

A Portrait of an artist as a young man ^① an autobiographical novel.

James Joyce is a pioneer of modern English novel and occupies an important position in the 20th Century fictional world. He has first hand knowledge of social, religious and economic condition of Irish people and personal experiences of all the vicissitudes of human life. His novels reveal his creative art and narrative technique and, at the same time, paint a true picture of Irish society. Undoubtedly his 'A portrait of an artist as a young man' is an autobiographical novel that demonstrates his rebellious attitude against the existing condition in his Fatherland which is, in no way, conducive to the growth of an artist's imagination. This novel is a masterpiece of his fictional writings. Here he has used the Stream of Consciousness Technique, images, symbols and motifs that enable him to move freely into the past and the present to depict the actual thoughts and actions of his characters. Let us see how far the given novel represents the autobiographical elements.

Some of the critics consider 'A Portrait of an artist as a young man' as a thinly veiled autobiography of James Joyce. Joyce himself declares that 'many writers have written about themselves. I wonder if anyone of them has been as candid as I have. The very title of the novel is also significant in this regard. In fact, Joyce does not want to portray any artist but only the artist, meaning himself. When we analyse the novel and observe Stephen's thoughts and actions as well as his situation and contacts, we find a lot of similarities between him and his creator. They have similar families and friends. They live in the same place, attend the same school and bid farewell to Ireland at the stage of growth. They are both the artists in making who realise that the stifling atmosphere

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of their families, their country and their church is not conducive to their genius to get its full ~~fruit~~ flowering and fruition.

Besides, it is evidently obvious that the personality of Daedalus Stephen is founded on the author's personality. The events and happenings that shape Stephen's personality are similar to those which have contributed to the development of that of Joyce. The novel traces Stephen's spiritual development that proceeds on the same lines as the author's own progress. Joyce's childhood experiences are also similar to those of the hero of the novel. In fact, as Joyce is a master of fictional art, he does not transfer the all the facts of his life straight into the novel. He has selected some suitable facts of his life and has dexterously instilled in his *A Portrait*. He has left out some of his experiences and has dramatised and fictionalized the rest. Of course, all the incidents of the novel are not true to James life in their details but the spirit is the same.

As a matter of fact, James Joyce, while in his formative stage of life, wanted to become an artist but he was pulled in different directions. The environment of Dublin was not congenial for the progress of a devoted artist. His father was the most irresponsible person and the family was sinking deeper and deeper into poverty. The attitude of Irish people towards their leaders and writers was highly disgraceful. The Church wanted him to be a priest that he did not appreciate and, so, he left the land in order to fulfill his cherished desire to become a dedicated artist. These experiences of James Joyce with the same magnitude are amply reflected in the life of the hero of the novel, Stephen.

James Joyce has followed the same method as

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has been described by Stephen for the creative process. He says, "The aesthetic image is life furnished in and reprojected from the human imagination". Stephen is in fact, young Joyce 'purified in and reprojected from the human imagination of the matured artist.' However, the ~~trivial~~ final assessment of the novel makes us feel that 'A Portrait of an artist as a young man' makes us feel the novel is not an exact autobiography. Joyce has been a witty and gay person, while Stephen is presented as being always serious. Several incidents described in the novel did not happen with him but in the life of his friends. Stephen refuses to mimic the Rector at Belvedere in a school play but Joyce did so when he was a student. Furthermore, Joyce has been more affectionate to his parents than Stephen who is not even grateful to his father for sending him to good school and University.

Thus, we see that Joyce's aim in writing this book is to show the evolution of a young man into an artist. He, therefore, has selected only those incidents of his life which ^{are} relevant to show the evolution and has left out those which seem irrelevant for his purpose. He has ^{also} invented certain incidents which are more befitting. In short, the framework of this novel is the author's own early life but he has made some changes and has invented some new situations which are required for the artistic presentation of Stephen's character.