



James Joyce: A Critical Study of His Novels, Poetry and Play

Soumyajit Samanta

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Writing, as James Joyce envisaged, is a continuous process, always creating new words, new meanings, new works in worlds born anew. However, any conception as well as summation of Joyce the artist is bound to inculcate the unique personality of Joyce the man. Hence, it is an extreme unction to find, to seek, to locate and explain the man behind Joyce's works, who masquerades as the proverbial God, paring his fingernails, having fathered his own text/child. This book problematizes the uniqueness of Joyce the man in his letters, essays, drama, poetry as well as his novels. The very act of reading Joyce's texts becomes a rich, polyvalent as well as ambivalent literary enterprise wherein the authority and authorship of texts are debated, questioned and reformulated. This book is a quest to recover and discover through the trace, the elusive idea of Joyce the man who is always conspicuous by his absence in his works/words.

As the pre-eminent modern/ postmodern author, the appreciation of Joyce tides over critical boundaries, defying demarcation of time and space. In this book we continue to read and discover in his very act of erasure the dimensions of the elusive persona of the Joycean self. His poems evince a search for an objective correlative to embody the nascent artist's birth, in brilliant images. His travails have been dramatized in *Exiles*. His essays illustrate the ambivalence and impersonality of the artist. *Dubliners* illustrates his nascent use of epiphany which he perfected later in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where he aptly dramatizes the fluidity and fecundity of the richness of the artistic process. In *Ulysses*, Joyce is fascinating as the Everyman, adding myth, history and a compendium of knowledge and literary styles to the richness of his portraiture of Bloom. Finally, in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce showcases the immediacy and universality of Finnegans as Everyman/ Noman through his cascading prose which creates, decenters and recreates the twentieth century man/artist. But the decentering/recreating of the artist is never complete, it is an incessant process. This book is an attempt to understand and explain the richness of this decentering and recreating process in Joyce.

This book owes its present nature to my numerous interlocutors and fellow teachers in India and abroad, who suggested that the study should be so designed as to benefit both researchers as well as students of English literature.

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