

THE ESSENCE OF MODERNISM IN JAMES JOYCE'S A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

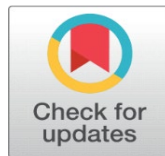
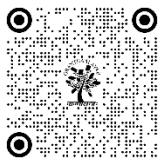
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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.3515](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.3515)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Literature is an eternal mechanism to document the experiences of people in diverse forms. It also acts as the storehouse of different features witnessed in the course of literary movements. Many writers have considered literature as a platform to historicise the changes or spirits of society. James Joyce is one of the exponents of literature who provides the required impetus to represent modernity in the literary expressions. His novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) has exemplified modernism in a European society. He has touched upon the evolving, fascinating, challenging and established structures like commerce, religion, tradition, and social life. His works have exhibited the characteristics of modernism, including a strong desire to break free from the constraints. They deal with the search for solutions and a place for man in the universe; and experiments with form and style. Even he is observed as a typical writer of modernist elements which have seriously influenced the evolution of modernist literary movement.

Many techniques are introduced in the field of English literature with the intension of foreseeing transformations in the human ecosphere. The literary styles, themes, structures, and techniques have been able to elevate and provide the world of literature a new dimension. In literature, the 'Stream of Consciousness' is typified as a sober and sublime technique; which is possessed with the characteristic feature of modernity. Even the linguistic and language principles have been treated as the modern techniques to absorb the transformative elements of human civilization. All these modern techniques are universal in nature with genuine and subtle variations. These modern techniques assist the readers to comprehend and synthesize the virtues of an artist embedded in his portrait by means of the stream of consciousness and interior monologue. Hence, the research paper unfolds the essence of modernism represented in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* within the contemporary charter.

Keywords: Essence, Modernism, Technique, Stream of Consciousness, Interior Monologue

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature has been able to focus on discreet and diversified vibrancies of human culture. The potential authors have juxtaposed the vibrancies to mark their literary significance in the respective works. Being a pioneer of modern literature, James Joyce has discussed the global issues like humanity and freedom with special reference to the transforming trends. Instead of referring to the society, his literary expressions have discussed the values and virtues of individuals. In most of his works, he has incessantly examined the full range of linguistic possibilities. These have led to the significant impact on authors of twentieth century and their employment of fiction that ranges from postmodernist

to realistic view. The realistic approach of modern writers has put across the nuances and intricacies of individuals who dwell in the ambit of unrealistic hallucinations.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) is a profound description of Irish author James Joyce. He has skilfully textured the social and political leitmotifs to extant the crossings of personal and national character. It is basically autobiographical in nature and published in the magazine called 'The Egoist'. The book is overwhelmed and acknowledged as an intense piece of literary inscription. It chronicles the initial years of Irishman Stephen Dedalus. Joyce has portrayed Dedalus as the dominant persona of Greek tradition. He beautifies a vivid picture of elements and the last years of nineteenth-century Ireland for his bibliophiles. Even it marks the blame and decline of his common folk, nation, tradition and religion. As the raconteur rises from a Catholic youngster to an early adult who travels to Paris to pursue his dream of becoming an artist. His escalation in life and the world of Dublin is depicted through his awareness. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M. H. Abrams opines:

Stephen Dedalus is the chief person in modern novel whose character is widely discrepant from that of traditional protagonist or hero. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power or heroism, the antihero... Joyce's work, is petty, ignominious, passive, clownish, or dishonest. (2009)

Being an observant novelist, Joyce inscribes the life of Dedalus from his early youth to his departure for Paris. He treats his modified ego with pity and mockery. He has a number of theoretical epiphanies while chasing his goalmouths. His experimental writing is always combined with the core elements of mythology and literature. He anticipates the past incidents to create a novel language using symbols and variety of narrative forms. The novelist makes an attempt to demonstrate his astonishing love of language. His inventiveness and intellectualism have been linked to great personalities who showered momentous and eternal contributions to the crux of humanity. The novel is remarkable both in style and content. The practice of unfolding a character and his thoughts is known as the stream of consciousness technique. This technique is pre-eminent and disseminated in portraying an artist at the highest peak.

2. THE THEMATIC PRE-OCCUPATIONS IN A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

James Joyce is an acclaimed author with greater substance in the field of English literature. He has been endeavoured with subtle literary mechanisms to showcase the hidden talent lies at the bottom of his intellect. His exuberant novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is structured into five explicit chapters. In the opening chapter, the readers are introduced to Stephen as a child, who infatuates everyone with his innocent perspective. Dedalus struggles to articulate his thoughts clearly. As a young and energetic boy, likely around five years old, Stephen is one of the youngest students at Clongowes Wood Educational Institution for boys.

Further, the opening chapter is divided into four meaningful sections that trace the upheavals of protagonist Stephen. The first section explores the early childhood of Stephen. The narrative then proceeds forward, placing Stephen in various settings like the schoolyard, classroom, hostel, and hospital. In the subsequent section, he returns home on the eve of Christmas dinner. Afterward, he is seen again in the playground and cafeteria before visiting the office of rector to lodge a grievance against father Dolan. Consequently, the opening chapter presents the key influences that mould Irish Nationalism, Catholic faith, and profound sensitivity in Stephen.

In the succeeding chapter, the protagonist Stephen has aged a few years. It discusses the changeover from late childhood into his adolescent years. His youth proves to be a disputed and critically significant period. He is now appearing at Belvedere College, where he begins to explore literature and idealizes his existence through the stories he recites. He attempts to compose a poem for the beloved girl, but his efforts fall short. This Chapter highlights the adolescent days of Stephen and also displays his greater independence. He hints at his rejection of church and supports Byron, regardless of the heretical views of the poet. He pens an essay that includes a minor heretical idea on a metaphysical subject.

The subsequent chapter explores the consequences of Stephen and his initial insurgence against Catholic preachings. It seems that he begins to seek the regular acquaintances of women and proceed with illicit relationships. He goes through the gestures at school and during church. Even he does not show concern for the deceitfulness in his life. While on a spiritual departure with his class, his spirits of being free allow to resonate with him the sermons of Father Arnall. This episode has helped to draw him back to the Church. The sermon given by the priest on sin and damnation profoundly impacts the inner psyche of Stephen. He has decided to display his commitment to God in the residual part of his life.

The next part of novel depicts a substantial shift in the spiritual journey of Dedalus. His father has decided to admit sixteen-year-old Stephen to attend the university. One fine day Stephen is strolling along the beach in the afternoon contemplating his poetry. Incidentally, he notices a young woman swimming in the beach. They just exchange a gaze, but no words are spoken. This seashore incident has ignited a kind of inner turmoil in the intellect of the protagonist. He interprets and articulates this visual treat as an insignia of non-verbal spiritualism. As a result, he goes on to the extent of committing himself to the life of spiritual graphic which would have an unceasing impression in cognizance of a budding lyricist.

The concluding chapter affords a comprehensive interpretation of Stephen and his act of insolence. The passionate protagonist Stephen is now a part of university. He is enthusiastic about his embryonic philosophy of aesthetics, but develops a type of lazy attitude in being regular to the classes. In an attempt to distance himself from the religious or political subjects facing his nation, he declines to emblem a political supplication. He opens up and expresses his views to intimate friend Cranly. He discloses his decision to vacate Ireland and foldaway to Europe with the intension of pursuing his artistic vocation. The novel ends in an open-ended mode as the protagonist decides to depart the landmass looking for better artistic fortunes in the new abode. In *The Heros with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell recounts:

Dedalus has represented the type of the artist-scientist: that curiously disinterested... beyond the normal bounds of social judgment, dedicated to the morals not of himself but of his art. He is the hero... single hearted, courageous, and full of faith... shall make us free. (2004)

On the whole, the novelist James Joyce makes a serious attempt to articulate the ideals of an individual who tries to seek better fortunes in the new atmosphere rather searching for heaven in the existing continent. But it is observed as the decision of a person expecting transformations as life takes on to the other levels. His departure of old place can also be viewed as a release from the old entanglements and can be foreseen as an opportunity to find solace in the modern facets of society. May be the education and exposure that he has received at the university has formatted him with the required courage to look for the modern approaches to life in the new terminal.

3. THE ESSENCE OF MODERNISM IN JAMES JOYCE

The literary illustrations of James Joyce have been dealt with both the sunnier and murkier nuances of modern society. His popular novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is the result of his realistic approach to modernity witnessed in the nineteenth century. Modernist writers like Dylan Thomas, Joseph Conrad, Franz Kafka, James Joyce and few others have emanated with literary works in a response to transforming civilization. Through their terminologies, they tried to challenge the established institutions like trade, capitalism, social order, religion, and traditional practices. The celebrated authors of the previous eternities have arrayed on the 'archetypal style' of literary outputs. But the writers of modern period have embarked on the epitomes of modernity in their descriptions. These chronicles have positioned them in a pitch and characterize the hallucinations of younger cohorts. In *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, Harry Levin writes:

The actual person Joyce has been originated by scholars to vary considerably from the imaginary character Stephen and therefore the novel cannot be seen as based on a literal transcript of the first twenty years of Joyce's life. (1960)

Most of the modernist writers inscript their literary works in the first-person narration. It permits them to have the freedom of expression in fragmenting the characters and events. This has enabled authors to change the order of events and to create an ambiguous state in the mind of bibliophiles. Joyce has extensively used the 'stream of consciousness' technique to showcase the insight of authors. The practice of this technique has succeeded to sustain the curiosity of readers in grasping the modernistic approaches of people and their arrival at troublesome destinations. In a way, the readers are left with many queries about the future of the protagonist Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. But the real test always halts in the frontier of an author to address dreams, chaos, realities, and outcomes of the much-hyped characters of the modern society.

4. THE DEPICTION OF MODERNISM IN A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

James Joyce is typified as both an enigmatic and pragmatic author due to his nostalgic commitment towards modernistic spirits. He has pre-supposed modernism as a literary movement. His novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* stands as the best instance to idealise the key concepts of evolving human abode of modernity. He has not only

touched upon the 'stream of consciousness' technique, but also made a way for the distinctive use of language. Pronouncing a sophisticated language in the equitable manner is also viewed as a vibrant trait of modern life style. In the English Society, the demonstration of archetypal characters is categorical on the standards like 'dress code', 'language', 'tradition', and 'approaches' towards life. How the chief protagonist of a particular work of art uplifts himself with the said standards? It is actually decided on the success or failure of his entity in the process of identity assertion.

In the nineteenth century, the revolt against the Catholic Church and Irish traditions are also treated as the essence of modernity. The same attitude has been replicated by the central character Stephen in the novel. The revolt and growth of a young man as an artist has created an avenue for readers to ponder over the facets of modernity. These elements have certainly benefitted the authors to display the transformations which would stand as symbolic in ascertaining modernity as a continuous phenomenon of human existence. The thoughts, memories, perceptions, associations, and sensations prevalent among the vibrant disposition of characters have made a way to understand the multitudes of modernistic features. The writer like Joyce appears as both cautious and conscious in delineating the exuberances of modernity through his typewritten drafts.

The novelist describes cautious and conscious experience as the boundless flow of ideas, spirits, emotions, and perceptions that is continuous and unbroken. His expressions are free-flowing and reflect the cognizant ideas of protagonist Stephen. Since the novel generates a diverse fictional reality; it appears as the discrete image and crucial technique of real world used by modernist writers. He has frequently favoured writing about individuals over society. He foreshadows the modernist techniques in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by employing both the interior monologue and stream of consciousness. In the later stage, the literary theories like 'Imagism', 'Marxism', 'Feminism', 'Symbolism', 'Expressionism', and 'Existentialism' are treated as the top most ideologies of the early twentieth-century literature.

The literary excellence of Joyce becomes evident in the assertion of narrative devices applied in the novel. It has helped to capture and manoeuvre the essence of modern approaches towards life. The versatile characters and their representations mark the nature of human thoughts. But the novelist never steps into logical and coherent line to rearrange the stream of thoughts. He simply seizes the consciousness of character in the simpler manner and the style is similar to an internal monologue. As a result, the author succeeds in compounding the second and third person, and hypothesizes his own authenticity. The style of novel fluctuates as it shadows the life of Stephen from childhood to adulthood. The booklover can categorize modernist linguistic qualities that have progressively developed into more predominant throughout the phases of transformation.

5. CONCLUSION

To put in the container of literature, the passionate bookworms should embark on the vicissitudes of individuals in foreseeing love, pleasure, success, money and material. But in the certainty of human life, nothing places an individual in the world of comforts permanently. Change is the everlasting phenomenon whether it is good or bad; success or failure; and one like it or not. In the similar path, much has been deliberated about the forms, genres, devices, and subject matters of modern fiction. As the time crawls forward, the reputation of writing just keeps on changing in the natural course. The literary expositions of Joyce have opened up a novel window for bibliophiles to feel the spirit, essence and flavour of modern epochs of nineteenth century literature. His novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has been mindful and fruitful in shedding light on the values, virtues and essence of modernity in European humanity.

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