

James Joyce's "Ulysses": Modernity in its Textualization
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Abstract

"James Joyce is one of the pioneer innovators of 20th-century writers, a prototypical avatar of modernity and postmodern structuralist. He is considered as the perfect example of 'modern alienation of an artist', as well as a symbolic bridge between the modern and the post-modern."

His "Ulysses" is divided into eighteen episodes, each with a special technique and closely knit by an elaborate network of subtly recurring motifs. The stream of inchoate, fragmentary thoughts and feelings of each character in the novel is vividly rendered by the use of internal monologue under the influence of modern psychology. The present article endeavors to bring out the modernity in the textualization of the novel- "Ulysses" as well as some other important aspects like interpreting his alienation through the use of a stream of consciousness technique."

Keywords: *structuralist, modern and post-modern, alienation, motifs, internal monologue, modern psychology, stream of consciousness.*

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Introduction

James Joyce serves as a metonym for modernity- he is read as the supremely modern writer, ‘the inventor and technologist of modernist and post-modernist poetics’; as the ‘champion of alterity’; as ‘the inscription of modernity’s fragmentation’; as ‘the site of contestation between authoritative and marginalized discourses’, and as ‘the textualization of modernity’s discontents’.

Since the 1980s, many individual studies have used poststructuralist theory to probe the textuality, sexuality, and intertextuality of Joyce’s works. The poststructuralist theory is basically an extension of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and linguistics of what writers such as Gertrude Stein and James Joyce forged in literary discourse. Joyce’s textualization is based on the psychoanalytical stance that nothing is completely lost, it is only partly ‘forgotten’. Poststructuralist theorists made use of Freud’s concepts of repression return and interpretation by holding some projects of reading Joyce’s texts. They believed that like psyche, the text is split psychodynamically.

Technically speaking, James Joyce may not be credited as the innovator of the ‘stream of consciousness technique’, still we can see some of the features of this technique clearly reflected in his novel “Ulysses” and his other major writings. The term ‘stream of consciousness’ is derived from modern psychology and denotes the free association of ideas in the human mind. The novelist, who uses this technique does not tell us what the character is thinking, but takes us directly into the mind of the character. What is presented in this manner is called an ‘interior monologue’ or a ‘direct quotation of the mind’.

The novel “Ulysses” unfolds the story of a single day, chiefly in the lives of three Dublin natives of Ireland: Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and his wife, Molly Bloom. The title is suggestive of a close parallel with “Odyssey” which implies an unflattering view of both the modern world and the classical, and augments the significance of the novel by projecting it against the history of Western civilization. Joyce’s “Ulysses” is divided into eighteen chapters, each decked with a special technique. The novel is meticulously woven with an elaborate network of certain recurring motifs. The stream of inchoate, fragmentary thoughts and feelings of all the major characters is vividly and distinctively presented by the use of the internal monologue, a device which Joyce borrowed from Edouard Dujardin’s “Les LauriersSout Coupes” (1887) and which he considerably developed under the influence of modern psychology.

Joyce held life in its microcosmic aspect and to him, everything was in a sense everything else. Yet this vivid expansion of meaning achieved by style (which keeps shifting continually) comes from a realistic base, and the realistic base in "Ulysses" is lively, grounded, and entertaining. The novel imprints a stamp of its own in the psyche of the reader by delineating a picture of Dublin life in the early twentieth century. Joyce wanted to give an elaborate touch to the character of Bloom, but while making Bloom's character so inclusive in the novel, he did not lose sight of the modern problem which may be stated as the relationship of loneliness to love. He has very well portrayed that everyman is essentially lonely and we may observe in "Ulysses" that tragic vacuum in man's inner self, revealed to us through the 'stream of consciousness technique' - the self, revealed to us through the 'stream of consciousness technique'; and the self, which he presents to his neighbors and companions. This contrast is emphasized again and again in "Ulysses". All the three protagonists undergo this state of exile on an individual state. But all men belong to the community as well. In Bloom himself, the paradox of the exile is sharply defined, whereas, in various other characters, it is often only suggested. So far as technique is concerned, Joyce restricts the surface action to a short period of time and works backward through exploring the past within the present consciousness of his characters. Thus we know Bloom perhaps more completely, even though the action takes place in less than twenty-four hours. Joyce employs the 'interior monologue' more consistently and with less intervention on the author's part than any other major writer of the century.

There are other aspects of "Ulysses" which are equally important. The character of Stephen Dedalus is significant both in the total design of the novel and in its own right. Stephen is presented as a potential artist, who has to move in an insensitive world. He is an alienated man, but unlike Bloom. He desires to live a secluded life to cultivate 'the impersonality of the artist', but he is indulged in his environment which Bloom can not. He moves for the most part in an atmosphere of conviviality.

The novel opens with three episodes involving Stephen, the protagonist of the novel and autobiographical self of the novelist. First of all, we see him in the Martello Tower with his companions- Mulligan and Haines. Then we see him at work. He is shown teaching at the school but later, talking to the headmaster to offer his resignation. Thirdly we see him walking along the beach alone. He meditates upon life with his restless spirit, sorting and categorizing his observations. He is haunted by feelings of guilt about his dead mother and his 'Hamletic bent of mind'

keeps him indulged in thoughts that help to isolate himself from his kid. Bloom appears in the fourth episode but from this time on, he is portrayed as the central figure. Bloom is also haunted by the thought of his dead infant son, of his father who committed suicide, of his Jewish background, of his wife's infidelity. The stream of consciousness of these two widely different men interweaves in subtle counterpoint long before they actually meet in the fourteenth episode. In the great 'night town' scene, where the exhausted Bloom looks after the drunken Stephen and finally sees in him, symbolically, the image of his dead son, and here, the father-son motif is resolved (The motif involves not only 'Ulysses and Telemachus', but also 'Hamlet and his father' and many other literary and theological themes).

In the concluding section of the novel, Bloom takes Stephen to his home. He gives him cocoa and offers a bed. Stephen accepts cocoa but declines the bed. This section contains all kinds of ritual overtones involving the reconciliation of opposites and the possibility of identification of oneself with someone else. Thus, the theme of loneliness and love reaches at a new level in the book.

The final soliloquy of Molly Bloom, the wife of Bloom, gives vent to her experiences as a woman with the vulgar sensuality. It gives us a perspective that life will keep going. This soliloquy implies her willing submission in a pragmatic way. She accepts that life is what it is and is to be accepted. It is 'multifarious and monstrous, ordinary and terrible, heroic and trivial' at the same time; but it remains interesting and important and worth attending to, for, in any one part of it, all of it is contained.

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