



Uluslararası Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi

The Journal of International Social Research

Cilt: 7 Sayı: 30 Volume: 7 Issue: 30

www.sosyalarastirmalar.com Issn: 1307-9581

READING *A LITTLE CLOUD* AGAIN: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

Mehmet Akif BALKAYA*

Abstract

James Joyce's *Dubliners*, including fifteen stories, was first published in 1914, London. The stories were about the life of middle class Irish people living in Dublin in the first half of the 20th century. This study reveals that James Joyce's main concern in *A Little Cloud* is to disclose the miserable condition of the city and the characters' inner lives which is enabled by rereading the story in terms of psychoanalysis. In this sense, Dublin and the characters in the story will be analyzed with psychoanalytic criticism.

Keywords: Dubliners, Psychoanalytic, Dublin, Freud, Lacan.

Introduction

Like all the other stories in *Dubliners*, *A Little Cloud* presents a realistic portrayal of Dublin and Dubliners. "It was a searing analysis of Irish middle- and lower-middle-class life, with DUBLIN not simply as its geographical setting but as the emotional and psychological locus as well" (Fargnoli and Gillespie, 2006: 45). In his guide about Joyce, Tindall writes:

Though each of these stories has a beginning, a middle, and an end some seem lacking in conventional shape or import; yet, however unlike those in popular magazines, these stories are of a kind of more or less familiar since the time of Chekhov. Lacking in obvious action maybe, the stories of *Dubliners* disclose human situations, moments of intensity (Tindall, 1959: 3).

Dublin suffered a lot throughout history from wars, plagues, British exploitation, which caused the decay and decline of Ireland, and Dublin. "On the surface these stories appear extremely transparent. As a rule, particularly at first glance, nothing sounds simpler than a sentence in *Dubliners*" (Bosinelli and Mosher, 1998: 13). Concordantly, Blades writes that

The psychological realities of a person in preference to external considerations such as physical appearances are revealed. This is not to say that physical objects, settings, and appearances are not important at all, but I would say that Joyce seldom describes things simply for their own sake. Almost always such external features appear as a way of exploring symbolically the consciousness of the character under attention, so that physical objects often take on an internal life of their own (1996: 3).

The aim of this study is to search the psychological realities of the characters of the story *A Little Cloud* in James Joyce's *Dubliners*. The stories were written at a period when the

* ResearchAssistant, Aksaray University, Faculty of Science and Letters, Western Languages and Literature, Department of English Language and Literature. e-mail: makif.balkaya@aksaray.edu.tr

Irish nationalism hit the top; seeking national identity and aim increased, and Ireland was shaken by the opposite ideas and effects. That may be the reason why many characters are in search of leaving the city although failing to do so. Therefore, the city is reflected just like another character as KuğuTekin purports in her article:

The city is, in a way, yet another character holding a mirror to the protagonists' lives, wherein they witness their entrapment in, or even their enslavement to, the circumstances of their birth. The city proves to be a prison to their existence, just as the body to the soul. The urge to flee, therefore, arises as a natural reaction whereby the protagonists seek to fulfill their frustrated potentials through their wealth, passion, or, above all, art and literature (2006: 121).

In a letter to a publisher in 1906, Joyce states that "my intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (qtd in Bosinelli and Mosher, 1998: 2).

A Little Cloud

This is the eighth story in *Dubliners*. It marks the beginning of the third section of stories, those concerned with maturity. Written in early 1906, "A Little Cloud" was the 14th story in Joyce's order of composition. Along with "The Boarding House," it was published in the May 1915 issue of the American magazine *Smart Set*, edited by H. L. Mencken (Fragnoli and Gillespie, 2006: 60).

Dublin, the characters in the story and their behaviors can be reviewed according to psychoanalytic approach; "clearly Joyce would have known that he had provided excellent examples for psychoanalytic interpretation, which claims to interpret all sorts of neurotic behaviour" (Butler, 2004: 79). Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan are known to be the founders of the psychoanalytic theory. McManus mentions that

All psychoanalytic approaches to literature have one thing in common—the critics begin with a full psychological theory of how and why people behave as they do, a theory that has been developed by a psychologist/psychiatrist/psychoanalyst outside of the realm of literature, and they apply this psychological theory as a standard to interpret and evaluate a literary work. (McManus, Cnr.edu)

It can be said that psychoanalysis is a way of expressing the inner world, and it is "a talking cure"; language and narrative are fundamental to it. In a sense, psychoanalytic therapy is the re-narratization of a person's life" (Lye, Brocku.ca). It will be appropriate to evaluate Little Chandler and his behaviors depending on this approach. "A Little Cloud" tells us about the assimilated life of Little Chandler, who is shaped by his family and culture. He is known as Little Chandler because of his boyish appearance, and he works as a legal clerk in Dublin. This is stated in the story as "he was called Little Chandler because, though he was but slightly under the average stature, he gave one the idea of being a little man. His hands were white and small, his frame was fragile, his voice was quiet and his manners were refined" (Joyce, 1991: 30).

Although he is 32, Little Chandler acts as a child, "the half-moons of his nails were perfect, and when he smiled you caught a glimpse of a row of childish white teeth" (Joyce, 1991: 30). It seems that Chandler has childish discipline which may be bequeathed to him from his parents. Although they are not mentioned in the text, it seems that Chandler had repressive parents now that his childish behaviors and obsessions go on. Also another repressive character is his wife, Annie, it is clear that they do not have a happy marriage, and actually they do not love each other. Chandler's friend Ignatius Gallaher, who left Dublin for London eight years ago and now a successful journalist, has an appointment with his old friend.

Chandler feels repressed in Dublin, and he cannot succeed anything that he wishes to. He is not like Gallaher, who escaped from the repressive city. According to Rivkin and Ryan in the context of Freudian psychoanalytic approach:

Repression is essential to civilization, the conversion of animal instinct into civil behavior, but such repression creates what might be called a second self, a stranger within, a place where all that cannot for one reason or another be expressed or realized in civil life takes up residence (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 389).

As an ordinary clerk, Chandler does not love his job and supposes that his ordinariness stems from the lack of opportunities in Dublin. "Little Chandler's thoughts ever since lunch-time had been of his meeting with Gallaher, of Gallaher's invitation, and of the great city London where Gallaher lived" (Joyce, 1991: 30).

For years Ireland was exploited by England, that is why Dublin is portrayed as the paralyzed child of the mother land (England). Ireland is repressed and dominated not only physically but also mentally with the exploitation and repression of its culture, therefore, London is the great city for Chandler and, to him, since Gallaher went London, he had been successful. Chandler believes that if he had the chance to be in London, he would be able to actualize his desires, he would be as prosperous as his friend. His second self that wishes to be a poet and thus popular is repressed, and comes to life only in his imagination and unconscious.

Joyce depicts a community through its collective pathology. But does this pathology manifest itself as a provincial and false idealization of places outside Ireland, or as an inability to break local ties and seek one's fortune in the wider world? The characteristic Joycean answer is 'both' (Howes, 2004: 266).

In the story the two friends Gallaher and Little Chandler have Dublin backgrounds. Ironically although Chandler is a clerk and has ambitions as a poet, it is clear that he is emotionally limited. Little Chandler seems emotionally and socially immature; and because of his childish appearance and thoughts he is known as Little Chandler.

Now that his friend is a talented journalist, Chandler has some conflicts in his mind about this appointment. He feels restricted in Dublin and his unconscious accuses the city for his shortcomings. As he usually does, Chandler thinks about the books of poetry he bought before his marriage which makes him comforted, that is actually his escape from the reality. Deep down in Chandler lies a free-spirited, boastful man who pursues his desires but he is so reserved that he cannot take a step that second self; he only gets carried away with his dreams.

"Chandler remembered the books of poetry upon his shelves at home. He had bought them in his bachelor days and many an evening, as he sat in the little room off the hall, he had been tempted to take one down from the bookshelf and read out something to his wife" (Joyce, 1991: 30). In this passage, Joyce references the books of poetry through an interpretive language, highlighting the monotony of Chandler's life and his desire to be alienated from them. John Lye mentions that "as psychoanalysis deals with language and with interpretation, it introduces a significant approach to the hermeneutics of suspicion, the idea that there are motives and meanings which are disguised by and work through other meanings" (Brocku.ca). Chandler's such actions to alienate himself from the real world are his hidden and disguised motives which "can be illumined by psychoanalytic thought" (Lye, Brocku.ca).

Freud suggests that people have some kinds of desires which are suppressed because of the society and social rules/orders. However, it is not that easy to give up those desires, instead of giving them up, people or characters in a literary work repress or try to achieve them by dreams or imagination. Chandler dreams of writing poems, he thinks that he can be as successful as Yeats, but actually he never tries to write a word let alone a poem; therefore, it seems that he wishes to be popular among people just like Gallaher. Little Chandler wants to act like a snob; his desires are always repressed by the city, his family and his marriage. If these dreams or imagination are excessive, it may cause the individual to turn into a neurotic.

Generally, neurosis means poor ability to adapt to one's environment, an inability to change one's life patterns, and the inability to develop a richer, more complex, more satisfying personality (Boeree, Ship.edu).

In the story Chandler is portrayed as the neurotic person because he cannot develop a satisfying personality, he is unhappy with his family, his job and Dublin. He admires Gallaher now that he is not married, and he is a talented journalist. Chandler's appointment with his friend is at Corless's, a fashionable restaurant mostly visited by the upper class. "For the first time in his life he felt himself superior to the people he passed. For the first time his soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street. There was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away" (Joyce, 1991: 31). Even the idea to go to such a bar makes Chandler feel superior to the others. In his dream world Gallaher is his savior, he thinks that his repressed dreams – being a poet, popular and rich – will come true.

At the bar, Gallaher welcomes his old friend with boastful manners. It is obvious that Little Chandler is dying for being like Gallaher, his unconscious makes him envy Gallaher, who talks about his adventures in Paris and Berlin. In her article, KuğuTekin writes about these cities:

...Dublin, the city is a gloomy, dull, joyless antithesis of anywhere else; a conservative and monotonous urban personality that presents a sharp contrast with the excitement and colours of a seductress Paris, or the immoral manners of a Berlin, or the artistic opportunities lavished by a generous London upon her inhabitants indiscriminately (2006: 121).

Gallaher's taste of whiskey, way of speaking on his prestigious job and the corruption of religion and the aristocracy affect Chandler. Also Gallaher's considerations about marriage influences poor Chandler after he talks about his marriage and his baby. Gallaher claims that he is too experienced and therefore never thinks about marriage. According to Rivkin and Ryan, Freud's psychoanalysis investigates the psychology of the human by analyzing the repressed conscious, and

His discovery was that the human mind contains a dimension that is only partially accessible to consciousness and then only through indirect means such as dreams or neurotic symptoms. The "unconscious," as he called it, is a repository of repressed desires, feelings, memories, and instinctual drives, many of which, according to Freud, have to do with sexuality and violence (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 389).

While looking after his sleeping baby, Chandler sighs and thinks about his conversation with Gallaher and his way of life as a successful journalist, and he expresses his feelings in a series of desperate rhetorical questions: "Could he not escape from his little house? Was it too late for him to try to live bravely like Gallaher? Could he go to London?" (Joyce, 1991: 38). It seems that Chandler discovers that he would like to have a life similar to that of Gallaher. His wife and child is hunchback to him. Therefore this results in cognizance of his mental restriction.

After some drink Little Chandler, who seems henpecked because of his dominant wife, gets back home and has a quarrel with his wife. He cannot cope with his life and wife, he seems stressful, and the only way that he can escape from the real world is to imagine himself as a talented poet. As it is mentioned "...the family may itself be a source of the stress and confusion which the child may be unable to cope with" (Boeree, Ship.edu).

Again Little Chandler thinks about poetry, and reads from Byron. When the baby gets up, being uplifted by his thought Chandler shouts at him and makes him cry. It is apparent that Chandler does not care his baby son, and shouts at him "Stop!" but just after that "he looked at the contracted and quivering face of the child and began to be alarmed. He counted seven sobs without a break between them and caught the child to his breast in fright. If it died! (Joyce, 1991:

38). Chandler refers to his son by using the pronoun "it" which makes the baby an object in Chandler's eyes. His wife appears immediately at that moment and cools the child. Chandler regrets because of his behavior and thoughts. Concerning this, in his book *Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective*, Leonard purports that:

For example, Little Chandler in "Little Cloud" realizes that, through his marriage, he has become a prisoner for life. He has wanted to escape from his little house and to live bravely like his friend Gallagher. But when he returns to his dull and loveless home, he finds something mean in his wife's face, the furniture which needs to be paid for and the crying baby, it dawns on him: "It was useless. He couldn't read. He couldn't do anything. The wailing of the child pierced the drum of his ear. It was useless, useless! He was a prisoner for life" (D, 1991, p.95). This is an epiphany for Little Chandler, but can be one of similar import only when the reader can place himself in the same context and perspective (2004: 87).

In his essay "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*", Sigmund Freud discusses the concepts of pleasure and displeasure, and believes that human is always inclined to pleasure. The pleasure principle is to satisfy the human by escaping from pain and discomfort. In Joyce's story *Gallagher* is the person who runs away from Dublin in order to fulfill his desires. He knows and believes that Dublin is the prison without iron bars, and to satisfy his ego he goes to London, he wants to lead an attractive life and he fulfills his desires while Chandler cannot achieve that. On the opposite of the pleasure principle lies the reality, and if one cannot satisfy his/her pleasures, his/her behaviors change and the person gets out of his/her character, just like Chandler shouts at his baby. Concerning this, in the context of Lacanian approach Rivkin and Ryan suggests that

Lacanian criticism shifts attention to language and sees it and the unconscious as almost identical. Human desire is carried by signifiers which stand in for a lack that can never be filled in. It is in the signifiers then, in language itself, that the unconscious, what of the unconscious one can know, resides (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 395).

He knows that he will never be as successful as Gallagher in writing (whether a poem or a newspaper article) although he imagines himself as a poet in times of being repressed and imprisoned. If he had the chance to write poems, maybe he would express his feelings because "there were so many things he wanted to describe", and thus his repressed second self, through the language of his poems (Joyce, 1991: 38).

The story contrasts Little Chandler's dissatisfaction with his life and Gallagher's boastful manners about his career. The focus is on these two characters. Chandler seems to be restricted by his marriage, Dublin and his dull job, whereas the former seems actually unhappy because of his materialism, and lack of manners.

In the story, a spiritual journey to Chandler's inner world is taken, and he thinks about poetry whenever he feels bad, and is consoled. Also thinking about the poetry books that he bought before his marriage, he regards himself and his ambitions restricted because of his wife and child which lead his shortcomings. About the end of the story and Chandler's shortcomings, it is mentioned that:

Little Chandler, in the story 'A Little Cloud', returns home after his conversation with Gallagher, only to find he hates his furniture, his wife, his marriage, and even his infant son, for robbing him of the chance to be an acknowledged poet. But is this even true? One could argue that the reason he has never written any poetry (despite writing favourable reviews of the unwritten poetry in his head) is that this allows him to continue fantasizing that he one day might. And yet the price he is paying for this treasured fantasy is the growing unhappiness in his marriage to a woman who is increasingly hostile toward him because she resents his resentment of her (Leonard, 2004: 91, 92).

Conclusion

In Joyce's stories the protagonist makes some kind of discovery. And in this one, Little Chandler discovers about the reality of his life when his wife gets the crying baby from him upon which his opinion and understanding of life changes. He realizes the fact that he will never be like Gallaher or never live the free life in London or elsewhere that he dies for; he will always be repressed by his family and Dublin in which he is bottled up. As mentioned, Dublin is pictured with its geography and atmosphere, and both friends "Gallagher and Little Chandler" have Dublin backgrounds. These two friends are struck with mental and spiritual paralysis in Dublin. Little Chandler's ambitions for being a poet is exposed many times throughout the story but he behaves faint-heartedly and shouts at his family because of his repressed feeling in his unconscious. He tries to flee from his repressed unconscious and his family by poetry but it is realized that he will not be successful to do so.

REFERENCES

- BLADES, John (1996). *How to Study James Joyce*, London: Macmillan Ltd.
- BOEREE, George C. (2002). *A Bio-Social Theory of Neurosis*. Retrieved from <http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/genpsyneurosis.html>
- BOSINELLI, Rosa M. and Harold F. Mosher JR. (Eds.) (1998). *ReJoycing: New Readings of Dubliners*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- BUTLER, Christopher (2004). "Joyce the Modernist", Derek Attridge. (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 67-86.
- CUDDON, J. A. (1984). *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, London: Penguin Books.
- FARGNOLI A. N. and Gillespie M. P. (2006). *Critical Companion to James Joyce*, New York: Hermitage.
- HOWES, Marjorie (2004). "Joyce, Colonialism, and Nationalism", Derek Attridge. (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 254-271.
- JOYCE, James (1991). *Dubliners*, Canada: General Publishing Company.
- LEONARD, Garry (2004). "Dubliners", Derek Attridge. (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 87-102.
- (1994). *Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective*, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- LYE, John. (2008). *Psychoanalysis and Literature*. Retrieved from <http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/psychlit.php>
- MCMANUS, Barbara F. (1998). *Psychoanalytic Approaches*. Retrieved from <http://www2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/psychcrit.html>
- RIVKIN, Julie and Michael Ryan. (Eds.) (2004). "Introduction: Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis", *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 389-396.
- TEKİN, Kuğu (2006). "Joyce's Dublin: The Character, the Mirror, the Prison", Çileli, Meral, and Mustafa Kirca. (Eds.) *The 13th METU British Novelists Conference Proceedings James Joyce and His Work*, Ankara: Metu, 121 -127.
- TINDALL, W. York (1959). *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*, New York: Noonday Press.