But his spiritual transformation has the odour of the original sin. With his daily life 'laid out' devotionally, he "offered up each of his three daily chaplets that his soul might grow strong in each of the three theological virtues". His spiritual vision is ridiculed by the geometrical image, "he saw the whole world forming one vast symmetrical expression of God's power and love". This overzealous spiritualist unconsciously deploys images that reflect a mechanical approach to spirituality.

Stephen's own name brings to him the image of a 'winged form flying above the waves'. In the ecstasy of 'flight' he is seized with a wild desire 'to cry like a hawk'. He experiences the epiphany at the sight of a girl wading the sea. She appears to him a sea-bird awakening, finally, a new life in him. The sudden shift from the Dedalus to the Icarus-image impregnates the narrative with a double suggestion. Dedalus gets his freedom through his artistic genius but the same fire brings tragic end to Icarus.

Joyce calls this book 'a portrait of the artist'. Though he suggests that it is not a biography ~~but~~ but a work of art, he does not commit himself to it. Hence 'A Portrait'. And, the phrase 'the artist' carries the suggestion that the person portrayed is not the prototype of the universal artist, but an artist of a particular cast. As we recall in this context Joyce's choice of the name he gives to the hero — Stephen Dedalus — this ambiguity seems to be confirmed. With his first name (Stephen) signifying spirituality and martyrdom and his surname (Dedalus) implying 'deadliness of seriousness', the artist-hero only justifies the uncertainty of the stance that goes with the title.

The 'artistic' rendering of the biography makes the novel a veritable challenge to the reader. If this is a measure of the autobiography as an objective piece of art, James Joyce certainly succeeds in his job. But the conventional reader finds that the novel is being subverted into a game. But Joyce's experiment

entails ambiguity as a part of the artistic perfection. His art does not offer solution, it only involves.