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### **A Journey Towards The Truth And Certinity In Robertson Davies' Fifth Business**

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**Abstract:**

Captivated by Davies depth of psychological moorings, this paper will discuss about the major theme the journey towards the truth and certainty of the characters in general and to each other because of the snowball incident in the award-winning novel Fifth Business and in particular by highlighting the not so glamorous and mystical life of Dunstan Ramsay who is the hero of this novel. Fifth Business is perhaps Robertson Davies best known and is widely considered his finest work of fiction. One of the dominant theme in Davies's work is the quest of the individual for individualization, the process by which the individual brings together the disparate strands of his or her authentic identity. This quest explores the nature and formation of identity, the nature of fate, the consequences of an unfinished and un-lived life, the role of heritage and inheritance, the definition, creation and means of living a successful life and importance of physiology in psychic health is discussed.

**Keywords :** Psychological, truth, Certainty ,Jungian Archetypes, Concept of Wholeness.

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### **Introduction**

Robertson Davies enjoyed a notable career as a journalist, playwright and novelist. He is a writer of great ideas and a very exciting imagination, so his stories captivated and interested audiences all around the world. He excelled in a variety of literary disciplines. He has been an astonishingly productive writer and had started his career approximately from 1939 and continued till he died. Davies novels has been considered as a brilliant novelist who has written so interestingly that a good number of critics and writers have been influenced by his works. His writings have expressed positive ideas and thoughts to his readers by bringing to life real characters, who live in this real-world learning and experiencing complicated incidents. The stories are logically written, coherent with highly developed plots and interesting and

believable characters. The characters emit a positive outlook in life, living with a charismatic, authorized, patriotic and superior way of sailing through life's stormy waters.

The novels of Robertson Davies are a substantial contribution to novel writing in Canada. The comic spirit which pervades them, expressing itself through language, situation and character, in a variety of modes, is unexcelled in Canadian writing. Davies has also given evidence of considerable originality and skill in creating and projecting the characters in the trilogy. Characters like Dunstan Ramsay, Paul Dempster, Liesl, Mrs. Dempster and David Staunton not only substantiate this claim but indicate something of the breadth of Davies' range as a novelist. He does a complete character study and explores the characters in depth—for the most part they are used as a means to present or develop ideas.

Captivated by Davies depth of psychological moorings, this paper will discuss about the major theme the journey towards the truth and certainty of the characters in general to each other because of the snowball incident in the award-winning novel *Fifth Business* and in particular by highlighting the not so glamorous and mystical life of Dunstan Ramsay who is the hero of this novel. *Fifth Business* is perhaps Robertson Davies best known and is widely considered his finest. Christopher Lehmann Haupt described the novel in the *New York Times* as "a marvelously elegantly written and driven by irresistible narrative force" (Flint 27). It is a story of life of the narrator, Dunstan Ramsay who functions as a 'Fifth Business' (that is neither hero, heroine, villain, nor sidekick-but nevertheless essential to the plot).

Davies characters are shaped with a connection to mythical stories, they undergo a variety of experience's shaping their lives and become enriched by the power of it. As Diamond Lynne Nigh had said that Davies characters "are photographically realistic, but realistic in the sense of being archetypal and therefore not entirely individualized" (Nigh 18). The character's names instead of being branded forever, change depending on the status of their personality and soul. The plots are on the whole traditional and primarily vehicles of Davies' ideas.

The characters in *Fifth Business* interact and are connected psychologically to one another, making the mythological connection more real and interesting. The characters behaviour and the major themes acts as an interconnected which creates an interest in the readers. In dominant themes in Davies's work is the quest of the individual for individualization, the process by which the individual brings together the disparate strands of his or her authentic identity. This quest explores the nature and formation of identity, the nature of fate, the consequences of an unfinished and un-lived life, the role of heritage and inheritance, the definition, creation and means of living a successful life and importance of physiology in psychic health. The myriad of other psychological issues of identity that Davies investigates, many involving people, the role and the relationship, particularly within the family.

Davies' Jungian frame work serves as the basis for discussions of anima and the animus, the shadow and the archetype. These psychological and moral overtones overlap in the continuing contemplation of the change of responsibility, revenge and guilt, myth and magic, miracles and freaks, saint and devil – such is in *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore* and *World of Wonders* unleashed by a simple snow ball thrown in the village of Deptford in 1908 is set in semi-rural Ontario. The Deptford trilogy traces the divergent life of the three boys- Percy Boyd Staunton, Paul Dempster and Dunstan Ramsay from their childhood. The three boys are connected by one event in their childhood. Percy throws a snowball with a rock in it meant for Dunstan, but instead causes premature birth of Paul. The novel deals with the psycho-analytical concepts and issues in the quest for identity and truth undertaken in the lives due to guilt.

In The Deptford trilogy Davies fully gets engulfed in Jung's world. The narration is in first person subjective exploration. These novels are mythic and portray a marvelous view of this world where all

humans are connected to each other in some way or the other. This intricate and complicated relationship between the Characters reveal the underlining truth behind the mystery and meaning of life. The importance of the magus and artist (who are often the same) as revealers of the unconscious and the problems of good and evil. Davies believes that he is the communicator who transmits the information from the unconscious and makes the readers aware of the wonders of this life and all the mysteries in it.

The novel *Fifth Business* is seen through the eyes of Dunstan Ramsay who is born in Canada, of Scottish descent. He acts as a binding force in bring meaning to the life of Magnus Ensengrim. This man is humble in contrast to Ensengrim and a traditionalist figure who does not strive for power and fame like others in the story. He is content listening to the unbelievable tale of Magnus's life, without getting upset with the opinionated view with which the story is delivered. Nor does he constantly argue with whatever is said. Basically, he is a relatively simple and happy man, who strives not for control, but for knowledge in and out of his field of history.

Ramsay's keen interest in hagiography and his guilty connection to Mary Dempster provide most of the impetus and background for this novel. He spends much of his time struggling with his image of Mary Dempster as a fool-saint. Davies being an avid follower of Carl Jung's ideas also employs them in 'Fifth Business'. Characters are clear examples of Jungian archetypes and events are demonstrative of Jung's ideas of synchronicity. Davies employs an interesting means of narration in *Fifth Business*. The entire story is recited in the form of a letter written by Ramsay on occasion of retirement as Master of Colborne College and is addressed to his former headmaster.

All the characters in the story –Dunstan, Lisel, Paul, Boyd and Padre are characters with whom the readers don't want to part. Dunstan Ramsay experiences a number of incidents which marks a very important aspect in his connection to the other characters in the novel. As Dunstan grows and begins to understand the world, the incidents which occur in his life, force him to change his view of the world. His severed relationship with his mother, his understanding of Mary Dempsters behavior with the tramp , make him wiser.

Davies doesn't wait for Dunstan to reevaluate his own character at the end of the novel , but this revaluation and recognition of Dunstan's faults and experiences is done in a new aspect at the end of every incident in the plot structure. Dunstan's view of religion is which he is refreshingly irrelevant to the standard structures of religion yet he does not see the world as a non-religious place either. He comments to an atheist friend Sam that he knew a metaphor when he heard one and that he liked the metaphor better than reason and all atheists fall under the same perspective of life.

Dunstan is a phenomenologist; he continues to take in phenomena as they occur and he applies metaphors to them in order to understand them. If a new phenomenon occurs, which does not fit to the old metaphor, he throws out the metaphor and begins again. In this way Dunstan is playful with life and his growth as a character is beautiful and natural. Dunstan's next step of growth was his 'rebirth' in the army. He says that the army had not made him mature. He says "I was like a piece of meat that is burned on one side and raw on the other, and it was on the raw side I needed to work" (Davies 92). He had grown to be a man in one sense, but still had another side of him to develop. He also shares the harshness he experienced in war and when talking about the war he narrates the gruesomeness of war and how the death revealed to him the meaninglessness of life.

Dunstan's next step of growth was of course, Diana. But typical of Dunstan, he doesn't worship her in the end as his girlfriend or wife or saviour, but just another player in his world of drama. The novel, is heaped with real and life like incidents one after the other, the readers find it difficult to differentiate because the story is also transfused with elements of magical or near magical. (Willie coming

back from the dead, Mrs. Dempster's face on the Madonna and the aura that surrounded Dunstan's occupation with saints and their miracles). This book the *Fifth Business* is full of meaty themes, real characters, interrelated plots lines, interesting history and superb writing. Dunstan is a very interesting character and narrator of the text. He grew up in a small town, noticed its limitations, got out and kept going, found the world fascinating, realized he loved his hometown but could never live there again and has a playful view of life, philosophy and religion.

Ramsay's fascination for myth and magic does not make the story dull, but enlivens it with its strong psychological framework. This novel is reminiscent of Jostein Gardner Sophie's world, in which one can't help but love what the main character loves –that is why Dunstan Ramsay is memorable. As John Moss commented in a Reader's guide to the Canadian novel "Davies theatricality harnessed to a vision deep into the heart and source of things where magic and mystery hold sway becomes profound drama, moving us towards wonder rather than enlightenment, towards passion enthusiasm, eccentricity and away from ordinary conceptions of reality" (Moss 67).

The depth and breadth of knowledge in Jungian Concepts Robertson Davies draws us fathoms beneath the surface of the human personality. The audience is not left grasping for breadth, but is enraptured by the rich dualism in this fantastical world of Dunstan Ramsay. Good and evil, illusion and reality; history and myth –the shadows and likes of the world are exposed and explored. Gordon Roper, a longtime friend of Robertson Davies in an article "Fifth Business and that old fantastical duke of dark corners, C. G. Jung". Roper describes *Fifth Business* as a book "whose form and substance is overwhelmingly Jungian"(Moss 35). Although he notes several Jungian elements at play within the novel, He suggests that it is the concept of individuation – the process by which a individual achieves an authentic understanding of his or her nature – that is the dominant motif.

Davies' style is smooth-tongued and his characters speak and create impressions when the story unwraps it's self like an explosion to his readers making them wonder what would happen next. The characters express themselves through well-crafted and coherent paragraphs. The characters speak such technically attractive dialogues with the interplay of colourful imagery, which is characteristic of Davies work. On the whole Davies has written complex novels –which are mythical and portray a marvelous view of the world and plunges into the psychological moorings of the characters. Judith Grant the biographer of Davies is substantively correct when she asserts that, the most that can be reasonably gleaned from a study of Davies writings is "a map of the terrain and some hint of the riches to be mined"(Grant 9).

As a novelist, Davies was very much concerned with the images of evil in the nineteenth and twentieth century literature and so gradually moved towards literature which revealed 'life'. That is why Davies portrays the concept of wholeness. He is not really asserting a necessary dualism, but argues that we may discover wholeness of character. Davies', for all his admission to being a kind of moralist, is much more interested in character than morality, in the difficult attempt to comprehend as best we can glimpse it, that larger, cosmic concept of wholeness. Who am I really? How can I become myself? To attain this 'wholeness of self', one has to get rid of all the masks, drop the false fronts and discover our true selves. This realization of 'self' guide individuals in being what they are to themselves and not what they are to society.

In conclusion the characters in the novel *Fifth Business* are connected and when they feel threatened disconnect with the other characters in the novel. Magnus Ensengrim or in other words Paul Dempster decides to connect with Dunstan Ramsay but cuts cordial terms with Boy Staunton who was the cause of all the traumatizing events in his life. Dunstan Ramsay in turn connects to the monstrous Liesl, the

mentally naïve Mrs. Dempster and many other characters thereby bringing about a connection and involvement so that the incidents follow smoothly from one chapter to another. The characters interact and help each other to grow, achieve and imbibe a connectedness to themselves and the world around. Davies being a humanist and moralist strongly believes that only interconnectedness which is a complicated process, but when based on the psychological moorings of the mind is an effective way of building bridges in our lives and could make human existence soulful.

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