

Modern Bildungsroman in James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

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المخلص

على مدار تاريخ الأدب، تطورت الحركات والتقانات الأدبية، ويعزى إلى تعزيز التقدم الفوري في عقد البشر من حيث المشاعر والتجارب الفردية. مثل هذه التجديدات والاستحداثيات خاصة في العصر الحديث لها علاقة فورية وطيدة مع التفاعلات السياسية المعاصرة والدراسات النفسية والاجتماعية والثقافية الجديدة. ولقد انسجمت رواية تشكيل البطل كأسلوب أدبي تقليدي بشكل كبير مع العصر الحديث، حيث الأسلوب المستخدم فيها يحاول تقديم نبذة عن الشخصية المنعمة بالتطور وعملية النضج. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تناول رواية "صورة الفنان في شبابه" للروائي جيمس جويس كرواية تشكيل البطل الحديثة، مفسرا التقانات المستخدمة في هذه التحفة الأدبية. بعد تقديم جيمس جويس روائيا معاصرا وحديثا، سيتم تعريف وتقديم مفهوم رواية تشكيل البطل الحديثة بشكل مفصل. البحث يشمل ثلاث اقسام: مقدمة وتعريف رواية تشكيل البطل ونقاش الرواية قيد الدراسة.

Abstract

Throughout the history of literature, literary movements and techniques have developed due to the instant progressive enhancement of human complexities in terms of feelings and individual experiences. Such literary innovations, especially during the modern era, have an instant relation with contemporary political interactions and new psycho-social and cultural studies. Bildungsroman as a traditionally used literary technique has been dramatically adapted to the modern era since the technique itself attempts to provide an account about the matured and one's process of maturation. This study endeavours to inspect Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as a modern bildungsroman, explaining the techniques that are used in this masterpiece. After introducing James Joyce as a modern novelist, a detailed definition will be offered about the concept of modern bildungsroman. This research comprises three sections: an introduction to James Joyce's life, a definition of Bildungsroman, and a discussion of the novel in question.

1. Introduction

In 1817, Karl von Morgenstern, a German philologist, coined a new term under the title of Bildungsroman. Though the style and technique was used previously by many writers such as Daniel Defoe, the term was not used until the second half of the 19th century and eventually reached to its apex during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, both in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The term refers to those novels in which concentrate on the process of mental and physical maturation of the main character. The etymology of the term is originated from two German words, 'Bildungs' and 'roman' 'Bildungs' meaning formation and 'roman' is an equivalent of novel in English. As a matter of fact, this genre of novel includes various subdivisions, such as; Kunstlerroman (development of the artist), Entwicklungroman (novel of development), Zeitroman (a type of coming of age novel which blends the development of the main character and the period he lives within, simultaneously), and Erziehungsroman (novel of education) (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998).

Historically, this genre of prose writing was commonly favourable to many writers until 1860. Most of the novels which have expanded this genre of prose composition intend to drift the reader to a higher individual enlightenment as the central character becomes mature and develops through undergoing certain life circumstances during a long span of life. One of the most significant aspects of Bildungsroman is the motif of journey which involves the process of self-discovery and maturity in the end (Milne, 2009, p.70). The process of maturation follows a certain pattern: hence, the main character after acquiring certain skills or specific knowledge, due to the hardship and circumstances of life, and then after ages, finds the best setting to apply his exceptional talents.

While German novelists focus more on the mental and psychological struggles of the main characters, English writers intend to be more interested in making the hero's battle more complicated with the outer world in order to establish and identify individual identity.

Joyce was born in Dublin in 1882. As a middle-class Dubliner, his family's economic situation declined rapidly, though it did not affect Joyce's educational situation. He afforded a brilliant Jesuit education, in which it is alluded to some extent in his quasi-autobiographical novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Graduated from University College in 1902, Joyce left Ireland and moved to Europe. After a period of time, in 1903, he returned back to Ireland because of his mother's unstable health situation. After her death (1904), Joyce denied his Catholicism and with his wife left Ireland to Europe for ever. Joyce continued his life in Italy, France, Switzerland, and Zurich as a language teacher and this experience of his life made him aware of the Development of Basic Senses in Absence of an Advanced Lingual Communication in which is mirrored in his novel. It was during this period of his life that he wrote one of the most stigmatic works entitled *Ulysses* (Fargnoli, Gillespie and Fargnoli, 2006, p.3).

James Joyce is an Irish prominent and iconic figure in English Literature during the modernist literary period that devoted most of his life to working as a novelist, short story writer, poet, playwright, and critic. Though he has written in various genres, including poetry and drama, Joyce's fame comes from his exceptional novels and short stories such as; *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and *Ulysses* (1922), and *Dubliners*. Joyce's influential works are still studied widely in universities and read by people all over

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the world. Numerous interpretations of his works are being offered by various well-known critics such as Harold Bloom. His works are bound to the modern issues that surround the modern man in the modern age, aspects such as; religious, historical, quasi-autobiographical, and feminist, social, and political themes (Fargnoli, Gillespie and Fargnoli, 2006, p.90).

2. Modern Bildungsroman in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

It is a fact, literally acknowledged by the men of literature, that literature as a living existence has undergone certain evolutions and devolutions due to the circumstances of each era. Modern English novel has not been an exception, and its adaptation through the modern age is totally vivid in terms of themes, techniques, characterization, symbols, motifs, and language. Development of science in different perspectives, first and second world war, the appearance of colonization and its consequences, formation of various societies that were following different values and norms were some of the most important factors that made the Modern English novel alter its concerns from its previous ages that were basically founded on religious values and mindset.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is one of the modern coming of age novels which deals with the process of maturation of its main character, Stephen Dedalus. The novel is written as a quasi-autobiographical one, based on the authentic life of the author himself, that's why to have a better understanding of the work, one should have a general knowledge about the biography of the writer. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* can be considered a modern Bildungsroman novel due to its exceptional traits and elaboration of the modern techniques for illustrating mental and physical maturation of the main character. Though, throughout the novel history, numerous novelists, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, have tried to have dynamic characters based on the character's response to the natural surrounding environments, still few of them have been really successful to portray a real state of mental and physical maturation as Joyce does in his masterpiece *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

James Joyce, in his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* breaks the boundaries and unlike his other English folks illustrates his main character's maturation from both inner and outer aspects. Stephen's mental maturation and his development of understanding about his identity regarding the conservative society that surrounds him is the best example of Joyce's innovation of Bildungsroman in English literature. This fact has basically a profound root in Joyce's spending a big portion of his life outside Britain; hence no one can deny the great impact of the European secular and innovative mindset on his fictive works.

Beyond any shred of doubt, James Joyce started a new trend in English literature, more specifically Bildungsroman prose composition, by blending it with specific techniques in which can deal and reveal the main character's mind and psychology in a way that the main character's process of mental maturation is mirrored through Stream of Consciousness, and Development of Basic Senses in Absence of an Advanced Lingual Communication. Through elaboration of these modern techniques that are based on modern psychology, the reader lives through the character's mind. This process exposes the reader in an unconscious didactic mode.

In fact, characteristics of Bildungsroman can be applied to many novels throughout the literary history. Though, it has never been considered as a dominant literary genre; it has an international and universal significance, since it deals with the universal experience of development through coming of age. Regarding Joyce and his novel, "A Portrait subsequently moves its hero through a series of epistemic crises, each of which expands the range of his theory and displaces its centre of gravity" (Thurson, 2004 ,p 151). The end of each chapter in the novel signifies a level of maturation in which Stephen undergoes as

“Stephen’s progress in symbolic self-expression is punctuated, at the end of each chapter” (Aubert ,1992 , p93).

The story is a ‘quasi-autobiographical’ novel which is based on the life of the author (Parson, 2007, p.38). It starts with the childhood of Stephen Dedalus who is the central character of the novel. We find him as a little boy who grows to a young man and eventually decides to leave his country to Europe. This is basically to achieve his dream which is becoming an artist.

At the beginning of the novel, Stephen who is about 5 years old is studying at Clongowes Wood College, an elementary school for boys. In this regard Stephen defines his primary identity as “Stephen Dedalus is my name, Ireland is my nation. Clongowes is my dwellingplace, And heaven my expectation” (Joyce, 2005, p.12). In this level of his life, he shares the most vulnerable and fragile characteristics of a young boy. He has been pushed into a drain ditch by another student, named Wells. Next day he wakes up ill. In the infirmary he missed home and fancied to be home with his family for the Christmas holidays. Being young, sick, and highly vulnerable, he calls his mother; “Dear Mother, I am sick. I want to go home. Please come and take me home. I am in the infirmary. Your fond son, Stephen” (Joyce, 2005, p.20). Then, Stephen’s consciousness takes the reader to Mr. Dedalus’s house when at a Christmas dinner Stephen’s father has a hot conversation with Dante, Stephen’s governess, about Catholic Church and Parnell.

Once again, Stephen’s consciousness takes the readers back to school when he has broken his medical glasses. For this, Father Arnall has excused him from doing his classwork. Father Dolan, the perfect of the studies, enters the class to discipline the students. Here, Stephen becomes verbally abused and unfairly punished in front of his

classmates. This is the first time Stephen, as an immature boy, is introduced to the concept of injustice. Stephen after being encouraged by his classmates stands up for his right and talks to the school rector. When the rector promises him to talk to Father Dolan, he feels that the first epiphany of his life does not appear weak in front of injustice.

Quite significantly, the second chapter starts when Stephen is a few years older and is a high school student at Belvedere College. Stephen romanticizes everything based on what he reads, since he has recognized he is interested in Literature. His strive to compose a poem for the girl he loves with no fruitful effect. "All day he had imagined a new meeting with her for he knew that she was to come to the play. The old restless moodiness had again filled his breast as it had done on the night of the party, but had not found an outlet in verse." (Joyce, 2005, p. 76). He tries his chance in a theatre at high school, but the result is not favourable, since his friends start to mock Stephen by making him recite a line of the play over and over again. This incident takes Stephen's conscious to his English class when his teacher accuses him of heresy.

Stephen's father took him to Cork where Stephen's father was born and raised when he was as age of Stephen. There he wins an amount of money which he spends to have fun with his family, what he calls a 'season of pleasure'. When he runs out of the money, readers find Stephen in Dublin's red light streets. The chapter ends when Stephen has his first sexual experience with a prostitute. "His lips would not bend to kiss her. He wanted to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly, slowly, slowly. In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself. But his lips would not bend to kiss her." (Joyce, 2005, p.99).

Stephen is not bothered by the duplicity in his life, while he has many relations with prostitutes, he goes at church. "The boys were all

there, kneeling in their places. He knelt among them, happy and shy.” (Joyce, 2005, p. 143). The juxtaposition of ‘happy’ and ‘shy’ in a paradoxical statement clearly depicts such a duplicity in Stephen’s personality. He goes to religious retreat, and the priest’s sermons deeply affect him in a way that he goes to confession and repents. Stephen starts a religiously dedicated life and renounces sinful relations. “will offer up my mass tomorrow morning, said the director, that Almighty God may reveal to you His holy will. And let you, Stephen, make a novena to your holy patron saint.” (Joyce, 2005, p. 157). Once, the director recommends him to become a priest, but he knows he cannot be one. Stephen has just become 16 and his father has a plan to send him to university. One afternoon, when he is walking at the shore he sees a beautiful woman and the state at each other, though no verbal communication happens. Stephen considers this incident as an epiphany and decides to devote his life to the Art. The novel ends with Stephen’s weak performance at the university and when he rejects to participate in a political petition, planning to move to Europe (Attridge, 2004, p.51).

James Joyce in his coming of age novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man*, used various innovative techniques that are not very common to be witnessed among the works of his other English folks. This novel has become an exceptional modern English bildungsroman, thanks to elaboration of various techniques such as; stream of consciousness, development of basis senses in absence of an advanced lingual communication through coming of age which lead the main character to an evolved and matured state (Bulson, 2010, p.93).

Though there is no definite definition for this style of narration and no two critics have offered the same description for this technique, Stream of Consciousness, as noted by Milne (2009), can be defined as

“a narrative technique for rendering the inward experience of a character. This technique is designed to give the impression of an ever-changing series of thoughts, emotions, images, and memories in the spontaneous and seemingly illogical order that they occur in life”(p. lxxviii). This style of narration is one of the main techniques in which Joyce elaborates on floating the reader’s mind through the main character’s life settings. In addition, utilization of this technique helps the reader to look at different issues through the main character’s perspective and angle of vision. It is a highly acknowledged technique in which it “offers a representation of the act of Representation, a portrait of a mind portraying its world” (Valente, 1995, p. 190). A mere Victorian description is totally disparate to implement these tasks, and only a modern writer like James Joyce, via utilization of the stream of consciousness would be able to comparatively illustrate the change in a character’s mental and psychological horizon in different chronological backgrounds. For instance, when Stephen is desperately sick and feels lonely in the infirmary, he fancies being home with his family for the Christmas holidays. Then, Stephen’s consciousness takes the readers to Mr. Dedalus’ house when at a Christmas dinner Stephen’s father has a serious conversation with Dante, Stephen’s governess, about Catholic Church and Parnell. The following sentence is the shift that connects the Stephen’s consciousness from the infirmary to his family back home “Dear Mother, I am sick. I want to go home. Please come and take me home. I am in the infirmary” (Joyce, 2005, p 20). This letter is actually never written by Stephen to her mother, and is used merely to float the setting from the infirmary to home, where her mother could probably read such a letter, in case of sending it to her. There are many other similar cases throughout the story when Joyce, by elaboration of a neat shifting point, floats the readers’ mind and conscious through different settings and Stephen’s life stages.

Joyce breaks further and utilizes stream of consciousness to illustrate the physical maturation and sexual awareness of the central character, Stephen, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, who is an intellectual, eloquent, and sensitive young man, but when his sexual self-awareness urges him to push the limits, he finds himself at the Dublin's red light streets, having his first sexual relationship with a prostitute.

Another significant technique that Joyce has used in his novel is language and the process of maturation of the central character in a lingual perspective. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man has often been commended for its insistence on the creative value of language" (Rabate ,2001 , p 59). In this respect, Milesi (2003) believes that the passage bears biographical references to the linguistic and literary training that empowers Joyce to gain the artistic maturity, self-discovery, and individual autonomy (p.184). Joyce's ability to make a connection between language and development of a child is the result of his long experience working as an English language instructor in various European countries. Through his experience in teaching language and "By carefully choosing language and syntax, Joyce enables us to share what is possibly the earliest childhood memory" (Zimbaro, 2002 .p 14).

Language development of the main character, Stephen, is one of the tangible issues that are portrayed by James Joyce. In Joyce's *A Portrait*, "the narrator's language, which gradually becomes more articulate and analytic as Stephen's intellect and capacities for abstraction develop, which still serve as a focal point for the reader's access to the hero's maturation at choice moments"(Milesi, 2003 , p.2) . Though, Joyce cannot be categorized as an Irish nationalist writer, due to his different religious orientation, still to illustrate the curious

and demanding conscious of Stephen regarding his surroundings he shows an interest towards Irish nationality and language. His feeling of alienation and exile triggers when “Stephen realizes that every word he speaks or writes in English entails an exile from the home-grown tongue” (Ellmann, 2010, p 7).

Stephen’s language evolves through the novel, though the development and maturation of his other senses is more eye-catching, and this is a neat characterization which is applied deliberately. As the title of the novel implies, Stephen Dedalus is supposed to become an Artist and not a religious preacher or a priest. Naturally, he needs his basic senses to be perfectly developed.

Language seems to play an important role in Stephen’s process of maturation, especially during his very young age, when he is studying at the elementary school. He is alienated from his surrounding world from many perspectives; he is not sociable at school and is not able to make a proper communication with other kids especially when they play, when he grows up he doesn’t have a real friend and is not able to make a connection with the opposite sex in a way that eventually his sexual desire urges him to visit prostitutes. All these lead him to live in a physical and psychological exile, even though he lives in his own land. This issue is directly connected with “Joyce’s long, voluntary exile and dedication to aesthetic modernism”, as noted by Nolan(2012). Stephen’s incompatibility with language makes him to compensate this vacuum through other senses that are vital to be fully developed in order to be an artist. Readers recognize Stephen as a potential future artist when he says; “When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oil sheet. That had the queer smell. His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance.” (Joyce, 2005, p. 3).

3. Conclusion

James Joyce had an enormous share in contemporary English literature by publication of his quasi-autobiographical masterpiece, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, through innovative elaboration of modern techniques and styles of narration. The work, as a coming of age novel, through utilization of stream of consciousness and intellectual elaboration of language, brought the contemporary English literature to new horizons. These techniques are basically used for various reasons by Joyce, but their ultimate aim is the formation of a matured and experienced character like Stephen Dedalus. Throughout his novel, Joyce has successfully managed to provide his readers with a multi-dimensional colorful portrait of the maturation process of his protagonist via various epiphanies whose physical senses blossom to become a future artist.

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