

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

James Thurber in the *Secret Life of Walter Mitty* has explored some sorts of conflict. He also describes the main character uniquely. So do Zakys in the *Eveline*. As the researcher explained in previous chapter, character is the central part of a story, because it determines whether the story will be interesting or not. A good story is able to make the reader influenced all at once, through his/her imagination, even it can influence the reader's psychology. The *Secret Life of Walter Mitty* and *The Eveline* may be two of the stories that can make the writer interested in and to analyze it through the main characters.

4.1 The Analysis of James Thurber's *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* Story

4.1.1 Character Analysis

4.1.1.1 The Major Character (Walter Mitty)

Walter Mitty is a daydreamer who imagines himself the hero. In real life, he is not anything special. He gets bossed around by his wife a lot. He can not do simple mechanical things. He is forgetful. Walter Mitty is also viewed as a static character or someone that stays the same without any change occurring throughout the story. In the beginning of the story he is a commander on a ship. "*The old man will get us through 'they said to one another.' the old man ain't afraid of hell!*" (thurber, en.wikipedia:2008). In this quote from the story it shows that Walter is a fearless and confident man. In most of his daydreams he is described as this and throughout the story he stays this way.

"Then, with that faint, fleeting smile playing about his lips, he faced the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful, Walter Mitty the undefeated, inscrutable to the last." (Thurber, en.wikipedia:2008).

In both of these quotes, it shows Walter Mitty as a character who doesn't change. He stays as the guy who is in control and almost fearless of anything in his daydream fantasies.

He often chooses powerful personalities for the characters that he becomes. He then has power and control over the decisions made and skills performed. The fact that his wife is so controlling over him is the main factor that drives him to his daydreams and fantasylands.

He's not a great driver, and people always seem to be either yelling or laughing at him for one blunder or another. To compensate for his failings in the real world, Mitty creates an entire "secret life" for himself: a series of fantasies in which he is a powerful, decisive man admired by those around him – everything he is not in reality. When Mitty passes a hospital, this sparks his surgeon fantasy. When a newsboy shouts about the Waterbury Trial, Walter imagines himself in a courtroom. He is wearing a sling in this fantasy, just as he thinks of wearing a sling the next time he goes to a garage. The *Liberty* magazine with pictures of air bombers sends him into a fantasy military dugout. These physical or tangible connections between fantasy and dream remind us to look for deeper, emotional connections between them. In Mitty's first fantasy, for example, he is piloting a "naval hydroplane" through a storm while those around him look on in awe and admiration. This is interrupted by Mrs. Mitty's plea for him to

slow down. Here Mitty fantasizes about the control that he's missing in his marriage. There is clearly a great deal that Thurber uses to characterize Walter Mitty.

However, it is important that we correctly interpret this text. When one looks past the primary, more common assessment of this short story, Mitty's true character is revealed. And the irony is, he is saner than anyone else who ridicules him as insane. The society is just not open-minded enough to see their stupidity.

4.1.1.2 Mrs. Mitty (Walter Mitty's wife)

Mrs. Mitty is a dominating wife. She is viewed as a nagging wife who is always on her husband's case. In the story, his wife really seems to nag and tell him what to do every breathing second of his life; therefore he uses his imagination to escape the fact that his wife controls every move and decision he makes. It is evident in the fourth paragraph.

"Remember to get those overshoes while I'm having my hair done," she said. "I don't need overshoes," said Mitty. She put her mirror back into her bag. "We've been all through that," she said, getting out of the car. "You're not a young man any longer." He raced the engine a little. "Why don't you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?" Walter Mitty reached in a pocket and brought out the gloves. He put them on, but after she had turned and gone into the building and he had driven on to a red light, he took them off again. "Pick it up, brother!" snapped a cop as the light changed, and Mitty hastily pulled on his gloves and lurched ahead. (Thurber, en.wikipedia)

While he is dropping his wife off to get her hair done, he has to go run errands and get overshoes because she wants him to. The fact that he is

running around for her shows that she controls everything he does in his everyday life. As he goes to pick her up from getting her hair done he sits and waits for her to be finished with his box of overshoes. *"Couldn't you have put them on in the store?... i'm going to take your temperature when I get you home."* (Thurber, en.wikipedia:2008).

She is in complete control over Walter Mitty and due to her superiority Mitty is drawn to a fantasyland where he gets away and has control over something in his life for once. She is looked at as a character who does not change, often called the antagonist that is a flat character. Mrs. Mitty only has one goal and that is to get her husband on a normal level and for him to be able to make his own decisions, but the only way Mrs. Mitty believes that will happen is by Walter proving his common sense and maturity. Her only reason for constantly nagging at Walter is the fact that he refuses to listen to her and chooses his fantasy worlds to escape to, rather than just facing the problem in his reality while he still has the chance. *"You were up to fifty-five, you know I don't like when you go more than forty. You were up to fifty-five."* (Thurber, en.wikipedia:2008). That statement really indicate Mrs. Mitty is constantly nagging at Walter from the beginning to the end of the story. So, she is considered a flat character.

4.1.2 The Conflict of the Main Character

As in any typical story and everyday life, there is always a conflict involved. In the secret life of Walter mitty, the conflict is displayed as realistic yet well defined. The conflict is so believable because many people daydream from

day to day. It is also well defined since it is used so much through out the story. The main conflict that is displayed in this story is man versus man, or in Walter Mitty's case it is man versus woman.

4.1.2.1 The External Conflict

Walter goes through a series of events where his wife is constantly nagging at him to get something done, and he is never given enough time to make the decision himself. Therefore he is put in a situation where his fantasy world is the only place he can turn to where he is an independent individual who is in control for once. Not only does it please her that she can control every move Walter makes, but it reassures her with power and causes her nagging to continue. In the story, she catches Walter speeding, as in his daydream he was also speeding but on a battleship. Somehow, Mrs. Mitty has an effect on his daydreams also. She constantly interrupts at every chance she can, whether Walter is in reality or not. It does not seem to matter what state of mind he is in, she finds a way to control his every move. *"Why do you have to hide in this old chair? How did you expect me to find you?"* (Thurber, en.wikipedia:2008).

As Walter tries to escape Mrs. Mitty in his fantasies, he also tries to escape her in reality. Her nagging has literally driven him insane and he has nowhere left to go. His daydreams are what motivate Mrs. Mitty to nag constantly at him, because he does not seem normal or to her standards enough. She tries to morph him into something that she wants him to be, when in reality, he just wants to be in control of just one single thing. Obviously, Mrs. Mitty becomes so frustrating and annoying to Walter, that it

causes him to put himself in a distant area where it would be difficult for her to find him at. Her constant nagging makes the story what it is, if it were not for her specific characteristics, Walter would not turn to his imagination to get away from her. He would turn towards reality and live his life with her, rather than turn away and have her live his life for him. She takes complete control over Walter and takes advantage of it, because he has no choice but to let her control him. The characters of the story are well developed. Walter may need to escape Mrs. Mitty's nagging, but in another way, he needs it to fulfill not only her needs but his needs also.

She nags him to buy galoshes, to put on his gloves, and to drive more slowly. When she asks Walter why he did not put on his overshoes before leaving the store, he responds with irritation: *"I was thinking...does it ever occur to you that I am sometimes thinking?"* But while Mrs. Mitty may appear overly controlling and condescending, Walter is incompetent and refuses to shoulder adult responsibility. Mrs. Mitty is Walter's link to reality; she prevents accidents and helps Walter avoid losing his grasp of everyday life. Mrs. Mitty seems very concerned for Walter Mitty. As an over protective wife, she treats Walter Mitty more like a son than like a husband. His unhappiness about his wife's obsession with his well being causes Mr. Mitty's dreams of a better life. A life where he is in charge and thought of as an important figure like the ones in his fantasies.

In the story, the major conflict is presented by things said by his wife that command him what to do. *"Not so fast! You are driving too fast!"* said Mrs. Mitty. *" what are you driving so fast for?"* *"you were up to fifty-five,"* she

said. *"You know I don't like it when you go more than forty."* As Mrs. Mitty tells Walter what to do, it breaks him down more and more and causes him to turn towards his imagination. The major conflict is really represented within quotes from Mrs. Mitty. As Walter is told what to do, his imagination is his only friend because it is the only thing that he can control and determine the decisions made there. He often chooses characters that are looked at as heroes and people with a lot of power. His wife is the main cause of his daydreaming. If she did not constantly nag at him, Walter would be an ordinary guy in the world who makes his own decisions. In the story she tells Walter what to do all the time, for instance, she wants him to go get overshoes while she is getting her hair done and be back to pick her up by the time her hair is done. *"Remember to get those overshoes while I'm getting my hair done."* she said.... *"Why don't you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?"*. (thurber, en.wikipedia:2008)

Walter is treated as if he is a child, his wife gave him a few errands to run while she was getting her hair done as if she thought he could not keep a hold of himself for a few hours while she got her hair done. As displayed in the story, Walter is being controlled with every little choice he is given. His wife automatically makes decisions for him as if it were her instinct to do so. Not only in this story does Walter face the fact that his wife controls him, but he also faces the fact that he lets his wife control him so he is against himself and turns away to live a realistic fantasy in his daydreams.

4.1.2.2 The Internal Conflict

Walter Mitty faces not only his wife in the story, but himself. We see the main character as a misfit in society. He is often unaware of the world around him and always found his pleasure in his daydream. James Thurber describes a henpecked husband constantly escaping from the never-ending demands of his wife. Mitty's first daydream illustrates this point well. As he is navigating through the ice, the crew "looked at each other and grinned. *"The Old Man'll get us through...."* This commentary shows the bond and respect they have with and for "the Commander." The next levels deal with the need to explore and the need for order. These are two main themes in most of his dreams. He is a doctor in one, fixing new problems and telling nurses what to do. "Give me a fountain pen", he snapped." In another dream Mitty is a sergeant, giving orders before heading out to fight the Germans. The top levels of the hierarchy deal with self-fulfillment. Thurber provides many descriptions of Mitty that show he is very pleased with what he has accomplished. The best example is in the final paragraph: *"Then, with that faint, fleeting smile playing about his lips, he faced the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful...."* This creates a picture of a confident man who knows his life was lived well. One can clearly tell that Walter Mitty is an outstanding individual in this short story.

On a winter day, Walter tried to take the chains off of his car and accidentally got them wound around the axles, therefore he had to have a man come out and take the chains off of the car for him. The only thing that Walter got the chance to do himself, he messed up on. Just like anybody

else, Walter was upset with himself because he could not do it himself. So to make it better for him next year, he planned to put his arm in a sling so the young man could not possibly think that Walter could do it himself.

Walter lies to himself and other people to reassure his mistakes and to boost his self confidence. Another instance that gets Walter to turn against himself is how he forgets what his wife told him to pick up for her while she was getting her hair done. He hears a local newsboy in the distance yelling about something that occurred in court. "Perhaps this will refresh your memory." The district attorney suddenly thrust a heavy automatic at the quiet figure on the witness stand." Walter uses his imagination to help him remember what is real and what is not in his mind. His fantasy intertwines with his reality and helps him remember what is real. He turns against himself in this because it is to the point where Walter needs his daydreams to help him remember. He can not live without his daydreams, because if it was not for them, he would be a lost soul without a clue in the world.

The conflict of man versus himself takes place quite a bit in this story, those being only a few examples of it. In this story, if it was not for his wife nagging at him constantly, there would not even be a theme. The whole idea of his nagging wife contributes to the fact that Walter daydreams to escape reality.

4.2 Analysis of James Joyce's the Eveline

4.2.1 Character Analysis

4.2.1.1 The Major Character (Eveline)

The protagonist in "Eveline" by James Joyce is Eveline. Eveline is an unhappy, nineteen year old living in early twentieth century Ireland, as part of a middleclass family. Eveline encounters much conflict inside herself over the course of this story, and makes an interesting decision in the end. Eveline's childhood was two sided. She says that she and her brothers and sisters "seemed to have been rather happy". Eveline also tells the reader "Her father often used to hunt them in out of the field (where they played) with his blackthorn stick". She also reveals that their father physically abused her brothers, but he would never touch her because she was a girl. She does not specifically tell us what her father did to her mother but it is shown that she was mistreated. Eveline's childhood tragedy does not end with abuse. Her mother died of an illness when Eveline was young. She made a promise to her mother before she died to "keep the home together as long as she could".

It's important to note that Eveline's list of pros and cons is pretty particular to her. The tone of the story, which mimics her voice, is sort of exaggerated and impulsive. It's also overly sentimental when it comes to things like pictures of old friends of the family on the wall. Would a wiser or more emotionally mature person actually worry so much about his or her "familiar objects" if it came down to leaving? Maybe not. On the other hand, despite Eveline's obvious immaturity, her inability to make this

decision makes a ton of sense. It's a pretty big decision, and she doesn't really know Frank all that well. Most of what she can say is that he is "very kind, manly, open-hearted" (Eveline.10). Sounds great, but is that really enough to follow him across the world? What's really tragic about the story, then, is that Eveline is already at a disadvantage for making serious decisions (she's just not mature enough), and now she has to make one of the most serious decisions anyone could imagine. The collision of these two facts sets the stage for the climactic closing of the story, which takes place at the North Wall of Dublin, right in front of the ship to Argentina.

The character of Eveline is dynamic. She spends the whole story planning to leave with Frank to escape her troubles. It seems as though they are in love, but she does give us some insight that they are not when she says, "He would give her life, perhaps love too". She thought that they would fall in love eventually, but subconsciously she was just using Frank to better her situation. In the last two paragraphs, we see her change from a woman who wants to turn her back on her family and run away with her lover, to a woman who realizes the evil she had been planning. The text supports this with "her eyes gave no sign of love or farewell or recognition". She showed no emotion toward Frank because he was the reason that she was going to betray her family.

4.1.2.2 Frank

Even though he is the main reason Eveline has such a big decision to make, Frank hardly figures into the story at all. Until he shouts three lines in the last page of the story, everything we know about him comes from

Eveline's description, and it's pretty sparse. He is from Ireland originally and has come back on vacation from his career as a sailor. At first, his relationship with Eveline went really smoothly and was all kinds of romantic: they went to the theater, he sang her songs, made up nicknames for her, and boasted of all his sailor adventures.

The only problem was Eveline's father, who eventually banned her from seeing him, because he is a big fat jerk. Since they kept meeting in secret, the relationship kept on and eventually included an invitation to return to Argentina with him and be his wife. Swoon, right? Not right. Even when Frank really comes on to the scene in the last section of the story, he does so mainly in order to be ignored. First, Eveline doesn't even hear what he is saying to her. Then, when he cries to her more and more urgently, hoping that she will finally board the ship, she does not even acknowledge that he is speaking—or yelling. It's like Frank has sort of disappeared all of a sudden because Eveline "gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (Eveline.26). We don't really know how Frank feels about this because the story ends here, but it hardly matters: the real focus is just how completely and how suddenly Eveline has been convinced that going with Frank is a bad idea.

4.2.2 The Conflict of the Story

4.2.2.1 The External Conflict

This story focuses on the theme of escape. While the young boy narrators of the previous stories are too young to leave Ireland or do anything about their poverty, Eveline has been given a chance. Yet in the

end, the girl finds herself incapable of going. Certainly, she has every reason to leave. The portrait we have of her family life is less than heart-warming. We see that she has taken on an incredible part of the burden in keeping the family together, as her mother did before her. Her father, despite the points he wins for not beating her, is a domineering and unfair man, who makes his daughter work and then keeps her wages. Rather than appreciate her sacrifices, he ridicules her. Unpleasant characters in Joyce's works often criticize the Irishman who leaves Ireland, the most common sentiment being that these expatriates are ungrateful children of their country. Joyce, himself an expatriate, turns this insult around in "Eveline": we see not an ungrateful child, but an ungrateful parent. Eveline's stifling family life becomes a metaphor for the trap that is Ireland.

Her mother provides the chilling example of what it means to be a grateful child, and to do what is expected: we learn that she lived a life "of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness". At the end of her life she is true Irish, babbling in Ireland's native language (which nationalists had been trying to revitalize). However, the phrase she utters repeatedly is probably nonsense; at best it is corrupt Gaelic. The meaninglessness of the phrase suggests, metaphorically, that the sacrifices have also been meaningless. Eveline's mother has earned nothing but madness. The stages-of-life structure continues. Eveline is adult, a young woman old enough to get married. Joyce gives us in concise detail the terrible poverty and pressure of her situation. The weight of poverty and family responsibilities bear down on this young woman heavily; her financial situation is far worse

than that of the three boy narrators of the previous stories. She is trapped in an ugly situation, responsible for her siblings and the aging father who abuses her.

Paralysis is a common theme in *Dubliners*, and poor Eveline finds herself unable to move forward. She lacks the courage and strength to make that leap that will free her of her oppressive situation. She's too scared to leave Ireland, and sees her lover as a possible source of danger: "All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He [Frank] was drawing her into them: he would drown her" (34). But her paralysis will cost her. Instead of an uncertain but hopeful future, she faces a certain and dismal future that may well repeat her mother's sad life story.

4.2.2.2 The Internal Conflict

On the pro side, Eveline loves Frank, and thinks he can protect her. She also hopes, in a vague sort of way, that she'll be respected more in Argentina as a wife than she is currently as a single woman and low-class worker. Finally, leaving Dublin will mean getting out of a bad family situation in which her violent and drunk father threatens her and makes her life miserable. For Pete's sake, lady, hop on the boat. Not so fast. All those pros are actually tied up in the cons of her leaving, too. She's taking care of two young children, and knows they need her. Her father isn't always that bad, and he also needs her. And she's familiar with her home, and it's hard to imagine leaving it behind forever. She figures that she has "a hard life—but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable

life." So the choice is becoming a lot less clear-cut now that she's done her pros and cons.

She's gotten this far. She's literally standing on the dock. Seems like she's made up her mind, right? She could have bailed on Frank at any point along the way if she didn't want to go. And the last lines of the story before the scene switches seem to be Eveline's final decision, her certainty that "She must escape!" and that "Frank would save her!" (Eveline.18). Sweet. Let's get this over with. We may have jumped the gun here. Before she can actually make this decision and board the ship, Eveline has a major freak out: "she felt her cheek pale and cold" and "her distress awoke a nausea in her body." Her response to all of this is to pray for guidance (Eveline.19). And of course the moment she finally decides is the moment when Frank's all, let's hit the road, babe "*A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand*" (Eveline.20).

Apparently that bell, wherever it comes from, means that she's definitely not going, and she just holds on for dear life at this point, as if she was afraid not only that Frank "would drown her," but that the water itself would threaten her life. And even though she has made a decision, and doesn't get on the boat, it's not like she does it with a lot of confidence. "*She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal*" (Eveline.26). She may have decided, but she's not exactly pumped about her choice.

4.3 Compare and Contrast Both of the Story

After analyze the characterisation and the conflict, the researcher analyses both of the story by classify the similarity and dissimilarity.

4.3.1 The Similarity

Between James Thurber's *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* and James Joyce's *The Eveline*, certainly there is some similarities especially in the conflict. The story tell that they have a same position in their conflict. Walter Mitty as suppressed as Eveline. Their external conflicts bring them to the crucial conflict in their self. Besides forgetful, Walter Mitty has a nagging wife and he always be arranged by his wife. Of course he is so suppressed. He feels his wife never appreciate him. So that, he is looking for release by become a hero in his daydream. So do that in the *Eveline*. The mayor character, Eveline is a poor girl and confuse about her future. She feels suppressed because she has a lousy father and never treats her right. Her life is monotone. She has to clean her dirty house and accompany her nasty father. It make her doesn't comfort and sick. She cannot stand with the way of treating his father.

4.3.2 The Dissimilarity

Between James Thurber's *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* and James Joyce's *The Eveline*, apparently there is a big difference in the characterization. Mitty as the mayor character in the *Secret Life of Walter Mitty* has a static character. It seems from how the way he always repeat his stupidity and never change throughout the story. Of course it is very contras with the characterization of Eveline in James Joyce are. Eveline is a catholic girl and her character is

dynamic. She spends the whole story planning to leave with Frank to escape her troubles. It seems as though they are in love, but she does give us some insight that they are not when she says, "He would give her life, perhaps love too". She thought that they would fall in love eventually, but subconsciously she was just using Frank to better her situation. In the last two paragraphs, we see her change from a woman who wants to turn her back on her family and run away with her lover, to a woman who realizes the evil she had been planning.

In the conflict side, the difference had seen from how the way the both of character to use their awareness. Walter mitty uses his unconscious mind when he get daydream. Whereas, Eveline is always think with her conscious to solve her problem.