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A BLEND OF MYTHOLOGY AND REALISM IN JAMES JOYCE WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Mythology is an innate element of all culture in the world. It is having an incredible power to wide awake the inner potential of man and it is something widespread with a universal function of realism. Realism is an art and literature is an endeavor to portray life as it is. Thus this paper is an effort to find the synthesis among mythology and realism in the works of James Joyce. James Joyce's use of mythic motif is to provide a form to the chaos of modern life. Throughout his life, Joyce was fascinated by myths, ancient legends, and tales that because of his cultural origin but carry a universal theme, like the conflict between father and son. Joyce influence was felt by many writers like T.S.Eliot, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett.

Keywords: Mythology, Realism, James Joyce.

INTRODUCTION

James Joyce (1882-1941) is considered the prominent literary craftsman of our time. It is undeniable that James Joyce becomes pre-eminent during the Irish Revival. He has earned a distinctive place and receives the attention of readers. His works have been an endless source of material. Joyce's main characteristic feature in his writing is the mixture of mythology and places in Ireland. Ireland was his starting and end point in his writings. In the late nineteenth and early 20th century, Ireland experienced a strong demand for restoration and consolidation of its own political and cultural identity. James Joyce tried to fulfill the Irish need for identity. He made an endeavor to provide self-awareness to his people through his works so he blended mythology and realism. He published three important pieces of literature: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). It is through *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that James Joyce's true vocation is revealed and it is an autobiography which incorporates realism and naturalism. My aim

throughout this paper is to analyze the combination of mythology and realism in the works of James Joyce.

DISCUSSION

James Joyce uses mythological aspects in his first novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the mythological allusion in his complex final work, *Finnegans Wake* and his masterpiece *Ulysses*. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce merges chaos and the cosmos to conjure up the chaosmos. In all his works Joyce fascinates himself to an outstanding trickery world of "chaosmo," which stands for a poetic mystery that barely any writers have attained. His work of art sheds light on the cracked heart and when history dwindles from the memory, myth starts. Joyce himself divulges to the readers that *Finnegans Wake*, "ends in the middle of a sentence and begins in the middle of the same sentence" (Joyce Letters I 246).

Finnegans Wake is a complete work, progressing on fragments in which the last sentence runs into the first and consequently encircle a complete circle which is widely known as the cyclical

temporal structure that is based on the cyclical theories of history created by Giambattista Vico's an eighteenth-century Italian philosopher. His capricious system was taken from his book *La Scienza Nuova* which moves through chaos. The Last line of the novel, "A Way along a last a loved a long the" (Joyce 628). The First line of the novel, "riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus or recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs" (Joyce 1).

Joyce exemplifies mythopoesis at its best. His mythological character interweaves classical myths and modern stories. Stephen Dedalus, a significant character in *Ulysses* and the protagonist in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, are the embodiment of Joyce's mythological passions. He deliberately chooses this name to link the hero with the most known and captivating mythical Greek hero Daedalus, an architect, a great innovator and an artisan. According to the myth, King Minos requests Daedalus to build a labyrinth on Crete to imprison his enemies and they would be killed by the notorious Minotaur, a half-bull and half-man monster. But King Minos confined Daedalus and his son Icarus, high in a tower in the labyrinth. Daedalus being a creative innovator fashioned wings of wax and feathers to escape from the labyrinth. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus act as a structuring element whereas Stephen's aspiration for flight and freedom, his name and his artistic soul all are appropriate to this myth.

Stephen may be seen as a courageous artist-hero, casting off the forms and conventions of society as inappropriate to his gifts and destiny, freeing himself to soar away from Ireland to a fulfillment of his mission as fabulous Dedalian artificer. (Schutte 96)

Like Stephen, in our present existence many young people are caught in a maze of dead ends and, circular reasoning and through their mind, they roam the labyrinth searching for answers, "His strange name seemed to him a prophecy" (*A Portrait* 183)

Stephen's first name strikes as St. Stephen, a martyr in Christian mythology who was stoned to death by a mob because he asserted that he saw God who appeared in the heavens. Like him, Stephen is seen as a martyr to his art.

The mythic motif in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is not only that of Daedalus and his son but also of Lucifer (the fallen angel) who refuses to serve God out of the consciousness of his own dignity. Stephen's three-day journey in which he is led by the priest signifies his physical or mental crisis in which he experiences the torments of hell. His journey is viewed as a trip to a mythic underworld, and like the hero of myth, Stephen comes back from his journey with a change of heart and an expansion of consciousness. At last, Stephen rejects all the family ties in the same way as an artist rejects the name of art.

In *Finnegans Wake*, the name Finnegan is symbolically split by Joyce as "Finn" and "egan". Finn is pointing to the Irish mythological figure (Fionn) mac Cumhail. Fionn is a mythical hunter-warrior of Irish mythology, occurring also in the mythologies of Scotland and Isle of Man. The stories of Fionn and his followers, the Fianna, form the Fenian Cycle. The first chapter is devoted to the cyclical structure and the equivocal subject that is initiated in the title "Wake" which signifies both the deathwatch besides the body of a deceased person and the fall. The death of Finnegan and the process of reawakening initiate his symbolic resurrection that ascertains the whole work. Thus, the title implies waking up from a dream or death. The novel starts with Tim Finnegan, an Irish man who works on a construction site as a hod carrier who gets drunk at work and falls of a ladder and is apparently killed:

The fall (bababadalgharaghtaka
mminarronn konn bronntonner
ronntuonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoo
hoohoordeenthurnuk!) (*Finnegans* 1)

One of Finnegans friends held a ceremonial watch over his coffin soon it turns to a real celebration by the time he comes to life and joins with them to dance but soon a person from the gathered around pushes him back because he has already been replaced by the primordial Finnegan in a new chapter who takes his place and the fall which

brings the death and resurrection are clearly emphasized. The archetypal form of all forms in *Finnegans Wake* is the fall that unleashes the symbolic potential of the simple story that intertwined the ordinary event of Finnegan falling from the ladder to evoke the mythic narrative of the fall.

CONCLUSION

James Joyce stands like a colossus in the realm of the mythological novel. His *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* stand out as three supreme examples of mythological works wherein he has skillfully and successfully transposed classical myths to his horizon of inquiry taking into account even minute topographic details as *Ulysses* manifests. Quietude, crafty and exile are the three elements that Joyce lived within him. So *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* he shows the growth and the fortune of the artist and the exile as part of a single progression.

He would never swing the thurible before the tabernacle as priest. His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world. (Joyce 175).

Joyce was interested in the aesthetic relevance of myth, the universal truths and meanings which the myth embodied. Stephen has the courage to face the world all alone and the only real world for him is the religious world which he thinks of his mythical patron, Daedalus. Like Stephen, for every man, the life poses riddles at each turn and these riddles are meant to stretch your brain. So we have to meet every challenge with confidence to get a sense of satisfaction. In the modern world, we need myths to lead our life in a profitable way and this is proved through the mass appeal of Joyce works. For our inspirations and aspirations, we need the heroes of myths. Myth teaches us how to live your life to the fullest. Mythology is still breathing and always it will be alive.

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