

## The Use of Epiphany in ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’

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### Abstract:

**JAMES AUGUSTINE ALOYSIUS JOYCE** was born on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1882, at Rathgar, Ireland. He was an eccentric student and he did not confine himself to the books prescribed by the University. He read books from the library on all types of subjects. He made a deep study of English literature and formed his own theories on aesthetic and literary themes.

James studied modern European languages like French and Italian, so that he could study the works of the great masters in original. All good writings strives towards poetry as poetry is the highest form of writing. Joyce started off as a poet was good enough to receive attention from W.B.Yeats who encouraged Joyce to “turn his mind to unknown arts.”

### FAMOUS WORKS OF JAMES JOYCE:

- DUBLINERS
- A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN
- ULYSSES
- FINNEGANS WAKE

Under this title James Joyce collected together fifteen stories dealing with the life of Dublin. His experience of Dublin was that it was a drab and dirty where the people led miserable lives. The characters are created from his own observation of life.

### Introduction:

#### A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN:

The aim of Joyce in writing this book was to show the development of Stephen as an artist. He, therefore, felt that this book was not developing on right lines. The family and friends of Stephen and the environment of Dublin had taken very great space and the central light had not been kept on Stephen. He, therefore, decided to abandon this work and to rewrite the book in about one-third of its length, in five chapters only. In this book which developed into A Portrait of the Artist as a Youngman he retained only those incidents which were directly connected with Stephen’s growth as an artist. Much of the matter of the earlier book was then destroyed.

### ULYSSES:

Ulysses continues the story of Stephen Dedalus. It was in the peaceful atmosphere of this country that he composed this novel. Ulysses is a big novel covering more than eight hundred pages although it deals with the thoughts and actions of a single day in the life of Stephen Dedalus, Leopold, and Leopold’s wife, Molly. The thoughts which pass in the minds of the characters are all described in full detail. One idea suggests some other idea which is associated with it and that suggests some other idea. The ideas are not selected and presented logically as some other novelist might have done. The novelist records the full stream of ideas or impressions which pass through the minds of the character

### ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE:

Right from the start, Joyce had an uncanny feel for organizing the

macrocosmic structure in his works. His first book, the collection of short stories entitled *Dubliners*, isn't like most anthologies of stories. The volume was conceived as a book from the beginning, linking multiple stories by theme, technique, subject matter, etc. and the stories are presented through four aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life. I've thoroughly examined the structure of *A Portrait of the Artist as a young Man* in a previous post, and the organized structure in both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is staggering for such enormous texts. I've read a quote from Joyce somewhere describing *Ulysses* as his *Notre Dame* and it's not a bad comparison. I'm less familiar with the structural anatomy of the *Wake*, but it does use Giambattista Vico's four cycles of history as a trellis and, as artist Stephen Crowe recently argued, its structure is even more thoroughly crafted than *Ulysses*.

#### **THE USE OF EPIPHANY IN 'A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN'**

According to the dictionary an epiphany is a 'manifestation or showing forth'. It is the sudden of the revelation of the hidden meaning of an ordinary happening. Sometimes some of unimportant thing happens which makes us realize the real significance of things which was up till then hidden from us. The experience has been described as 'the lifting of the a veil which enables one to see the essential quality or unity of some idea, event or person. Such a spiritual breakthrough could be triggered by something as in significant as a sound or gestured.' It's a moment of vision when one suddenly looks into the heart of things, and finds a temporary solution to the problems that were baffling him. Epiphany is actually an ecclesiastical

term which was secularized by Joyce . when Jesus was born in Bethlehem 3 Wise Men of the East came the and they realized through their spiritual inside that the baby in the manger was not an ordinary child but the son of god and they offered gifts to baby Christ. The coming of the magi to Jesus Bethlehem is commemorated in the Christian churches with the feast of the epiphany on the 6th of January every year. That is called the epiphany because the Wiseman where able to see that what appeared to be a poor infant lying in the manger was actually the son of god. Joyce has not used the word in *A Portrait* but he has introduced epiphanies at every stage of Stephen's spiritual progress. It happens sometime that an in significant event suddenly reviews the truth or provides an insight into the causes of his conflict. The revelatory moment comes all of a sudden and he quickly understands the situation. For a longtime there are conflicts in Stephen's mind and then suddenly there is a resolution. There is a synthesis. The problem is solved for the time being. This is epiphany. There is a major epiphany at end of each chapter. But there are smaller epiphanies within each.

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is James Joyce's first novel. It was published serially in a magazine called 'The Egoist' between 1914 and 1915. It was published as a book in 1916. It has a long and tortured process of composition. It starts out as an essay, then it turns into a book called *Stephen Hero*, which was going to cover the development of our hero, Stephen (makes sense) Dedalus from infancy to adulthood. He wanted it to be super realistic, kind of hyper-realistic. Joyce eventually abandons the project. He really doesn't like it and kind of chucks it out. He then finishes a short story collection, *Dubliners*. Then, he

starts to work on it again and revises into this book, into *A Portrait of the Artist*. Kind of the main difference between *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait* is length. *Stephen Hero* is really long while *Portrait* is not. The other thing is that he really starts to abandon this idea that he needs to be strictly realistic. He starts to get a little more interested in representing Stephen's consciousness as he develops from infancy to adulthood more than adhering to any standards of strict realism. So it becomes a way different book. But it kind of has the same goal as the original, which is to fully represent this development of the artist as a young man, tracing his development into the artist that he wants to be. So what does this form look like? Now that we've abandoned realism, what does it turn into? And who is Stephen? And what does Joyce do to make this all so unique? These are all things we're going to talk about.

One of the hints of what makes it so unique has to do with something called epiphany. This is a really key concept for Joyce. We'll go into it a little bit later. But have that on the back burner in your head. Basically, Stephen, the character, is kind of an alter-ego of young Joyce. He goes to the same school that Joyce went to. He follows the same developmental trajectory. There's a nice German word for books like this that follow developmental trajectories and that is *Bildungsroman*. This literally means 'formation novel.' *Die Bildung* is education or formation and *der Roman* is 'novel.' The idea of the coming of age story has infiltrated all kinds of movies. You've got 'Dirty Dancing,' 'American Pie,' 'Sixteen Candles' and even 'The Lion King' or 'Legally Blonde.' They involve someone figuring themselves out and becoming someone new.

So there's a long and storied tradition of this and *Portrait* fits right in. It's specifically something that's called a *Künstlerroman*. That's a sub-genre about artists because *Künstler* means artist in German. Now you know some German, so that's exciting. We follow Stephen through stages of childhood and young adulthood as comes into his artistness. It's arranged into five parts.

#### **JOYCE'S EPIPHANIC MODE:**

Material Language and the Representation of Sexuality in *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait* ” by Joshua Jacobs is very insightful for the study of Stephen's epiphany in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* . “The Liturgy of the Epiphany Season and the Epiphanies of Joyce” by Florence L. Walzl takes a philosophical approach for the understanding of Joyce's epiphanies. “The Epiphanies of Joyce” by Robert Scholes and Florence L. Walzl is another perceptive study on Joycean epiphanies. Chinese studies concerning *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* tend to analyze the mechanism and the presentation of Stephen's epiphany as well as the aesthetics reflected throughout this novel. Professor Li Weiping's original works published in China, including *Joyce's Aesthetics Concept and Fictional Art* and *The Stream of Consciousness Novel* , elaborated on the artistic features of Joyce's works, providing insightful perceptions on how to appreciate Joyce's writing technique and to decipher Stephen's epiphany in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Besides, a part of *The Transfigurations of the Characters in Joyce's novels* written by Chinese scholar Feng Jianming is also very helpful for the understanding of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a*

Young Man. Other studies concerning A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man can be found on some dissertations by Chinese students who focus on the expression of Stephen's epiphany. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man stills has a massive population of readers and a special magic especially for people in their 20s who are experiencing something similar to the protagonist in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man . This fact encourages the author of this paper to read this book several times so as to forge his own conclusion. Based on the method of close reading, this paper tries to make a rather systematic study of Stephen Dedalus's epiphany with a focus on the implication of Stephen's epiphany, the presentation of Stephen's epiphany and finally the role Stephen's epiphany played in the life path of the protagonist, James Joyce as well as readers similar to Stephen's age. Epiphany, according to Abrams's a Glossary of Literary Terms , is defined as "‘manifestation,’ or ‘showing forth,’ and by Christian thinkers was used to signify a manifestation of God's presence within the created world" (Abrams 80). However, previously before Joyce's Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man , seldom did epiphany found its voice in literature. Epiphany is found more expression in works concerning religions, be it Christian, Buddhism or Taoism. What is more, some scholars even hold the idea that the term epiphany is supernatural. For Christianity, the epiphany is closely related to Jesus Christ, the son of God. The Adoration of Magi is celebrated through history as the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and every year , on the six day of the first month, the Feast of the Epiphany is commemorated in churches of western society. What is interesting is that in the

east, churches also celebrate on the nineteenth day of the first month, although the focus is on Jesus Christ's baptism.

For ordinary people of religion, religious epiphany only takes place when he/she realizes that what is seen through is connected closely with his religious faith or belief, or we can affirm that only when divinity is concerned can the term be referred to. It is nothing peculiar to find similar expression on other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. In Hinduism, the very term epiphany means the rising of wisdom while in Buddhism Nirvana is closely related to this definition. Besides, in Taoism, the more profound religion, the term epiphany here becomes so mysterious and subtle that language seems unable to provide a suitable definition.

However, Stephen's epiphany in chapter four is best defined by James Joyce himself in another book entitled Stephen Hero. Now for the third quality. For a long time I couldn't make out what Aquinas meant. He uses a figurative word (a very unusual thing for him) but I have solved it. Claritas is quidditas. After the analysis which discovers the second quality the mind makes the only logically possible synthesis and discovers the third quality. This is the moment which I call epiphany. First we recognise that the object is one integral thing, then we recognise that it is an organised composite structure, a thing in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognise that it is that thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany.

**Conclusion:**

Thus Stephen's spiritual development takes place through a series of epiphanies. He is agitated with various problems and difficulties. Then suddenly the veil is lifted and he sees the solution of his problems. A synthesis is in sight and he jumps at it. Epiphanies are landmarks in his progress. He has throughout felt that for him the family, the nation and the church are like prisons. He must fly away from them. A true artist should have loyalty only to his art. In the final epiphany, therefore, he decides to go into exile where he will be absolutely free to dedicate himself to his art.

This novel thus traces the progress of Stephen from creature to creator. At the end we find that he has thrown off all entanglements. Now he has no loyalty except to art. He goes out of Ireland with the firm resolve that he will not serve that in which he no longer believes whether it calls itself his home, his fatherland or his church and he will try to express himself in some mode of life or art as freely and as he can, using his defence only such weapons as silence, exile and cunning.

**Reference:-**

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