

## The Evolution of an Artist in English Literature

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### I

#### "Who is an artist?"

"All it takes to become an artist is to start doing art."

(Langer, Ellen J. *On Becoming an Artist*)

Creativity is not a unique capability that only some special few are born with, but rather an integral part of everyone's makeup. All of us can express our creative impulses— authentically and uniquely.

Currently, the term artist customarily refers to anyone who is engaged in any activity that is deduced to be an art. However, the questions of what is art and who is an artist are not easily answered. The idea of defining art today is far more difficult than it has ever been. Anything can in fact be art, and the term remains constantly evolving.

An artist is a person who is involved in the wide range of activities that are related to creating art. The word has transformed through time and context, but the modern understanding of the term generally refers to a person who is involved solely in the visual arts, as opposed to a musician, an actor or a poet.

In ancient Greece, there was no word for "artist," but there were nine muses who governed a different field of human creation related to music and poetry. During the Middle Ages, the word "artista" referred to something resembling "craftsman," or student of the arts. The European academies of the 16<sup>th</sup> century formally coagulated the gap between the fine and the applied arts, which exists in varying degrees to this day. Generally speaking, the applied arts apply design and aesthetics to objects of everyday use, while the fine arts serve as intellectual stimulation.

This causes any definition of "artist" and "art" so vague as to be meaningless. Definitions can never be personal. When it becomes personal, it is an interpretation, not a definition. A definition is an objective meaning of a concept.

Pablo Picasso has said, "The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web."

An artist is guided by many emotions like love, anger, strife, cynicism, deception, trickery, jealousy. The true artist is joyous, loving, forgiving, giving and embracing. In this reference Alice Walker has rightly said that a writer's heart, a poet's heart, an artist's heart is always breaking. It is through that broken window that we see the world.

*The entire soup-bowl of human emotions is the palette of the true artist.*

Emotion is the fountainhead of all art. To specify which of those guide an artist and which don't, is an exercise in futility and mistaken in its initial presumption. Then the question arises that is an artist individualized from other human beings by his inner nature? Do specific temperamental qualities classify some people as artists and exclude others? But the perception of an artist is very different from the way we see things. Artists are virtuosi. They afloat us to worlds that were previously unknown.

Most of the people have estimated that the one thing you need to be an artist, is skill. Was the artist who designed the Sun Temple of Konark or the Taj Mahal an artist? Did the artist have the skill to execute his/her vision? What about the workers who built the Sun Temple of Konark or the Taj Mahal? Hundreds of thousands of workers were toiling to create a masterpiece. Were they artists? These are difficult questions in the context of art. No, they were not, they were artisans. If one has artisans who have the skill but who do not have the artistic creativity, why does an artist need skill? Artistic skill can be outsourced. Artistic creativity cannot.

It is conceived that to become an artist one must have imagination. That is not true at all. The thing is that everyone is an artist. Whether you are a student, teacher, athlete, scientist, doctor, etc., you are all artist. Every person on this planet is born with imagination.

“Be an artist, in whatever little faculty possible.

For the Earth, without ‘Art’ is just ‘Eh”

- Jasleen Kaur Gumber

## II

### **Literary Artist or a Poet**

The word Literature comes from Latin ‘littera’ which means letter, so literature means an acquaintance with letters or the art of written works. Literature embraces all compositions in writing which preserve the results of observation, thought, fancy and imagination.

A poet or a writer is an artist that paints with words. A poet is the artist's artist - One who can paint most captivating and colorful landscape by using only one paint color which only the mind's eye can see and elucidate. So the poet is an artist, further more a literary artist.

Understanding ‘what literary artist is?’ has always been a challenge and adhering a definition has proven to be quite difficult task. Here is one definition of what literary artist is “Ideally, the literary artist creates written works that respond to a literary tradition as well as a contemporary context with an eye to the future, anticipating that others will look back on this work and reflect on how various features of the work relate to the specific context that surrounded its creation, including time, place, and audience.” (Helen Yung, artist, writer)

The literary artist is a thinker. Ideally speaking, it is impossible to be someone else. It is impossible to transfer bodies with another human being, and it is impossible to completely understand the intricacy of their world. Literary artist, as an alternative, makes us able to understand

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another person and his world whole-heartedly. For instance, a novel about a treacherous war, written in the perspective of a soldier, allows the reader to envision their memories, their pain, and their emotions without actually being that person. Consequently, literary artist can act as a time machine, enabling individuals to go into a specific time period of the story, into the mind and soul of the protagonist.

Literary artist plays the vital role in preserving knowledge to be passed down through generations. Literary artist has had a major impact on the development of society. He has carved civilizations, reformed political systems and uncovered injustice. Literary artist gives us a detailed preview of human experiences, allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotion.

Literary artist provides a means of expressing the creative and innovative ways in which we humans interpret the world and all things in it. He/she also acts as a source of inspiration, entertainment, and opportunities to develop the mind.

Literary artist puts the foundation to life. He helps us to know our emotions in this way he also manages our emotions. Literary artist motivates us to do something and gives us the sense to recognize and understand the emotions of other people.

A poet or a writer teaches us many lessons that have universal themes, such as love, war, desire, justice and many more. When we read these topics, we become much more enlightened in our thinking and our vision of the world expands. This makes us better citizens. Literary artist has the ability to see the world with a pair of fresh eyes; it impels the reader to reflect upon their own lives.

### III

#### **An Artist within Literature**

Dr. Pranava Dave, a professor in Department of English of Sardar Patel University, has distinct view that if a picture is worth a thousand words, how worthy are thousands of words about literary characters who draw pictures?

Yes, with the beginning of modern period in English literature, where there is the great variety of subject matters, themes and forms in literature, some authors have put a serious effort to trace a life or the development an artist in their works, some fictions includes protagonists who are painters, musicians, poets or other kind of artists. In this context, it is significant to acquaint James Joyce for his *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Stephen Hero* and *Ulysses* in which Stephen's decision to leave his family and friends behind and go into exile in order to become an artist, suggests that Joyce sees the artist as a necessarily isolated figure. *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a heavily autobiographical coming of age novel depicting the childhood and adolescence of protagonist Stephen Dedalus and his gradual development into artistic self consciousness.

Then In Margaret Atwood's novel, *Cat's Eye*, the protagonist and renowned artist, Elaine Risley, stages a retrospective exhibition. This provides her with an opportunity to revisit her past and reassess her life stories. Her paintings become important mirrors to the past and in many ways symbolize Elaine's ambivalent and often contradictory relationships that lead to infinite

displacement, rather than fulfillment. Elaine comes to realize that “identity” cannot be grasped as a whole; rather it is fractured in multiple personalities that are all aspects of her troubled self.

*The Day of the Locust* is a novel by American author Nathanael West, set in Hollywood, California. The novel follows a young artist from the Yale School of Fine Arts named Tod Hackett who travels to California in search of inspiration for a new painting titled "The Burning of Los Angeles".

Emile Zola's novel, *The Masterpiece*, is a semi-autobiographical work telling a story of artistic and political rebellion among a group of aspiring young artists and writers in Paris of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Accepted leader of the Bohemian group is the brilliant artist, Claude Lantier, who is haunted by the need to create his masterpiece. He knows what he wants to do but seems forever incapable of accomplishing his goal because of personal insecurities.

Michael Gruber's *The Forgery of Venus* features a modern-day painter Chaz Wilmot who is a painter born outside his time. He has a gift for copying and can reproduce nearly any of the Old Masters. He can paint like Leonardo, Goya, Gainsborough, artists whose works sell for millions, but this style of painting is no longer popular, and he refuses to shape his talent to fit the fashion of the day.

*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* is a novel by Jewish American author Michael Chabon that won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2001. The novel follows the lives of two Jewish cousins before, during, and after World War II. They are a Czech artist named Joe Kavalier and a Brooklyn-born writer named Sam Clay. In the novel, Kavalier and Clay become major figures in the comics industry from its nascency into its "Golden Age."

Thomas Mann's final novel, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn, as Told by A Friend* (1947) recounts the story of Adrian Leverkühn, a brilliant composer whose art is aesthetically groundbreaking yet intellectually cold. The events of Leverkühn's life are told by his childhood friend, the philologist Serenus Zeitblom, who juxtaposes the narrative of the composer with news of Germany's involvement in World War II, news that grows dimmer through the course of the novel.

So let's awaken our inner artist but be cognizant of the words of T.S. Eliot in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."

("Jay Ambe" 22-Gokul Park Society                      Opp. A.P.C. Vidyanagar-388120 Mo.:9879242397)

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