

MODERNIST FEATURES IN A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN BY JAMES JOYCE

Nazira Mukhitdinova

Chair of Department of English language teaching methodology, faculty of foreign languages, Jizzakh State
Pedagogical institute, Uzbekistan
E-mail address: naziramukhitdinova07@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* James Joyce prototyped modernism to a world, which was changing, where institutions like social life, religion and capitalism were brought to doubt. All the features of modernism: strong wish to escape the rules; wish to find ways for man's position in life; and experiments in style and forms are to be found in Joyce's novels. Many aspects of modernism from this novel had a great influence upon the development of the modernist movement itself and made James Joyce superior modernist writer. The most perceptible of modernist techniques in a portrait of the artist are the "stream of consciousness" literary style, themes of universe and individual, extraordinary unique language, *Kunstlerroman* plot. James Joyce uses interior monologue and the stream of consciousness, thus the writer foresees his later techniques.

Keywords: Tradition, stream of consciousness, individual, interior monologue, modernism, modernist features.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most superior modern writers, James Joyce talked about freedom and humanity and most of his themes were based on universality. His works refer to the individuality rather than society. James Joyce constantly explored the total resources of language in all his novels and he greatly influenced the fictional technique of twentieth-century writers, from realists to postmodernists.

A portrait of the artist as a young man is neay complete rewrite of the Stephen hero novel. It is mainly autobiographical, and it was first published in the magazine *The Egoist* from 1914 to 1915, and later in 1916 published as a book. The book was admitted as a work of genius writer. The novel tells the story of the early life of the Irish Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's representation of himself alluding to the master of Greek mythology, Daedalus. Here, James Joyce gives his readers a clear picture of the final years of the 19th century Ireland and the factors of which he thinks is the reason for the decay of his people and country: religion and death of proletariat. The world of Dublin is shown through the consciousness of the narrator who grows from catholic boyhood to an early adulthood when he wishes to be an artist and goes to Paris to fulfil his ambitions. Joyce treats his alter ego with sympathy and irony and the story of Dedalus is written from the earliest childhood until his leave to Paris. In his pursuit Joyce experiences various concept epiphanies.

His love of language was outstanding in his experimental writing that used mythology, literature, and history to create an innovative language using symbols and various narrative forms. Joyce's intellectualism and creativity has been compared to that of Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein, whose contributions to humanity are enormous and historical. Both in style and in content the novel was extraordinary for its time. Stream of consciousness technique, which Joyce made popular with this work, is the method of narrating the thought process of a character. Thus, the novel moves forward through the path of Stephen's consciousness.

Materials and methods

Joyce's novel is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter of the novel, we see Stephen as a child and we, as readers, are completely integrated into his childish world. Dedalus is hardly able to put together all his thoughts. Stephen is a young boy, probably five-years-old. He is one of the younger students at Clongowes Wood College for boys. In short, the first chapter consists of four parts. First is Stephen's infancy. Suddenly skipping the years, Stephen is at school, on playground, in classroom, in dormitory, and infirmary. The third part finds him back at home for the Christmas dinner. Later he is back on playground and refectory and he goes to the rector's study with a complaint against father Dolan. Hence, this initial chapter introduces to the major forces that shape Stephen Irish nationalism, Catholicism, and his incredible sensitivity.

In the second chapter Stephen is a few years older. It tells us about the period of transition from late childhood to teenage years. Adolescence is a conflicted time for Stephen, and extremely important one. He is now at Belvedere College. He has started to become interested in literature, and romanticizes his life based on what he reads. He tries to write a poem to the girl he loves, but does not succeed. The adolescent Stephen in Chapter 2 is more independent. His rejection of church is foreshadowed here: he defends Byron, despite the poet's heresies, and he himself writes an essay that contains a small bit of heresy on a philosophical point.

Chapter three deals with the results of Stephen's first rebellion against Catholic values. Apparently, he makes soliciting prostitutes a habit. He goes through the motions in school and at church, and is not bothered by the deceitfulness of his life. He goes on a religious retreat with his class and his sense of being lost makes it possible for Father Arnall's sermons to bring him back to the Church. The priest's sermon about sin and damnation affects Stephen deeply. Stephen now dedicates his life to God.

The fourth chapter records the great turning point in Dedalus' spiritual life. His father makes plans for Stephen, who is 16, to enter the university. Walking along the seashore one afternoon, thinking about poetry, Stephen sees a young woman bathing. They stare at each other, but do not speak. Stephen takes this as a spiritual omen and he decides to dedicate his life to art.

The fifth chapter is the lengthy chronicle of Stephen's rebellion. Stephen is at university now. He is lazy about classes but passionate about his developing theory of aesthetics. He refuses to sign a political petition, thus trying to set himself apart from the concerns of his country's politics or religion. Talking to his close friend, Cranly, Stephen announces that he has decided to leave Ireland for Europe to pursue his artistic vocation. The novel closes with him making plans to leave for the continent.

As a whole what Joyce tries to emphasize is that an artist is essentially an individual who can flourish only by becoming free of all collective entanglements and commitments in the world around him. Joyce himself led a life of self-imposed exile as he left Ireland after he completed his college.

James Joyce and Modernism

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is a precursor of the Modernist novel written in response to the realist style, which was prevailing in the 19th century. Joyce and writers like T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf or Ezra Pound were the creators of literary works responding to a quickly changing world in which institutions like religion, social order and capitalism were questioned.

The modernists were writers who changed the world from the "typical" way of writing that had come before them. They often wrote novels in the first person, and they fragmented them, sometimes confusing the reader by rearranging the order of the events. Joyce was especially fond of the "stream of consciousness" style in which the narrator gives the reader a view of the

inside of his/her mind. Like other writers of his time, Joyce tried to show how to bring some order out of the anarchy that was typical of the world post-World war I.

The novel of age should combine “something of the exaltation of poetry” and “much of the ordinariness of prose” as Virginia Woolf states in an essay entitled “Poetry, Fiction and the Future (reprinted as “The Narrow Bridge of Art”) [1]. It will make little use of the marvelous fact recording power which is one of the attributes of fiction” she says later on. “it will tell us very little about the houses, incomes, occupations of its characters; it will have little kinship with the sociological novel or the novel of environments. With these limitations it will express the feelings and ideas of the characters closely and vividly but from a different angle... It will give the relations of man to Nature, to fate; his imaginations, his dreams. But it will also give the sneer, the contrast, the question, the closeness and complexity of life. It will take the mould of that queer conglomeration of incongruous things – the modern mind.” [2]

Modernist features and techniques in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Modernism as a literary movement which had an impact on James Joyce’s writing, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* reflecting many of its ideas. Many features of modernism depictable in this novel influenced the development of the modernist movement itself and turned Joyce into a prominent modernist writer. The most relevant examples of modernist techniques in *Portrait of the Artist* are the *kunstlerroman* plot, the “stream of consciousness” literary style, individual v. universal themes, and unique language.

Result and discussion

The novel is one of the superior examples of a *Kunstlerroman* (an artist’s *Bildungsroman*) in English literature in which we can watch the development of an artist in his confusion and rebellion against the Catholic and Irish Conventions of his upbringing. This novel is about the development of an artist, not just any young man. Due to its story it is one of the most widely read and taught novels in English literature and has had a great influence on novelists all over the world.

The modernist novel also focuses on the consciousness of the individual human mind and the term comes from William James’ description of mind’s experiencing of thoughts, perceptions, memories, associations and sensations in their multitude. According to James, conscious experience is described as continuous and unbroken, referring to the never-ending associative flow of thoughts, perceptions and feelings.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce’s style is free flowing, following Stephen’s conscious thought. This is an essential technique of modernist writers as it creates another imaginary reality, which has little to do with the true world.

The “stream of consciousness” technique was amply used by Modernist writers, particularly by James Joyce who preferred to write about individuality rather than society. By using the interior monologue and the stream of consciousness, James Joyce precedes his later technique in *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*. Various isms of early twentieth century are present here: symbolism, imagism, expressionism, Marxism, existentialism and feminism.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is one of the earliest examples in English literature of a novel that makes extensive use of stream of consciousness, which is a narrative technique through which the author attempts to represent the fluid and eruptive nature of human thought. the writer does not intervene in rearranging this flow of consciousness in a logical, coherent way. He simply renders the consciousness of his character as it occurs and the style resembles an interior monologue. By mixing second and third person, the writers creates his own personal reality.

The novel is a third-person narrative and the dialogues are minimal. The style of the novel evolves to describe Stephen’s life from the time he was a child to his adulthood, when he finally

decides to leave Ireland. The reader can mention modernist features in language, which gradually increases in all these stages of evolution.

CONCLUSION

The significance of early twentieth century writing is obvious and there has been a long debate on the issues of the subject matter and the form of modern fiction due to the experience of modern life. All the characteristics of Modernism: experiment in form and style, the desire of breaking away from tradition; the quest for searching new ways of man's position in the Universe are to be found in James Joyce's writings. Modernist novels were generally composed in the first person and fragmentation was a device currently used the chronological order of the events being sometimes rearranged to follow the inner life of heroes.

Virginia Woolf in one of the most frequently quoted passages of her writing captures the essence of modernist writing:

"Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions-trivial, fantastic, evanescent or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old... Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. It is now the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit whatever aberration or complexity it may have with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible".[3]

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