

JOYCE'S SELF-EXILE PORTRAYAL IN *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*

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Abstract

“This race and this country and this life produced me, he said I shall express myself as I am,” proclaims the protagonist- Stephen Dedalus - the alter ego of the author - in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This, the first novel of the author is a vivid account of his birth and how he was predestined to develop his persona into an artistic product. Also, the publication of this *Bildungsroman* (Novel of Education) work signals his vocation as an artist. To call it precisely, it is *Künstlerroman* – a novel of the artistic development of the protagonist. Hence, it is a prologue rather than a complete and rounded work. Joyce, inherited the view of an artist from Henrik Ibsen - an artist is a man who is isolated from other people by his career, and he must continue to isolate and distance himself from all the attachments of family, society, religion, and nationality which would seize him to the everyday, bourgeois life. An artist, according to Joyce, is like a scientist who must hunt for truth; he must surpass the atmosphere in which his fellow-men are submerged. To break free off the ties of the family and other affections, the artist may end up injuring himself. Joyce very well knew this. Thus, this article examines how the author has exiled himself in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in order to tell the truth which is unpleasant to his countrymen.

Keywords: Self-exile, Artist, Identity, Culture, nationalism, etc.

To talk about the Irish culture, it is highly required to know about the Irish nationalism which had been a major influence and had closely intertwined with Irish ethnicity, literary skills and other associated social aspects. Joyce associated himself in the work as an artist abroad. His response to the demise of the Irish nationalist Parnell: “But he had not died then. Parnell had died.” He always wanted to self-exile for escaping from the narrow ideologies of Irish nationalism. He says, “the sow that eats her farrow”, i.e., its saddened nationhood wipes out its own Irishmen.

A Portrait, as an archive, did not fail to chronicle the deep felt emptiness caused by the disappearance of the fallen hero Parnell. The quarrelsome dinner table talk on Christmas day is a fine carving that in deep articulates the political opinions of each character. Joyce has to be lauded for setting up such arty phenomenon in the novel.

Stephen, out of bitterness, speaks out his political views that differentiate his present day politicians from the martyrs who fought for the interests of the country and for who he has high regards. He believes that such great men were deceived by their followers and this had brought ill fame to the country and its people. It is as well the opinion of all radical thinkers of his time. The defeats of national hero gradually built in Stephen some instantaneous hatred for politics.

Joyce draws a good comparison between the history of literature and nationalism. Speaking of culture, at a time, Joyce himself personally remarks that Ireland is a culturally deprived state, a later addition of Europe. But, the time before Parnell was optimistic and held signs of cultural unity. The Irish literary renaissance, in its initial level, did not have Irish material and was dominated by overseas culture. But it was later reasonably answered by great literary geniuses like Yeats. As they tried to construct a link, i.e., praising the legendary writers of the past for supplying profound materials, Joyce necessitates filling the role of Parnell through the people like Fergus.

Joyce created Stephen who is mounted up with a lot of pressure. He as proud figure, while facing reality, has to encounter so many challenges to prove his ideas right. His opinions are visible and presented through his talks and memories. His bond with father and mother is also not so vivid, i.e., we see no attachment with them. The remoteness between them is evident when Stephen showed his act of rebellion for protesting against the unfair palm-whipping, he takes notice of his father recollecting a conversation with the Jesuit against who he stood.

The pictorial visions of the author's school buildings, structure of the street and Dublin city are highly mirrored in *Portrait*. In actual fact, Joyce was the pioneer in bringing the picture of city and urban life in modern Irish novels. He is greatly responsive to his surroundings. As a result, the Irishness in his experience is obviously echoed in his writings.

“He had wandered into a maze of narrow and dirty streets” (Joyce)

These streets are labyrinths which literally mean the slums of Dublin itself. These labyrinths symbolize all the forces that arrest the artist of nationality, religion and other aspects. He has to reject all these to fly out of the maze. But his flight will be dangerous.

Thus, these walks in the city have given him both admirations and frustrations. All these feature in this novel. His psyche has beautifully been operated to produce the reality of city milieu. His wandering, hunting, likings, ambitions and other visions of life are profoundly generated in *Portrait*.

Joyce was disinclined towards archetypal city life for its adverse conditions. He despised his state in which he was forced to speak the language of another nation. He felt estranged in his own motherland. He strongly believed that a better Ireland was only possible through humanity. His writing carried more about Ireland than any other Irish writer's.

Joyce, as a Jesuit trained Catholic man, had great regards for Cardinal Newman and was much moved by his tones of prose. As a boy, Joyce read literature and other religious texts. They provided him with a fair knowledge of the past and inner wisdom of doctrines on how orderly the world should be. He even remembered his early times in church when he sat near fire to listen to the Jesuits' description of people's after-death journey to heaven and hell. These hearings had a great impact on him. He used to compare what he imagined with the reality which is utterly devoid of moral and ethics. He fell sick many times as a result of these. To him, the

present gave him the appearance of hell as in the case of Dante in *The Inferno*. He was often melancholic. All these visions of the other world gave him a sense of completion and so he had to discover or chase through spiritual and literary journey. It is apt to say that he declined the false religious beliefs for the true artistic beliefs. He decided to become a priest of his everlasting imagination.

As a school boy, he turns to literature as a means of escape. He enjoys *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the story that talks about escape and liberation from imprisonment. The boy's aloofness endures all through the work as the people who love him slither away from his psyche without having any real impact. Thus, the readers witness Stephen detaching from his schoolmates as his family's financial conditions worsens and his father hunting for employment.

The style that Joyce adapted here is straight and intuitive and at proximity it echoes, in an incoherent way, the recollection of his thoughts and memories lingered in his mind. Thought the author said to be ousted himself from the society and family inhabit, the readers are comfortably realize in the work that they take a walk with the protagonist on his drive to self-discovery.

Stephen likes to establish his life in a utopia where he can be very much himself and be free. He looks for a place to execute his creativity and other skills. These, he definitely could not find in Ireland. He, from his early days, set himself for a far away land. He did not want to involve himself in politics and pursue his Irish literary circle. Amidst all these Irish circumstances (Church and State), in a concluding note, this genius, like the mythical character Icarus, wanted to take a flight in self – exile to create himself as an artist.

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