

# Study Of "Stephen Dedalus ", The Main Protagonist Of A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man

Fatemeh Azizmohammadi (Corresponding author)

Department of English Literature, College of English, Arak Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Arak, Iran

E-mail: Meena\_mina\_mina@yahoo.co

Sepide Kamarzade

M.A. in English Literature, Islamic Azad University-Arak Branch, Arak, Iran

E-mail: Sepid\_Sparkler@yahoo.com

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## Abstract

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, written in 1916, is an autobiography and the first novel of the great Irish writer, James Joyce. It's written in Modernist style. So it can be contain of some category of realism, naturalism, and Marxism which aroused in mid-to late nineteenth century. But it mostly included realistic style because of the beginning date of this literary school. By reading all works of James Joyce is maybe committing oneself to an outstanding trickery world of "chaosmos" (Finnegans Wake, p. 118.21), which stands for poetic mystery that few writers have achieved. In this study attempted is made to survey the main Protagonist in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and Ulysses, Stephen Dedalus, and its relationship to the author.

**Keywords:** James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Modernism, Humanism, realism, self-awareness

## 1. Introduction

James Joyce was born in Dublin in 1882, became one of the most important writers that we've ever known. He was son of a genius but incompetent father who is described exactly by "Stephen Dadalus" in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as a man who is appeared in the story as the protagonist and antihero, who is " the chief person in modern novel whose character is widely discrepant from that of traditional protagonist or hero. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power or heroism, the antihero, like Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's work, is petty, ignominious, passive, clownish, or dishonest" (Abrams, 2009, p. 10). As we see during the story that how he becomes petty by the words of his College's friends in chapter one, because of his name and social rank. When Joyce was a child, Ireland had been under British rule since sixteenth century, and tension between Ireland and Britain had been high. In addition to political strife, there was religious tension between Catholics, the majority of Irish, and Protestant. James Joyce's whole education from age six to nine was at Clongowes Wood College, and from age eleven to the age sixteen at Belvedere College in Dublin was Catholic. As he studied in Clongowes Wood College, in his early youth, he was very religious, but in a year to his graduation from Belvedere he began to reject his Catholic faith and that's why he saw as involving in rebellion and exile. After all the problems that happens to him, Joyce, by writing a series of stories which engraving with remarkable lucidity aspects of Dublin life, began his job as a successful writer. Like Stephen, his fictional hero, Joyce in his youth felt restrained by the pressures of religion and politic, and limited and spare interests which surrounded him in Ireland during the nineteenth century. Because of the restricted atmosphere, in 1904 at age twenty-two, unfortunately he left his family and the Roman Catholic Church of Dublin, which he was interested during his childhood, for becoming a great writer to Europe. Thereafter he remained away from his nation and family, with brief exceptions, for the rest of his life.

By looking at his style of writing, we encounter that most of Joyce's work contain the style known as stream of consciousness, which leads reader to a certain character's thoughts and insights as reader visualize. In another word, he ,by using stream of consciousness, can see character's mind. Roman and Greek mythology, Catolic religion, and Celtic language are also integrated with Joyce's work. In most of his works, including Ulysses, the greatest novel of nineteenth century, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, an autobiographical novel, compulsion with above mentioned mythology can be found easily.

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1 Summary of *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is a story about the formation of a person, Stephen Dedalus, from his childhood to youth. He should study at a Jesuit school for boys, as his family decides, at Clongowes Wood College. The young Stephen finds it hard to integrate with others. He never participates in games with the other children, because the older boys always mock him and treat him as an outsider or stranger, so he always annoyed by behaviour of his classmates. He often recognizes ownself as a hero but remains isolated from others and "exile" himself. As he becomes younger, he

goes to Cork as a short trip along with his father. His father was a Corkonian, who humiliates his son, during a short trip, by drinking, flirting, and a long talk. Cork city causes Stephen's father to remember his youth. Stephen cannot realize his father's attitudes and emotions. Stephen believes he is wiser and older than his father, however he was young and this feeling of authority was a part of his arousal sexuality. He became strange with his family, by passing school days. Instead of his deep religious beliefs, he understands that lust is surrounded him by pleasures which he can find in worldly enjoyments and delights. Stephen looking for a way of escaping from the conflict around and within him. He was full of regrets because of many sins that he committed. In this moment he visits a priest, Father Arnall, who speaks of hell. The description of hell makes him scared and it was a motivation for his confession. Despite a short time his belief to Catholic, his religion, begins to fade again. When he leaves his family, in Europe, Stephen continues his studies at university. In this time, he was away from society while by writing and studying literature he tries to go inside of himself. Finally, Stephen knows himself and realizes that he must decline the ideologies which surrounded him. As a result of his revolution, he leaves all the lost paths and continues the way which he has chosen for himself from leaving Ireland to become a successful artist.

## 2.2 Stephen Dedalus

Stephen Dedalus, the main character in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and a significant character in *Ulysses*, is the embodiment of Joyce's methodological assions. In etymology dictionary (2014): "Stephen or Steven is a masculine first name, derived from the Greek name "Stephanos", in turn from the Greek word, meaning "wreath, crown, honour, reward", literary "that which surrounds or encompasses" and in addition, in Greek mythology, Daedalus /di:dəlis/ or /dɛdəlɪs/ (Ancient Greek: Daedalos, meaning "clever worker"; Latin: Daedalus; Etruscan: Taitale) was a skillful craftsman and artist" (Online Wikipedia & Online Etymology Dictionary, 2014).

"Joyce extends across two boundless prospects by naming his wellknown protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, after the builder of the Cretan Labyrinth "Daedalus" from classical Greek title meaning "cunningly wrought" muffle our sense of Stephen's individuality by suggesting a mythical analogue and possible type quality in his name" (Online Encyclopedia, 2014).

"In Christianity Stephen's first name strikes as St. Stephen the martyr who was stoned to death by a mob because he claimed that he saw God appear in the heavens" (Fargnoli, 1996, p. 55). Stephen himself feels unfairly to the same degree. "Joyce's view of the artist as isolated and exiled, misunderstood by his neighbors and consequently vilified by them, would have made the association with St. Stephen" (Givens, 1963, p. 119). Stephen becomes the hero and creator of his own story while many myths surrounded him. "Joseph Campbell . . . divides the journey of the archetypal hero into three parts: departure (the call to adventure); initiation (a series of adventures that test or develop the hero's skills); and return (the hero arrives transformed)" (Robbins, 1994, p. 261).

"The basic myth that is prevalent in *Portrait*, is the Greek legend of the escape from the island of Crete by Daedalus and his son Icarus. Daedalus, a great architect, created a large maze called the Labyrinth to house a half-man, half-bull called the Minotaur. The Minotaur was birthed to King Minos' wife as punishment for keeping a sacrificial bull that was to be given to the sea-god Poseidon. Therefore, Poseidon made Minos' wife fall madly in love with the bull. Minos, to keep the secret of the Labyrinth safe, imprisoned Daedalus and his son Icarus in the Labyrinth on Crete. The only escape from the island was by air. Daedalus created two pairs of wings from feathers and wax and he and his son flew from the island together. Yet this story is not without a lesson to be learned. Icarus, who did not heed his father's warning took his pride and himself high into the sky. The wax melted and Icarus fell to his death" (Hamilton, 1969, p. 144-45, 157).

Many extraordinary literary stories illustrating Daedalus' wings as that of Ovid: in his *Metamorphoses* (VIII, p. 183-235) "Daedalus was shut up in a tower to prevent his knowledge of his Labyrinth from spreading to the public. He could not leave Crete by sea, as the king kept strict watch on all vessels, permitting none to sail without being carefully searched. Daedalus set to work to fabricate wings for himself. He tied feathers together, from smallest to largest so as to form an increasing surface".

The name "Dedalus" also offers Stephen's interest to "fly" above constraints of religious, nationality, and politics in his own growth, as we see at the end of the novel when he builds two wax wings in order to use them for flying over everything.

## 2.3 Look over and analyze of "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"

We can see during the story, especially the beginning, when Stephen is spend his childhood, his contemplation to his name and the significance of identity. As we encounter in the story: "Stephen Dedalus / Class of Elements / Clongowes Wood College / Sallins / County Kildare / Ireland / Europe / The World / The Universe" (*Portrait*, 1991, p. 12), when he writes in a fly leaf of his book, his name and location, he is trying to find the relationship between his name and the place which he is physically in. His nasty classmates for scorning also had ridiculously written on the opposite page: "Stephen Dedalus is my name. / Ireland is my nation. / Clongowes is my dwelling place / And heaven my expectation" (*Portrait*, 1991, p. 13). By a brief thinking on his name and its relevance to the people and universe, Stephen finds out some differences (like God and Dieu) which is existed in association with a person and an entity with its name in comparison to his own: "God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. Dieu was the French for God and that was God's name too... But though there were different names for God in all the different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. God's name always pointed to God; whereas, Stephen's name was ambiguous" (*Portrait*, 1991, p. 13).

As he moves from childhood to adulthood, without any self-awareness to consciousness, from a Portrait to Ulysses, language is the foundation and structure of Stephen's character. To the reader, the personal identity of Stephen is introduced by his first conversation at Clongowes Wood College with a classmate when he is at age six. This conversation starts when a classmate questions Stephen's name and the meaning of it. This part of the novel foreshadowing Stephen's identity-crisis when he doesn't have anything to answer:

And one day [Nasty Roche] had asked:

—What is your name?

Stephen had answered:

—Stephen Dedalus.

Then Nasty Roche had said:

—What kind of a name is that?

...Stephen had not been able to answer... (Portrait, 1991, p. 5).

A little time after, another classmate by the name of Athy, when Stephen is in weakly, claims that: "you have a queer name, Dedalus" (Portrait, 1991, p. 23).

In other part of novel we see :

"What is your name? Stephen had answered: Stephen Dedalus. Then Nasty Roche had said: What kind of name is that? And when Stephen had not been able to answer Nasty Roche had asked: what is your father? . . . Is he a magistrate?" (Portrait, 1991, p. 8-9).

As seeing in mentioned parts, Stephen's sensitivity about his name and identity continually is challenged at school in a way that he doesn't realize the reason of it. In another word, he has identity-crisis at his childhood age. Nasty Roche who is one of his classmates, is always challenged authority of Stephen's father and identity of them, like Dante, who represents the cruel, nasty, and unpleasant side of the church, (roche = rock = church), and Stephen never can answer his questions.

In his adolescence, young Stephen through questioning his name's meaning strives for increasing his self-awareness. It "serves as the central dynamic of Stephen's adolescent development and motivates the plot of the novel by igniting its narrative desire" (Baxter, 2000, p. 207-8). Especially, Stephen is efforting to "make a name for himself", in order to illustrate his attempt to find out his identity which becomes a translation for him, it involves "a relationship between identity and language exists at the root of the adolescent identity crisis and the adolescent's movement into adulthood" (Baxter, 2000, p. 204).

"Stephen's perceptions of self and struggles with identity begin in Portrait with the questioning of his name. The significance of his name precipitates in questions of paternity. He tries to be loyal to his blind acceptance of authority, but his ability to do so is ruined by the argument at dinner at home, and later by the unfair punishment he receives at school. When he is punished it is too much for his scheme, and his confusion and disappointment are emphasised by the way he thinks the priest is going to shake hands with him" (Mcbride, p. 32).

At school, Stephen never takes part in the activities of the other boys, so because of his identity-crisis, he send himself to a kind of exile. He can't even talk to others. Exile, silence and cunning, he actually separates himself from others and these three categories were Stephen Dedalus's weapon in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. As well, these were weapons of James Joyce, its author, against unfriendly world. He chooses these weapons in order to act against language, nationality, and religion, which always make him feel ashamed and deprived from free life. Also in Joyce's real life, he exiles himself from Ireland not only because of his personal dislikeness or repulsion, but also because of the unfriendliness and hatred of Irish people towards their artists. And through the story, when Stephen visits the National Theatre on its opening night, people's hatred is proved to him. Stephen's desire to resist authority and control, in order to maintain his values and beliefs in front of the dominance rule that always efforts to bridle him, is vital for him, but there is also a strong indication of martyrdom in his name's identity which he carries its attitude by his name, that he identifies himself and the hidden characteristic of his own with the Irish politician Charles Parnell. We are also mentioned before that one of the reason of Joyce for choosing the name Stephen is association of him with Stephen the first Christian martyr.

At the end of Portrait Stephen proclaims, "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. ... Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (Portrait, 1991, p. 275-76).

Regardless of Stephen's father and all that he symbolizes, Catholic Church and its inflexible rules, little by little, turn Stephen's soul to stone. Stephen's father, in this story, is a symbol of disorderly life which is never be at the fix and steady regulation and in literary language we can refer him as a symbol of temptation in human. Both of the above mentioned sources send Stephen's soul to prison. In order to set his soul free from the mysterious identity, which becomes a jail for him, he has to discover, through self-perception, what his identity is and, next, how to accept all the social requirement without losing his characteristic.

Stephen creates a serious, efficient, thoughtful, and business-minded nature. He is one to make his own decision and not to be influenced by others. He desires independence and freedom in authority and interference of others. He is not overly ambitious and in his personal relations, he is inclined to be serious and not to see the humor or likely to respond spontaneously. As we see in some parts of the novel that he doesn't participate in boy's playing. Thus in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Stephen gets a great deal of reader's sympathy. In a section of the story when Stephen's eyeglasses were broken, he saw movements of life, reality, and physical truth by a short-sighted glimps.

### 3. Conclusion

As it had been discussed before, James Joyce creates a deeply personal and emotional portrait to every man. The study of the main character of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses, Stephen Dedalus, showed that Joyce tried to capture the insufficiency of self-awareness and freedom in his life, which comes into contact with universal feelings of detachment, guilt, and awakening. The result is the relationships that are based on wrong factors and consequently instead of shaping a new possibilities, leads to loss, failure, and destruction. Through the novel, by close looking, it becomes obvious that reality is absolutely different from what appears in the story and the mind of Stephen. At the end of the novel, he understood that all the ways which he had gone, was wrong and invaluable so thereafter he decides to make himself ready for what he belongs to. He chooses to be artist because he wants to be free from all the rules and regulations. He escapes from this material world by using wax wings, which is symbol of his free soul. We can see all of these despair, loneliness, and feeling of guilt, which happen to him, because he is not able to accept others. So he tortures himself by exile and jailing within a imaginary fence in order to be away from others. He experiences a kind of exile, silence, and cunning which shows nationality and religious of him. This story is a kind of symbolic, alligorical one which is autobiography of the author.

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