

**Investigating the Subject's Identity:
The Critical Treatment of the Lacanian-Althusserian Dialectic and
Subjectivity Formation in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a
Young Man***

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Abstract

Critically examining the Lacanian and Althusserian theories of the subject, this thesis explored the theoretical problems and methodological premises of a converged version of both theories. The central argument the present thesis seeks to demonstrate is that the Lacanian-Althusserian dialectic provides a more comprehensive and effective account of the process of the subject formation than a purely psychoanalytical or structuralist Marxist analysis of the term. After a critical study of the way the subject is positioned between language and ideology in contemporary critical theory the thesis proceeds to investigate the subject-object relation in the Cartesian and Hegelian subjects.

Conceived of as the convergence of lack and material, the Lacanian-Althusserian dialectic focuses on the close affinity between the Lacanian notion of linguistic alienation and the Althusserian concept of ideological interpellation. The subject's alienation with what is called in the thesis 'ideological signifier' is considered as the result of direct and dramatic modes of interpellation in both language acquisition process and the mature phase. The major theoretical premises of this model include the following: first, identity functions through, and because of, the 'inter-subjective dialectic' and an 'intra-subjective lack.' Identity is never fully constituted because of this antagonism, and thus remains 'incomplete.' Secondly, the subject is ideologically constituted through language. The mechanism through which both language and ideology construct a subject never permits the subject enjoying a state of full identity with ideological signifiers. Thirdly, the subject's identity is represented in the language exposed to and, later, reproduced by him/her.

In order to demonstrate a practical reading of subjectivity formation in terms of this critical approach the present research applies it to James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). The process of the subject formation has been analysed through the subject's alienation/interpellation by the ISAs. Also, the inter-subjective dialectic between different subjectivities of the subject's identity has been investigated. The thesis demonstrates that identity reconstruction represented in the novel is a complicated and ongoing process, which begins with disillusionment, goes through materialization of epiphany, and ends with inventiveness in language. This process has been represented as a move from ideological to non-ideological subjectivity through artistic creativity. The exploration of the aesthetics of language is crucial to the analysis of the reconstruction of Stephen Dedalus' identity in that it happens in and through language.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother and my father, who, from a long distance, provided me with an effective motivation to complete this research project.

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