

## JOHN CHEEVER: A FICTIONAL SUBURBAN WRITER

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**Abstract** - John Cheever was one of the most prominent 20th century American writers. Most of his stories are rooted in New England villages in the region of Quincy, Massachusetts. Cheever's works exemplify the typical Americans life of the suburban areas. His well-crafted archives of upper-middle-class lifestyle describe the reality of suburban living which deserved him the title "the Chekhov of the Suburb". Cheever's writings explore both the subjective growth and construction of characters engaged, but his text allows the reader to observe the constructed and imagined essentials of the suburban life. Cheever also reveals the theme of social issues such as ethnic identity, tradition, family values, moral responsibilities of individual and sexuality and materialism in general through the shade suburban life of the 20th century American society.

**Key Words:** Suburban, American Life, Problems, Reality and Imaginative.

### 1.INTRODUCTION

John Cheever was one of the most prominent American short story writers in the 20th century. He wrote some novels but he became familiar by his collection of short stories. Most of his stories are rooted in New England villages in the region of Quincy, Massachusetts. His short stories are in three different varieties, first is extremely realistic stories were generally published in small magazines during the period of 1930 to early part of 1950. The second one is mixed with realism and antirealism together entirely represents New York and the suburban places around the city. The third and last type describes the proponent of modernism emphasizes the importance of consciousness in suburban life.

Cheever's works exemplify the typical Americans life in suburban area, his focus from urban to suburban represent the migration of the American population actually happening. Cheever migrated from New York to Scarborough, later to Westchester with his family. Cheever's elucidation of suburbanites acquired a name of suburbia in his writings. In his both the short stories and novels, he portrayed the characters which are alcoholic and engage in oversexed often challenging the devastation of their families obliged in financial pressures.

Cheever's writings deal only the issues of white American families living in the commuting areas around New York City, but it is merely considered him a suburban writer. Most of his protagonists are a white male protagonist who connects distinct values of suburban life.

Cheever used the setting that falls into several categories each associated with different stages of his career. His well-crafted archives of upper-middle-class lifestyle describe the reality of suburban living which deserved him the title "the Chekhov of the Suburb" which was conferred by John Leonard, editor of Times Literary Review. Cheever did not limit himself with the themes and methods linked with stories that he sets in suburbia. Carlos Baker argues about one of Cheever's novels *The Wapshot Chronicle* in which he states clearly that Cheever has not confined himself in writings in the area of suburban he keenly reveals in this novel, "it shows that while John Cheever's fortes are many, amusing, touching, and admirable, one of them is not architectonics" (20). Cheever's best stories hit a balance between the objective description of real world and the subjective interpretation of fictional world. In *The Critical Response to John Cheever* Boshia points out the imagination of Cheever:

Cheever's imagination the concrete, visual world is transformed into emotion, and emotion into something akin to nostalgia. The senses, alerted to a patch of blue sky or swirling leaves or a sudden shaft of sunlight, are stimulated to a recollection that transcends the present and transcends, when Cheever's writing is at its most powerful, the very instrument of perception that is its vehicle. (145)

Cheever's writings explore both the subjective growth and construction of characters engaged, but his text allows the reader to observe the constructed and imagined essentials of the suburban life. His works show the suburb is a place where consciousness is endangered by the point of traditional values, by interruption into a system of division and into capitalist amount of success. Cheever permits his characters to fall from the method provided by suburbia and he often relocates them within new fictional methods such as the visualized success or failure. Multiple levels of methods or orders arise both inside and outside the texts as characters, narrators, and the involved author sometimes offers or refuses the explanation.

In Cheever's works, the characters inhabit a suburban life with typical tone and distinct style of the narrator that exhibits largely the importance of suburban life. Certainly other argument persists in his stories which are the problems among brothers, the consequence of disloyalty and duality of human nature. The strong theme of Cheever's stories deal with autobiographical elements in easy way based on Cheever's personal life.

Cheever proposed in an interview, how to maintain the connection between the reality and the figurative in suburban setting in his stories:

All my work deals with confinement in one shape or another, and the struggle toward freedom. Do I mean freedom? only As a metaphor for... a sense of boundless, the possibility of rejoicing. Have used three symbols for confinement in my books: the small New England village...The world of affluent suburbia...and prison. (100)

Cheever's suburban characters can be categorized as victims in the real world, the protagonists who are not in control over their fates.

One of Cheever's short stories collections, *The Enormous Radio and Other Stories* explore a typical style and subject. The stories deal mainly the issues of people around the city, New York. *The Enormous Radio and Other Stories* (1953) are comprised of fourteen stories, all of which originally emerged from the life of New Yorkers. The first story of this collection is *The Enormous Radio*, a merely good out of most prevalent themes of Cheever that beneath the surface of routine life. This story revolves around the American couple, pleasant in all things except their fondness for music which is to reveal, for harmony and order.

Cheever's writings are hopeless and have exuberant view of possibilities. Cheever seems to have fictionally reframed his memories in his work and his life gives him a rich opportunity for explanation can satisfy the reader cautious of the intentional erroneous belief. Cheever recorded about abandonment of tradition and corruption of nature and artificial quality of contemporary life. Cheever's method is to charm the reader through a casual narrative style of realism, which allows the grotesque and the supernatural in his stories to seem believable and even inevitable. He is a master at blending the ridiculous and comic with images of terror or despair.

This study examines the representing themes that dominate Cheever's fiction and establishes him as a suburban writer haunted by images of the grotesque in suburbia. Cheever light up the disorder in familial relationship, marital enmity, egotism, and the conflicts between brothers, nostalgia and alienation at the heart of 20th century American life, especially that life is carried out in the suburbs. Cheever also reveals the theme of social issues such as ethnic identity, tradition, family values, moral responsibilities of individual and sexuality and materialism in general through the shade of suburban life.

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