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## PORTRAIT CONSTRUCTION IN MODERNIST FICTION: A LINGUISTIC AND INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF WOOLF AND JOYCE

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### ABSTRACT:

This study examines at the linguistic and intertextual strategies used in portrait descriptions in modernist fiction, particularly Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dallowey* (1925) and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Modernist authors revolutionised character portrayal by disregarding traditional descriptive strategies in favor of fragmented, psychologically driven, and intertextually complex narratives. Woolf and Joyce's linguistic choices, which include free indirect conversation, internal monologue, and syntactic complexity, represent their characters' psychological depth and growing self-awareness. Furthermore, their intertextual parallels to Shakespeare, Romantic poetry, and classical mythology deepen the significance of portrait descriptions, providing a multiple perspective of character identity. This study focuses on the dynamic role of portrait building in modernist fiction, demonstrating how Woolf and Joyce challenge traditional character depiction to redefine literary realism and artistic self-expression.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Linguistic aspects of portrait descriptions of both works

A detailed linguistic study of Woolf's and Joyce's stylistic choices demonstrates that their portrait descriptions use complicated grammatical structures, internal monologue, and lexical repetition to convey psychological depth. Unlike traditional Victorian characterization, in which authors supplied precise, omniscient descriptions, Woolf and Joyce included character portraits into their protagonists' fluid consciousness.

Woolf's *Mrs. Dallowey* depicts Clarissa Dallowey as fragmented from several viewpoints, showing her existential self-awareness. Woolf blurs the boundaries between the narrator's voice and Clarissa's own ideas through free indirect discourse, as reflected by the passage: "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown" (Woolf, 1925, p. 10). This language fragmentation reflects modernist concerns about self-perception, identity, and social masks (Simpson 2004).

In contrast, Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* develops linguistically as he matures. His early descriptions are simple and rhythmic, similar to early childhood cognition: "His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face" (Joyce, 1916, p. 3). Joyce's vocabulary becomes increasingly complex as Stephen

develops, including Latin phrases, religious imagery, and personal reflections that construct his self-portrait (Leech & Short, 2007).

### **Intertextual references in character portraits**

Woolf and Joyce both use intertextuality in their portrait descriptions, integrating literary, philosophical, and cultural references that help readers understand the characters.

Woolf's intertextuality is demonstrated by her adoption of Shakespearean echoes, particularly in Clarissa Dallowey's self-perception. The work relies on Cymbeline and Othello to represent Clarissa's internal battle between societal roles and personal identity (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1991). Furthermore, Romantic poetry informs Clarissa's nostalgia and emotional depth, evoking the lyrical qualities of Wordsworth and Coleridge (Allen, 2011).

Joyce's intertextual framework, on the other hand, combines Catholic iconography with mythological allusions. Dante's Divine Comedy has had a strong influence on Stephen Dedalus' self-perception, particularly his rejection of religious dogma and embrace of artistic independence (Genette, 1997). Joyce's pursuit of classical mythology, particularly the Daedalus and Icarus story, serves as a core metaphor for Stephen's artistic awakening (Bloom, 1973).

### **A Comparative Analysis of Woolf and Joyce's Techniques**

While both authors avoid standard picture descriptions, their approaches vary greatly.

- Woolf's portraits reflect the character's fragmented self-awareness;
- whereas Joyce's portraits depict Stephen Dedalus' intellectual and artistic progress.

Woolf and Joyce's linguistic and intertextual methods show that portrait descriptions in modernist literature are more than just visual depictions; they are dynamic structures that alter the reader's engagement with character identity and self-perception.

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