

UNWHOLESOME FICTION:

JOYCE

THROUGH

BAKHTIN

UNWHOLESOME FICTION:
JAMES JOYCE'S
A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN
THROUGH MIKHAIL BAKHTIN AND
THE DIALOGIC IMAGINATION

By
DOUGLAS GESSELL

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AUTHOR: Douglas Gessell, B.A. (University of Alberta)

SUPERVISOR: Joseph Adamson

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis examines James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* through the literary theory of Mikhail Bakhtin as expounded in *The Dialogic Imagination*. The theory is not so much applied to the novel as it is compared to the practice, a rather Bakhtinian course to follow since he attempts to base his theory on what the novel does rather than on what he thinks it is. The first chapter introduces a few important Bakhtinian precepts necessary to his understanding of the novel, noting especially—implicitly and explicitly—their similarity to the thinking of Jacques Derrida.

The second chapter deals with the problematic narrative position adopted by Joyce in *Portrait*, examining its implications and concluding that Joyce writes with a comic sensibility for which he has yet to receive due credit. The comic author not only searches for laughter, but also engages in a serious questioning of any discourse with aspirations to authority. Though *Portrait* is sometimes funny and often ironic, it always questions the discourse that surrounds it; Bakhtin stresses the fundamental correspondence between the comic and the questions it engages, and this correspondence in *Portrait* is traced here.

In chapter three the thesis explores the various language systems that invade the novel and contribute to its heteroglot composition and stylistic unity. After a brief discussion of what "stylistic unity" entails, a number of different language systems are identified, though only two are examined at length: the "common" languages with which Stephen aligns himself at different moments in the novel; and the "expected" literary horizon that dialogizes the book, both from within and from without.

In the fourth and final chapter the implications of Stephen's attempts to define himself through language are examined. Stephen's self undergoes a number of changes in the course of the novel, changes reflected in the manner of the narrative stylization, but changes that are also seen in the way Stephen himself views language. From mastered he gradually turns to master, and the conflict within himself and between himself and the author leads to a *Portrait* that ends (or rather does not) with no definition at all.

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CHAPTER ONE

"What a piece of work."

- *Hamlet*

James Joyce is very possibly the pre-eminent novelist of the twentieth century. Each of his four prose works has received considerable critical scrutiny, often in the attempt to "catch up" with his various technical innovations—critics still struggle with how to read *Ulysses* and, especially, *Finnegans Wake*. With T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound and others, Joyce ushered in literary Modernism, and his influence is still apparent today in any writer who indulges in the slightest fracturing of narrative. One consequence of Joyce's originality is the high esteem with which he is regarded by post-structuralist critics, who applaud the similarity of his concerns with language to their own. Jacques Derrida, seldom noted for his literary evaluations, begins an essay with these abstruse words of praise: "It is very late, it is always too late with Joyce..." (Derrida, "Two words" 145). Surprisingly, however, there has been relatively little examination of Joyce from a post-structuralist perspective. This paucity of attention extends to a critical perspective whose similar theoretical precepts predate Derrida by approximately thirty years: that of the Russian literary theorist M.M. Bakhtin. There have been signs recently that this inattention is about to change—within the past two years at least one critical

anthology and two full-length book studies of post-structuralist orientation have been applied to Joyce¹—so that one can only expect recognition of Bakhtin's originality and importance to become more widespread. This thesis will contribute to the growing currency of Bakhtin's methodology by examining his theory of the novel, primarily as set forth in *The Dialogic Imagination*, in connection with Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I wish not to say that Bakhtin's theory will be applied to Joyce because of the difficult task of distinguishing between theory and praxis and because application assumes that the theory is ready-made for use, much like the pre-fabricated structure of a house. *The Dialogic Imagination*, like any other text, is open to the same interpretive holes that Bakhtin so gleefully discovers in his conception of the novel. *Portrait* will be posited as an example of the novel that will test both the legitimacy of Bakhtin's theory (as I understand and examine it) and the evaluative process he says goes along with it. "There is no artistic understanding without evaluation" (416n), Bakhtin notes near the end of a long section detailing the two evaluatory-fraught stylistic lines of the European novel. The thesis will be divided into four chapters, the first of which will focus on specific elements of Bakhtin's theory. It will close with some discussion of Joyce's place in Bakhtin's evaluative structure, while the middle chapters will disseminate at length a few elements of Bakhtin's involvement in *Portrait*.

¹ Vicki Mahaffey's *Reauthorizing Joyce* (1988) chiefly examines *Portrait* and *Ulysses*; *New Alliances in Joyce Studies* (1988), edited by Bonnie Kime Scott, collects a number of different theoretical approaches to Joyce, including deconstruction, feminism and Bakhtin; and *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Culture* (1989), by R.B. Kershner, examines the use and effect of various voices of popular culture—especially song—on *Portrait* and other early Joyce texts. In addition, Attridge and Ferrer's *Post-Structuralist Joyce* (1984) collects several essays translated from the French that concentrate almost exclusively on *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Its earlier publication reflects the general French and Continental receptivity toward new theoretical methodologies.

To begin (or to begin again): Bakhtin's view of the novel, while not entirely original (Tzvetan Todorov, in *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, demonstrates Bakhtin's debt to Friedrich Schlegel's Romantic perception of the novel genre), is nonetheless shared by few other literary critics. "The novel is not merely one genre among other genres" (Bakhtin 4), Bakhtin writes, and the traditional attitude he reacts against has changed little since 1941, when these words were written. (John Paul Riquelme, in *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction* (1983), writes that "*Portrait...* is only marginally a *novel*, if by that term we mean a prose narration that abides by the canons of realism" (50). Like most critics, Riquelme does not consider the novel an exception to generic categorization, even if his vague "canons of realism" suggests that his definition is unlikely to hold together.) In contrast to the epic and "other major genres" (presumably lyric and dramatic genres, though Bakhtin is never specific), "the novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted" (3). In fact, "the novel has no canon of its own, as do other genres; only individual examples of the novel are historically active, not a generic canon as such" (3). Such an assertion no doubt surprises anyone aware of contemporary controversies regarding the place of the canon in English studies. What about Defoe, Fielding, Austen, Dickens, Eliot? These great authors are non-canonical, to Bakhtin, for two reasons: one is that they are merely the latest in a long line of novelistic texts, not the first. The novel begins in ancient Greece, not seventeenth-century Europe. The second reason is that, notwithstanding Bakhtin's statements to the contrary, the novel is less a genre than an indeterminate human force. To explain will require a significant digression.

Bakhtin considers the epic and other major genres "already completed..., with a hardened and no longer flexible skeleton" (3), suggesting that the completed genre

opposes the living realities of the novel, which must therefore be another kind of genre. Yet elsewhere, as Todorov notes, Bakhtin contradicts this suggestion: "A genre is the set of means for a collective orientation in reality, aiming for completion" (Todorov 83). Unhappy with the inconsistencies of Bakhtin's thought, Todorov goes on to conclude that "what [Bakhtin] described under this name [the novel] is not a genre, but one or two properties of discourse, whose occurrence is not confined to a single historical moment" (91).

Todorov correctly recognizes the non-historical basis of the novel as genre, but he accords rather too much significance to Bakhtin's equation of completion with genre, and not enough to the anti-generic nature of the novel as Bakhtin sees it. In his introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, Michael Holquist describes Bakhtin's conception of the novel as "novelization" (xxxi); elsewhere, in an article entitled "The Carnival of Discourse: Bakhtin and Simultaneity," he thinks it "is perhaps best characterized as a force called *novelness*" (221). Either of these descriptions more nearly strikes the mark than Todorov's complaint about theoretical inconsistencies. Despite Bakhtin's contention that "in literature conceived as a living whole" the novel will "have to be included in a completely different way" (5), what he talks about in *The Dialogic Imagination* goes beyond the boundaries of just literature. Holquist suggests that the novel "is best conceived either as a supergenre...; or not a genre in any strict, traditional sense at all" (Bakhtin xxix). This interpretation is better, but still too confining. "Novelness" is a force of language, identified by Bakhtin with the (implicitly human) speaking subject, that what we conventionally call the novel allows us to recognize. It is not limited to the novel, and would exist even if the novel did not.

A number of factors lead to this conclusion. One is the fact that "the experts have not managed to isolate a single definite, stable characteristic of the novel—without adding a reservation, which immediately disqualifies it altogether as a generic characteristic" (8). Even the novel's most unassailable feature, its prose, is annulled by Bakhtin's assertion that "there exist excellent novels in verse" (9)—he regularly cites Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* as a novel rather than as poetry. Without any generic characteristics, the novel cannot be considered a genre. Bakhtin's own definition of the novel contributes to this anti-generic composition: "The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized" (262). Relying on the vague condition of artistic organization (Paul de Man has touched upon the difficulty of defining, and criticizing, art (de Man 8)), Bakhtin's definition of the novel is clearly cross-generic. Though he would argue that most novels are in prose (*Eugene Onegin* is the only poetic novel cited), he leaves the definition open enough to accept virtually any work of language in which one may distinguish the dialogizing effect of heteroglossia. This definition of the novel contributes further to an understanding of the novel as a force that exists altogether independently of literature. Literature is necessary only as a locus where the force of novelness may coalesce. Understanding the importance of heteroglossia to the novel makes this even more clear. Heteroglossia, the internal socio-ideological stratification of language (which becomes, once in the novelized text, "another's speech in another's language" (324)), is the natural state of language. It surrounds us as speakers at all times in the various socio-ideological strata that we encounter every day—the business, professional, trade, student, domestic and many other languages that continually confront us. "The language of the novel is a *system* of languages that

mutually and ideologically interanimate each other. It is impossible to describe and analyze it as a single unitary language" (47) Bakhtin writes, but his description of novelistic language fits language in general just as well. To the extent that heteroglossia surrounds us and that heteroglossia provides a dialogizing background for the novel, each of us may be considered a novelized text, both producing and produced: "For any individual consciousness *living in it*, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world" (293; emphasis mine). Though Todorov emphasizes that the distinction between the author and the image of the author given in the text "must be preserved" because the author is "a producer and not a product" (Todorov 52), each of us may be called "novelized" from another's perspective because we exist (and subsist) in dialogic relation to others. Where "the self's time is open, unfinished, the other we conceive is, on the other hand, *completed* insofar as we see him as what he *is*" (Holquist 229). This is an extreme view; more practically, any oral anecdote that parodies another socio-ideolect (how many jokes involve prominent politicians and their speech, for example?) constitutes, according to Bakhtin's definition, a novel. The novel need not be written except insofar as it is "written" in the course of its utterance. And when it need not be written, it need not be necessarily confined to the narrow boundaries of literature, much less the still narrower boundaries of the genre.

Novelness infects all other genres with which it comes into contact: "In an era when the novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres are to a greater or lesser extent 'novelized'" (5); "the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)" (7). In the course of

novelization, the epic and other major genres become less pure; the reverse never occurs to the novel, however, because it is by "definition" open and embracing, made up precisely of the impure. One example of this impurity is parody and laughter, constitutive features of the growth of the novel according to Bakhtin; the consequence of this parody in the case of a sonnet, for example, is the loss of the sonnet form altogether: "what results is not a sonnet, but rather the *image of a sonnet*" (51). It is also a novelized text, and one more example of the novel's cross-generic status.

Even Bakhtin's other central condition for the novel, its dialogism—the interaction between its diversity of languages, either internal or external in a dialogized background—prevents any consideration of the novel as a genre. The alternative to the dialogic text is the monologic, monoglot one, and though Bakhtin suggests that the problem with other "already completed" genres is their "closed and deaf monoglossia" (12), such is not quite the case. Every utterance is dialogic: "The word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way" (279); the most that may be said is that closed genres (the only kind) are relatively monoglot—they suppress their dialogism, fight to remain monoglot in some misguided misapprehension of the world about them. It is the denial of poly- and heteroglossia that necessitates the distinction between "genres," not any absolute differences that maintain them. Even here, the distinction between genres can be made to disintegrate: it is not so much the context that establishes the novel, but whether or not this context is recognized and accepted. Novelness is thus a little like the fifteenth-century world exploration that confirmed the world is round: accepted or not, its factuality always lurks about the margins,

existing even in non-acceptance: the monoglot, epic text is the "flat world believer" of literature. Novelness is a force to be found, not imposed, and it is the necessity of discovery that confirms its crossgeneric nature. This crossgenericism does not enfold all other genres, though novels may be discovered in them; it indicates instead that novelness is neither generic nor non-generic. Determining its status poses a difficulty akin to Derrida's project of demonstrating that there is no truth from within a metaphysical system based upon the true-false dichotomy. We lack the ability to categorize novelness properly, and this is partly because it defies categorization: it is, after all, "defined" as open and embracing, non-generic and essentially indefinable.

The novel's crossgeneric status is not the only original insight Bakhtin brings to studies of the novel. "Discourse in the Novel" opens with an eye-catching proposal: "Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon" (259). This directly contradicts such thinkers as Saussure and Jakobson who believe that discourse is constructed by the individual consciousness with no regard for context. The standard view of sender A communicating code or message Z to receiver B in a linear relationship is inadequate to the Bakhtinian conception of discourse. Rather, since discourse is based on the model of human communication, speaker and listener (not sender and receiver) build or create discourse between them. The statement they create is the utterance, a combination of "signification" and "theme" –in Saussurean terms, *langue* with the *parole* left in, and the *parole* determined socially (contextually) rather than individually. Todorov cites Bakhtin's own explication of the utterance: "By *signification*, in distinction to *theme*, we mean all the moments of the utterance that are *reiterative* and *identical unto themselves* in all their repetitions." Falling into the category of signification

would be abstract grammatical considerations: words which perform the value of nouns, verbs, modifiers, prepositions and so on. On the other hand: "Let us call the meaning of the utterance as a whole its theme.... In fact, the theme of the utterance is individual and non-reiterative, as is the case with the utterance itself. It is the expression of the concrete historical situation that engendered the utterance...." (Todorov 45). This is not to say, because the theme is individual and non-reiterative, that a given passage of language contains just one meaning. The utterance does not equal the sentence. Every utterance is a unique entity precisely because it is a social construct oriented in time. Even the directly repeated sentence is a different utterance because its context is different—most obviously, it is seen in the context of the same sentence uttered moments earlier. Context is everything: "The difference between the utterance and the proposition (or the sentence)—a unit of language—consists in that the first is necessarily produced in a particular context that is always social, whereas the second does not need a context" (Todorov 43). The sentence will always remain the same no matter when it is read; it is unaffected by time or readership. But the utterance is defined by time and the productive reader; every utterance happens just once, and cannot be returned to.

So far, the utterance appears unremarkable apart from its reorientation of discourse from the individual to the social. However, Bakhtin's thinking has some important philosophical ramifications. Because every word is (always already) "directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word it anticipates" (Bakhtin 280), we live in a "world where there is no first word (no ideal word), and the final word has not yet been spoken" (30). Every utterance anticipates its answer; conversely, every utterance also answers a question. "Meaning always answers some questions" (Todorov 54), Bakhtin says. "In this

inconclusive context all the semantic stability of the object is lost" (Bakhtin 30); the incessant questions and answers of dialogism provide no absolute, ideal ground upon which language may be founded.

The epigraph to this chapter illustrates this lack of ground and the social nature of the utterance. The epigraph is purposefully vague to demonstrate the differing ways in which meaning is built socially; this creative process necessarily precludes any absolute foundation for language because it will always vary according to context. Readers will come to differing conclusions about the theme or meaning of this particular utterance, depending on their own background. Shakespeare aficionados will wonder at the lack of the traditional end of the quotation, "is a man." Someone unaware of this quotation may wonder at Shakespeare's reputation when he appears unable to write a complete sentence. Others will detect a hint of prematurely indulged conceit at the success of this thesis. Still others will affect to see a measure of respect for Bakhtin or Joyce or both. According to context, the possibilities are endless.

Such "endless possibilities" obviously have many similarities with the thought of Jacques Derrida. (Similarities exist with reader response criticism as well, but Bakhtin's thought differs from that of Wolfgang Iser's, for instance, in that the author demands no minimum agreement all readers must share: there is no swiss cheese bedrock of meaning that the reader makes completely solid by filling in the holes. Such a view sees some meaning existing independently of each individual reader; Bakhtin understands meaning to be entirely dependent upon the interaction of speaker and listener, author and reader.) The utterance, in fact, can be compared quite profitably to Derrida's notion of arche-writing in that both proposals subsume writing and speech. One difference is slight, a mere matter of lexicon. "Instead of

arguing that all speech is a form of writing, Bakhtin insists that writing is a form of the radical activity of speech he calls the utterance" (Holquist 232). More significantly, however, arche-writing cannot be identified as such: "It is that very thing which cannot let itself be reduced to the form of presence" (Derrida *OG*57). No such restriction applies to the utterance—Bakhtin "never hesitates to name extra-personal social forces as the locus of alterity" (Holquist 233). Yet the major premise remains the same for both ideas: to show that speech and writing are two sides of the same coin, and that they are beholden to the same principles of communication, not hierarchically different ones. Critics such as Allon White and Richard Jackson who prefer to see Bakhtin as "a more constructive deconstructionist" (Jackson 420) read Derrida and Bakhtin with inadequate regard for their philosophical similarities. Bakhtin's "constructiveness" rests in his attempt "to build bridges (however provisional) across the 'differences' he sees at least as clearly as the deconstructionists themselves" (420), but the conclusions that so infuriate critics of Derrida—eternal loss of referent, the inevitable blurring of distinctions between binary oppositions—all follow from Bakhtin's theory as well. His occasional reference to the author's most recent "semantic instantiation" is merely another way of positing infinite deferral of meaning; though the utterance means something for a moment, its meaning is entirely transitory and gives up the ghost at the first effort to place it independently of its temporal location. One may call semantic instantiation the Bakhtinian version of Derrida's "trace, where the relationship with the other is marked" (Derrida *OG*47). Though in a somewhat different context, Bakhtin understands language much the same way: "As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" (Bakhtin 293). The difference between the

two positions is that for Bakhtin "the other" is distinctly identified as another person; "the word in language is half someone else's" (293). Bakhtin locates the author of the utterance in the social atmosphere which surrounds us while Derrida, as Holquist notes, "heroically refuses to give a location for differance in the face of all the outraged (and sometimes anguished) demands of his critics that he do so" (233).

However, Bakhtin's social centre is at best relative because it still depends on the ever-shifting sands of context. Knowing who speaks is no prerequisite for semantic cement both because the temporal demands of context ensure semantic uniqueness and because the social nature of the utterance really does not answer precisely enough the question of who speaks. *We* speak, and it is impossible to reduce meaning's ultimate origin farther, to a singular, unitary state. "Heterogeneity and change will always be privileged in their contest with unity and sameness" (Holquist 233), and so the absolute ground that seems so comforting will continue to elude those readers that seek it in the writings of either Derrida or Bakhtin.

Just as the utterance resembles arche-writing, other post-structuralist tenets hover into view in *The Dialogic Imagination*: lack of self-coincidence (37); denial of the absolutism of unitary language (366); even the existence of a "radical" skepticism "bordering on rejection of the very possibility of having a straightforward discourse at all that would not be false" (401). But Bakhtin is not so interested in pursuing the implications of infinite deferral of meaning in language that his theory makes so manifest; instead, he takes "language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (271). In the novel, he targets style as the centralizing unity of the text that may replace the semantic stability that does not

exist. This emphasis on style proves essential to the task of evaluation every reading must undertake.

This "centralizing unity of the text" is still of a relative nature, however:

There is no unitary language or style in the novel. But at the same time there does exist a centre of language (a verbal-ideological centre) for the novel. The author (as creator of the novelistic whole) cannot be found at any one of the novel's language levels: he is to be found at the centre of organization where all levels intersect. (48-9)

A novelized text's style obviously centres on the author, where there is a gravitational pull that prevents the novel's style from flying off into the swirling chaos of social heteroglossia. Since "there are no 'neutral' words and forms—words and forms that can belong to 'no one'" (293), "no words with meanings shared by all" (401) (and thus no semantic unity), Bakhtin's doctrine of authorial centrality simply acknowledges that a specific aggregate of words are tied to one particular speaker. The novelistic whole, for Bakhtin, breaks down into five basic types of "compositional-stylistic unities" which "are subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole, a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it" (262). Given language's semantic instability, this vague novelistic unity primarily focuses the historical, material fact of the literary text, and guarantees its autonomy on one level. For Bakhtin, Dickens as a man does not matter so much; what matters is that he provides a name for that style that inheres in all the books to which he gave his name. He cannot possess the words, but he can possess their interconnectedness, his particular play with them—in short, their style. "The style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles" (262), and this combination can function as a centralizing unity because it is unique. It is,

after all, composed of a series of discrete utterances, and it is the multiplication of these utterances in a textual totality that eventually produces a novel's style. Like the theme or meaning of the utterance, style is non-reiterative: an author cannot borrow another's style and "lose" his or her personality within it; he or she cannot borrow it and not modulate it with his or her own voice. When Joyce, in "The Oxen of the Sun" chapter of *Ulysses*, brilliantly borrows the styles of various literary epochs, it is always Joyce's version of a particular style that we hear, no matter how much it sounds like the original. There is no escaping his voice behind the voice of the literary figure he mimics.

Just as certainly as style is non-reiterative, though, it is also social in that it requires a reader. Double-voiced discourse (irony, for example) does not absolutely exist: competent readers the world over disagree over its "presence" in various texts (Kate's speech at the end of *The Taming of the Shrew* is one well known example). The social nature of style thus provides a relative centrality, one that identifies the text but does not close it off. Nonetheless, Bakhtin's artistic, stylistic unity allows the critic some focussing power: while in the past critics unfortunately searched for semantic unity that did not exist, they may now acknowledge the decentered nature of language while celebrating the artistic achievement of stylistic unity. It is in fact on the basis of style that Bakhtin himself evaluates the novel.

To return then, finally, to the issue of the canon that was broached so long ago: the novel is non-canonical because it is not a conventional genre. Todorov's complaint about theoretical inconsistency is unjustified since the novel is not really a genre at all, but his confusion is understandable—what else is there to call it when it can only be compared to other genres? Bakhtin's assertion of the novel's lack of a canon appears less surprising in the context of novelness, but because the novel is

non-canonical does not rule out the possibility or even the necessity of literary evaluation. In fact, evaluation is more central to Bakhtin than to many other theoretical projects.

The final section of "Discourse in the Novel" possesses the subheading The Two Stylistic Lines of Development in the European Novel. The section proceeds to outline the growth of the novel into the European version that we have conventionally termed the novel. It splits the novel into two lines, First and Second, with the First accounting for those novels that utilize heteroglossia only as a dialogizing background, and the Second for those that incorporate heteroglossia directly into the text. For Bakhtin, the Second Line is clearly the superior product (or, more accurately, process). What is important here is not so much which novels are First and which Second and where Joyce may fit (though this will receive incidental consideration), but that the novels are ranked according to style because that is all they can be ranked according to. There is no evaluation based on matters of theme or morality because such matters are hopelessly subjective; the favored reading material of the priest is unlikely to match that of the artist. Evaluation comes down to the number of languages incorporated into the novel, the more the better. To be a great novel, Bakhtin says, *A Portrait* "must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era, that is, all the era's languages that have any claim to being significant; the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia" (411). The critic's task would appear disarmingly easy: merely count all the separate socio-ideological languages present in the novel and report them to the interested reader. But it is not so simple as all that. There is still the qualifying claim of "significance," and this will by and large be the province of the individual critic. Decisions must be made and interpretations defended, even on such a basic matter as a count of languages. If we

are all to agree beforehand that Joyce's reputation is in little danger beneath the lens of Bakhtinian scrutiny, the question "why not?" still begs examination. Onward. Utterances (every answer a question to an answer) await.

CHAPTER TWO

Bakhtinian criticism of Joyce generally and of *Portrait* especially is—so far, anyway—extremely rare.¹ What criticism does exist in respect to Joyce concentrates almost exclusively on *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses*,² as if finally an appreciable theoretical perspective has arrived that can suitably explicate Joyce's inexplicable later fiction. Such endeavours are undoubtedly worthy, but Bakhtin offers much in the way of analysis of *Portrait* (and other texts), too; to ignore those texts that may appear to have been more adequately served by previous critical methodologies is to forget Bakhtin's dissatisfaction with "the utter inadequacy of literary theory ... when it is forced to deal with the novel" (8). The recent publication of *Joyce, Bakhtin, and*

¹ Christine van Boheemen-Saaf names Bakhtinian criticism as one among the "latest critical fashions" with a slight pejorative sniff. Academe's "welcoming embrace" of Bakhtin has prompted her to complain that it "may imply a shirking of the responsibility to fully investigate the importance and usefulness of more received approaches" (Boheemen-Saaf, 29). Since, in her case, more received approaches are feminism and deconstruction, her statement carries more than a hint of likely undesired irony. While many critics in various university English departments are undoubtedly still attempting to demonstrate the validity of feminist and deconstructive criticism to their peers and colleagues, Boheemen-Saaf finds disconcerting the alleged tendency to leave "deconstruction jilted in the corner" (29) because it has been (supposedly) accepted and (therefore) prematurely exhausted. Ironic or not, her statement does not detract from the truth of the matter regarding Bakhtin: Bakhtinian criticism is still very new and largely untested.

² The two essays in Scott's *New Alliances in Joyce Studies* anthology that deal with Bakhtin—Joseph Valente's "The Politics of Joyce's Polyphony" and Richard Pearce's "Voices, Stories, (W)holes"—discuss *Portrait* only briefly before moving into fuller examination of *Ulysses*. Murray McArthur's recent *Stolen Writings* engages Bakhtin, but again in connection with *Ulysses*. The existing Bakhtinian criticism to date is often of an offhand nature rather than a thoroughgoing commitment to a new critical position; many critics prefer to examine Bakhtin himself before applying his precepts to other fiction.

Popular Literature, however, is likely just the first of many Bakhtin-oriented critical examinations of *Portrait* to come.

Bakhtin's engaging new perspective on the novel is particularly well-suited to modern fiction, with its emphasis on fractured narrative and its more overt multiplicity of voices. Nonetheless, within the subcategory of modern fiction (and within fiction as a whole) Bakhtin privileges the comic over other novelistic forms because it is the comic that most effectively introduces heteroglossia into the novel simply as a matter of course. The comic impulse feeds on the questioning of authoritative discourse(s), and it is this questioning that gives rise to heteroglossia in the novel by presenting another's language (because someone must be making fun of the central, "authorized" discourse) and, more importantly, another point of view.

For any and every straightforward genre, any and every direct discourse—epic, tragic, lyric, philosophical—may and indeed must itself become the object of representation, the object of a parodic travesty or "mimicry." It is as if such mimicry rips the word away from its object, disunifies the two, shows that a given straightforward generic word—epic or tragic—is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object; the process of parodying forces us to experience those sides of the object that are not otherwise included in a given genre or a given style. (55)

The comic and parodic inspires relativity in the novel: it does not create it, of course, but is co-existent with it, enabling it to manifest itself and overcome its suppression by authoritative, monoglot discourse. Heteroglossia is present in other novelistic forms, but it does not have to be; where the comic immediately opens the discourse to another voice, other forms need not necessarily employ heteroglossia to meet

their objectives as they define them. Church literature and other sacred texts, for example, actively suppress the recognition of any other voice that does not speak in accordance with the official discourse. Contradictory ideologies are thoroughly discouraged, especially if they should indulge in laughter. It is an interesting question whether the evident heteroglossia of the Bible's many competing voices strengthens or undermines Christ's word; which takes precedence, the differing authorial voices of the various books or the presumed official sanction of God and Christ? Without humour there is no guarantee of heteroglossia.

Portrait defies easy description as either comic, tragic or some hybrid of the two, thus making its place within the Bakhtinian hierarchy difficult to assign. It is no less "unwholesome," however, for its difficulty of categorization (on a Bakhtinian level or any other one). In fact, it is just this difficulty (a difficulty that amounts to anti-genericism) that Bakhtin demonstrates is the constitutive feature of the novel, and this difficulty that *Portrait* exemplifies so well. This thesis will proceed to show a few of the many ways that "the work of an author who is often accused of being deliberately obscure" (Spielberg 320) and ambiguous is indeed simply that, and will suggest why there has been so little consensus on precisely what this novel is all about. Critics have most often felt that Joyce "meant" only one of the many interpretive options available to the reader, but this is not the case. Joyce meant them all (even those he did not think of himself), and he constructed his text in such a way as to deliver maximum semantic plurality.

Portrait is a deceptively difficult book to read: its impersonal narrative voice is very elastic, so that from differing perspectives it may change entirely depending almost as much upon the mood of the reader as on his or her social background. As a result, this elasticity and change engenders much confusion among readers,

especially where Stephen is concerned. It is easy to read *Portrait* more or less literally, from Stephen's perspective, dismissing Stephen's shortcomings as justifiable given the context. But it is easy, too, to detect various instances of irony in the novel, and once one or two are found suddenly a hundred seem to make themselves obvious. If the reader chooses to view Stephen's esthetic theory in ironic light, what then of his artistic "conversion" in the bird-girl scene? Is it just so much romantic posturing, not to be taken seriously, or is it epiphanic evidence of "a rebellious voice [that] delights in disrupting the storyline, in creating holes, in flaunting its materiality, in seeking relationship rather than control" (80) as Richard Pearce would have it? What of Stephen's attempts to understand "Tower of Ivory"? Does the reader excuse them as the quaint notions of a young boy, or should he or she see a broader ironic thrust at Stephen's fundamental inability to understand matters "as they are"?

Much of the confusion stems from a lack of critical agreement regarding who actually narrates *Portrait*, and how much distance the reader may posit between Stephen and Joyce. "Because the novel seemed so 'real' to early readers, a persistent assumption arose that the work was solely autobiographical with many interesting technical embellishments" (Staley 4-5). Readers at this time perceived little or no irony; instead, the book was considered a celebration of the artist's escape from the labyrinthine perils of Dublin that reflected Joyce's own presumed success. Later, in the first explosion of serious interest in *Portrait* as literature, Hugh Kenner and Ellsworth Mason unequivocally adopted the view in respective essays that "Joyce is not Stephen" (Mason 195); the book was for both critics rife with irony, and for Kenner "a tragedy of ideals without matter" ("Perspective" 58) that focuses on Stephen's fall from Christian precepts. Joyce narrates Mason and Kenner's particular

reading of the text as well, but he distances himself from Stephen, identifying with him (perhaps) only earlier in the novel. Wayne Booth, in his influential *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, takes it upon himself to disagree with Kenner's ironic view of the novel. Here, too, there can be little doubt that Joyce authors the novel (Booth's "implied author" does not separate the voices of narrator and author but merely considers the author of the text a "better" version of the author in real life), but Booth takes this position in the interest of disapproving of Joyce's technique. Far from deciding whether or not Joyce is near to or distant from Stephen, and therefore whether or not *Portrait* is ultimately ironic, Booth complains that we cannot determine irony in the novel at all "unless we are willing to retreat into babbling and incommunicable relativism" (Booth 328). This fault is laid directly at Joyce's door, notwithstanding New Critical inveighing against the intentional fallacy: "the truth seems to be that Joyce was always a bit uncertain about his attitude toward Stephen" (330).

In arguing for an ironic, distant reading of the text, Kenner states, in "The *Portrait* in Perspective," that "it is a persistent and recurrent fallacy to suppose that the *Portrait* [was] written by a Stephen Dedalus" (41-2). If a fallacy, however, it has remained very persistent indeed. Recently, Frederick Radford and John Paul Riquelme have both suggested that Stephen is the author of *Portrait*.¹ Of course, "any interpretation that suggests Stephen may be the narrator will take exception to most readings that dwell on the problem of irony, or aesthetic distance, and on the impersonality of the narration" (Riquelme 51). Riquelme does concede some room for irony—"there can still be disagreements concerning the precise mix of the

¹ Riquelme understands Stephen as author as a presupposition for his argument; Radford as the logical end of his particular discussion.

narrator's attitudes toward the central character at any given moment in the story" (52)—but his reading remains largely sympathetic to Stephen's position; after all, if Stephen narrates the novel he obviously becomes the success he set out to be at novel's end.

Riquelme's position is not without validity and should not be discounted with undue haste. There is much to be admired in the general thrust of Stephen's actions if we accept that Dublin is an oppressive cultural backwater that stifles original thinking and believe with Stephen that "when the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight" (203). At the same time, however, one cannot ignore the apparent irony found in the gritty, realistic discourse (and the scenes it describes) that almost inevitably follows his frequent flights of romantic fancy. Vicki Mahaffey, in her recent book *Reauthorizing Joyce*, argues that *Portrait* is comically ironic. She views Stephen half-sympathetically; that is to say, she sees a sympathetic side in him because Joyce makes "Stephen play both Christ and Lucifer in alternation, defining each role as a paradox" (81). She also admires his esthetic theory but feels that it is his inability to understand the personal side of his intellect that lends the book its humour and allows us, with Joyce, to laugh at him. For Mahaffey, too, it is Joyce that narrates the text.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, however, the reader's view of the narration must be modified slightly. Bakhtin identifies five "basic forms of incorporating and organizing heteroglossia in the novel": "a comic playing with languages, a story 'not from the author' (but from a narrator, posited author or character), character speech, character zones and lastly various introductory or framing genres" (323). Specific novels are not limited to just one of these forms; they may be used in any combination, the more complex the better. *Portrait*, of course, organizes

heteroglossia through "introductory or framing genres" (incorporated genres such as the villanelle and the diary) and character speech—"a form that every novel without exception utilizes" (315)—and through character zones that involve heteroglossia "diffused throughout the authorial speech that surrounds the characters" (316).

These zones are formed from the fragments of character speech, from various forms for hidden transmission of someone else's word, from scattered words and sayings belonging to someone else's speech, from those invasions into authorial speech of others' expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations). Such a character zone is the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another upon the author's voice. (316)

Character zones see only moderate use in *Portrait*, however, because Stephen's discourse dominates all others; since the novel is told so overwhelmingly from his point of view, other characters' discourses have little chance to break in upon the narration, though they do sometimes manifest themselves in Stephen's hybridized free indirect discourse. But character zones are not entirely exempt from the novel for two reasons. One is because Stephen's free indirect discourse qualifies as one immense character zone itself. The other is because the character's language that intrudes upon the narration is an element of difference most associated with irony (and thus the comic spirit), and Joyce, in *Portrait* as well as elsewhere, is very much a comic writer.

This short enumeration of the various methods for organizing heteroglossia has yet to touch upon the two that remain, the comic playing with languages and the tale "not from the author." The impersonality of Joyce's narration denies it the categorization of a narrator's tale or character's tale, but to say that *Portrait* indulges

in a comic playing with languages would strike most readers as far-fetched. There is no critical consensus on the status of the novel's irony—sharp, mild or non-existent—let alone a critical view that regards the book as a comic classic. There are no laughs here; the issues are too grim, serious and high-minded for that. But notwithstanding the fact that *Portrait* is far more comic than the common critical perception—Lynch is a comic character in the best tradition of Shakespeare, and chapter five generally is the most pointedly "funny" in all the book—the "comic playing with languages" is hardly limited to big laughs and broad smiles. At its most essential level, the comic spirit in the novel is one of questioning, and questioning is what Stephen (and Joyce) is all about. From Joyce's perspective, few of the questions in *Portrait* lack a comic component, whether they lead to laughter or not.

Portrait is not a comic novel in the tradition of Fielding, Sterne and Dickens, of course, but those elements of the novel that Bakhtin defines as comic are very much evident within this novel. Bakhtin notes that "in the comic novel, the incorporation of heteroglossia and its stylistic utilization is characterized by two distinctive features:

(1) Incorporated into the novel are a multiplicity of "language" and verbal-ideological belief systems—generic, professional, class-and-interest-group (the language of the nobleman, the farmer, the merchant, the peasant); tendentious, everyday (the languages of rumour, of society chatter, servants' language) and so forth, but these languages are, it is true, kept primarily within the limits of the literary written and conversational language; at the same time, these languages are not, in most cases, consolidated into fixed persons (heroes, storytellers) but rather are incorporated in an impersonal form "from the author," alternating (while ignoring precise formal boundaries) with direct authorial discourse.

(2) The incorporated languages and socio-ideological belief systems, while of course utilized to refract the author's intentions, are

unmasked and destroyed as something false, hypocritical, greedy, limited, narrowly rationalistic, inadequate to reality. (311-2)

While Joyce's comedy is of a peculiar variety in *Portrait*, one that mocks Stephen's maturation of self at the same time it applauds it, it certainly meets the conditions of comic discourse defined by Bakhtin here. Within the novel is indeed a "multiplicity" of languages—of preachers and prostitutes, kin and classmates, scholars, poets and politicians—languages that Joyce chooses to question at nearly all times, through simple juxtaposition if through nothing else. It is up to the reader to decide to what extent Joyce unmasks and destroys each particular language as "false, hypocritical, greedy" since some languages will undoubtedly garner more respect than others, though the fact of questioning itself denies any kind of absolute truth that will translate into ultimate respect.

As one who writes from a comic, questioning perspective, Joyce narrates the novel "in an impersonal form 'from the author.'" One should not hastily equate this impersonal form with Joyce himself, however, as a majority of critics are wont to do. On the contrary, the narration alternates with "direct authorial discourse" that makes itself apparent at more or less rare intervals. Joyce narrates the text, yes, but he ("he" being his direct authorial discourse) is not the narrator because the narrator is not quite someone. It has no views; it merely reports. The narrator is not a discrete, concretely realized personality that one may identify as such, and so the reader must understand the narration to be from Joyce's approximate perspective, "from the author" but not equal to him.

One may distinguish between Joyce's direct authorial discourse and his less-defined general narration for several reasons. One is, as one might expect, the impersonality of the narration that molds itself to the shape of its particular reader.

The narrator's sympathies are not easily betrayed, and as a result there is much room for the reader to appeal to the narrator for confirmation of his or her own interpretation of the action. Another reason is the continually intrusive free indirect voice of Stephen that obliterates much—though certainly not all—of the influence other characters might have on the narrator. The narrator of *Portrait* is far more constrained than one might assume despite his impersonality; the novel is Stephen's story as much as it is Joyce's. A third reason is because of the unease of identification of the narrator. It could conceivably be Stephen's tale (a story from a character; this is why Riquelme's analysis cannot be dismissed) or a story from a narrator other than Joyce, but in each of these cases the narrator is presumably identified as such. In any case one cannot with certainty equate Joyce's directly intentional word with that of the narrator's; if one could, there would be considerably less to argue about in the debate about esthetic distance. It is precisely the impersonality of the narration that has contributed so much to that debate. Even if one assumes that the narrator is Joyce through and through (the most common reader response), it still holds that the narrator remains unnamed, and purposely so. The unidentified narrator calls attention to himself, and it cannot be thought that this is by accident.

Distinguishing Joyce's direct authorial discourse¹ from his refracted narrative viewpoint, a viewpoint structured to meet the narrative requirements of the story, is made more problematic by the narration's "sympathetic" stylization. Though the narration is impersonal in that it does not actively court one particular view or another—there is no explicit commentary informing the reader how to understand

¹ It should be noted that "direct authorial discourse" is something of a euphemism. There is no such thing as a literally direct, unmediated, implicitly monoglot discourse. To speak of the direct author's speech is to identify him or her as speaker, but not to limit the plurality of his or her words.

Stephen and his complex situation—it is obviously stylized to match Stephen's development as an artist at each of his particular ages. There is, by the narrative absorption of this style that approximates Stephen's language (and thus, to a certain extent, Stephen himself), an implicit authorial sympathy for him. The "sympathetic" stylization is apparent from the first moment that the narrator's voice mixes with Stephen's:

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 footballers 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.* (8)

Allowing Stephen his indirect voice enables Joyce to acknowledge his estimation of its worth: Stephen's voice best helps tell Stephen's tale. From this point on there is a strong mixing of authorial voices, one the detached, impersonal narrator given over to little more than simple description; the other the free indirect voice of Stephen. But where in the first chapter the distinction between narrative voices is fairly clear because of the simplicity of the young Stephen's language, by the final chapter the two voices are so interwoven that they tend to blur into one common voice:

It was too late to go upstairs to the French class. He crossed the hall and took the corridor to the left which led to the physics theatre. The corridor was dark and silent but not unwatchful. *Why did he feel that it was not unwatchful? Was it because he had heard that in Buck Whaley's time there was a secret staircase there? Or was the jesuit*

house extraterritorial and was he walking among aliens? The Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space.

He opened the door of the theatre and halted in the chilly grey light that struggled through the dusty windows.... (184)

Here Stephen's voice is surrounded by the impersonal (though not impartial) description of the narrator, but it is also boxed in by two phrases that could be either the narrator's voice or Stephen's. This ever-increasing interweaving of voices will finally end with the suppression of the separate narrator altogether in Stephen's diary.

Yet simultaneous with the author's suggestively sympathetic narration there is an ironic authorial voice that intrudes, albeit subtly, with parodic commentary from time to time. As Stephen walks from the university, lost in reverie, after waiting for his father and "Dan Crosby, the tutor, to find out for him something about the university" (164), the narration tells us that "a voice from beyond the world was calling" (167). Internally, perhaps, but the only voice the reader hears is the one of the next line following: "Hello, Stephanos!" The depth of Stephen's character zone is demonstrated here, for it is in just such ironic moments that the direct authorial voice can be heard in contradistinction to the narrative voice, which is a kind of Stephen/Joyce hybrid, belonging wholly to neither one of them. "In parody [the word "with conditions attached"] two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis *two speaking subjects*" (Bakhtin 76; emphasis mine). The difficulty in *Portrait* is determining these "two speaking subjects." Not because the reader cannot surmise that the originator of the parody is Joyce and its subject Stephen; rather because the impersonal narrative voice is so uneasily identified that it becomes impossible to say that Joyce does not direct some of his irony at himself. When we talk to ourselves we

do not talk self-coincidentally with our self; instead, we speak to a particularly constructed version of our self, and the novel's narration appears at times to bear the imprint of an artist talking with himself. Such an impression can only increase with the eventual advent of Stephen's solitary voice in the diary. If the reader is to equate the narrator with Joyce, what does he or she think once the narrator's voice is finally excised? Joyce hardly disappears from the text when Stephen's voice takes command. Joyce's parodic word, directed at Stephen but also at himself, thus engages in "auto-criticism of discourse," another "one of the primary distinguishing features of the novel" (Bakhtin 412). He mocks Stephen's discourse for "its relationship to reality: its attempt to faithfully reflect reality, to manage reality and to transpose it (the utopian pretenses of discourse), even to replace reality as a surrogate for it" (412). But his own language is not exempt from such criticism, and it must be considered included in his parodic attacks.

The uncertainty and contradiction inevitable in an author who considers nothing sacred—not even his own discourse—is made more clear by *Portrait's* sympathetic stylization, which indicates that its "literal" content cannot pass by unrecognized. There is a Joyce here that largely believes in some part of Stephen, if only because in the impersonality of the narration he refuses to pass the easy judgment upon Stephen that so presents itself in his less humble moments ("Aristotle has not defined pity and terror. I have. I say . . ." (204); Lynch's responsive indignation at this juncture is especially fitting). In a sense there is a resonating irony in *Portrait*: an irony that appears as an overtone upon the literally read situation so lightly that it dissipates given closer examination of the context. We should laugh to see Stephen's soul "loosed of her miseries" as he walks "the rainladen trees of the avenue" and finds "evoked in him, as always, memories of the

girls and women in the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann" (176). This is a portrait ("as always") of a foolish, miserably self-consciously stylized artist, young or otherwise. But there are valid reasons to believe Stephen's soul is in fact in misery if he must turn to Hauptmann, "the cloistral silverveined prose" of Newman, the "spirit" of Ibsen and the songs of Ben Jonson for companionship he can find nowhere in the Irish culture surrounding him. The distinction between his legitimate concerns, however they may be defined, and his illegitimate ones (the ones touched by irony) is very fine and ultimately undecidable. In his use of irony Joyce has managed to turn figure into ground into figure into ground in a continual slow turn simply by differentiating the implicitly sympathetic narration (sympathetic if only because someone goes to such effort to tell Stephen's story) from his own comic view, a comic view that exploits the foibles of Stephen and the tragedy of Dublin at the same time. Joyce himself flutters in and out of the text; he refuses to be placed, refuses to be caught, refuses to admit that yes, this is irony here. There can be no definition, only the unending change of context that will always reverse what has just been. Seen without irony, the scene must have it "added" on; clothed in it, the scene must be "stripped bare," and neither view will ever quite suffice.

Critics obviously have little trouble discovering the two narrative voices at odds in *Portrait*, but it is their failure to discern that the second "authorial" discourse—Stephen's—is not quite Stephen's alone that leads them to conclude that the theme or moral or point of the novel must rest on one author's side or the other. The narrative situation of *Portrait* is not completely usual according to Bakhtin's view of "the artistic image of a language," which

must by its very nature be a linguistic hybrid (an intentional hybrid):
it is obligatory for two linguistic consciousnesses to be present, the one

being represented and the other doing the representing, with each belonging to a different system of language. Indeed, if there is not a second representing consciousness, if there is no second representing language-intention, then what results is not an *image* of language but merely a *sample* of some other person's language, whether authentic or fabricated. (359)

In that "two linguistic consciousnesses" are present in Joyce's narration *Portrait* is no anomaly. But the represented consciousness—assumed by most critics to be wholly Stephen—is not unitary. Joyce's sympathetic stylization identifies himself with the language he criticizes elsewhere ironically, and so not only Stephen but Joyce himself serves as the butt of his own ironic discourse. This deviation from discretely posited consciousnesses is one of which Bakhtin would approve, as it demonstrates just how much the other is caught up within the self. Joyce, as all of us, is of a divided mind, yet this division remains captured within the socio-historic individual readers recognize to be James Joyce. While the division is relatively explicit in *Portrait*, it is difficult to imagine a novel without a similar division of one extent or another.

A self-division such as the one envisioned here obviously contradicts more "traditional" perceptions of the novelistic self such as Wayne C. Booth's implied author. The most immediate difference is Booth's insistence on the unitary self at a time when his own theory demonstrates just the opposite. Booth finds the implied author "present in all fiction" without exception, and considers it a "harmful error [to pretend] that an author can allow direct intrusions of his own immediate problems and desires" (75). For Booth, "the 'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices" (74-5). But though this ideal, created

author is not the real author, Booth discerns no conflict between the two selves he posits. He sees the implied author as one voice that somehow incorporates "the real man" while exceeding him. It is because Bakhtin recognizes that such conflict cannot be ignored—even in tales "from the author"—that he expressly denotes the notion of direct authorial discourse in contrast to whatever other narrative mode the novel may follow. It is only in those cases "where the author's voice seems at first glance to be unitary and consistent, direct and unmediatedly intentional" (Bakhtin 315), rare though they may be, that character speech becomes the sole organizational element for heteroglossia in the novel.

Booth, unlike Bakhtin, concerns himself with fiction's "wholesomeness," what Bakhtin terms the view of the literary work as "a hermetic and self-sufficient whole" (273), and a ruptured narrative voice seriously impairs this self-sufficiency. It is the Aristotelian metaphysical belief in unity that compels Booth to trumpet the inclusivity of the text and assume that irony exists apart from the reading process; like the words on the page, it does not come and go but defies the instability a procession of readers brings to the text. For Bakhtin, this view can only be considered erroneous. Irony is not an open and shut case; it is always open and only open. Irony is a subjective construct rather than an objective one so far as Bakhtin's theory is concerned because of the social nature of communication—irony is not recognized, it is created between author and reader. "The ability to recognize irony is one of the surest tests of intelligence and sophistication," Hugh Holman tells us in *A Handbook to Literature* (236), but if such a test is not entirely invalid, it is misapplied. Irony is not in a given passage to be detected strictly on the reader's merit in interpreting the author's intention; instead, irony may be drawn into certain contexts depending upon the reader's own background in combination with

the author's discourse. The two (reader and author) do not function separately; every utterance engages both reader and author at once.

Examples of reader-dependent irony (and thus Joyce's comic spirit) occur in those character zones that slip past the wall of Stephen's discourse. What to many readers may appear as simple description in the direction of various characters' dialogue—"Dedalus, said MacCann *crisply*" (199); "Damn me, said Mr Dedalus *frankly*" (60); "Might I ask you what you are talking about? said Stephen *urbanely*" (77)—can be interpreted with comic overtones, especially considering the direction that the narration comes from. Who thinks that MacCann speaks crisply and Mr Dedalus frankly? Does Stephen? Whose word do we trust that Stephen speaks urbanely? Considering the rarity with which such directions (almost as if for the stage) are appended (the vast majority of identified speakers are identified without elaboration: "he said," "she said"), one must consider their purpose. Is it to illuminate the reader's understanding of the situation? When Joyce so obviously relies upon the reader to imagine the situation for himself most of the time (no Bennettian Naturalism here), why does he add directions that are almost surely redundant or comically inappropriate? The answer is that each of the above is an example of the character's speech infecting the speech of the narrator. "Damn me, said Mr Dedalus frankly, if I know how you can smoke such villainous awful tobacco. It's like gunpowder, by God" (60). The frankness of Mr Dedalus's statement is immediately apparent from his oath ("Damn me"), from his pejorative description of the tobacco ("like gunpowder") and from his indirect questioning of uncle Charles's personal habits ("how you can smoke"). There is little debate here about whether Mr Dedalus may be speaking frankly or not; the redundancy of the dialogue direction must be viewed with a comic eye because it threatens to objectify Mr Dedalus's

speech rather than represent it. To take it seriously is to do the author an injustice.

Similarly, Stephen's naiveté contradicts his "urbane" reply to Heron's cajolery about Emma's attendance with the Dedaluses at the play. Having thought "all day ... of nothing but their leavetaking on the steps of the tram" (77), and with the benefit of Heron's "expressive" nudge with the elbow, Stephen's pretended ignorance is unconvincing. Even the reader, with no knowledge that Emma will attend, can surmise that the issue at hand likely regards a girl: "You're a sly dog, Dedalus! ... You'd think butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, said Heron. But I'm afraid you're a sly dog" (76). The humour of the situation comes from the apparently innocently appended "urbanely," but it is just such small comic moments that provide clues about Joyce's feelings toward Stephen. Though we must locate Joyce as the origin of this comedy, naming the speaker resolves nothing. It merely broadens the dialogic nature of the text from one that involves a reader and Joyce to one that includes Joyce and Stephen himself, whose language it must be that feels he did, in fact, respond urbanely.

Indeed, the issues become more complex because of the subtlety of Joyce's humour here; if we are to agree that humour exists in these dialogue directions, where does it end? Since there are light touches of humour should we also find some in broader strokes? Talking to Davin, "Stephen had turned his smiling eyes towards his friend's face, flattered by his confidence and won over to sympathy by the speaker's simple accent" (182). Which of the clues take precedence here? Do we understand Stephen sympathetically, concentrating on the "smiling eyes" and the sincerity of the flattery he feels or do we perceive him ironically because he is "won over to sympathy" through snobbishness rather than genuine compassion? These questions are irresolvable. Joyce's light comic touch threatens to disappear at the

slightest prompting rather than indicate that it is the first wave of a tide of laughter. At that moment when Joyce appears ready to provide concrete definition of Stephen—yes, laugh at him, he knows nothing—he pulls back from the edge of commitment. This is partly because Stephen is too complex to categorize so easily, and partly because Joyce knows definition is fruitless, a mere hallucination.

The narration of *Portrait*, protean to the highest degree, exploits this lack of definition and accommodates as many interpretations as various readers may produce. Hugh Kenner claims that it is a mistake to think of Stephen as the author of his novel, but it is just as foolhardy to make an equally absolute claim for Joyce as author of the text, as if no other author could be imagined. The very point of Joyce's impersonal narration is that it, too, is reader-dependent; undefined rather than defined, open rather than closed. In fact, since the narrator remains very much unnamed, there should be no pressure to name him decisively at all. Provided that he performs his function, less and less emphasis should be placed upon positioning him and more upon the implications of this lack of authorial positioning. Joyce is clearly interested in opening the text as widely as possible in anticipatory defiance of the New Critical belief in the hermetic text to show that there are at least two perspectives—realistic and romantic, individual and institutional; however one wants to define them—that may be brought to bear upon Stephen's situation in Ireland. The vast majority of critics have understood this, but they have approached the problem in an either/or context, supposing that Joyce (or whoever they identify as the novel's mover) must have intended just one of the paths they discern.

The competing systems of authority inherent in the double-voiced narration of *Portrait* ensure that the dialogue between author, characters and reader can never be resolved. Identifying the author's speech accomplishes merely that. It does not

identify a privileged speaker, one whose speech controls the interpretation of the novel. Stephen "is located in a zone of potential conversation with the author, in a zone of *dialogical contact*" (Bakhtin 45). Instead of dictating to Stephen or the reader how to read the novel, Joyce "converses" with his main character; "such a conversation is the fundamental constitutive element of novelistic style" (46). It is precisely the dialogic nature of conversation—the exchange between two or more voices—that limits Joyce's priority of discourse. While we may accord the author more importance if we choose, Joyce sets himself up not as the opinion but as an opinion. In a heteroglot world it is all he can aspire to.

Of course, Stephen's esthetic theory would deny Joyce even the privilege of contributing his own opinion to the novel: "The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (215). Insofar as Joyce "hides" behind his impersonal narration, he would appear to achieve one of the conditions of dramatic art, the disappearance of the author. Such an author presumably lets his creation talk for itself, without explicit authorial commentary. To the extent that the kind of author Stephen implicitly disapproves of here is one very much involved in directing the reader's reaction to the text (like Richardson in *Clarissa*, for instance), Stephen's vision of an indifferent author as one who simply presents the action is correct. But to say that the author is "refined out of existence" and thus provides no commentary on the text at all is unrealistically hermetic. In the course of presentation commentary of one kind or another is inescapable. Joyce represents Stephen's language (and, as sympathetic narrator, his own; read "literally" they mean much the same thing) "as an image that speaks, and that is therefore preconditioned" (Bakhtin 46). This preconditioning renders the author "far from

neutral in his relationship to this image" (46) since he or she "converses" with this language dialogically: "behind" it is the author, omnipresent in the novel; every word hears his or her echo. The indifference or impersonality of the narration does not translate into the neutrality of presentation it connotes.¹ On the contrary, every single reading will remove this indifference as it inevitably engages the author's opinion: the author is ironic, the author is non-ironic, the author is not the author; whatever the position, it will appeal to the author at some point. Criticism depends upon a temporary implicit fusion of critical and authorial voices, one long enough for the reader to feel he or she knows the author's intention, because it is this fusion that indicates the reader understands the "authorial" text. It is only once fusion is achieved that evaluation can be delivered if it is not to be based on visceral emotional reaction.

The climax of Stephen's esthetic theorizing—the artist "refined out of existence"—reveals another ironic jab by the author at the same time that it appears to contradict this irony. In stating that "the personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalises itself, so to speak" (215) Joyce laughs because the impersonalized narrator is not really him; it is a narration that is mostly uninhabited. As far as Stephen and his tale is concerned, the author has disappeared; he affects Stephen not at all, especially once he speaks directly through the diary. But there is another tale

¹ Neutrality is functionally impossible anyway. As defined by Funk and Wagnall, neutrality means "having no marked characteristics; neither one nor the other; indefinite; middling" (909). To be neither one nor the other is to be both one and the other, the same only opposite; to be neutral is to be on the unimaginable cusp of margin and centre, that place that is neither margin nor centre and yet must be both in defiance of Aristotle's dictum that what is cannot be what it is not. The neutral object does not really exist; it is, in fact, characterized by a state of non-existence, or tries to be. It attempts to state, in effect, "I do not exist" and in the effort demonstrates the invalidity of the position. One, indeed, may not exist, but one may not say so.

here—Joyce's ironic commentary upon Stephen's language. At one and the same time, then, Stephen is both right and wrong, and in the validity of his view Joyce's irony withers away as in its invalidity Joyce's irony grows strong.

To say that Joyce speaks impersonally, without a voice, is to confirm that "the author participates in the novel (he is omnipresent in it) with *almost no direct language of his own*" (47). The author is not limited to identification with just one language system, but is able instead to skip about them (as above), identifying with one here and another there. It is just such "skipping about" that prompts Wayne Booth to conclude that "the truth seems to be that Joyce was always a bit uncertain about his attitude toward Stephen" (330). The truth, insofar as we speak of such a thing, is that the only one uncertain about Stephen is Booth because Stephen does not neatly fit into one of the categories present in the novel. Joyce's authorial voice in the text is open, comic and not to be pinned down, but it is not precisely uncertain. Nor is it precisely certain, either. To be certain is to stifle debate, not encourage it, and if in nothing else, Joyce shares Stephen's distrust of the authoritative discourse represented in *Portrait* by the church. But it is not uncertain because Joyce deliberately chooses to open the text to a variety of interpretations that he knows are inevitable anyway. The Bakhtinian/Joycean text is not a misread text at any time; it is a created text, one open to as many different readings as there are ideolects and language systems that may intersect with it. Of course, those language systems outside of the novel constitute merely a heteroglot background for the text. It is those systems inside of it that significantly open the text, systems that shall be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

The heteroglot vagaries of reader response to *Portrait* has resulted in an astounding breadth of readings outside of the specific debate about esthetic theory, many of them, taking their cue from Stephen's renunciation of Catholicism, in a Christian allegorical context. Julian Kaye, for one, sees "a recapitulation of Luke's story of the Annunciation and of the subsequent visit paid by Mary to her cousin Elizabeth" (Kaye 266) in the name Betty Byrne at the beginning of the novel; Don Gifford, on the other hand, merely notes it as a biographically correct name for the Joyce of the same age as Stephen. While Kaye's overworked interpretation looks more ludicrous than likely, it is an example of the productivity of *Portrait* in generating multiple readings. This productivity arises as a result of the number of intersecting language systems that infect *Portrait* and inflect semantic decision making by the reader. Each of them has the power to attract the reader's allegiance, and most of them will, at one time or another, accomplish that feat to some extent. A reader's judgment of the novel rests on the particular melange of language he or she discerns in it.

Apart from the various character voices of Father Arnall, Simon Dedalus, the Jesuit director, Cranly, Davin and others, there are at least four major language systems intersecting at the authorial, stylistic centre of the novel: the hybridized voice of Stephen, from infant to university student; Joyce's impersonal, descriptive narration; the authoritative discourse of the church that stands in stark dialogic

contrast to virtually every word in the novel; and the "expected" literary horizon of the novel against which Joyce's language strives. In addition, a number of "common languages" – "usually the average norm of spoken and written language for a given social group" (Bakhtin 301) – are apparent on such occasions as the Christmas dinner, in the boys' talk at Clongowes and Belvedere and in the discussions heard and overheard at University College. All of these language systems join in linguistic combat, penetrating each other's defenses, sometimes fusing and sometimes feuding, overlapping one time and meeting head-on another. The sparks that fly from the various conflagrations prompt each reader's individual interpretation as he or she latches on to that in the utterance which their socio-ideological background makes most apparent. Chaos does not reign here, but disunity does, unity residing only in that stylistic, authorial unity that gives free rein to the conflicting language systems Joyce sets in play. It is analysis of these languages (though the scope of this thesis cannot hope to examine each of *Portrait's* languages in great depth), these ideolects, that presents a portrait of *A Portrait*.

We may speak of an authorial stylistic unity in what is otherwise decentered narration for two reasons. One is because it is the author who sets the various language systems of the novel into play. It is here that Bakhtin's definition of the novel requiring "artistic organization" of its heteroglossia becomes a factor. To subject the novel to the unrestricted interaction of heteroglossia is to copy all the various voices heard in a given place for a given length of time; it is to present the language of everyday life as unmediatedly as possible (complete lack of mediation could only be accomplished by a tape recorder, and even then it is still governed by the human hand that chooses to turn it on and off). The author organizes his or her heteroglossia by contrasting and comparing its various languages to meet his or her

requirements. In *Portrait* Joyce thinks it is necessary for the philosophical esthetic language of Stephen's university days to meet headlong the discourse of the church. There is no question of a final conquering or submitting (though the intention of each ideolect is precisely to conquer, to capture as much linguistic ground as it can); these linguistic battles are eternal. Stephen's comparison of the artist to "the God of the creation" (215), for example, integrates the philosophical-esthetic language of Stephen's surrounding conversation with that of the church. Depending on the social and ideological background of the reader this could be a statement of heresy, a taking of the Lord's name in vain, or an implicit admission that despite all of his talk, Stephen cannot progress beyond the most basic of Catholic concepts, that which says God created the world, the cosmos and everything in it. There are no absolute answers here, only more questions, but the linguistic battleground has been centered by the author in the meeting of these specific ideolects. The dialogue between individual and institution is by no means limited to the specific voices of Stephen and church; all the prior and future dialogues involving the church (a great many) and Stephen (comparatively few) can also be brought to bear on this situation. But their bearing will depend upon the reader and the background he or she uses to fill in the utterance. Though nothing is exempt from this dialogue, each dialogue for every reader will involve at least the voices of Stephen and the church. It is this initial positioning of the dialogue relative to the author (a relative centre) by the author that determines the novel's artistic organization and demonstrates one part of its (relative) stylistic unity.

The other part of this stylistic unity resides in the fact that behind every voice the reader hears in the novel is the voice of the author. Every word of the novel, no matter from whose perspective, sounds at least twice: once with the presented voice,

be it church, character or state, and once with the author's voice in relation to the first voice. In many cases the author will muffle his voice as much as possible, attempting a linguistic fusion of design and desire; many examples of this occur in *Ulysses*, notably in "The Oxen of the Sun" chapter. Even here, though, where Joyce hides himself best, the various voices he imitates—Bunyan, Defoe, Gibbon and Dickens, among others—sound with the knowledge that he inhabits them, too. To hear Joyce's Shakespeare¹—

Punch Costello was of them all embraided and they reclaimed the churl with civil rudeness some and shook him with menace of blandishments others whiles they all chode with him, a murrain seize the dolt, what a devil he would be at, thou chuff, thou puny, thou got in a peasestraw, thou losel, thou chitterling, thou spawn of a rebel, thou dykedropt, thou abortion thou, to shut up his drunken drool out of that like a curse of God ape... (14: 324-30)

—is to hear Joyce's Shakespeare, no matter how accurate it seems (could not "thou abortion thou" be hurled as a low insult in virtually any of Shakespeare's plays?). The uncanny rendition of Shakespeare heard here is still heard in the context of Joyce's utterance, and this context leads the reader to deduce Joyce's possible intention in organizing his heteroglossia just so. It is the context that gives rise to every specific novel that determines its shape, and that context always includes the author. The voice of the church that the reader hears in *Portrait* is heard in the context of Joyce as author. This much is evident in biographical studies of Joyce's sources that show, for instance, that Father Arnall's sermons borrow heavily from

¹ It may be argued that the quotation excerpted here is not precisely like Shakespearian prose, but it must at least be acknowledged to resemble the speech of the Elizabethan era in general. Joyce's intention in this case may very well have been to parody the period rather than any specific author.

the writings of Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti, an Italian Jesuit of the seventeenth century (Gifford 177). The authoritative voice of the church heard in *Portrait* is thus one particular to Joyce (and others, perhaps) but not one necessarily familiar to all the Catholic authority figures of the time. It is not a church voice, sanctioned with the full weight of Rome and uttered by Rome; it just sounds like one. The church's voice here suffers the peculiar distortion and refraction of Joyce's authorial purpose as it inevitably must.

An even better example of this authorial distortion is Stephen's description in his esthetic discussion of "a spiritual state very like to that cardiac condition which the Italian physiologist Luigi Galvani, using a phrase almost as beautiful as Shelley's, called the enchantment of the heart" (213). Galvani's phrase, unbeknownst to the majority of readers, describes "the momentary cessation of a frog's heartbeat when a needle is inserted in its spinal cord" (Gifford 254), which leads the reader to one of at least three interpretative paths. One is that Galvani's phrase is sufficient in its linguistic beauty and elegance to match Stephen's situation, no matter its context. This does not seem unlikely, since few readers are likely to know of Galvani or have the wherewithal to look him up. Another path leads the reader to believe, even if he or she is aware of Galvani, that Stephen's accomplishment should be celebrated as a masterful example of combining the two separate discourses of art and science and demonstrating their compatibility. Another path yet would lead the reader to think, upon discovering the origin of Galvani's phrase, that Stephen should be condemned for insufficient esthetic research. Certainly, anyone immediately familiar with Galvani would be hard-pressed to refrain from laughter (or genuine admiration of Stephen's temerity) given the incongruity of the situations the same phrase is used to describe. Three potential readings are placed before the reader here, but they all

have in common Joyce's distortion of context. It is that in the novel that sets the reader on to interpretation, that choosing and selecting and pruning by the author, that allows us to distinguish between the novel and random conversation. And it is this that achieves the distinction of stylistic unity.

Of course, this stylistic unity is hardly unity at all in any semantic sense. On the contrary, it is the novel's stylistic unity that allows the novel to open up so that it need not be bound together semantically (as traditional criticism has long presupposed). If we are to put faith in the post-structuralist ethos of Jacques Derrida (and Bakhtin), nothing can be unified semantically at all; multiplicity of meaning, however, can be suppressed or encouraged. Bakhtin addresses just this issue when discussing the difference between the monoglot and the heteroglot discourse.

"Monoglossia" is a misnomer that can describe only a tendency, not an absolute:

It must not be forgotten that monoglossia is always in essence relative. After all, one's own language is never a single language: in it there are always survivals of the past and a potential for other-languagedness that is more or less sharply perceived by the working literary and language consciousness. (66)

Stylistic unity encourages multiplicity of meaning by presenting no impediment to semantic freedom. Stylistic unity does not engender semantic disunity, but it is not a unity that bounds the ability of the text to mean. To say that Joyce's stylistic unity begins at any one point verges dangerously on post-structuralist heresy; none of the major language systems is intrinsically more important than any of the others, only elaborated at greater or lesser length. The impact each has on the novel is determined by specific readers, and is prone to change; initial readings are likely to focus on the overwhelming presence of Stephen but later ones may discover the

significance of, for example, Joyce's play with the "expected" literary horizon. Beginning examination of the language systems and styles of *Portrait* is bound to be an arbitrary endeavor; but, to cite Derrida, "we must begin *wherever we are*" (*OG* 162). And where we are is the common languages of *Portrait*.

Portrait's common languages (and, for that matter, the common languages of any novel) can be divided into two categories: the languages of specific social groups and the language of the "expected" literary horizon that provides much of the novel's dialogic background. This second category can be further subdivided into that horizon expected by the reader from past experience and that expected, and exploited, by the author, though in the course of the utterance such distinctions may become impossible. The first category comprises those languages identifiable by class, languages shared by others beyond the (perhaps solitary) few characters who speak them in the novel. In *Portrait* these languages are most evident in the school situations, where a number of students (all save Emma boys, and Emma's few indirectly reported words hardly count as conversation) share many of the same speech characteristics. At Clongowes the boys' talk is at once largely similar and "interanimating" – mutually interproductive – when it is not yet similar. This comes partially because their grasp of language is still youthful, with limited vocabularies relative to adults, and because they all share the same situation – the unifying conformity of a young boy's Catholic education – and the same interest in social status. Social status is of considerable importance to the boys of Clongowes; moreso perhaps than might be expected from a group of children. But shortly after Stephen's arrival Nasty Roche asks him of his father, "Is he a magistrate?" (9) in order to establish the resident social hierarchy and Stephen's identity. Since Stephen is not easily identified by his name ("What kind of a name is that?"), it falls to his father's

profession to define Stephen for the boys of Clongowes. Similarly, when Athy (another strange name, in its way) meets Stephen in the infirmary, by way of introduction he immediately tells Stephen his father "kept a lot of racehorses that were spiffing jumpers" (24-5) in order to place his relations with Stephen in the proper socio-economic context.

The interanimation of language is demonstrated most obviously by Stephen, whose discourse dominates and whose discourse is the only one the reader becomes acquainted with at length, but it extends to all the boys and is demonstrated chiefly in the use of slang. The boys employ slang as a kind of safe rebellion against the proper conformity taught by the church, as an alternate language authority of their own, but it simply results in more conformity as each boy rushes to embrace (or at least understand) what slang he hears.

The degree to which one understands and employs slang contributes measurably to one's acceptance in the peer group; more frequent and complex use of slang distances the speaker farther from the authoritative language of the Jesuit teachers. Athy confirms his status as an entrenched member of the local social class by telling everyone that the boys who ran away were caught "smuggling." Boys on the outside (Stephen in this case) unsure of just what smuggling entails keep their questions quietly to themselves. The alternative is embarrassment similar to that Stephen endures for admitting he kisses his mother then recanting, an embarrassment that distances him from his peer group. It will be Stephen's eventual dissatisfaction with the bifurcation that confronts him—either the church or his peers, us or them, one conformity or another—that prompts him to strike out on an isolationist path.

Stephen's attempted assimilation of Clongowes's social standards is an important part of his first educational experience, as demonstrated by his continuing and varied efforts to fit in. He struggles to understand the double meanings of "belt" (9) and "suck" (11), words whose doubleness is made known to him only at Clongowes. It is through their use as slang that he discovers there is more than one authority to appeal to. At the same time, he works to accept the language he hears all around him, from family and friends: "his father had told him, whatever he did, *never to peach on a fellow*" (21); "it would be *ready in a jiffy*, his mother had said" (27); "Wells's *seasoned hacking chestnut, the conqueror of forty*" (10); "a fellow asked him to *give it one last*" (11). Examples abound in *Portrait's* first chapter of an acclimation to language that, rather than guaranteeing Stephen's inclusion within Irish society, serves to push him out. The language of Clongowes is supposed to smooth over differences; everyone is to speak differently from their Jesuit teachers, but only if they speak with the same different voice. To believe Stephen is to believe that he realizes that speaking with the same voice is not equivalent to speaking with one's own voice, even though every individual voice is to be made up with the voices of others. Stephen rejects the ideology implicit in accepting a unitary Irish voice of any persuasion while at the same time accepting that voice for the purposes of his ideology, the ideology of exile. Even though Stephen eventually decides that exile is his only hope, his voice still comprises his various cultural influences as an Irishman and as a Dubliner. His exile is much less decisive than he thinks.

The same situation repeats itself at Belvedere and at University College. There, however, Stephen resists the attempts of his peers to attract him into their linguistic gravity well. On the contrary, he keeps up the appearance of pious devotion, taking "an arid pleasure in following up to the end the rigid lines of the doctrines of the

church and penetrating into obscure silences" (106). At Belvedere Stephen is curiously quiet; while his friends talk all around him he says little, and even then speaks only in a language fit for a properly religious young man. He contrasts his fellow ringleader, Heron, in this respect. Where Heron goes on about the rector's "bally old play," contentedly asking the messenger boy sent to fetch Stephen to "tell Doyle with my best compliments that I damned his eyes" (83), Stephen is the picture of propriety and correct grammar. Even in the sticky moments leading up to his recollected fight with Heron and Boland and Nash he manages to maintain decorum rather than fall into some more vulgar, easily-imagined construction: "You may keep your mouth shut" (81), he tells Boland after Boland betrays his ignorance regarding poetry. At Belvedere Stephen is all *politesse* but not quite an outsider to his peers because he appears to align himself with a familiar authority (the church) while yet condescending to student requests to "ask questions on the catechism" (105). Such questions undermine both kinds of instruction the students receive: the content and its pedagogical delivery.

At University College Stephen's apparent isolation increases, apparent because he now aligns himself with unfamiliar authorities and uncommon languages. "I will not serve," he tells Cranly, "that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church" (247), and in rejecting these things he rejects all that Davin, Cranly and Lynch are familiar with. To them Stephen is completely isolated, "always alone" (201) as Davin would have it. Stephen himself believes in his solitude, cultivating its impression among his friends. Rather than dispute Davin's assessment of his solitude he belittles Davin's nationalism, the antithesis of solitude in its celebration of community, by mocking the nationalist struggle: "When you make the next rebellion with hurleysticks, said Stephen, and

want the indispensable informer, tell me. I can find you a few in this college" (201). But Stephen's solitude is all illusion; he has merely accepted different authorities in addition to his Irish ones. Contrary to what he may think, Stephen's self-imposed exile does not indicate a rejection of Ireland so much as it suggests an acceptance of his own particular vision of it.

By promoting himself as a candidate for self-exile Stephen demonstrates less his dissatisfaction with Ireland than his ultimate belief in it. Implicitly contained within the idea of exile is the desirability of return. The notion of exile is more commonly attached to the malingerer forced out by the local authorities, and crucial to exile is the element of force. Simply because Stephen's exile is self-imposed does not mean that force is not involved. Quite the opposite is true; Stephen must force himself away from Ireland because he feels that it is what is best for him, not because elsewhere (the Continent in this case) intrinsically attracts him. In a strange way Stephen's departure constitutes what is best for Ireland, too, since his skepticism will never translate into the action that is needed to effect any of the changes he feels are so necessary for Ireland's continued health as a cultural center. Stephen could not exile himself from Ireland if he did not accept what it is and what he hopes it might become; to truly reject Ireland would cause Stephen merely to leave and not contemplate the self-imposed pressure that prevents him from returning to his native land.

To return, then, to Stephen's alternate authorities: Stephen's influences at University College show through in his language quite plainly, freely admitted: Aquinas, Aristotle and Galvani all present themselves in Stephen's speech. His language changes little from that of Belvedere except for an increased verbosity. He maintains a predominantly polite, literary kind of talk that is not so notable in its

own right as it is in comparison to the speech of his fellows. Moynihan eagerly confides that "MacCann is in tiptop form. Ready to shed the last drop. Brandnew world. No stimulants and votes for the bitches" (195). Cranly confidently swears in blood and fire ("You flaming floundering fool! I'll take my dying bible there isn't a bigger bloody ape, do you know, than you in the whole flaming bloody world" (200)); Lynch in colour ("Damn your yellow insolence" 204). While Stephen notes the different languages of all three men in various ways—he "smiles at the manner" of Moynihan's confidence, comments on the benefits for "European culture" resulting from Lynch's decision to "swear in yellow" and wonders if Cranly's "epitaph for all dead friendships" (195) will ever be spoken for him—they have very little influence on his own speech. Where he kept silent at Belvedere, betraying few of the romantic impulses that drove his thoughts, Stephen at university fears the secret of his isolation no more, caring little if he is considered impious or insufficiently nationalistic. His allegiances are no longer so narrowly confined.

The second category of "common language" also functions as a language system of its own. The common language of the "expected" literary horizon is not so much heard in the novel as felt, as much noted by its absence as its presence. Bakhtin defines it as "that horizon against which the particularities of the teller's tale are perceivable" (313), and so it is an indispensable component of the narrative voice, from whomever it may derive. In *Portrait* this expected literary horizon could be any of a number of "literary" discourses current at the time of the novel or the time of its writing; in a certain sense, the expected literary horizon will at one time or another be all of them.¹ More than this, the expected literary horizon can be

¹ The post-publication expectations of the reader are not a factor because they are completely retrospective—the dialogue in this case is entirely within the reader.

exploited by all the tellers in a particular tale—in *Portrait*, chiefly Joyce and Stephen, though Father Arnall might be considered another storyteller—though Bakhtin emphasizes the relationship between posited author (discrete narrator) and real author.¹ The naturalism of Arnold Bennett or Gustave Flaubert, the realism of late Victorian novelists, the decadence of such nineties writers as Oscar Wilde, even (to a lesser extent) the general romantic and sentimental bias of nineteenth century fiction as a whole could all be considered the expected literary horizon for Joyce's first novel. Certainly, Stephen's epiphanic moments (the bird-girl scene especially) tend to get caught up in flights of Romanticist rapture. Philip Herring, in *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle*, argues convincingly that much of Stephen's thought and writing is influenced by the Symbolist poetics of Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Dujardin and others. Symbolism's emphasis on the "priority of suggestion and evocation over direct description and explicit analogy" (Drabble 549) naturally fits Stephen's propensity to dream big and ignore the little details, though he does become somewhat more pragmatic in the final chapter, articulating his view of Ireland's shortcomings and making plans to leave for the continent. As an expected literary horizon, Symbolism locates Stephen in time and fights with authorial deviation from its precepts. Where the narration undercuts the Symbolist ethic the reader experiences a linguistic battle between it and that discourse Joyce chooses to contrast it. Of course, Stephen may also choose to undermine the Symbolist ethic as well,

¹ In fact, Bakhtin speaks of the "expected" literary horizon only in connection with the conflict between a posited author or narrator and the real author. This is unnecessarily limiting, however; the expected literary horizon cannot be restricted to the novel's internal horizon of discourse because to do so would be to deny the external heteroglot background every novel dialogizes itself against whether the novel incorporates heteroglossia internally or not.

though this cannot be expected to happen particularly often given that he is its chief proponent.

Variation from the "expected" literary horizon, whatever it may be, will often rely on another already established literary discourse such as (if we posit a romantic literary horizon) realism or naturalism, but it is also to be countered by Joyce's innovations with language that begin largely in *Portrait*. Notable instances of the former situation include those incidents that undermine Stephen's discussion with Lynch on esthetics. The cart that rolls by and interrupts Stephen and leaves Lynch cursing is described naturalistically and dispassionately in contrast to the elevated, philosophical language Stephen uses to formulate his thinking: "A long dray laden with old iron came around the corner of Sir Patrick Dun's hospital covering the end of Stephen's speech with the harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal" (209). With typical Joycean compression, the incident "speaks for itself" without overt authorial commentary. Stephen's language fights here with that of Joyce's because of the parody evident in the juxtaposition of languages. Each seeks to take command against the expected background of dispassionate narration.

In a similar vein are the pedestrian beginnings to each of the second, third, fourth and fifth chapters that follow Stephen's evidently temporary epiphanies at the end of each chapter preceding. After the other-worldly ecstasy of the bird-girl scene, for example, chapter five opens in squalor, a reminder of what life for Stephen is like in this sphere:

He drained his third cup of watery tea to the dregs and set to chewing the crusts of fried bread that were scattered near him, staring into the dark pool of the jar. The yellow drippings had been scooped out like a boghole and the pool under it brought back to his memory the dark turfcoloured water of the bath in Clongowes. The box of

pawntickets at his elbow had just been rifled and he took up idly one after another in his greasy fingers the blue and white docket, scrawled and sanded and creased and bearing the name of the pledger as Daly or MacEvoy. (174)

The dialogic method of countering the expected romantic horizon of Stephen with naturalistic discourse sets up a seesaw between the two discourses and opens the interpretative possibilities of the text. Which discourse more accurately describes Stephen? Which does Joyce sympathize with? Again, most critics have taken these questions as either/or propositions: either the romantic sensibility or the realistic scenery more accurately describes Stephen, and critics have naturally appealed to Joyce's thought upon the matter to confirm their own. The questions above, however, are of little relevance to each other. The discourse that more accurately describes Stephen changes depending on context; and if the reader decides that Joyce sympathizes with a "realistic" portrayal of Stephen at Stephen's expense, the reader still has only Joyce's opinion as counsel, not confirmation. The two language systems are in conflict, Stephen struggling to tell his story as he thinks it should be told and Joyce hastening to correct Stephen's misconceptions. But neither discourse completely dominates; rather, they converse with each other, each—in one sense—the other's expected horizon.

Joyce's innovations in language also contribute to the dialogic offensive against the expected literary horizon, but these are more problematic when it comes to assigning the position of Joyce and Stephen relative to each other. They do not argue for or against Stephen so much as against the established currents of literary thought; their use is consequently not limited to situations that denigrate or celebrate Stephen's achievements, and the languages involved may be

complementary as well as contradictory. They do, however, tend to reveal more of Joyce than other languages indulged in within this very heteroglot novel.

Joyce's innovations in *Portrait* are relatively modest in comparison to *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* or the works of authors such as Virginia Woolf or William Faulkner. Nonetheless, against the expected romantic, symbolist and realist horizons they are significant. These innovations consist largely of two things, one directly connected to language and one connected to structure. Joyce's language is innovative in its compressiveness, most obviously achieved in his frequent use of compound words, especially compound words not normally likely to be paired. Joyce disliked the use of unnecessary punctuation (another innovation, in its way) (Spielberg 320n), thus explaining the lack of hyphens for some of his compounds, but he often places words together that are ordinarily separated: "deathwound" (19), "strangelooking" (26), "nettlebunches" and "indiarubber" (137) are but a few examples. Depending on its context, such usage may indicate Joyce's sympathy or derision for Stephen in any particular scene. An example of this occurs during the pandybat scene in chapter one.

F. Parvin Sharpless cites the pandybat scene as a measure of early Joycean irony in the novel. He presents the scene as one that can be experienced either sympathetically or ironically, although the reader must be awfully authoritarian to think of it ironically: "if one hates revolutions, violations of order, going out of channels" (322), then one will view it with an ironic eye. It is his footnote for this discussion, though, (as so often for the New Critics) that is most instructive: "Although Stephen does not know enough of the world to recognize the insignificance of the incident [the pandying], he is right to recognize the injustice" (323, n11). Apart from revealing his own particular bias toward the reading ("the

insignificance of the event"), Sharpless's perspective questions the inclusion of the incident in the novel at all and ignores the complementary voices that narrate the scene.

Sharpless claims that the reader can consider Stephen either a hero or an excessively prideful young boy as the extremes of "proper" reader response to the pandybat scene. While he acknowledges that neither reactive extreme—do we hate tyranny or do we hate rebellion—is likely based simply on the scene's content, he neglects to identify any textual voices that might aid one's conclusion. Sharpless prefers an appeal to (privileged, literary) consensus: "From where *we* stand, the way of the world does not make one pandying cause for weeping" (323). But in this case, Stephen does not stand alone, his situation presented dispassionately and "objectively"; on the contrary, Joyce takes a strong interest in Stephen's pathos. After Stephen's free indirect voice asks, "Why did he say he knew that trick?" (50), the narrative voice becomes almost the exclusive province of Joyce's narration. Joyce's sympathy for Stephen is expressed through the stylistic deviation in description from what has stood so far as the novel's common language: the "hot burning stinging tingling blow" (50) is language from Joyce's direct authorial voice superimposed over or in addition to his unemotional narration. In this case at least, he cares about Stephen's predicament. This voice appears again a few lines later with "a fierce maddening tingling burning pain" (50). We may posit Joyce's direct voice behind these words precisely because they deviate from the common, impersonal tone of the narration to this point, and we can assume that Joyce sympathizes with Stephen because it is the pain—the scene's most emotional moment—that he emphasizes. The pain is doubled by its injustice, and Joyce's suddenly very personal intervention accentuates just that.

Joyce's structural innovation, on the other hand, is by now old hat: it is his technique of delivering maximum information with minimum commentary, another kind of compression to complement his compression of language. Chapter five is filled with such incidents as various friends and acquaintances come and go:

They turned into Lower Mount Street. A few steps from the corner a fat young man, wearing a silk neckcloth, saluted them and stopped.

—Did you hear the results of the exams? he asked. Griffin was plucked. Halpin and O'Flynn are through the home civil. Moonan got fifth place in the Indian. O'Shaughnessy got fourteenth. The Irish fellows in Clarke's gave them a feed last night. They all ate curry.

His pallid bloated face expressed benevolent malice and, as he had advanced through his tidings of success, his small fatencircled eyes vanished out of sight and his weak wheezing voice out of hearing.

In reply to a question of Stephen's his eyes and his voice came forth again from their lurking places.

—Yes, MacCullagh and I, he said. He's taking pure mathematics and I'm taking constitutional history. There are twenty subjects. I'm taking botany too. You know I'm a member of the field club. (210)

The density of information related here makes the passage virtually incomprehensible unless one is an Irish historian or consults a handy guide such as Don Gifford's *Joyce Annotated*. The reader can obviously determine the apparent subject matter ("the exams"), but what exams precisely (what is the Indian? What the home civil?) and what their importance might be is tremendously difficult to determine without assistance. The actual referentiality of the language is not so important (interested readers are advised to refer to Gifford) as the fact that the author's presentation here counters the expected naturalistic, "tell it all" discourse common then and still common now. It also functions to undermine Stephen's philosophical discussion of esthetics once again, both in terms of language (the

common and familiar versus the elevated and philosophical) and in terms of characterization. While Stephen natters on about esthetics, Donovan (the speaker here) and the rest of the men he mentions are obviously more concerned about employment opportunities since that is what the exams are for.

Joyce does not limit his structural compression to incidental matters such as the news regarding exams or to the more mature stylistic phase of the narration. He is also deliberately ambiguous where Stephen's religious difficulties are concerned. Instead of explaining the precise nature of Stephen's heresy in chapter two, the reader must muddle out its relative importance on his or her own. After being told that "this fellow has heresy in his essay" (79), the reader comes to the main issue:

—Perhaps you didn't know that, he said.

—Where? asked Stephen.

Mr Tate withdrew his delving hand and spread out the essay.

—Here. It's about the Creator and the soul. Rrm . . . rrm . . . rrm . . .

Ah! *without a possibility of ever approaching nearer*. That's heresy.

Stephen murmured:

—I meant *without a possibility of ever reaching*.

It was a submission and Mr Tate, appeased, folded up the essay and passed it across to him, saying:

—O . . . Ah! *ever reaching*. That's another story. (79)

Unless well versed in Catholic doctrine, readers are unlikely to know the basis of the argument between Mr Tate and Stephen, and guessing whether or not the heresy was indeed accidental is a bit of a game. This game, though, is intentional. Here, as elsewhere, sufficient information is provided to make some sense (sense is never complete, and Joyce knows this) of the narrative depending upon the reader's context. Joyce does not assign himself the position of ultimate authority, the final arbiter to whom all decisions may be appealed. In this case, neither authority—

Stephen or the church—appears particularly strong in and of themselves; their strength or weakness must derive from the reader. The situation is not defined by the church as well as one might expect given its institutional interest in standards and conformity—it assumes understanding and non-questioning of its precepts, thereby underestimating Stephen—but at the same time Stephen's rebelliousness fails to take advantage of this opportunity to affirm his own authority.

The effect of the various language systems of *Portrait*—only a random sampling of which could be examined here—is a decentering of discourse that makes not only Stephen's every thought and action open to question, but also the thoughts and actions of the other authorities represented in the novel. *Portrait* is a picture of process, a forever evolving tracing of the language systems and ideologies that battle for Stephen's allegiance. Vicki Mahaffey states it well: Stephen comes to represent "not the artist, but the dialogical process of verbal recreation that we tend to split into reading and writing" (64). In that Stephen is the chief personality over which linguistic war is waged, he comes to represent what one might call the locus of disunity in the text. That is to say, the novel's various language systems and competing authorities meet in him at one time or another; in their attempts to define him as they would see fit they are all considered from his incessantly changing perspective. It is Stephen's attempts to define himself amid the conflicting heteroglot influences he experiences that will be the subject of the final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Characteristic for the novel as a genre," Bakhtin tells us, "is not the image of a man in his own right, but a man who is precisely the *image of a language*" (336). Language is the measure of the self, and this is nowhere more evident than in *Portrait*. Stephen struggles from beginning to end with language in the attempt to define himself and his situation; it is not only just himself that he must understand, but his context as well, and this context will be understood only through language. Stephen understands the vital importance of language for coming to terms with his immediate situation, but he unwisely thinks that he himself can be considered in isolation from his context, and that his shaping impulses may be dismissed. All the evidence in *Portrait* points to the contrary—the novel presents the reader not with one, unitary Stephen but with several, one for each of the chapters and the respective influences they exert upon him. Though certain aspects of the Stephen the reader sees remain relatively consistent throughout the novel—most obviously his propensity to rattle off a series of often challenging questions, a trademark from infancy through to maturity—it is clear that the Stephen of the book's beginning is not precisely the same character—with all the same beliefs and aspirations—as the one that declaims philosophically in the final chapter.

The self is ever a condition of process, but Stephen's mature self, the one most capable of understanding this, differs from his earlier incarnations in believing that he has found answers to the problems that plague him. Stephen thinks that he

succeeds, and that in success he finds an end, a peak of achievement where he may rest. Stephen's firmness of opinion is one of the things that led Joyce to say of him he has "a shape that can't be changed" (Kenner "Cubist" 177). It was not always thus. In the opening chapter various words and phrases meet definitions particular to Stephen, but doubt still plagues him. "By thinking of things you could understand them" (43) he thinks, having cleared up the mystery of "Tower of Ivory" and "House of Gold." But this is stated not so much as fact as reassurance. The implicit "couldn't you?" is supplied with the next sentence, a question: "But why in the square?" This question initiates a convoluted series of questions, each finding more and more that still needs to be explained about the smuggling incident. Remembering that the square was filled with graffiti, Stephen thinks:

Perhaps that was why they [the boys caught smuggling] were there because it was a place where some fellows wrote things for cod. But all the same it was queer what Athy said and the way he said it. It was not a cod because they had run away. He looked with the others in silence across the playground and began to feel afraid. (43)

Stephen's fear stems from his dissatisfaction with his own guesswork, its contradictory nature exposed. A little later, the boys laugh at Athy's gallows wit regarding the pandying the guilty parties are sure to receive. From feeling that the boys "were a little afraid" (44) in spite of their laughter to asking, "But what was there to laugh at in it?" (45), Stephen, thoroughly perplexed and afraid because of it, asks himself anxiously, "O how could they laugh about it that way?" (45). He closes this fearful state of mind with the realization that "Mr Gleeson would not flog Corrigan hard. And Fleming had said he would not because it was best of his play not to. But that was not why" (45). Though Fleming may be more astute than

Stephen thinks, depending upon how one chooses to hear his words, the issue of whether Stephen is right or wrong here is immaterial. The significant thing is that he does not know why or why not Corrigan will be flogged hard or soft. He knows only that he does not know and finds no comfort in that fact. Whether he is aware of it or not (and his discomfort suggests that he may have some partial understanding of his fear), Stephen has just demonstrated that thinking of things is no guarantee of comprehension. He has moved from a position of security, or one he considers secure, to one of insecurity because thinking of things does not complete knowledge so much as render apparent its incompleteness. Answers only lead to further questions.

For the reader, of course, the point is made doubly clear by Stephen's simplified and naive understanding of "Tower of Ivory." Adequate on a personal level for Stephen's needs, his understanding of "Tower of Ivory" is notable to most readers for its comic hamartia. "Eileen had long thin cool white hands too because she was a girl. They were like ivory; only soft. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory* but protestants could not understand it and made fun of it" (42). On the terms of Stephen's understanding of "Tower of Ivory" – how the protestants' understand the phrase – Stephen's definition obviously will suit no one but himself. Stephen works from a prior incompleteness – the inadequate protestant understanding of "Tower of Ivory" – to the incompleteness of his questions regarding the smuggling incident. He does not realize that the prior incompleteness is actually incomplete – for him it is a ground of understanding. Because the reader does, however, he or she recognizes, at Stephen's expense, the semantic instability that encloses all of us. It is his blindness, in this case, that enables the reader to see.

This last sentence, of course, refers to the nearly ubiquitous "presence" of Paul de Man in post-structuralist studies. Though he would chafe at the separation of blindness and insight in this context (insight and blindness are the same thing only opposite), Bakhtin is not without a comparable position of his own. Where de Man tends to morbid contemplation of the void, however, Bakhtin locates his conflation of blindness and insight in the escape of laughter. This conflation is evident in Stephen's questions about what Athy and the other boys find funny in the floggings soon to come. The boys do not laugh because they think that pandying is genuine fun; they laugh because laughter is one of the few means of rebellion left to them. The pandybat is an instrument of the authoritarian oppressors, and laughing at the authority it represents is one way of asserting the boys' own authority. Even though it may be presumed that Athy and some of his fellows comprehend the situation better than Stephen, they do not laugh because of their superior knowledge. They laugh instead because they do not know, because they are not part of the authority that towers over them. Their laughter springs from fear and incomprehension, as so much laughter does, and its intent is to repair their own insecurity—in this case, the chance that any one of them might be on the receiving end of the pandy without much provocation. Athy, Stephen, Fleming and the others have done nothing, but are, as Fleming says, "all to be punished for what other fellows did" (43). The boys have no power as such; they can make no decisions in this case; but their laughter simultaneously recognizes this fact and disregards it as a trifle. "The fellows laughed, but he felt that they were a little afraid" (44). Undoubtedly they are afraid, but their laughter and fear become so intertwined that it is impossible to tell one from the other. For Athy and the others, laughter erases their powerlessness at the same time that it confirms its existence.

Stephen does not engage in the defense mechanism of laughter to hide and announce his own doubts in his abilities. Disappointed in his own efforts to accommodate the authority of his friends, he replaces their authority with that of the romantic fiction of Dumas:

He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how: but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. They would meet quietly as if they had known each other and had made their tryst, perhaps at one of the gates or in some more secret place. They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment. (65)

Here Stephen contemplates the pleasure of passivity; things will happen to him; he need do nothing except react, just like the Dark Avenger. Instead of feeling, as he does in chapter one, that the world is something he must adapt himself to in order to find acceptance and survive, he chooses to believe that the world will adapt itself to him; that it will recognize his superior qualities and seek him out because that is his fate. Acceptance is no longer an issue except on his terms, and neither are his various inadequacies. Inadequacies are measured against the standards of some external set of peers, and though Stephen is still internally aware of "weakness and timidity," the peer group he imagines here will make no demands upon him but only satisfy his requirements.

Stephen's new struggle of inactivity is naturally couched in language. "Words which he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart; and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him" (62).

In response to the frustration of non-understanding he felt as a young boy, Stephen re-orientates himself in the world. It is "about him," and he is no longer properly in it but already in exile simply waiting to enter: "The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him the nature of which he only dimly apprehended" (62). Stephen has sent himself into premature exile because his attempts to effect assimilation at Clongowes largely failed. His one triumph was for him the result of his own initiative, only confirming for his young mind the essential nature of his isolation, and his pride in it: "The cheers died away in the soft grey air. He was alone. He was happy and free: but he would not be anyway proud with Father Dolan" (59). He is of course proud, but his triumph is based on group acceptance. As Bakhtin states, "every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)" (272), but each utterance tries, in its own way, to become that "unitary language" as well—each of us treasures that dominion of language and influence (and consequent acceptance) we may spread over others, though success will in time mean failure as the "unitary language" changes again.

Stephen fails to recognize or fails to accede to his own need for acceptance, however, and acts instead the part of the malcontent who likes to "taste the joy of his loneliness" (68). Playing the passive loner Stephen turns ever inward:

While his mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms and turning in irresolution from such pursuit he had heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic

above all things. These voices had now come to be hollowsounding in his ears. (83)

On the one hand Stephen's mistrust of these voices of authority is to be commended both because of their contradictory messages (witnessed in the Christmas dinner scene; does being a gentleman above all things lay your allegiance with your country or your church first?) and because of their futility and ineffectuality. Stephen's Ireland is like the cows "which had seemed so beautiful in the country" (64) but which produce "foul green puddles and clots of liquid dung" (63). The voices of authority Stephen hears not only will not change Ireland, and therefore his own condition, they will perpetuate it.

On the other hand, however, Stephen's growing insularity overlooks the basic fact that the authoritative voices he distrusts are his voices too, and that he cannot measure himself apart from them. It is because he tries to measure himself independently of any involvement in his culture that he is shocked to find the word "foetus" etched in a desk in Cork. His discovery "in the outer world" of "a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind" (90) represents the nadir of Stephen's awareness of those others which make up our selves as much as we do. Again, Stephen's sense of self is caught up in his approach to language: it is "mere words" (90) that give rise to Stephen's "filthy" and "horrible" imaginings. All his attempts at assimilation having failed, Stephen finally turns in his imagined isolation to the visceral emotional rewards of visiting prostitutes in the effort "to appease the fierce longings of his heart before which everything else was idle and alien" (98).

Stephen's isolation is an imagined one because it is the result of a submersion in a general romantic ethic that considers one sufficient unto oneself. Stephen is no

more isolated in his first years at Belvedere than he is at any other time; he just thinks he is and rather wishes he was. Instead, he subscribes to authorities different from those commonly recognized by those all about him. This does not make him a person alone because he "knows," in a sense, and respects certain others who share his views. Separation does not equal isolation, and though Stephen is apart from many of his fellow citizens, so are they apart from others in their own various ways—most notably in the differences evident between ardent Catholics such as Mrs Riordan and committed nationalists like Mr Casey.

Chapter three thus sees not a complete turnaround in Stephen's approach to the world, as it might appear, but rather a shift in emphasis from the fictional authority of Dumas and similar writers to the authority of God. Having searched for wholeness, and obviously dissatisfied with the results, he turns to the church in a search for wholesomeness instead. It is a move from supposed self-sufficiency to equally supposed complete insufficiency, the sinner's salvation dependent entirely upon the greater wisdom of God. By the end of the chapter and into the next Stephen subsumes himself and his voice to the voice of God, more perhaps than is healthy. Cranly asks later if Stephen has "never loved anyone." Apart from not knowing what love means, he answers "I tried to love God I tried to unite my will with the will of God instant by instant" (240). Stephen shifts from a position that advocates separation to one that he considers advocacy of virtual symbiosis, one where social aspects suffocate individual ones. Like a lobotomy, though, there is some comfort in the suppression of individual interests. Again, the conflict is etched in language, the spoils of this war his soul: "Shame covered him wholly like fine glowing ashes falling continually. To say it in words! His soul, stifling and helpless, would cease to be" (142). Stephen is in fact correct here, for two reasons. On the one hand he

experiences a transformation from the self-exiled to the self-enclosed, a move from proud separatist (or isolationist as he sees it) revelling in his sins to humble sinner meek in his forgiveness. This change is not one imposed on him by the priest's words of absolution but rather one of reorientation. On the other hand the suppression of individual instincts inherent in uniting one's will with God entails a loss of certain parts of Stephen's soul, those defined by the church as worth losing for sure, but perhaps a few others worth retaining according to Stephen's artistic sensibilities as well. Because Stephen considers his calling to be that of the artist rather than the church his words here have an element of prophecy about them. Having experienced two ends of the social spectrum (though in slight misapprehension of what the one end involves), the question for Stephen will be to see if he learns from his experience, if he learns another's language and in so doing knows his own. It is this that defines the reader's reaction to Stephen as character.

Many of the signs regarding Stephen's knowledge of himself and others are very promising. Having adapted his lifestyle to that of the church, "his daily life laid out in devotional areas" (147) of astonishing self-restraint and rigor, Stephen questions the permanency and efficacy of the return of his faith, thinking that "perhaps that first hasty confession wrung from him by the fear of hell had not been good" (153). It is the amendment of his life that consoles him, but his question—"I have amended my life, have I not?" (153)—indicates that its consolation is rather small. Both according to the precepts of the church and the influence of other, external factors, Stephen's question suggests that in fact his life is really little changed from what it was before. Though more pious he has not substantially improved, still given over to temper and to "frequent and violent temptations" (153). More importantly, though, Stephen's "amended" self fails to satisfy the artistic demands set

by his soul, or some set of demands extracurricular to the church that he defines as artistic. Inspired with the language of the church, Stephen realizes that it is not his own, at least not to such a great extent as to become a priest:

he knew now that the exhortation he had listened to had already fallen into an idle formal tale. He would never swing the thurible before the tabernacle as priest. His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world. (162)

His return to thoughts of destiny leads him back to the romantic/symbolist pathways he walked earlier, along with their consequent emphasis on the elevation of self above other. And though Stephen's insights are not yet exhausted, his denial of social influence—"he was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others"—proves to be his greatest misunderstanding.

What Stephen does understand, however, is the impressive variety of languages and authorities to choose from and appeal to. Whatever else he might be, Stephen is not one to believe in a monoglot world informed by just one central discourse above all the others. But where in earlier chapters Stephen struggles with language to shape it to his own ends, in the novel's final chapter he struggles no longer; it is now he who masters language and not language that masters him. It is his belief in his artistic powers that allows him to speak with an authority similar to that he condemns in the national and catholic voices that so imbue Irish life. Thus the reader finds Stephen pronouncing judgment on Davin ("I ask myself about you: *Is he as innocent as his speech?*" (202)); and on the implicitly Irish voice he sees in the signs all around him:

he found himself glancing from one casual word to another on his right or left in stolid wonder that they had been so silently emptied of instantaneous sense until every mean shop legend bound his mind like the words of a spell and his soul shrivelled up, sighing with age as he walked on in a lane among heaps of dead language. (178-9)

That the Irish voice is infertile ground for Stephen now is made doubly clear by a technique that anticipates its much wider usage in *Ulysses*: after describing "every mean shop legend" as a contributor to the "heaps of dead language" he walks among, Stephen first falls into nonsense verse and then, in a series of apparently random connections, contemplates at a little length another dead language, Latin. For Stephen, at least, the Irish language and what it represents is like Latin—simply an object for study, and no longer relevant to contemporary concerns.

If it is to be relevant, it will have to be in the manner of another of Stephen's increasingly confident pronouncements, his esthetic theory. This he considers "applied Aquinas," another virtually dead language (and, for Stephen, dead authority) that is rejuvenated by its contact with Aristotle and with Stephen himself. In fact, it is Stephen himself who becomes the focus of his various pronouncements while at University College. Where earlier he was acutely conscious of his position in the social fabric, whether trying to fit in or attempting desperately to stay out, he now affects indifference of the entire social climate to the point where he may claim that a reporter's perception of a tragic death is not tragic because "it is remote from terror and pity according to the terms of my definitions" (205). "My definitions" are now the controlling element of Stephen's psychology, and if he expressed too much interest in social acceptance at the expense of his individual psyche, he now swings

the pendulum too far in the opposite direction to the point where he feels he may safely ignore those social conditions that contribute to his understanding of himself.

Hearing Davin's censure of both his private life ("honest to God, Stevie, I was not able to eat my dinner" (202)) and his inadequate nationalism, Stephen replies with some aspersion that "this race and this life and this country produced me.... I shall express myself as I am" (203). While it is commendable that he recognizes the part his culture has played in shaping his personality, it is unfortunate that he thinks that shaping influence has been terminated: "this country *produced me*"; "I shall express myself as I *am*." If Stephen has been destined for the role of the artist, it is as if recognition of that role has abruptly robbed Dame Fortune of any further intervention in his life. Once, when weak and timid, he was in need of a destiny to drive him on past the problems that beset him—problems both real, founded in the gritty misery that can be Ireland, and imagined, the product of an over-sensitive young man who appears ready to perish if not allowed sufficient room for himself. Now, however, confident and cocksure in his ability to understand situations and contexts, Stephen has fulfilled his destiny (or thinks he is about to) but seemingly cannot comprehend that if it is so, his destiny is hardly begun. There is no magic endpoint where destiny begins and ends. Destiny as Stephen imagines it is never in the present; it is a thing consigned to past or future. But destiny is more appropriately located in the present because, as Stephen says of the present, "it brings forth the future" (251). Because he has achieved what he once considered his destiny does not mean that he should stop in time, but this is his great danger: he will live up to a point and only to that point.

This then is the crux of the novel. Stephen's apparent destiny is to become an artist, but it is impossible to say if that destiny has been fulfilled or if it is about to be

fulfilled in his trip to the continent. It is also impossible to distinguish between the fulfillment of destiny and its recognition, especially in the indeterminate case of the artist. At what point can it be said with certainty that Stephen (or anyone) is now an artist whereas he was not before? Stephen hears the call (or fancies he hears it) of the creator, artist, artificer: "Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable" (170). Hearing the call is equivalent to answering it because it is an internally constructed voice, a part of what Bakhtin calls "internally persuasive discourse." But if to hear is to answer—and Stephen operates on that assumption for the rest of the novel since there can be no question of him pursuing another avocation—there is still the sticky difficulty of the material aspects of his call. If he is to be an artist, fine; but when does he begin to create? When does he begin to create "a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful"? The answer is that he has already begun, on the one hand, because recognition of his destiny ineluctably signals his position as an artist. At the same time, though, he obviously has not begun because in a very real sense creation does not begin until something material appears. It is in this regard that Stephen's diary holds a crucial place in our understanding of his fate and of our reaction to him as a character.

The diary holds the promise both of hope and despair. After the confidence that characterizes much of chapter five, confidence that borders on arrogance several times, Stephen finally appears to relax and engage in some of the "auto-criticism of discourse" Bakhtin says is constitutive of the novel. The reader discovers a Stephen sensitive to others beside himself when he or she reads of his conversation with Emma: "Asked me, was I writing poems? About whom? I asked her. This confused

her more and I felt sorry and mean. Turned off that valve at once and opened the spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus, invented and patented in all countries by Dante Alighieri" (252). Here at last is a sign that Stephen has the necessary temperament for the artist, that he may be able to communicate what he feels and transform it into art rather than just talk about the desirability of that communication and his fitness for it. This conscious auto-criticism (Stephen appears sorrowful nowhere else in the novel, at least not in such explicit manner) confirms those clues glimpsed earlier that suggest Stephen is not so dangerously insufferable as he promised he might be: the "smiling" Stephen that expounds to Lynch his esthetic philosophy and the anxious Stephen whom Cranly "makes" confess at the end of the novel.

But immediately after the revelation of Stephen's multi-dimensionality the reader is told that Stephen's mother "prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it" (252-3). His tacit admission ("Amen") that he yet knows little of "what the heart is and what it feels" does not bode well for Stephen's success. It contradicts his acceptance of the call of the artist, who must know something of what the heart is and what it feels if he or she is to create art, even by the terms of Stephen's esthetics: "Art, said Stephen, is the *human* disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an esthetic end" (207; emphasis mine). If Stephen must go away to learn these things at the same time he wants to go away because he resents the fact that he cannot learn them in Ireland, where has he gained the knowledge that he possesses a lack? Stephen's mother characterizes him correctly as one who knows little of the heart, as does Davin, who considers him "a born sneerer" (202). But he is something else as well, something more accommodating and compromising that he suppresses in his

quest for exile. To admit that he is other than a born sneerer (Stephen does not deny Davin's accusation but rather confirms it with a wisecrack about the rebellion, hurleysticks and informers) is to severely distort the impression he wishes to stamp upon others (and upon himself) of his ideology of exile. Stephen is a walking contradiction, but in this he is entirely human. Humanity rests in misunderstanding since there is no final understanding one may place one's faith in. Understanding this is what leads to Stephen's misunderstanding; he chooses a solitary path in the belief that there are no final boundaries, not realizing that he has simply reinscribed that absolutism. It is for *Ulysses* to decide if he chooses "correctly."

One may speak of choices in a novel with so many apparent options open to its protagonist, options that extend into and through the novel's conclusion. *Portrait's* conclusion, really no conclusion at all, is so undecidable because Stephen's internally persuasive call to artistic destiny is not limited to a few moments here or there within the novel. *Portrait* is, instead, one long refracted representation of Stephen's internally persuasive word, "a word half-ours and half-someone else's," a word

not so much interpreted by us as it is further, that is, freely, developed, applied to new material, new conditions; it enters into interanimating relationships with new contexts. More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses. Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is *not finite*, it is *open*; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal even newer *ways to mean*. (Bakhtin 345-6)

The reader thus glimpses, especially in the diary, a record of the various influences and ideologies that struggle for Stephen's allegiance within Stephen himself. Afflicted by an infinitely undefined internally persuasive word, the irresolution surrounding Stephen all through the book and into his presumed journey to the Continent should come as no surprise since even he himself cannot know what defines himself. His attempts to force definition in the final chapter with his belief in his own success undermine this record of his internally persuasive discourse because he tries to arrest it, to hold it in one place, and therefore establish a linguistic fiefdom of his own.

Stephen's fiefdom is founded in his knowledge of the languages all around him. "What is realized in the novel," Bakhtin says, "is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system" (365). This process occurs in *Portrait* surely enough; Stephen understands the difference of his own language from the language of others in Ireland, especially those languages which seek to subsume all other languages to their own. But it is in this knowledge that Stephen begins to think that he has reached a pinnacle, that the process can end, that the understanding of context somehow erases context. There is one last hope for Stephen to realize otherwise in his diary:

Yes, I liked her today. A little or much? Don't know. I liked her and it seems a new feeling to me. Then, in that case, all the rest, all that I thought I thought and all that I felt I felt, all the rest before now, in fact ... O, give it up, old chap! Sleep it off! (252)

Given a change in his fortress of knowledge, the ramparts nearly fall. Stephen nearly reevaluates what has gone before to see that all that he thinks—"all the rest before

now, in fact"—might be understood in another light. He shies away from such light, however, having worked too hard to achieve the confidence and success he thinks he has achieved. Thus he goes "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" (253) having just denied "the reality of experience" with Emma. But at the same time he announces his exile—preferring the illusion of personal experience to social context—he reaffirms his Irish context in his goal to forge "the uncreated conscience of my race." For Stephen, exile and nationalism feed each other, and the reader discovers that it is impossible to distinguish between the two.

Portrait's last sentence summarizes its undecidable nature: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (253). One cannot know if Stephen is to follow after his father and be true to his namesake or follow after his father's son Icarus and fail. A common tendency for critics who decry flaws in Stephen's character is to identify him with Icarus and justify this identification through recourse to *Ulysses*. The analogy can hardly be so strict as that, though, because Stephen has demonstrated the ability to succeed as well as the ability to fail, and there can be no guarantee of which tendency will predominate at any given time. What Stephen shows above all is that in success lies the seeds of failure and in failure the hope of success, just as his father Daedalus has shown before him that escape may lead to life or death. Appropriately, this is all Stephen can hope to show and show of hope. Anything else is hopeless.

CONCLUSION

I noted at the end of the first chapter that "the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia" if it is to be accounted a great novel. *Portrait* achieves this with little trouble; the various influences of nationality, language and religion ("significant" influences) are all evident, but so are a great number of other ideologies. The school slang of Clongowes, the peace activism and pedagogy of University College, literary romanticism, the language of the esthete and the voices of family and friends are all heard throughout the novel. While many of these voices depend upon a more "significant" ideology (most commonly the church), each has their own particular orientation toward that ideology that commands attention. So if Stephen does not wish to enter the church as a priest, he may still believe after the manner of Cranly or Heron or even Lynch (presuming Lynch follows the pattern of the rest of the Irish population). In between his two poles of authority—individual freedom versus institutional fetters—lie any number of degrees of inclination to either authority. Joyce's presentation of so many of these degrees in an undistilled manner (that is, without requiring the intervention of the reader to invent them) is what makes Portrait an internally heteroglot novel rather than one with merely a heteroglot dialogized background.

In addition, the representation of Stephen's internally persuasive discourse as well as a variety of "introductory or framing genres" beyond the scope of this thesis—such as the diary, the villanelle, the come-all-you's and other songs and

verses—ensure *Portrait's* heteroglossia. *Portrait* qualifies with little doubt as a Second Line novel,

to which belong the greatest representatives of the novel as a genre (its greatest subgenres as well as the greatest individual examples), [and which] incorporates heteroglossia into a novel's composition, exploiting it to orchestrate its own meaning and frequently resisting altogether any unmediated and pure authorial discourse. (Bakhtin 375)

Joyce accomplishes this feat in admirable fashion with his protean impersonal narration, his engagement with the variety of heteroglot voices that constituted Ireland near the turn of the century and with his concentration on a discretely-realized self—Stephen—who, like Bakhtin, defines "the nature of consciousness as the necessity constantly to create, to *author* a self." For the most part, Stephen is aware that "what consciousness is always conscious *of* is the incompleteness of self" (Holquist 228), and he struggles constantly with this notion to the very end of the novel.

In fact, Joyce so successfully achieves many Bakhtinian tenets that one wonders if they were not in secret communication, notwithstanding their gap in years. Part of Joyce's success, of course, comes as a result of his composition of a novel, the unique entity Bakhtin (non)defines. But another part of his success is the success of the age. Michael Holquist compares Bakhtin to other twentieth century thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre and Levinas who share similar concerns, noting that his work, though published later, was written before all of theirs. He concludes that "there can be no question of influence then: the situation is better conceived as a series of like responses to the same set of philosophical questions that were abroad in the years after the turn of the nineteenth century" (Holquist 230). Joyce, too, is a philosopher

in his own way—a "practical" philosopher, if you like—meditating on questions of the self and other that are explored in all of his fiction, and it would seem unfair not to include him as one of the respondents to this "same set of philosophical questions." While perhaps not his crowning achievement, *Portrait* nonetheless still exhibits all those features—all those questions and all that uncertainty—that identify Joyce as one of the premiere novelists (in the full breadth of the Bakhtinian sense of the word) of the twentieth century.

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