

LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF JAMES JOYCE

Suyarova Nazira Furqat kizi
Master's Student of Karshi State University

Shakurava Nargiza Khamrakulovna
Supervisor, Senior teacher of Karshi State University

ABSTRACT	KEY WORDS
This article includes information on literary language and writing style of James Joyce with precise facts. Major works of James Joyce such as Dubliners and Ulysses are analyzed. His distinctive use of the language and contribution to the Modernism will be explained.	Modernism, Scrupulous meanness, Paralysis, simony, gnomon, Dubliners, Ulysses

Introduction

Scholarly literary opinion is that James Joyce revolutionized the novel in the twentieth century by abandoning conventional narrative for stream of consciousness and unprecedented play of language. When the Irish Literary Renaissance was ending James Joyce was just beginning. During this time Joyce brought new techniques of writing that no one had ever used before. His new method was writing in a modernism style. He utilized symbols and imagery to make his works complex. Joyce opened many eyes to this new style of writing. Through the use of modernism Joyce wrote about very controversial topics such as the Catholic Church and sexual issues. Joyce was seen as a rebel for his new writing style and, many of his books were often banned and were always under protest from his critics. Today, his works have become some of the most read novels in the world. The strong topics found in his books can be explained with Joyce's earlier life as he began to spend money on prostitutes. This is why many of his novels refer in various occasions to the sexual desires of men. Although Joyce is frequently praised for his mastery of the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique, his distinctive use of imagery has contributed much to the artistic development of the twentieth-century novel. A close reading of his works will produce many more images and language peculiarities within these patterns. Joyce's use of them is essential as he constructs his intricate thematic structure. To justify his style, he mentions and speaks of 'scrupulous meanness'. The term 'meanness' connotes stinginess or the lack of generosity. Joyce uses it to describe the economy of language applying to his stories. However, the interpretation demands a more complicated understanding of the term. 'Scrupulousness' is a crucial element both in Joyce's use of language, and in the structure and form of the stories. 'Scrupulous meanness' refers to a most complex and heavily allusive style that determines the reading of his works. From the minimum of words Joyce succeeds to extract the maximum effect so that the very economy of his style gives his novels such concentration and resonance that it "passes through realism into symbolism. Joyce introduces his writing technique in the style of 'scrupulous meanness' right away.

The three words ‘Paralysis’, ‘simony’ and ‘gnomon’ are key words that describe Joyce’s ‘scrupulous meanness’ while leading the reader through the story. ‘Simony’ and ‘gnomon’ are words of biblical origin which help to emphasize the image that Joyce attempts to draw of the Irish Catholic Church through placing Father Flynn in the center of his story. There is some evidence also that Joyce believed near the end of his life that he had gone wrong in this way. In any case, his experiments in narrative mode have had little influence among writers who followed him. A few passages here and there that adapt his techniques and the occasional work that takes a wholly stream-of-consciousness approach — though even then usually in a less difficult fashion, presenting characters’ interior monologues in colloquial language. It could be argued moreover that these efforts might have developed as they did without Joyce’s massive tomes pointing the way [1] in Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*.

Dubliners is a collection of fifteen short stories by Joyce, first published in 1914. They form a naturalistic depiction of Irish middle class life in and around Dublin in the early years of the 20th century. The stories were written when Irish nationalism was at its peak and a search for a national identity and purpose was raging; at a crossroads of history and culture, Ireland was jolted by converging ideas and influences. The stories center on Joyce’s idea of an epiphany: a moment when a character experiences a life-changing self-understanding or illumination. Many of the characters in *Dubliners* later appear in minor roles in Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*. The initial stories in the collection are narrated by child protagonists. Subsequent stories deal with the lives and concerns of progressively older people. This aligns with Joyce’s tripartite division of the collection into childhood, adolescence and maturity. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a nearly complete rewrite of the abandoned novel. Joyce attempted to burn the original manuscript in a fit of rage during an argument with Nora, though to his subsequent relief it was rescued by his sister. *A Künstlerroman* (Artist’s novel), *Portrait* is a heavily autobiographical coming-of-age novel depicting the childhood and adolescence of the protagonist Stephen Dedalus and his gradual growth into artistic self-consciousness. Some hints of the techniques Joyce frequently employed in later works, such as stream-of-consciousness technique interior monologue, and references to a character’s psychic reality rather than to his external surroundings are evident throughout this novel. The wet/dry imagery, for example, is symbolic of Stephen’s natural response to the world versus a learned response. As a small child, Stephen learns that any expression of a natural inclination (such as wetting the bed) is labeled “wrong”; the wet sheets will be replaced by a dry, reinforcing “oil sheet” — and a swift, unpleasant correction for inappropriate behavior. Thus, wet things relate to natural responses and dry things relate to learned behavior. Other examples of this wet/dry imagery include the wetness of the cesspool (the square ditch) that Stephen is shoved into and the illness which follows; likewise, the “good” of adolescent sexual feelings which engulf Stephen in “wavelet[s],” causing him guilt and shame. Seemingly, “wet” is bad; “dry” is good. With the appearance of *Ulysses*, 1922 was a key year in the history of English-language literary modernism. In *Ulysses*, Joyce employs stream-of-consciousness technique, parody, jokes, and virtually every known literary technique to present his characters. The action of the novel, which takes place in a single day, 16 June 1904, sets the characters and incidents of the *Odyssey* by Homer in modern Dublin and represents Odysseus (*Ulysses*), Penelope and Telemachus in the characters of Leopold Bloom, his wife Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, parodically contrasted with their lofty models. The book explores various areas of Dublin life, dwelling on its squalor and monotony. Nevertheless, the book is also an affectionately detailed study of the city, and Joyce claimed that if Dublin were to be destroyed in some catastrophe it could be rebuilt, brick by brick, using his work as a model. The book consists of 18 chapters, each covering roughly one hour of the day, beginning around

about 8 a.m. and ending sometime after 2 a.m. the following morning. Each of the 18 chapters of the novel employs its own literary style. Each chapter also refers to a specific episode in Homer's *Odyssey* and has a specific colour, art or science and bodily organ associated with it. This combination of kaleidoscopic writing with an extreme formal, schematic structure represents one of the book's major contributions to the development of 20th century modernist literature. The use of myth as a framework for his book and the near-obsessive focus on external detail creates an interesting mixture in the book in which much of the significant action is happening inside the minds of the characters. Later on Joyce admitted to Samuel Beckett that, "I may have over systematized *Ulysses*,"[2] and played down the mythic correspondences by eliminating the chapter titles that had been taken from Homer. Joyce was reluctant to publish the chapter titles because he wanted his work to stand separately from the Greek form. It was only when Stuart Gilbert published his critical work on *Ulysses* in 1930 that the schema was supplied by Joyce to Gilbert. But as Terrence Killeen points out this schema was developed after the novel had been written and was not something that Joyce consulted or followed while writing the novel.[3]

Joyce's method of stream of consciousness, literary allusions and free dream associations was pushed to the limit in *Finnegans Wake*, which abandoned all conventions of plot and character construction and is written in a peculiar and obscure English, based mainly on complex multi-level puns. The approach which is similar to *Ulysses*, but far more extensive has led many readers and critics to apply Joyce's oft-quoted description in the *Wake* of *Ulysses* as his "uselessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles" to the *Wake* itself. However, readers have been able to reach a consensus about the central cast of characters and general plot. Much of the wordplay in the book stems from the use of multilingual puns which draw on a wide range of languages. The role played by Beckett and other assistants included collating words from these languages on cards for Joyce to use and, as Joyce's eyesight worsened, of writing the text from the author's dictation.

In conclusion, James Joyce opened many peoples' eyes to modernism through his writing. With this new style, many people understood the modernism movement. Readers could now see the beauty and art in literature. Although Joyce's books were somewhat controversial, people were able to see past the controversial issues and get a feel for Modernism. Joyce is one of many writers who opened the door for Modernism to become mainstream and his works will be used for years to come. Although during his times his novels were unwelcome and criticized, James Joyce created the groundwork for writer who came after him. James Joyce has become one of the most read and influential writers and serving as a founder of a literary movement has a great deal to do with it.

Contrary to what you might expect, most of Joyce's literary works have been interpreted in films.

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