

**Imagery  
and the Mind  
of Stephen Dedalus**

**A Computer-Assisted Study  
of Joyce's  
*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man***

**JOHN B. SMITH**

### About the Author

John B. Smith received his B.A. in mathematics from The University of the South (Sewanee), his M.A. in Literature from the University of South Carolina, and his Ph.D. in Literature from the University of North Carolina. He has worked with computers and literature for almost ten years and currently is Associate Professor of English and Research Consultant at the Pennsylvania State University, where he teaches courses in modern British literature, computer techniques for humanists, and an occasional course in technical writing and Science and Human Values. Dr. Smith feels strongly that the computer can be a valuable tool not just for the mechanical aspects of literary scholarship but for interpretive studies as well. Properly used, the computer extends the critic's powers of recall and his ability to locate and characterize textual patterns.

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# Imagery and the Mind of Stephen Dedalus

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Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist  
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In the last chapter of *Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus presents to his friend Lynch a theory of aesthetics based on a model of perception. This theory, Dr. Smith believes, describes Stephen's mental growth and is applicable to the novel. In extending the theory into a literary hypothesis and applying it, Dr. Smith shows that images, those bits and pieces of normal experiences, cluster and coalesce around major transitional experiences for Stephen. By tracing the changing patterns of associations among images, the author has virtually drawn a map of Stephen's developing personality.

Earlier studies have concentrated on isolated clusters or patterns of images, often failing to note important changes that drastically affect implications and connotations. To trace the developing structure among all of the images—some thirteen thousand in a text of nearly 100,000 words—would have been impractical if not impossible to do

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by any conventional methodology. By using a computer, Dr. Smith is able to analyze the image structure of the novel comprehensively and exhaustively and to recover a number of developments and interrelations not heretofore noted.

Images, when interpreted as any datum of sensory experience, constitute the matter of apprehension. There is reason to infer from Stephen's discussion with Lynch that at moments of true radiance there will be large concentrations of sensory impressions, resulting in a spiraling build-up of intensity that can, if sustained, result in epiphany or major redefinition of the basic personality. Thus we may expect a quantitative relation between concentrations of important images in the text and the dramatic moments of epiphanic experience.

Graphs for individual chapters of the *Portrait* show that epiphanic experiences are accompanied not just by dramatic "peaks" of image intensity but that they are coincident with a sustained build-up. Next a number of independent computer procedures were used to trace the changing patterns of associations of images, thereby tracing the development of Stephen's mind. Using computer-produced aids, the author has been able to define the fundamental structure of associations among images and note the changes that take place during epiphanic experiences, and thereby flesh out and portray the fabric of association as it actually exists in the novel.

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To  
Wendell  
with my best wishes,  
John

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For my Family

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