

SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND EPIPHANY: A STUDY OF JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS AND JAMES JOYCE'S A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines self-consciousness and epiphany in Joseph Conrad's 1902 novel *Heart of Darkness* and James Joyce's 1916 novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with the aim of illustrating that these modernist writers' focus on the individual or subjective consciousness and self-discovery of the main characters is enriched by autobiographical elements prompted by the nihilism of the early twentieth century. Although *Heart of Darkness* is a colonial novel and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* traces the development of a potential artist, both converge on the themes of hypocrisy and injustice. Using the Psychoanalytic literary theory, the paper demonstrates that both Conrad and Joyce effectively explore self-awareness and discovery by the inclusion of various aspects of their real life experiences in their novels. In other words, the experiences of the protagonists in both works reflect those of their authors. Conrad and Joyce use their protagonists as mouthpieces to project individual freedom and the bestial part of man. Through that look inwards, the authors discover themselves and define a certain artistic consciousness. Both authors portray not what is dominantly fictional but what they were a part of. It is the exploration of consciousness from an autobiographical perspective that gives the British modernist novel its strength and major difference. Both authors demonstrate that without restraint, mutual respect and sincerity, the individual and society degenerate.

Keywords: Self-consciousness, epiphany, modernist, autobiography.