A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

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JOYCE

A Portrait of the Artist
As a Young Man

BY JAMES JOYCE

Introduction by HERBERT GORMAN

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NEW YORK

INTRODUCTION

When James Joyce's "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" first appeared in the columns of "The Egoist" (February, 1914—September, 1915), it is doubtful if more than a handful of readers realized exactly what had come into English letters. There had been stories before, plenty of them, about the childhood and school and college life of sensitive young men but never one of quite this kidney. The unusual aspects of this book, this impressive prelude to the then unsuspected "Ulysses," were implicit less in the situations than in the method of handling and the suggestive innuendoes rising from apparently trivial notations. In other words the author was exploiting a new form in the novel, a form not then fully ascertained but to be carried to its logical determination in the behemoth of books that was to follow it. To understand this form it was necessary to understand the limitations of fiction. It was necessary to comprehend that the novel had (within the boundaries more or less arbitrarily set for it) fully flowered and blossomed, that in Gustave Flaubert, and, after him, Henry James, the ultimate possibilities of characterization and mental and spiritual exploration and revelation had been exhausted. There was nothing to be done but to push the apparently set boundaries of the novel back still farther, to make possible the elaboration of that new factor in life,—the subconscious. So much had come into this problem of living, so many misty awarenesses of inexplicable inhibitions, so many half-formed impulses, atavistic urges, semi-conscious cerebrations, mysterious enchantments of the heart, and involved mental gestures, that a steadily widening gap was splitting literature and life apart. It was the purpose of Mr. Joyce to fill this gap, to make possible a profounder exploration of reality in the novel-form. "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," then, was (and is) important as a pioneer effort in this direction.

To this effort Mr. Joyce brought an astonishing and awe-inspiring array of talents. He brought independence and arrogance, psychological acumen and dialectical skill, vividness of conception and treatment, moral freedom and human passion, sensitivity and intuition, and, above all, a literary courage that was undisputed. It was no secret that it was himself, his own youth, that he was recreating. He realized, rightly enough, that in no better way could he develop this new form of fictional treatment, a treatment akin to pathology and infused with an uncompromising psychology, than in applying it to himself for in himself he possessed a rare subject for such an endeavor. The Stephen Dedalus of "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," delicately constituted, innately intellectual, afforded Mr. Joyce an opportunity for psychological revelation that was boundless in depth. Here was a youth, naturally fastidious in his conceptions and stirred by an obscure inward urge toward creativeness—in other words, the artist-type, set down in the midst of an antagonistic environment. He is surrounded by poverty and bickering. He is ultra-nervous as a boy. His eyesight is impaired. He passes through the phases of ridicule from his schoolmates, unjust discipline from his Jesuit-teachers, the quaking delirium of religion, the questioning arrogance of an awakening intellectualism, the broken sorrow of first love, and, at the last, he is left a proud exile about to set forth on that pilgrimage which every artist must travel. "Welcome, O life! 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." Such a theme could not have been handled in an old-fashioned objective manner for too much of it was inextricably bound up in the subjective processes of the mind of Stephen Dedalus. It is the mind of a youth that is the hero of this book, and its proper treatment demanded an intensive mapping of the fluctuations and progressions of that mind. Here thought is action as well as those objective movements and surface passions that bring personalities into violent or subtle reactions. It was, then, Mr. Joyce's function as author to discover the best media for transmitting this theme to an audience. He found them in the mingled methods of objective and subjective treatment and brought to the fore in English fiction (for the first time prominently, anyway) the stream of consciousness system of character delineation. This method was to be carried to its eventual goal in "Ulysses."

Perhaps no method has been more discussed in the last decade than this so-called stream of consciousness technique. There are enough practitioners of it now to fashion it into a well-recognized mode of fictional treatment. In England there are Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf. In America there are (unevenly, to be

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sure, and not always successfully) Sherwood Anderson and Conrad Aiken and Waldo Frank. In France they will hark you back to Edouard Dujardin whose "Les Lauriers Sont Coupés" is supposed to have suggested certain aspects of his treatment to Mr. Joyce. Then, too, there is Valery Larbaud, a self-admitted disciple of Mr. Joyce. But it is futile to enumerate names or attempt to place one's finger on the very first person who applied this method to fiction. Wyndham Lewis, for instance, appears to believe that Charles Dickens adumbrated the method in his character of Alfred Jingle. All this is unimportant. As a matter of fact, the stream of consciousness method is an evolution, the answer to a crying need of the novel which was discovering itself to be stifled within arbitrary limitations and which found a new outlet through the psychological discoveries and experimentations of the day. Mr. Joyce was certainly one of the first, if not the first, to handle this method on a large scale and with supreme and convincing ability. When he reached the immense panorama of "Ulysses" he had the mastership of his method well in hand. It was his willing slave and it performed miracles for him. But it had already manifested itself in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," particularly in such intense scenes as close the book, and because of this that volume assumes rightly enough an extremely important place in the development of the novel-form today. It was the gateway leading directly to "Ulysses" and it opened upon a huge and unexplored terrain that has yet to be completely traveled by following novelists.

Now just what is the stream of consciousness method? The solitary thoughts of characters in novels have been overheard before by god-like authors and yet we do not apply the phrase 'stream of consciousness' to these mappings of thought. The difference is in the word 'stream.' This new method is an attempt through the application of the author's psychological astuteness and intuition and profound knowledge of his character's mind, its depths, its subconscious impulses, inhibitions, and buried urges, to set down the undisturbed flow of thought—not always conscious, perhaps, to the thinker—that pours through the restless mind, a stream that is diverted constantly by a thousand and one extraneous objects, word-connotations, stifled emotions, from the consistent and built-up delineations of thought-processes to be found in the older novelists. Two objections have been brought against this style of literary treatment, that is, two paramount objections, for there are a hundred lesser ones. One of them is that the reader must take the author's word for it that his character's thought-processes are logical, that there is no proof that they are scientifically accurate. This is true enough, but, after all, the author's character is his own and to employ this form he must begin farther down to build his character up. He must lay the foundations of a subconscious person and rear on this the objective man. If he does this successfully there is no reason why his character's planned thought-processes as revealed through the stream of consciousness method may not be accurate and logical. True enough, it calls for a new type of novelist, a novelist who is psychologist and pathologist as well as a fictional creator. But that, obviously enough, is the road that the novel today is taking. The second objection is that the inclusion of haphazard musings, fragmentary cogitations, odd bits of thought, apparently irrelevant streams of brooding, changes the scheme of the novel and destroys that time-honored unity and selectiveness that so pleased our fathers. So it does. It calls for a new form in the novel, the observation and recognition of character from another plane. Instead of movement thought becomes action. This is what Mr. Joyce adumbrated in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." At least, three quarters of this book is absorbing because of the vivid transcript of thought in it. It is the mind of Stephen Dedalus that enchants and absorbs us and it is our consciousness of the authenticity of this figure that makes us so reluctant to lay the book down. Because of this we can reread "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" many times for each reading is the renewal of an intimate acquaintanceship. We know Stephen Dedalus as well as we know our closest friends although, because of that mysterious artistic divinity in the arrogant young man, his essential self is somewhat beyond our fullest comprehension.

If the subjective tone of "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" is convincing and distinguished, what may be said about its objective tone? After all, there is a surface to the book, movement, description, the presentation of character. Indeed, it was this surface that first drew readers (always excepting the lucky handful who knew from the beginning the potentialities it suggested for the future novel) to its engrossing pages. Scene after scene may be plucked from the book as representative of its clear realism and power of representing life. The agonies of Stephen Dedalus as he passes through the religious hysteria brought upon him by his days in attendance at the Roman Catholic retreat, for instance, is one although that has certain permeating subjective features to it. But what could be clearer of the subjective and yet more convincing and tragically humorous than the famous Christmas dinner at Stephen's home where his aunt Dante loses her temper at the malicious proddings of the two Parnellites. The history of Ireland in little is circumscribed in this section of a chapter where religious differences shatter to bits what promised to be a feast of love. There is irony here but it is a cold detached irony, an irony that could place this scene at a dinner ostensibly in honor of Jesus Christ but yet dominated by the rancorousness of fierce church differences. If, at times, this irony is bitter we must remember that these figures are more than fictions and that the painful autobiography of a sensitive soul, lonely and proud, is imbedded in these pages. There is humor here but it is the cold humor of a man who has detached himself deliberately from those things which first made him, things that his mind and soaring destiny refuse. The reader must never forget the symbolism in the name Dedalus. That name may be found in any primer of mythology.

The philosophical implications of the book pass the bounds of a short essay for one can do no more than indicate that Stephen progresses by a steadily maturing process of ratiocination toward his goal of reality. If, at the conclusion of the volume, he has not found himself as yet he is well on the road toward it and he has made several great steps in its direction, not the least of them being his painful self-liberation from the Church which educated him and whose tenets and scholastic reasoning still permeate his mind. He has also liberated himself from the compromises of love and reached that grave conviction that he must travel alone, an exile to time and country and faith and friends, if he is to achieve the ultimate core of reality. Michael Robartes remembered forgotten beauty and when his arms wrapped his love he held all the faded loveliness of the world; Stephen desires to press in his arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world. So he goes, with the thought of the old Greek Dedalos and his osier-bound wings in his mind: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead." So profound and beautiful and convincing a book is part of the lasting literature of our age and if it is overshadowed by the huger proportion and profundities of "Ulysses" we must still remember that out of it that vaster tome evolved and that in it is the promise of that new literature, new both in form and content, that will be the classics of tomorrow.

HERBERT GORMAN

January, 1928.
NEW YORK CITY.

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Manufactured in the United States of America

Printed by Parkway Printing Company   Bound by H. Wolff

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" Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes."
OVID, Metamorphoses, VIII., 18.

CHAPTER I

ONCE upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . .

His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.

He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.

O, the wild rose blossoms
On the little green place.

He sang that song. That was his song.

O, the green wothe botheth.

When you wet the bed, first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell.

His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance. He danced:

Tralala lala,
Tralala tralaladdy,
Tralala lala,
Tralala lala.

Uncle Charles and Dante clapped. They were older than his father and mother but Uncle Charles was older than Dante.

Dante had two brushes in her press. The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael Davitt and the brush with the green velvet back was for Parnell. Dante gave him a cachou every time he brought her a piece of tissue paper.

The Vances lived in number seven. They had a different father and mother. They were Eileen's father and mother. When they were grown up he was going to marry Eileen. He hid under the table. His mother said:

— O, Stephen will apologise.

Dante said:

— O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes.—

Pull out his eyes,
Apologise,
Apologise,
Pull out his eyes.

Apologise,
Pull out his eyes,
Pull out his eyes,
Apologise.

* * * *

The wide playgrounds were swarming with boys. All were shouting and the prefects urged them on with strong cries. The evening air was pale and chilly and after every charge and thud of the foot-ballers the greasy leather orb flew like a heavy bird through the grey light. He kept on the fringe of his line, out of sight of his prefect, out of the reach of the rude feet, feigning to run now and then. He felt his body small and weak amid the throng of players and his eyes were weak and watery. Rody Kickham was not like that: he would be captain of the third line all the fellows said.

Rody Kickham was a decent fellow but Nasty Roche was a stink. Rody Kickham had greaves in his number and a hamper in the refectory. Nasty Roche had big hands. He called the Friday pudding dog-in-the-blanket. And one day he had asked:

— What is your name?

Stephen had answered: Stephen Dedalus.

Then Nasty Roche had said:

— What kind of a name is that?

And when Stephen had not been able to answer Nasty Roche had asked:

— What is your father?

Stephen had answered:

— A gentleman.

Then Nasty Roche had asked:

— Is he a magistrate?

He crept about from point to point on the fringe of his line, making little runs now and then. But his hands were bluish with cold. He kept his hands in the side pockets of his belted grey suit. That was a belt round his pocket. And belt was also to give a fellow a belt. One day a fellow had said to Cantwell:

— I'd give you such a belt in a second.

Cantwell had answered:

— Go and fight your match. Give Cecil Thunder a belt. I'd like to see you. He'd give you a toe in the rump for yourself.

That was not a nice expression. His mother had told him not to speak with the rough boys in the college. Nice mother! The first day in the hall of the castle when she had said goodbye she had put up her veil double to her nose to kiss him: and her nose and eyes were red. But he had pretended not to see that she was going to cry. She was a nice mother but she was not so nice when she cried. And his father had given him two five-shilling pieces for pocket money. And his father had told him if he wanted anything to write home to him and, whatever he did, never to peach on a fellow. Then at the door of the castle the rector had shaken hands with his father and mother, his soutane fluttering in the breeze, and the car had driven off with his father and mother on it. They had cried to him from the car, waving their hands:

— Good-bye, Stephen, goodbye!

— Good-bye, Stephen, goodbye!

He was caught in the whirl of a scrimmage and, fearful of the flashing eyes and muddy boots, bent down to look through the legs. The fellows were struggling and groaning and their legs were rubbing and kicking and stamping. Then Jack Lawton's yellow boots dodged out the ball and all the other boots and legs ran after. He ran after them a little way and then stopped. It was useless to run on. Soon they would be going home for the holidays. After supper in the study hall he would change the number pasted up inside his desk from seventyseven to seventysix.

It would be better to be in the study hall than out there in the cold. The sky was pale and cold but there were lights in the castle. He wondered from which window Hamilton Rowan had thrown his hat on the haha and had there been flowerbeds at that time under the windows. One day when he had been called to the castle the butler had shown him the marks of the soldiers' slugs in the wood of the door and had given him a piece of shortbread that the community ate. It was nice and warm to see the lights in the castle. It was like something in a book. Perhaps Leicester Abbey was like that. And there were nice sentences in Doctor Cornwell's Spelling Book. They were like poetry but they were only sentences to learn the spelling from.

Wolsey died in Leicester Abbey
Where the abbots buried him.
Canker is a disease of plants,
Cancer one of animals.

It would be nice to lie on the hearthrug before the fire, leaning his head upon his hands, and think on those sentences. He shivered as if he had cold slimy water next his skin. That was mean of Wells to shoulder him into the square ditch because he would not swop his little snuffbox for Wells's seasoned hacking chestnut, the conqueror of forty. How cold and slimy the water had been! A fellow had once seen a big rat jump into the scum. Mother was sitting at the fire with Dante waiting for Brigid to bring in the tea. She had her feet on the fender and her jewelly slippers were so hot and they had

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