James Joyce Essay, Research Paper

James Joyce, Alan Sillitoe, and J. D. Salinger are authors, who show that most conflicts exists because of the difference between the loveliness of the ideal and the drabness of the actual. They convey their criticism through their short stories. The recurring themes in Joyce’s stories depict Dubliners ambitions being crushed by harsh realities and/or being restrained because of society. Sillitoe’s stories portray the lives of the working class and their struggle to adjust to the industrial society. In Salinger’s fictions the sensitive characters are isolated in a crushing and sometimes violent world. The authors prove their points through their protagonists, showing that loveliness of the ideal and the drabness of the actual is the most common type of conflict.

All three authors criticize the society’s laws, morals and accepted way of life. James Joyce is intensely critical of early 20th century Dublin for being dominated by a restricting and unchanging way of life. The church has total power over society. It enforces its rules and morals for a strict Christian way of life. Alan Sillitoe intensely criticizes his society of industrial Britain for not allowing the individual to choose his own fate. The law does not allow Bloke in “On Saturday Afternoon” to end his distressed life. Yet, J.D. Slinger slightly criticizes society for not allowing the discussion of former relationships between spouses. In “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut”, Eloise thinks and believes that she cannot discuss her past relationship with Walt to her husband, fearing that her husband won’t understand.

In Salinger’s short stories the common conflicts between the loveliness of the ideal and the drabness of the actual exist in almost all of his stories. In the short stories “Down at the Dinghy” and “For Esme – with love and Squalor”, Salinger believes that people can learn to live in this world without becoming contaminated by the moral decay which is common in our society. In “Down at the Dinghy”, Seymour’s sister Boo Boo forces her young son Lionel to accept the reality of imperfection in the real world instead of letting him decide for himself. Lionel, at an early age refuses to compromise between corrupt reality and pure spirituality. In “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut” is another story that shows the drabness of the actual. Eloise’s daughter, Romona, shows that intelligent and creative people are usually paralyzed in one way or another. Good-looking idiots do well in this superficial world while the ugly smart ones are brushed aside and forced to confine to themselves.

Joyce also points out the common conflict of loveliness of the ideal and drabness of the actual. In “After the Race”, the Irish desired a place of affluence and culture to better their lives. They pursue an escape from Dublin, but mistakenly idealize mainland Europe as a vessel for their dreams of transcending the ordinary. The idea that Utopia exists across the ocean resulted in the people’s loss of interest in everyday life causing them to become stagnant.

The story “Counterparts” explores the capitalist society of Dublin in which people are the machines of productivity. Mr. Alleyne practices capitalism without knowledge when he continuously demands productivity from Farrington. Farrington is not pleased with his work place conditions and tries to escape through alcohol.

The three authors are able to show common conflicts by criticizing the protagonist for being subservient to society and not being able to face their challenges or not make the right choices. James Joyce somewhat criticizes the protagonist for being so subservient to the rules of society, that they become paralyzed if they try to break free. In “Araby”, the boy could not go to the Araby without his uncle, although he was capable of going by himself. In Alan Sillitoe’s “One Saturday Afternoon” he criticizes the protagonist for not attempting to try to get out of the situation in which he is in. The protagonist, Bloke, decided to commit suicide thus quitting his life. He should have tried to overcome his struggle with society and move on. J.D. Salinger is very much critical of protagonists who posses spiritual illness. In “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut”, the death of Walt enables Eloise to take her place in society.

The writer’ vary on criticizing the hold that the society has on its people and have their own idea of how people can escape to the loveliness of the ideal. James Joyce feels that society’s grip on the people is so strong that only through death can one escape from the drabness of the actual. He conveys this in the story “Dubliners”, where Joyce describes the protagonist free from society after dying. Alan Sillitoe firmly believes that in order to achieve the loveliness of the ideal, the individual must struggle to overcome their situation. At least in Sillitoe’s stories there is hope for the individual to overcome their obstacles, in “One Saturday Afternoon”, Bloke decides to commit suicide. While the boy who witness the attempted suicide chooses never to give up on life no matter how difficult life gets. J.D. Salinger intensely believes in order to achieve the loveliness of the ideal one must escape the society’s clutch on the individual. J.D. Salinger informs us that through private revelations one can escape from the clutch. In “Uncle Wiggly in Connecticut”, Eloise realizes that she must move on and release herself from the memories of Walt.

Through James Joyce, Alan Sillitoe, and J.D. Salinger stories it is apparent that most common conflicts arise because of the conflicts between loveliness and the drabness of the actual. It is always difficult to achieve the loveliness of the ideal. This is because even if we have everything that makes up the ideal, we still crave for more.

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