

Psychoanalysis of James Joyce through the Study of Characters in His Novels

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Abstract

Modern period in English literature experimented a profound transformation in narrative style, themes and character development. Characters in modern literature engaged with alienation, existential dilemmas, and the search for identity amidst rapidly changing social, economic and cultural landscapes. The modern period witnessed a shift towards unreliable narrators and experimental forms encouraging readers to engage actively with the text which allow for a higher understanding of character motivations and the thematic undercurrents that define their journeys. Joyce's characters embody the complexities of modern life and through the technique of stream of consciousness, he captures their inner lives helping readers to resonate with the characters on a deeper level of comprehension. The distinctive nature that reflects in the characters created by James Joyce is exploration of self; feelings of alienation from society, family or even themselves; non-heroic protagonists lacking clear moral delineation, exhibiting both admirable and flawed qualities; the influence of Freudian theory and existential philosophy; embodying the tensions and issues of their time, such as class struggle, gender roles and racial identity. Stephen Dedalus is a multifaceted character of Joyce who holds the central character among his important literary works such as A Portrait of The Artist as A Young Man and Ulysses. His journey reflects profound questions about identity, art, and the search for meaning, making him one of Joyce's most compelling and enduring creations. Another character would be Leopold Bloom who is a richly developed character making him one of literature's most memorable protagonist. To familiarize these two characters could open the author's various facets of his personality, beliefs and experiences as Freud mentions in his essay Creative Writers and Daydreaming: "His Majesty the 'Ego' of the writer becomes the hero of the story."

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Stream Of Consciousness, Character, Inner Life, Identity

INTRODUCTION

Modern Period Literature:

Modern period in literature significantly reflects the change in social, cultural and technological landscape where writers brought in a revolution, experimentation and innovation in literature. Modernism rejected the 19th-century focus on realism and sought to represent the inner workings of the mind rather than external reality. Modernist literature often focused on the individual, particularly in terms of exploring consciousness, identity, and personal experience. Writers were interested in how

individuals respond to the rapidly changing world around them. The modern period writers encouraged readers to engage actively with the text which allow for a higher understanding of character motivations and the thematic undercurrents that define their journeys. Some of the profound writers of this period are James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, William Faulkner and Franz Kafka.

Modern period characters:

Character is one of the essential elements in making a novel which helps deepen the reader's engagement with the story, elevate the novel's meaning, and contribute to its lasting impact. Shoojit Sircar in his interview acknowledge the importance of characters in his writing process stating that "it is not the story that decides the character but character that decides the story." (Unfiltered by Samdish, 2024, 1:29:35) The character's journey in the novel, choices, and fates can reinforce the broader messages the author wants to convey about society, identity, morality, or existence.

Characterization in modernist literature gave importance to complexities and intricacies of inner lives, authors attempt to reach to the readers for the understanding of such characters by using techniques such as stream of consciousness where interior monologue is the key to get to psychological depth, internal conflict and existential crisis of the characters. This technique attempts to capture the continuous flow of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of a character, often disregarding traditional narrative structure. This allows for a more intimate and fragmented portrayal of the character's mind. According to Richard Power in his interview claims that "character is like an onion" where the outermost layer is the cloths we wear and style we carry. (Perell, 2024, 7:47) To shade off the outer layer which consist mostly of materialistic things is easy but getting deeper to the layer comes to realm of mind play which is subjective and psychoanalysis is the pursuit to get into those layers. Each layer carries certain identity of the character and casting off each layer can help identify the core reason for the author to make that fictional character which could be coming out of author's sub conscious level. Delving into James Joyce's fictional characters certainly will help open the psychic state of his mind as his main protagonists Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom are the 'alter egos' of Joyce. Geetha (2000) discloses the means of creation of characters by authors in second chapter, it can be based from imagination, living sources or from the author's own self or, on a combination of the author and some others of acquaintance or imagination. Later being the main character formation in Joyce's novels, to study his characters will be feasible to examine him.

Objective of the study:

- To acknowledge the importance of character study as it attributes to bring out the excellency of the novels.
- To study the fictitious characters of James Joyce and the psychological types and laws that operates them.
- Psychological effort Joyce dedicates in his work through the fictional characters to channel his beliefs, social struggle, internal journey for self-growth and human consciousness.

Research Methodology:

Methodologies that are used to analyse characters in literary works, each focusing on different aspects such as psychology, society, narrative structure, and identity are given below.

- Psychoanalytic criticism, based on the theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and other psychologists, to explore the unconscious motivations, desires, and psychological conflicts of characters as well of author.
- Ethical criticism to examine the moral implications of characters' decisions and the ethical dilemmas they face.
- Analyse using social identity theory to understand how characters' sense of belonging to certain social groups, such as family, class, race and nation, shapes their personal identity, relationships, and social dynamics.

Literature Review:

Ahmadifar, Solmaz (2018) mentioned the important influences done by psychologists like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung into the literary world, authors were writing novels that deals with inner thought process and introspection to deliver one's primary knowledge of their mental life. "It was found that human consciousness has mainly three layers named consciousness, subconsciousness and unconsciousness. The hidden desires and thoughts of human mind lay in the arena of unconscious and subconsciousness and they constantly keep on coming on the surface i.e. conscious mind. The upsurge of subconscious and unconscious bring change in the human personality." Such discoveries on human psychology during that period brought interest in experiencing the concept of consciousness. Geetha (2000) mentions the acceptance of psychoanalysis among literary writers and critics as a result of psychological theories applied by Freud to art and literature. The study highlights the link between psychoanalysis and literature brought in by Freud in his attempt to psychoanalyse the Delusion and Dreams of a character Nobert Harold in "Delusion and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva" and further expanded from his work "The Creative Writers and Daydreaming". In Freud's work Interpretation of Dreams, dream work consists of four important strand of the unconscious manifestations which are "the recollection of the past, the use of linguistic symbols, childhood memories and the archaic heritage of man". Freud took the help of "free association" technique to understand the primary and secondary functions of mind. Such technique is highly possible of Joyce having been used in his working on the characters, Richard Ellman clarifies in this study that Joyce was very much familiar with the theories of Freud. On the second chapter of the study, a quote given by Freud explains well to the characters being born during the modern period of literature, it says

"The psychological novel in general, no doubt owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split up his egos, by self-observation into many part-egos and in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes. In certain novels which might be described as 'eccentric', the person who is introduced as the hero plays only a very small active part. He sees the actions and sufferings of other people pass before him like a spectator."

Characters of James Joyce, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom, are the example of this explanation. Stephen represents the alter-ego of Joyce starting from his novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, however the split of it can be witnessed in the novel Ulysses where Bloom represents the other side of Joyce who is sincere of his stream of thoughts that includes the vulnerable sides of him and practising

freedom of expression as an artist. This is affirmed one amongst others from the chapter ‘Circe’ in *Ulysses* where the characteristic trait of Bloom meets to Ellman’s observation of Joyce who showed ‘traces of fetishism, anality, paranoia and masochism’. In *Ulysses*, the presence of Stephen is miniscule comparing to Bloom but the meeting of the characters in the end of the novel is a significant part of the novel. The study brings out Joyce lack of imagination due to which it is hard to create new materials, however he had an excellent creativity in rearranging the existing materials to put to his advantage. The result of it can be witnessed in his play of characters, he strategically brings up the characters there in *Dubliners* to *Ulysses*, to mention one is Bob Doran from *Dubliners* in Cyclops chapter of *Ulysses*. The practice of it is notified by Seidal (2002) saying “characters in Joyce’s work tend to migrate from one of his books to the next. That is the way he creates the feeling of a total Dublin landscape”.

When it comes to character analysis of *Finnegans Wake*, in the book of Ellman (1983) Joyce himself said:

“...I am trying to tell the story of his Chapeliyod family in a new way... Time and the river and the mountain are the real heroes of my book... There is no connection between the people in Ulysses and the people in Work in Progress. There are in a way no characters... If one had to name a character, it would be just an old man. But his own connection with reality is doubtful...”

If a characterisation is to be done of ‘the river’ and ‘the mountain’ through the traditional Chinese concept of *Shan Shui* then the river represents the feminine quality of universal energy (Yin) and the mountain represents the masculine aspects of universal energy (Yang).

In *Bloom Unbound* by Ellmann (1984), the un-named narrator in the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses* has been portrayed as Thersites, but Joyce also introduces second narrator which strongly resembles Dr. Pangloss and both were considered as the ‘twoone-eyed narrators’. Another Cyclopean that is further introduced in this episode is the ‘one-eyed Citizen’. Leopold Bloom for the first in that day of the novel was attacked by the Cyclopeans from all directions and to the extent of physical attack. Bloom act towards such attack was a small act of heroism which Joyce endorses in his literary work to convey the importance of what heroism truly means to him. Bloom faced their reproach with a culminated reply saying,

“But it’s no use... Force, hatred, history, all that. That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that that is life.” “What?” asks Alf Bergan. “Love... I mean the opposite of hatred. I must go now.”

Joyce’s take on the knowledge of history had been evolved which can be observed through Stephen and Bloom. Earlier Stephen states that “history is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.” In this episode, Bloom faces it with kindness opposite to how the Citizens were meeting the ferocity of history with equal amount of ferocity.

Jhanji (1971) brings out Sartre’s belief in ‘nothingness’ attached to a work of art, out of which “imaginative consciousness” or certain feelings could be extracted out. When Joyce attempts to elevate a new identity to the character, as in Stephen, the character seem to withdraw themselves into state of non-existence or nothingness psychologically and physically to start the act of his new characteristics with

new acculturate feelings and consciousness. To mention is Stephen in chapter three of A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man, where he isolated himself in his room stating he wants “to be alone with his soul” before deciding to take a new path in his life.

Conclusion:

Character when comes into existence, apprehending deep into their sub conscious level makes each of them to have come out with different personality; accumulated from his/her surroundings, environment, education, etc.; contributing themselves to the making of a society. Each individual in a sense is treated as a micro society in the modern period novels, hence priority has been given more to individuality than to the macro society by the authors. Characters cultivated by James Joyce for his novels have been mostly related to his self, however his self is ever evolving through time due to which different characters are formed with his evolving experiences of life and knowledge amalgamated. Characters in Dubliners are set to be ones created with his experienced moments of ‘epiphany’ having the characters experience them in their assigned stories. The most important characters in his follow up novels starting from A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man are Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom with other characters like foil characters to bring out the intrinsic part of these two characters. In Ulysses, in the beginning of the novel it is known that Stephen returns back to Dublin due to the demise of his mother which is relevant to Joyce return to Dublin too in 1903. However, Stephen refuses to pray at his mother’s dead bed in the novel, which showed the immaturity side of young Joyce who in his earlier life did not have much attachment with his mother through Stephen’s act. Allen (1954) in his work mentions about Stephen in Ulysses as:

“Stephen Dedalus is a... Projection of the author himself as a young man, arrogant, tortured by a vast ambition not yet realised, struck with remorse for this behaviour towards his mother, the repudiation of his family, his religion and his country.”

Leopold Bloom enters later and dominates most part of the novel as sensible character inhibiting the matured rendition of Joyce who starts his day with his act of love towards his wife and making a priority event to go to the funeral of Paddy Dignam. However, Bloom had the disruptive thought of his wife having an affair which puts him as an exemplar of modern period characters who had both goodness and flaws in them.

One of the technique writers uses in stream of consciousness narration is free association of ideas, images and words at the pre-speech level. Such narration meets the concept of free association technique introduced by Freud where non-linear thinking when expressed without censorship can lead to the unconscious mind. Joyce being aware of such idea implemented it in his life using the characters in his novels to narrate in such manner, to mention some would be Stephen’s and Leopold Bloom’s interior monologue moments in A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses. In a way his literary artwork became his means of understanding or discovering his unconscious mind himself.

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