
The Piercing Of Idealization: Psychoanalytic Criticism Of Araby

Idealization can be defined as one assuming a person, place, or thing as being perfect or more exceptional than it really is. Many people throughout the world have experienced some form of idealization in one way or another. "The Mask of the Bear" by Margaret Laurence and "Araby" by James Joyce are short stories that relate to those people as both authors depict ideas related to the cons of idealization. Margaret Laurence and James Joyce both educate their readers about the various morals that can be learned about idealization and the flaws of blinding oneself with a false reality. Some of the ideas portrayed in both stories are; the lesson that things are not always as they seem, the significance of one's actions on the lives of others, and the change in one's personality based on their surroundings. The literary elements and schools of thought used to support these ideas is what made both pieces unique but similar to each other, despite the differences in plot. The first step both authors used was showing the readers the illusions that the characters in both stories made to meet their own personal expectations.

In "The Mask of the Bear", Laurence reminds the reader of the different masks people wear in order to meet the expectations of society or to put on a front to be respected out of fear. In the story, Grandfather Connor put on a "mask" that made people despise him and think of him as a loathsome individual. This is symbolized by an enormous fur coat that he wore every winter. (Laurence 50). However, it is later discovered that the reason why he was uncivil to everyone, especially to his wife, was because he felt that she was too good for him. This shows the reader that Grandfather Connor wore a mask to show his despicable side, but in reality, he was a kindhearted person who loved his family on the inside. At the end of the story, Vanessa sees a bear mask at a museum and it reminds her that "in the days before it became a museum piece, the mask had concealed a man." (Laurence 91). This again alludes to the hidden nature of Grandfather Connor's personality. The hidden personalities that people hide within themselves can make or break the well being of others, something that James Joyce included in his short stories.

In "Araby", the narrator was willing to go to extreme lengths in order to purchase a gift for Mangan's sister, but after getting the chance to buy the present, he realizes that his love for the girl is not reciprocated. The narrator experiences what many people experience on a regular basis. Unrequited love is one of the many things related to some form of idealization. At the beginning of the story, the narrator explains his submissive love towards Mangan's sister. When explaining his infatuation, he states that "[the narrator] had never spoken to her, except a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood." (Joyce 288). This is changed at the end, where after the Araby bazaar closes down, the narrator stares "into the darkness" (Joyce 292) and "saw [himself] as a creature driven and divided by vanity." (Joyce 292). These two quotes describe the character development within the protagonist, going from a boy blinded by love to a man experiencing the pain of reality. Various schools of thought are used within both stories to support the pain experienced as a result of idealization.

Reader Response criticism is a school of thought that centres around the readers experience. Laurence connects to readers who have either suffered from emotional abuse at the hands of

people of power and people who have faked their personality in order to meet society expectations. Joyce connects to victims of one sided love and connects with readers who experienced their loss of innocence. Both authors also use reader response criticism in order to bring up the elements related to the consciousness of humans.

Structuralism is a school of thought that studies the structure of human activity. Examples of structuralism in "The Mask of the Bear" are the power struggles within the Macleod family. Grandfather Connor oppressed the people in his household, especially the women. This ties in to real life objectification that women face from influential but misogynistic men. In "Araby", the narrator put his love interest on a fictional pedestal within his mind in order to make ends meet with his fantasies. The narrator explains that "[his] body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires." (Joyce 288). The narrator was filled with vanity before he started his journey into maturity. The use of structuralism within the pieces also exhibits the personal ideologies of both Joyce and Laurence.

Often times, authors manifest their opinions on various topics through their literary work. This is what the school of thought known as psychoanalytic criticism can be defined as. Psychoanalytic criticism is used in "Araby " by Joyce. He gives his opinion on idealization through the dreadful encounters the protagonist has to get through in order to gain the reciprocated love of Mangan's sister. Laurence expresses her thoughts regarding people being trapped in their own mind. Grandfather Connor was controlling everyone around him and he didn't let anyone question anything about his way of living and how he treats his family. Grandfather Connor was also a victim of entrapment as he couldn't express the enormous amount of love he had for his wife, so he made the horrible decision of sentencing her to years of emotional abuse from which she suffered for many years. Grandfather Connor and the protagonist of "Araby" are both examples of dynamic characters, another literary element that both authors used in order to support their arguments against idealization.

People often change their ideologies once they realize the pain they can cause to both themselves and the people around them as a result of these principles. The characters in "The Mask of the Bear" and "Araby " are no different from these people. Grandfather Connor transitions from a spiteful individual to a good-natured one. The narrator starts off with a childish demeanor being easily impressionable as a result of puppy love, but at the end he has matured and moved on from his infatuation. Both characters look down on their own self value as a result of their love for their beloved. By the end of the stories, either the other characters appreciate their self value or they learn to appreciate their self value because of the experiences they faced as a result of their self loathing.

Maragret Laurence and James Joyce define and effectively criticize idealization in their works. They depict the transition of one's nature as a result of their idealistic fantasies, remind the reader to not undermine the value of their actions, and teach them not to fall into the trickery of an illusion as most things are not as they seem. Laurence and Joyce's literary pieces have helped connect with those who have suffered due to the tragedies that surround the wicked nature of idealization. The schools of thought have also backed up and proved their arguments. They truly showed that despite the significant differences in plot, they share the same dream; warning their readers of the pain, of the piercings of idealization.