
THE THEME OF SELF- DISCOVERY IN THE NOVEL A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

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ABSTRACT

James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (1882-1941) was an Irish novelist, and poet. He was a pioneer of the modern English novel. He used the stream of consciousness technique to perfection in *Ulysses* and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He enhances the effectiveness of the novel by using myths, imagery, and motifs. His four landmark works are *Dubliners* (1914), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922), and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). This paper explores the theme of self-discovery in the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, through Stephen Deadalus's journey by rejecting the constraints to embrace his vocation as an artist. Stephen moves from a state of innocence to experience. He rejects the "nets" of nationality, language and religion which are hindrance to make him an artist. The aim of Joyce in writing this book is to show the development of Stephen as an artist. Just as Daedalus flew away from his captivity in the same way Stephen wants to escape from bondage of family, nation and church. He works in freedom as an artist.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Nature, Indigenous, wisdom, Humanism, Ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the novelist moves freely into the past and the present to give the readers a clear picture of the characters, their actions and their ways of thinking and doing things. James Joyce applied stream of consciousness technique to perfection in *Ulysses* and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He enhances the effectiveness of the novel by using myths, imagery and motifs. The novelist explores the minds of his characters by using the stream of consciousness method. This is also called internal monologue. He depicted that the mind does not think logically. A certain Idea comes to the mind then the idea associated with it comes to the mind. Thus, thousands of ideas which are themselves unconnected with each other pass through the mind. The human mind is like a stream on which various objects unconnected with each other keep floating. This thought produces a reverie in Stephen and the description gives us impression that he is already at home.

James Joyce says-

"All the people: welcome home, Stephen! Noises of welcome. His mother kissed him, was that right? His Father was a marshal Now! Higher than a magistrate, welcome home Stephen!"

Here, the reverie is broken by noises in the dormitory and the shouts of the perfect who was telling to the students to look sharp. Then we realize that Stephen was in the school and

was only day dreaming. By making frequent trips from the present to the past and to the future he gives a complete picture of Stephen's thoughts and actions.

Motifs of James Joyce

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts and literary devices that can help to develop and conform the major theme of the text. In the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a young Man*, Stephen's appreciation of music is closely tied to his love for the sounds of the language. As a young child Stephen turns Dante's threats into a song. Moreover, Stephen Dedalus is a figure from Greek mythology. Stephen is a representative of mythological Daedalus. Stephen's father also has the last name of Dedalus. By using this mythological reference James Joyce implies that Stephen must always balance his desire to flee Ireland.

James Joyce brought unity into his works by introducing 'motifs' which is introduced in the beginning of the novel. The word 'motifs' is an unifying factor. It is repeated several times in the novel. There are many more motifs which keep recurring throughout the novel. In the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to the motifs of light and fire and their opposites - darkness and punishment. Motifs are recurring structures, contrast and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the major theme of the text. In the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen's appreciation of music is closely tied to his love for the sounds and language. As a young child Stephen turns Dante's threats into a song. Moreover, Stephen Daedalus's very name embodies the idea of flight. Daedalus is a figure from Greek mythology. Stephen is a representative of mythological Daedalus. Stephen's father also has the last name of Daedalus. With this mythological reference James Joyce implies that Stephen must always balance his desired to flee Ireland. When Stephen is school boy, the novelist depicts childish sincere prayers that mirror the manner in which a child might devoutly believe in the church even he has no any deep understanding about the meaning of religious doctrine.

Irene Hendry Chayes says-

The character of Stephen undergoes transformations as we move from Stephen Hero to the Portrait. In the earlier draft he is shown as a sneering at his mother's pious superstitions or trying to convert his parents to Ibsen. In the Portrait the Ibsen episode is omitted and the quarrel with his mother over his failure to do his Easter duty is mentioned only indirectly. The details of Stephen's debauches similarly remain obscure; what we are shown, in the boy's dreams of temptation, the sermons he listens during the retreat, and his hallucinations of domination and punishment, is actually an apotheosis or epiphany of sin and repentance, far removed from the adventures of the Eugene Grants who for a generation have seen storming the brothels of the world in the imitation of Stephen. Here, the novelist depicted Stevens dream and vision of his life.

The Autobiographical Element in the Novel

Stephen's own self is well hidden in his own self. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* traces the growth of Stephen Daedalus from infancy to the time when as a young man he found his destiny as an Artist. He is a fictional counter point of James Joyce himself. The novelist depicted his recollection of early childhood. He tells us how he makes himself free from the entanglements of family, society, religion and country. He dedicated himself completely to be a proficient artist.

There are several similarities between James Joyce and Stephen. They had similar friends and families. They lived in the same places, attended the same school and also left Ireland at the same time. They are both artists in the making who felt that their genius had no chance of progress in the stifling atmosphere of their family, their country and their church. James Joyce and Stephen both are similar in personality. The events which shaped James Joyce are similar to those which shaped Stephen.

James Joyce says -

"Many writers have written about themselves. I wonder if anyone of them has been as candid as I have."

This shows that the artist whose portrait he wanted to draw was himself.

Epiphany in the Portrait

In the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, epiphany is a core theme which representing sudden and deep spiritual, aesthetic and intellectual revelation that impels Stephen Daedalus towards artistic independence. He dedicated each day of the week to worship. He prayed regularly. He is subjected his body to mortifications in order to suppress flesh. He brought each of his senses-sight, hearing, smell taste and touch - under a rigid discipline. Due to deep divine temperament the director of the school was highly impressed by Stephen. He offered him to be a Priest. He told him (Stephen) that God had chosen him to become a priest of the church. Because no king or emperor on this earth, no angel in the heaven, no saint and not even the blessed Virgin herself had the power which a priest of God had. After listening to the director's proposal, Stephen considered very seriously of such offer. He thought that the Priesthood can give secret power. It will give him freedom from material worries but it would snatch his freedom as an individual. He realized that "he was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others." He has a possession to become a true artist, so he could not accept the bondage of the church. He listens his own soul and give up the idea of becoming a priest like a true scholar.

Moreover, Stephen was taking one of his usual walks by the sea-shore. On the way he passed a group of Christian Brothers. He tried to look at them with indifference but an expression of shame and self-pity appeared on his face. He hurt some of his schoolmates calling: "Hallo, Stephanos! Here comes the Daedalus!" They were trying to make fun of him but it flattered him. He seemed to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air like mythical Daedalus. This thought thrilled him. He had heard the call of life to his soul. He had become conscious of his identity as an artist. He saw a girl standing in the water ahead of him. She seemed to be a beautiful sea -bird. He looks at her with worship in his eyes. He was thrilled. He would live a full life now. He would never be a priest. He was intended to become an artist.

Stephen's Aesthetic Theory

Stephen Daedalus is the aspiring poet, philosopher and protagonist. Stephen's growth as an artistic inventor is paralleled to his adventurous deed like legendary Daedalus. There is constant transformation in Stephen's thoughts, deed and action as per his own thinking, liking, situations and circumstances.

Stephen says-

"For my purpose, I can work on at present by the light of one or two ideas of Aristotle and Agunias... I need them only for my own use and guidance until I have done something for myself by their light."

Here, Stephen is showing his interest in both the traditional and classical perspective to create new ideas. Stephen felt pity and terror both. Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feelings which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with secrete cause. Those things are beautiful the perception of which pleases. The useful arts are those towards which the appetite tends. The creative artists, who creates fine arts is concerned only with the creation of the beautiful. The productive artist who creates useful arts is only concerned with the production

of the good. Art should not be kinetic. Three things are necessary for the perception of the beautiful firstly wholeness, secondly harmony, and thirdly clarity or radiance.

Stephen's Quest for Freedom (to be an artist)

Stephen's quest for freedom is a journey towards independence from religious, national constraints, familial and language. He regrets the suffocating restrictions of catholic orthodoxy and irrationalism in favour of intellectual and creative autonomy. Stephen feels burdened by the social and religious exceptions imposed upon him. He develops his own conscience and identity by overcoming all 'nets' of social bond. He refuses to sign a petition for world peace. He also refuses to join his classmates in their nationalist enthusiasm because he never wants to make his thought in any kind of limitation. Books and literature become Stephen's pathway to freedom. After going through great mighty minds, he discovers that there are several ways of thinking and seeing the world beyond the society offers in the present scenario. Literature shows him that an individual can create their own values and importance. Now, writing becomes Stephen's way of asserting the independence and creating his own identity. He left Ireland because he realises that he cannot become the artist of his own way due to social, religious and political pressure. The novelist describes the attempts made by Stephen to get out of these nets into atmosphere of freedom where an artist can work for his own creation freely.

The Growing Personality of Stephen as an Artist

Stephen is the central figure in the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Whole story revolves around Stephen. In fact, the novel is the progress of Stephen from early childhoods to his early manhood. The novelist depicts only those events which are concerned with his growth as an artist instead of growth as a man. His environment is described only so far as it affects his aim of becoming an artist. Each of the five chapters of the novel, every incident presents gradual change in the behaviours of Stephen. The behaviour of politicians and religious men breaks up the harmony of the family and causes all bitterness to Stephen. At the Christmas dinner the members of the family have a heated discussion on the shabby treatment meted out by the clergymen of Ireland to the great Irish politicians, Parnell. Everyone was impressed by Stephen at Clonowes and Belvedere College. He was highly individualistic. He believed in individual life. He was never happy with collective life. He always stuck to his own opinions. He was consistently struggling to raise himself above his friends. Moreover, Stephen Daedalus's growth as an artist is a journey from sheltered and passive childhood to an independent artist. He dedicates to himself, to beauty and art. He shifted his devotion from God to creation. He develops a sharp, critical and aloof Persona. He alienated himself from Irish Catholic and family traditions to think independently.

2. CONCLUSION

The novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* begins with the childhood memories of Stephen. He remembers a story about a 'moo-cow'. He also remembers some heated discussions on Irish Politics that took place between Simon Daedalus, Mary Daedalus, uncle Charles and Dante and so on. He remembers that he was punished into a ditch of dirty water by a ill mannered fellow namely Wells. He remembers one Christmas which he spent with his family. He remembers how he had once been unjustly punished at school. Due to the bad financial condition of the family he was sent to another school called Belvedere college. Later on, Stephen was taken by his father to cork where he had to sell some of his property. He was taken to Queen's College where his father had studied and introduced to some of his old friends. Stephen won a Prize in an essay competition. One night he surrendered himself to young prostitute. But after listening the preaching of Father Arnall, Stephen was thoroughly shaken. He went to church for away from the school and made a full confession before an old priest.

He started leading a holy and pious life. Stephen goes to university. He believed that creative artist aims at the creation of the beautiful.

Thus, the aim of Joyce in this novel is to show the development of Stephen from a creation to a creator. He shows how Stephen grew from a child to a young man. He is capable of taking his own decisions. He is ready to take up his mission of an artist. He uses his style as his method to achieve his purpose. For each step of Stephen's development there is an appropriate style. He discovered in himself and artist. He left his honour as a priest. He always heard the voice of his soul which is over other than an artist leisure, security and freedom are essential for any creation.

“Painting is self-discovery. Every good artist paint what he is.”

-Jackson Pollock

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