Reactions to Change in Graham Swift's Works

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how, for Swift's characters, personal crises serve as turning points, prompting them to reexamine their identities by revisiting and reinterpreting their life narratives. The story consists of their self-analysis. There is always a change in the characters' lives that leads to a crisis, which in turn prompts the characters to explore themselves further. Psychological theories about crises and personal change will help us examine the situations of Swift's characters and the ways they transform. Erik Erikson's stages of psychological development outline the development of identity across life stages, which are characterized by crises that must be resolved. Resolving relationship issues leads to a stronger sense of self. J. William Worden's crisis theory suggests that individuals go through a process of adaptation and reevaluate their personal worldviews. Prochaska and DiClemente's stages of change model includes precontemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance. In contrast, William Bridges' transitional model claims that personal change happens in three phases: acceptance of issues (ending, losing, letting go), uncertainty (the neutral zone), personal reinvention, and a new beginning. These theories can bring more profound insight into understanding Swift's traumatized narrators. The novels *Shuttlecock*, *Ever After*, *Out of This World*, and *The Light of Day* will be analyzed.

Keywords: crisis, trauma, psychology, identity, adaptation

Introduction

Knowledgeable readers of Graham Swift's novels, according to reader response criticism (Mart, 2019), are familiar with his traumatized narrators (Mărginean, 2014). They also recognize the tendency to begin his novels in medias res (Bernard, 1990), during moments when the characters take time to reflect on their problems. These characters face psychological

crises as a result of their reactions to various external life events. Such events can stem from wars and, in particular, their aftermaths and the relationships that follow. A significant change in the world around them and in their own lives represents the trigger for their crises. This crisis, in turn, serves as the starting point or motivation for their story. Critics have noted the contrast between public and private histories in Swift's novels. They primarily refer to his best-known novel, *Waterland*. Here, the topic is treated explicitly by the history teacher, Tom Crick, who attempts to raise his students' awareness of how, for any incident, both in public history and in personal history, there is a cause and its consequences. The consequences then lead the characters in his novels to search for an understanding of how the current state of affairs developed in the present moment of the novel. From the present, the story moves backward and forward in time, based on the narrator's analysis.

The present paper offers a distinct analysis of the structure of Graham Swift's novels, focusing on the element of change, which serves as the driving force behind the crises characters undergo and prompts them to react to them. The crises lead to self-analysis of the characters. The passage from one state to another marks the starting point of the story, prompting the characters to react, understand their reactions, and find solutions to adapt to the new situation. This is achieved by revisiting their life story up to the present time in the novel.

The analysis of changing life scenarios and reactions to them is applied to a selection of Swift's novels, namely: *Shuttlecock*, *Ever After*, *Out of This World*, and *The Light of Day.* The life stories of the characters take a dramatic turn at a moment of crisis, related to the loss of a person, value, a belief, or all of them taken together, making them aware of a turning point in their lives. They start to reflect, a moment that coincides with the one when they begin to tell the story in the novel. When they reflect, they gradually become someone else and try to find solutions to adapt to their new life scenario.

What is common to these novels is the focus, in the majority of cases, on one narrator and his experience of a life crisis in reaction to a changing context in his life, the resulting change in his inner world, a different attitude towards life after the crisis, and a visible transformation in his identity. In *Shuttlecock*, Prentis is faced with the possibility that his father may not have been the war hero he is publicly known to be, which makes him consider his own role in his family, with whom he reconciles after going through difficult moments during the search for understanding his father's story, as well as his own. In *Ever After*, Bill Unwin's self-analysis follows the death of his wife Ruth, which leads him to face an existential crisis, to understand his role in the academic world, and to resonate

with the dilemmas of his ancestor, whose memoirs he is reading. The novel *The Light of Day* follows George Webb as he faces his wife's departure and reflects on his relationships, while he meets Sarah Nash, a client who asks him to follow her husband to ensure he has truly parted ways with a young student with whom he has had an affair. This makes George Webb's life different, as after he reflects on relationships, he emerges as hopeful about starting a relationship with Sarah, once she is released from prison. The novel *Out of This World* follows the crises of a father, Harry Beech, and a daughter, Sophie, who are estranged from one another, and who are also both affected by the death of Robert Beech, father to Harry and grandfather to Sophie. The daughter is undergoing analysis as a patient, which leads her to a revised attitude: after resenting her father throughout her childhood, she wishes to reconcile with him. The novel ends on a hopeful note, as she embarks on a trip to see him and his new wife. This difference in perspective suggests a more profound internal change that characters undergo, and the story told in Swift's novels is an account of this process of personal transformation.

Literature Review

The structure of Swift's novels and the character typology, already noticed by critics, serve as a starting point for a new analysis based on change. Change means transformation. It is the transformation of the characters' psychology as they consider new situations in their lives. Our life context can always be subject to external variations, and we respond to these changes individually as we attempt to adapt. This paper considers public and private histories (Drobot, 2014) as public, or external, modifications in the world and private, or personal, changes of the narrators themselves or those around them. Personal transformation often occurs in response to changes in the characters around them, the external world, or their life context. The way characters react to contexts in their lives serves as a starting point for their self-development process. We begin by defining ourselves in relation to others, as Hegel (Douzinas, 2002) suggests. The characters in Swift's selected novels also develop distinct ways of thinking and behaving in relation to one another.

Buddha is quoted as claiming that "The only constant in life is change" (Barlingay, 1977). This perspective is not exclusive to Asian cultures; it also applies to other cultures. Nevertheless, Asian cultures have their own ways of dealing with change. For example, Zen Buddhism (Barlingay, 1977) emphasizes the belief that we must accept fluctuations, as they are inevitable. Because everything in this world is ephemeral, we must come to terms with the fact that we will eventually lose everything and everyone we love.

While Asian cultures, and Zen Buddhism in particular, claim that the present moment is all we have and that we need to focus on it, Swift's novels, by contrast, show readers that the past is an important aspect in understanding the characters. In this way, we can relate the importance of the past to Freud's discoveries (Neu, 1973) in the field of psycho-analysis. In psychoanalytic sessions, the importance of the past is always considered in shaping the patient's present-day issues. Thus, the role of the past in the psychological crises of the characters is unquestionable.

Both wars and personal crises can lead to revisions in the characters' inner world. Wars redesign society at large, affecting the visual aspect of the country and its resources. They also shape the impact of loss on those fighting, as well as the changing mindsets and beliefs. Wars bring about significant remodeling of mindsets, principles, and values. These changes add to the external destructive aspects. Wars provide occasions for charac-ters to restructure their beliefs and their vision of the world. This is particularly evident starting with Modernism, which marked a radical break with the past. The trend continues with Postmodernism and beyond, as seen in Graham Swift's novels. The unreliability of storytelling is a key feature of Postmodernist fiction in Swift's work (Cottier, 1998; Logotheti, 2002). This renders public history itself unreliable and incapable of presenting a clear picture of how the common person interacts with these events. The objective omniscient narrator is rarely present in fiction after Modernism. As a result, Swift's novels are composed of subjective, or personal, versions of the story, with each character presenting their own perspective.

While the transformation of the individual can be observed based on their past and present selves, there is an expected continuity between past and present selves, an issue addressed by the Romantic poets and continued by Virginia Woolf and Graham Swift (Drobot, 2014). These identities, however, need to become united. Otherwise, they remain fragmented aspects of the selves. We notice the difference between a specific character in the past and the same character in the present; yet, these two differences can be united through self-examination, as seen in Graham Swift's novels.

A deeper level of analysis of the characters' change can be provided based on psycho-logical theories that address this precise topic in response to crises. To begin, the paper explores the stages of psychological development of identity as theorized by Erik Erikson. According to Erikson (1959, 1994), these stages of psychological development are marked by a crisis that the individual must resolve. The solution lies in their process of refashioning. For example, if someone has issues in their relationships, resolving them can lead to the development of a stronger sense of self. This appears to be the case with Swift's

characters, who emerge from the experience as more confident and knowledgeable about themselves. Building on this, Worden's (2018) theory of crisis posits that during a crisis, the individual undergoes an adaptation and reevaluation of their personal worldviews. Building further on crisis and change, Prochaska and DiClemente (2013) developed models of stages of change, comprising the following phases: precontemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance. Lastly, Bridges (2014) creates a transitional model that consists of three phases for personal change: acceptance of issues (ending, losing, letting go), uncertainty (the neutral zone), and personal reinvention, culminating in a new beginning.

Materials and Methods

A story deals with a progression of incidents and shifts from one state of affairs to another. Swift focuses on the inner transformation of his characters. For this matter, the psychology of crisis models presented in the literature review section can help further detail the process of growth that the characters undergo in their stories.

These selected novels follow the way in which characters going through a crisis related to their relationships end up improved after self-examination and integrating the differences in their relationships into their new identity, which is visible, first of all, in their attitude towards the end of the novel. The visible improvement is from a negative state of mind to a positive, or at least hopeful, state of mind.

Historical events are minimized and serve as part of the setting. The focus is on the psychology of the characters and how relationships transform them. The war may trigger death or simply act as a pretext for psychological conflicts. For example, Robert Beech in *Out of This World* was an important figure in the Arms industry during World War I. He was killed in a bomb explosion. His son Harry was a war photographer. These details provide readers with a visual representation of the intense psychological conflicts between the estranged father and daughter in the present. War serves as an analogy for the traumas and dilemmas the characters face, as well as their internal conflicts about their relationships with others. Prentis' father in Shuttlecock was a war spy. This becomes a literal counterpart to the figurative conflict with oneself and the parent–child relationship. Prentis faces a dilemma about whether his father was a deserter or a hero. He tries to find excuses for himself, acknowledging the torture prisoners of war could face. The main issue, however, is his father's role as a model. Prentis feels overwhelmed by his own life as a father and husband, as well as his strained family relationships. These reflect his own problematic relationship with himself, as he struggles to maintain a self-image

he does not feel he deserves. In the end, he accepts both his father and himself as individuals with strengths and weaknesses, and reconciles with his family. In *The Light of Day*, war has a similar role. Croatian refugee Kristina symbolizes the conflict between Sarah and Bob, wife and husband. The war in Croatia is only an external circumstance that brings Kristina into this couple's lives. The novel does not detail Kristina's perspective; instead, readers are only privy to George Webb's imaginings. Webb, the detective and sole narrator, imagines Kristina's inner world. His empathy and the expectations placed on him by readers inform this process as he reconstructs events. The only novel from this selection that does not involve war is *Ever After*. However, Unwin's psychological crisis remains intense, paralleling the interior crisis of his Victorian ancestor, who lost faith in Darwinism. This shattered belief affects the ancestor's relationship with his wife and father-in-law. As his worldview changes, conflicts arise because he no longer shares the same values and principles as those around him. Unwin's conflict with historian Fergusson comes from their different perspectives on the memoirs of Victorian Matthew Pearce, Unwin's great-grandfather. Fergusson sees them as historical documents. Unwin views them as personally significant and insightful about the meaning of life and existential dilemmas, such as the relationship between faith and science. The tension comes from the differences between objective history and personal, emotional engagement. The personal conflict is rooted in the characters' differing beliefs and mindsets, which reflect their individual psychology. These deeply held beliefs reveal what is constant in the characters' psychology. To claim that we encounter the same person, some constant aspects must remain. There is a paradox: if a person changes, can we still say they are the same? Plato's theory of forms, found for example in *The Republic*, Book VI, describes an underlying essence that remains: "The things which we see are always in a process of change, whereas the things which we do not see are unchanging. These things are grasped by the mind and not by the senses" (2016). For Swift's characters, the external world and other people may change. Psychologically, they can remember the past. Their memories remain unchanged, allowing them to bridge the gap between their past and present selves. According to Locke (1847), selfhood is constant due to the continuity of memory and consciousness over time:

> For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes everyone to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being; and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person. (Locke, 1847, p. 210)

The way Swift's characters analyze themselves and remember the past supports Locke's theory. For Parfit (1984, p. 215), personal identity means psychological continuity and not one, single, unchanging essence: "Personal identity is not what matters. What matters are certain relations of psychological connectedness and/or continuity, with the right kind of cause."

Storytelling keeps the characters' unity and sense of self as they change in response to psychological crises. These crises arise not only from outside events but also from relationships. They may reflect a natural need for self-exploration and redefinition, which often happens in middle age. Most of Swift's narrators face crises and changes in their lives, which lead to psychological adjustments during midlife. This stage, as Erikson (1959, 1994) notes, involves changes in identity or development. Throughout life, relationships are constant and bring their own problems. Life is a series of challenges that characters must overcome to progress through life stages. For Swift's characters, problems in relationships often come with existential dilemmas. During psychological crises, we see classic questions about life's meaning and identity. These crises prompt us to reevaluate who we are and our place in the world. Transitions from one stage of life to another often involve crises or personal dilemmas.

It could be due to her advancing age that she decides to consider her relationship with her father in further detail. This is what brings her into analysis, as she wishes to analyze her feelings about him in deep detail. Through psychoanalytic therapy, she wishes to try to clarify her feelings about her relationship with her father in *Out of This World*. Sophie's mother having died in a plane crash, her father decides to restart his life in a new relationship. Clearly, this is a conflicted situation for Sophie, yet she needs to accept that time has passed and that her father has the right to be in a relationship with someone else. In addition, Sophie needs to become aware that she is now a grown-up woman and that she cannot expect her parents to always be together when one of them has passed away. George Webb in *The Light of Day* moves towards the process of transformation by deciding to start over his life again in a new relationship, as he waits for Sarah to get out of prison.

The characters in Swift's novels navigate change and psychological crises by sharing their stories with one another. Storytelling is an essential part of our lives. We tell stories in the therapeutic process, we may try self-analysis, we go through moments of introspection during various problematic moments and stages in our lives, and we may also feel, at some point, the need to confess to someone we may not even know about a happening or episode in our lives, or to tell our life story based on selecting specific incidents,

or we may wish to tell someone close what our day has been like, referring to the way in which various incidents have made us respond emotionally. We can find all of these in Swift's stories. The narrators confess to the readers.

Furthermore, some narrators, such as Unwin in *Ever After* and Prentis in *Shuttlecock*, present their own analysis of their dilemmas. They do this by relating to and reflecting on other stories. Unwin finds these stories in the memoirs of his Victorian ancestor, Matthew Pearce, and Prentis in those of his father. Similar dilemmas appear, as if in a mirror, between Unwin and Prentis and the memoirs they read. Unwin also attempts to find himself while reading Hamlet and identifying with the main character. Hamlet is well-known for his moments of dilemmas and, ultimately, psychological crisis, as considered in the psychological theories discussed in this paper. Hamlet stays in the contemplation phase of the Prochaska and DiClemente model for most of the play. The action stage ultimately leads to the tragedy. He does not manage to solve the crisis or illustrate all the phases and the finding of solutions. The psychological theories about crises thus illustrate a complete and ideal process of transformation.

Writing and reading serve as tools for characters to confront and make sense of personal crises. Through writing, characters attempt to bring order to their chaotic and fragmented experiences, a process that mirrors the shifts in literary movements from Modernism to Postmodernism and beyond. Both self-analysis and storytelling become methods to connect events with personal identity. The depiction of a chaotic world reflects the characters' inner turmoil. To resolve their crises, the characters seek to reconnect and restore an order disrupted by change. For example, Unwin's identification with Hamlet exemplifies his effort to find meaning and structure in the face of a dilemma, highlighting his recognition of the need for transformation.

The characters in Swift's novels often feel misunderstood by others. As a result, they experience isolation and retreat into their own world. There, they write about or reflect on their experiences, becoming increasingly introspective. It is only by accident that readers overhear their interior monologues. Prentis feels alone as he wanders in his search for truth. This feeling results from his psychological crisis. He cannot properly communicate with his family and realizes he struggles to connect with his son. He feels he needs answers about his father's experiences during the war. Without them, Prentis' life seems disorganized, chaotic, and without meaning. All of this suggests a moment of psychological crisis.

The psychological crisis is triggered, for Unwin in *Ever After*, by his grief work and experience of mourning following the death of his wife, Ruth. His grief work leads to a radical

transformation in his life, and he needs to redefine himself, which makes him start reflecting on who he is now. The answers can lie in his personal past, as well as in analogy to his ancestors' experiences, and in a fictional character. Grief work (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2014) guides someone psychologically through stages of denial until they reach the final stage of accepting the loss. Anger, guilt, and rebellion against the loss can be included. Five stages are generally identified: denial, anger, bargaining or negotiation, depression, and acceptance (Barone & Ivy, 2004). However, not all five stages are present in this order, or some stages can even be skipped or overlap in some cases (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2014). Unwin seems to be only in a state of depression, ending up reaching acceptance of his loss. All this process leads the person grieving through a process of transformation and of gradual adaptation to the situation of no longer having a loved one beside them. Grief work is, in itself, a psychological crisis. For George Webb, in *The Light of Day*, the loss is related to the previous state of affairs or stability in his life. First, he loses his job, and subsequently, his wife decides to leave him, which makes his life chaotic and devoid of meaning. While this is also a loss, it is not a loss caused by the actual death of someone. Nevertheless, George needs to come to terms with the fact that his wife no longer cares for him and that he has lost his job. The first implied question is what went wrong and what brought about the present state of affairs; yet, readers understand that what happened did not depend solely on the characters. As a result, meaning is initially searched for in the past, since it is lacking at present. However, it will eventually need to be found in the future. For the characters, change is felt as an absence of stability and meaning. Specifically, Unwin and George face changes beyond their control, to which they must adapt, and this, in turn, implies additional changes on their part—both in themselves and in their psychological dealings with their life situations.

Lack of meaning is related to loneliness, as both Sophie and Harry Beech examine their past by themselves in *Out of This World*. Only Sophie is in analysis, yet the therapist can only guide her, and she needs to take an active role in her therapy. Sophie and her father both wish to have a revision in their lives, by no longer being isolated from others, from themselves, and from each other. Harry starts a new relationship, and Sophie wishes to reconcile with her father by visiting him, and readers assume, discussing their relationship, and making amends. Readers understand that her father would also welcome this reconciliation.

In *Shuttlecock*, Prentis begins to suspect that his father, a World War II spy, may not have been the hero portrayed in his memoirs. The public believes his father's story, but Prentis starts to imagine alternative scenes to the one in the book. His father is sick and cannot talk, so Prentis cannot have a dialogue with him. He imagines possible scenes of his father being

interrogated. The story of his father may, thus, be just a story, not a factual account. George Webb also imagines numerous scenes about Kristina and Bob. He reconstructs their story and tries to emotionally understand what he is investigating. Both Prentis and George imagine in order to understand and make sense of others' psychological reality. Readers may notice that the imagined scenes are reasonable hypotheses. Prentis and George imagine these scenes to empathize with the psychological experiences of the characters they envision. By imagining the scenes and psychological realities of the other characters, they try to come to terms with their own emotions about what is happening around them.

For Prentis, however, there is a conflict related to imagining these alternative scenes of his father not being the hero everyone knew him to be. Once his father is no longer a hero, Prentis himself no longer believes that he should struggle to be one for his own children. For Prentis, the entire vision of the world, and particularly his role in the family, shifts from an idealized one to a more realistic one. He is concerned about the truth, yet he decides to destroy the evidence suggesting his father is not the hero everyone knew. He tries to protect his father's public image, while he personally comes to accept this possibility or even fact. Prentis gives up the search, suggesting that he needs to come to terms with the fact that neither his father nor himself is perfect, or a hero:

> And then one day […] I stopped reading Dad's book. I inquired no further. How much of a book is in the words and how much is behind or in between the lines? Perhaps it is best not to probe too deeply into those invisible regions, but to accept on trust what is there on the page as the best showing the author could make. And the same is true perhaps of *this* book (for it has grown into a book) which I have resumed now after a six months' lapse, only to bring to its conclusion. (Swift, 1997, p. 214)

The psychological struggles Prentis goes through when considering the truth about his father are amplified by what his boss Quinn points out to him: "He knew the Chateau, and the regio—and perhaps he had—like you—a strong imagination. If he wanted to invent an escape story he could have done so. I'm just pointing this out, not disagreeing with you" (Swift, 1997, p. 186).

Quinn sees Prentis' father as writing his memoir in an attempt to convince himself, as well as his readers, that what he has written is actually true. For Prentis's father, becoming a hero may be understood, by both himself and the readers, as a way to construct a sense of meaning in his life.

A review of *Shuttlecock* in *Punch* magazine (1981) asks: "Is it important to be *heroic*?" By analogy, Prentis reshapes his perspective on fathers and sons, realizing he does not

have to be a hero or conform to a particular image to matter to his family. The uncertainty surrounding his father's heroism remains, but proving either side seems unimportant. What mattered was how this belief influenced his own self-image. Prentis recognizes he can move beyond this view, especially after Quinn tells him: "Aren't there certain situations when the pressure of events is so intense, so overpowering—that even the most wretched action can be forgiven?" (Swift, 1997, p. 192). Prentis reflects: "[...] if I knew that Dad hadn't been strong and brave, then I wouldn't hit Marian and shout at the kids and sulk around the house. But I didn't want to know that Dad wasn't strong and brave" (1997, p. 193). This indicates that the image he has of his father is closely tied to his own self-image and the model he believes he should emulate.

Another character imagining someone else's life is Unwin, who tries to understand better his ancestor based on his memoirs: "I imagine, I invent" (Swift, 1992, p. 138), "I see him" (Swift, 1992, p. 139), "I conjure him up, I invent him" (Swift, 1992, p. 155). Similarly, George Webb claims, "You have to picture the scene" (Swift, 1992, p. 197).

Another character can be a reflection or a projection of the narrator. For example, in *The Light of Day*, George Webb sees his client, Sarah Nash, as a reflection of himself. Both have been left by their spouses: George's wife leaves him, and Sarah's husband has an affair. Each experiences a growing distance in their partnerships, resulting in the end of their relationships. Drawn emotionally to Sarah, George hopes to be with her, so he views other experiences—like the affair between Sarah's husband, Bob, and Kristina—through her perspective. By exploring his emotions alongside those involved in his case, George feels less isolated in his own similar situation.

According to Fishman (1989), in the novel *Out of this World*, the phrase in the title refers to the way Harry Beech observes his own and others' lives from a large and detached perspective. This viewpoint is based on the visual aspect of his profession as an air photographer. In this way, Harry becomes aware of the rich history of a country, such as England, rooted in its agricultural life from the Bronze Age. His observations also extend to recognizing patterns in his own life, not just those related to agriculture. The visual image becomes a reflection of the figurative image of a broader perspective. Harry considers his own life and the significant person in his life from this perspective, in the following fragment:

> She is still holding a hand aloft as we bank to head south. And I could almost believe it, could almost be guilty of believing it: the rest of the world doesn't matter. The world revolves round that tinier and tinier figure, as it revolves round a cottage in a tiny village in Wiltshire, where she has taken up residence. That I am home, home. (Swift 1992: 39)

He sees Jenny, his fiancée, following him on the runway and waving at him. The entire world fades, and his attention is focused on her, revealing how significant she is to him. Readers may consider the saying that she is his entire world.

In addition, according to Fishman (1989), the image of flying also gives Harry a clear perspective of the past. He remembers the moment when his father offered him the possibility of being in one of the passenger airplanes, inside the cockpit:

> he had pushed me forward into this wondrous outlook on the sky, had made me a present of it, then discreetly withdrawn. I might soar away; he would remain... I can see now that throughout that homeward journey his feet must have been, so to speak, still on the ground, still caught in the mud. And I was being lifted up and away, out of his world, out of the age of mud, out of the brown obscure age, into the air. (Swift, 1992, p. 208)

For Harry, flying is the image of happiness and of beauty. While he had conflicted with his father, he also remembers their beautiful moments together. The images of flying and their connection with a clear picture of life can be seen by readers as equivalent to Harry's ability to create meaning for his life and find a sense of optimism. They can be seen as a means of helping him overcome the psychological crisis and as a means of showcasing his optimistic outlook on the world.

Harry and Sophie both deal, like Unwin, with grief work based on the loss of Robert Beech. Yet his loss is only the pretext for them to examine their lives and feelings about each other, and they wish to reconcile. George deals with the loss of his previous life. He loses his job and his wife leaves him. Prentis deals with the loss of his illusions and previous beliefs about his father. All of these incidents lead to the characters' psychological crises and their need to reorganize their inner world to overcome them. These incidents are intertwined with reflections, shifts in perspective, and changes in beliefs, as well as a reconsideration of values. Harry and Sophie decide to move past their conflicts and reconcile. Prentis also reconciles and takes on a more understanding attitude towards his family. Unwin deals with a conflict within himself, asking who he is, as he needs to redefine himself while getting over the death of his wife, Ruth. George reaches a reconciliation with himself and with life. He grows more optimistic, falls in love with Sarah, and hopes to be with her after she is released from prison. The primary element is a reconciliation with themselves for all these characters, along with a more optimistic, calmer, or detached outlook on life, and a more understanding attitude towards others.

The theories of psychological crises by Erikson (1959, 1994), Worden (2018), Prochaska and DiClemente (Prochaska et al., 2013), as well as those by Bridges (2004), show common elements that can be used to analyze the attitudes depicted in the novels selected for analysis in this paper. The general approach to overcoming psychological crises includes adapting to change and reevaluating worldviews. It also involves remodeling the sense of self, overcoming relationship problems, reflecting on the issue, and taking action to find solutions. Accepting the problem leads to working on self-reinvention and looking towards a new beginning. We can consider these stages of psychological crises as being overcome in a similar way to the stages of grief work, from denial, going through psychological turmoil, including emotions such as anger, guilt, uncertainty, and gradual acceptance, and coming to terms with the situation. The stages of psychological crises are not presented step by step in the novels, as the structure of the novels is designed to show the characters' attempts to make sense of their experiences. This also happens in real life.

Readers can reorganize the events and impressions in the characters' narratives to discern how they confront the psychological crises outlined in the previously mentioned theories. This approach keeps readers actively engaged in the unfolding story. Readers also form emotional connections, as they may identify with the characters' crises. They might use the characters' experiences to address personal dilemmas and view these narratives as models for resolving psychological challenges.

Results

Change is, for Swift's characters, related to a loss of a particular kind: someone they are in a relationship with leaves them, dies, or disappoints them, revealing that they were completely different from what they had believed them to be.

Nowadays, society leads us to believe that every individual is unique due to the mindset promoted by individualism. Psychotherapists support this view. They advise us to consider that each person experiences psychological crises and grief work stages in their own way. Grief work does not necessarily follow the same stage order for everyone. Each of Swift's novels, therefore, presents a unique case based on the experiences of his characters. At the same time, readers can relate to the universal need for characters to reinvent themselves to overcome challenges. Swift's traumatized narrators are understood from this perspective—as undergoing a necessary process of change.

Reactions to change for Swift's characters are related to their reconsideration of values and worldview, as well as to their shifts in mental attitude, which in turn enable them to function more effectively in this world.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the experiences of Swift's characters, readers observe how internal change and introspection can be naturally prompted and resolved by individuals as they progress through their lives. Otherwise, such processes are prompted by the therapeutic setting, allowing the individual, who is already troubled, to initiate a guided process of analysis, introspection, and reinvention, thereby starting anew. We can loosely compare this trajectory to the hero's journey, a model set forth by Campbell (2003), which is commonly applied to fairy tales and myths. Nevertheless, fairy tales and myths are part of our universal, common, or, according to Jung (2014), archetypal experience. We can understand, figuratively speaking, the characters' experiences as they confront psychological crises and overcome them, much like heroes embarking on a journey. The journey is one of self-understanding and self-discovery. The experience they go through is one of initiation, according to Campbell (2003), of growing up, and we can think of the experience of Swift's characters in the same terms. His characters undergo a journey of grief, loss, depression, and life changes, and they emerge transformed and optimistic like victorious heroes.

Swift's characters show how familiar people handle mild depression and loss. We cannot claim these experiences establish a pattern in dealing with loss or the changes that follow. Such changes often require psychological restructuring to adapt and modify our identity. However, these stories can help us relate to someone going through similar experiences. As readers, we can try a similar process by reading another account of coping with change. For example, we might consider Unwin's Victorian ancestors' memories and Prentis' father's experiences.

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