JOYCE'S NETS AS SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

---

by

Marguerite C. Laws

1991

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Marguerite C. Laws

Marguerite C.Laws

Approved, December 1991

J.H. Willis

Elsa Nettels

Elsa Nettels

Colleen Kennedy

Colleen Kennedy

For Melinda, Amanda, and Tom

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Professor J.H. Willis for his support throughout the course of this project and for his generous comments and encouragement over the past few years. In addition, I am indebted to Professors Elsa Nettels and Colleen Kennedy who read, and re-read, the manuscripts for this paper. Their comments gave this thesis focus and direction.

I would like to thank Elizabeth Brown, Director of St. Leo College's military program at Ft. Eustis, for her advice and support. I also apreciate the assistance that I have received from St. Leo's MEP Professional Development Fund Committee which has repeatedly provided me with funds for this work.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my family for all their help and patience.

ABSTRACT

In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* Stephen Dedalus declares that when a soul is born in Ireland, "there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall fly by those nets." Although the passage is certainly central to the novel, no one, to my knowledge, has ever previously noticed that those three nets are semiotic systems.

Language is a social code; and Ferdinand de Saussure's insight into the nature of language suggests that not only can language be used as a model for other semiotic codes, it is fundamental to any form of cultural transmission. I have attempted use Saussure's linguistic theory in an analysis of the novel's delineation of Stephen's experience with language from early childhood through adolescence, in order to determine how and why Stephen would believe that nationality, religion, and language are related traps for the unwary.

The novel clearly illustrates the process through which Stephen's self-concept is formed through language. His experiences with language give him a way of viewing the world; and that world view, in turn, explains the internal conflicts which cause him to reject his culture. The novel replicates the process by which an individual learns his culture's codes. It also has encoded within in it the need for resistance to unwitting cultural indoctrination.

JOYCE'S NETS AS SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS

JOYCE'S NETS AS SEMIOTIC SYSTEMS

Stephen's evolving relationship with language has long been recognized as a significant aspect of his aesthetic education in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.[1] Language, however, is not only an aesthetic tool; it is also a social code. Furthermore, art and artists are always products of a specific cultural environment. Several critics have recently commmented upon Joyce's fictional replication of cultural forces within *A Portrait*.[2] In the same critical direction, I would like to suggest that Stephen's experiences with language delineates the process by which an individual assimulates his culture's major semiological systems. Significantly, Stephen, himself, links language to two other social codes, nationality and religion, when he declares, that when "the soul is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall fly by those nets" (P203).

I believe an analysis of Stephen's experience with language in *A Portrait* offers insight into how these social systems are nets to trap the unwary. Stephen's artistic uniqueness is that he becomes aware of the structures of those systems and resists them. Furthermore, I believe that resistance to semiotic codes is encoded within the novel even before Stephen has reached the maturity to employ it.

Like language, religion and nationalism are semiotic systems.

Language, however, subsumes the others since language determines the manner in which a culture organizes experience. As Ferdinand de Saussure observed, language is necessary because without it is thought would be a "shapeless and indistinct mass."[3] Indeed, according to Saussure, because language determines how a culture understands experience, language "is largely responsible for the nation."[4] Language, however, is an arbitrary system of relationships. Saussure insisted that rather than being a "naming system" which simply assigns a signifier to all objects which are the same, language does not recognize sameness, only difference. Concepts, he wrote, "are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms in the system. Their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not."[5] He also pointed out that the qualities which determine difference vary among languages;[6] therefore, whether a difference between two objects becomes the defining difference is a quality of language, not necessarily a reflection of nature. However, because individuals within a culture must think within the culture's language, as they learn language, they usually come to assume that linguistic relationships are natural.

Because language, although arbitrary, dictates how thought is organized, other signification systems are also arbitrary. In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes uses the picture of a Black soldier saluting a French flag to illustrate a signifier of French imperialism;[7] indeed, nationalism's existence requires a system of

such symbolic presentations. Similarly, religion requires a system of symbols, for instance, bread's transubstantiatian into the Body of Christ. Symbol systems, however, as Barthes points out, are not neutral, transparent systems, but rather serve to reify cultural conceptions. As Barthes observes, the Black soldier does not simply represent French imperialism, his photograph lends permanence and naturalness to the abstraction by suggesting that France's colonial subjects love her. Without language is one would not intuitively understand that a black man in a uniform represents anything other than himself or that bread is anything except food.

One's conception of self is derived from social interaction, especially from verbal interaction. As Joyce illustrates in *A Portrait*, individuals develop a view of themselves by internalizing what they are told others see in them. In the first chapter, Stephen learns language and society's values and his conception of hs role within his culture. Significantly, the novel's first words belong to Stephen's father.

> Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo....
> ....
> He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.(P7)

Fairy tales, which "Once upon a time" suggests, are a verbal cultural transmission passed from one generation to the next. Simon's story is part of Stephen's Irish heritage. Don Gifford suggests that Simon's story may be derived from an Irish folk tale in which children are

carried away by a white cow to a magical island where they learn to be heroes before returning home.[8] By placing Stephen in the story as Baby Tuckoo, Simon suggests that Stephen has a heroic role to play within his culture: he is *Stephen, Hero*, the title of Joyce's earlier version of *A Portrait*. Thus, in telling this tale, a cultural transmission, Simon is associated with language and culture, even with God since, just as God created Man, Simon creates a destiny for Stephen. Simon's tale becomes part of Stephen's concept of himself, a relationship between Stephen and his culture. Throughout the novel, Stephen will explore various heroes from literature upon which to pattern himself: although he recognizes that he cannot be an athlete like Kickham, he leads the White Rose team in math, decides that his encounter with Father Conmee approaches the heroism of Greece and Rome or of Hamilton Rowan, and later imagines himself as the Count of Monte Cristo, Lucifer, and Byron.

Furthermore, in the early sections of the novel, Stephen acquires not only a view of his own potential destiny, but also a characteristic way of viewing the world. Even before he begins explicitly expressing complex relationships, *what* he sees indicates that he has unconsciously acquired a culturally-imbued viewpoint. For instance, while Stephen's first impressions of his father associate Simon with culture, language, and God-like power, Stephen's impressions of his mother associate her the sensory: her smells, her music, even her tears at parting. When they leave Stephen at school, Mrs. Dedalus cries, while Mr. Dedalus leaves manly advice--"never

peach on a fellow" and pocket money, society's legal tender (P9). His mother's tears already provoke a "manly" response from Stephen: "he had pretended not to see that she was going to cry. She was a nice mother but she was not so nice when she cried" (P9). Thus, the cultural codes his family passes on to Stephen involve a specific way of viewing the world, which, not by chance, happens to be Western civilization's male/female dicotomy: father is associated with language and culture; mother with Nature and the senses. In fact, in *Stephen Hero*, Stephen's awareness of that cultural pattern and the comfort he finds in it is explicitly stated: Stephen toys "with a theory of dualism which would symbolize the twin eternities of spirit and nature in the twin eternities of male and female.[9]

As Derrida has shown, Western logic is founded upon structures of coupled oppositions: male/female, intelligible/sensible,culture/ nature, concept/intuition, but those oppositions, rather than being "twin eternities" are actually a function of language's manner of distinquishing between signifiers by designating difference.[10] The specific difference which allows one object to be seen as the opposite of another may be cultural rather than "eternal."

In the first chapter of *A Portrait*, Stephen is assimilating that binary pattern of structuring thought. Joyce mimics Stephen's experience through the chapter's binary structural divisions: lines of asterisks divide the chapter into four sections, reflecting the alternating scenes of Stephen's childhood: home/school/home/school. In addition, Joyce employs free indirect discourse--mimetic vocabulary

and grammar--within the narrative passages, to portray Stephen's linguistic and cultural development. The first section is paratactic: sentences record discrete sensory perceptions, but connective relationships between perceptions are not given. The text, thus, suggests that at this point in childhood, Stephen processes sensory stimuli before he has the cultural experience with which to interpret it. Language is the means by which sensory perceptions are recorded and organized into meaningful relationships, the means through which society explains its shared understanding. The first section's short, disconnected sentences mirror the immaturity of Stephen's thinking:

> When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell. His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance.(P7)

Sensory relationships connect one sentence to the next: the smell of the oilsheet reminds Stephen of his mother's smell, which reminds him of his father's smell; his mother reminds him of the music she plays, which, in turn reminds him of his dancing. The text, thus, suggests that in early childhood, Stephen processes sensory stimuli through its relationship to similar stimuli.

Stephen requires further social and linguistic experience before he can form more complex relationships. The chapter's second section, which contains more complex sentences and longer paragraphs, records Stephen's earliest school experiences, his first social experiences outside the home. In this section, Stephen begins to express relationships between clauses; these relationships are often linguistic, rather than sensory--indicative of his growing mastery of

language. For instance, standing on the playground, Stephen places his hands in the pockets of his "belted grey suit. That was a belt round his pocket. And belt was also to give a fellow a belt" (P9). Similarly, overhearing Simon Moonan called "McGlade's suck" provokes a mental dissection of "suck" for Stephen:

> Suck was a queer word. The fellow called Simon Moonan that name because Simon Moonan used to tie the prefect's false sleeves behind his back and the prefect used to let on to be angry. But the sound was ugly. Once he had washed his hands in the lavatory of the Wicklow Hotel and his father pulled the stopper up by the chain after and the dirty water went down through the hole in the basin. And when it had all gone down slowly the hole in the basin had made a sound like that: suck. Only louder. (P11)

Language is the primary social code, and, as these examples suggest, Stephen has begun to organize his perceptions according to that code. However, while language and paragraph complexity increase, reflecting Stephen's growing maturation, his thinking, like the language he assimulates, mirrors what he has heard: "Rody Kickham was a decent fellow but Nasty Roche was a stink" (P8). Here, the free indirect discourse of "decent fellow" and "stink" suggests that Stephen's opinion reflects the general opinion among his schoolmates. With typical schoolboy logic, Stephen's high opinion of Rody Kickham seems influenced by Kickham's athletic ability: "he would be captain of the third line all the fellows said" (P8).

Although binary thinking is flawed, it is, none the less, typical of Western thought. As a child, Stephen is learning to employ that theoretical conception in understanding experience. However, throughout the first chapter, Joyce uses Stephen's naivite with

language to illustrate the folly of forcing either/or choices. Stephen repeatedly attempts to puzzle out logically linguistic relationships. His logical conclusions, however, are often incorrect when compared to what actually exists in the world. Stephen's ingenuity become a means by which the text gently refutes the logical validity, and, therefore, the naturalness of social and linguistic codes which Stephen assumes. The Jesuit "Order," for instance, is an ecclesiatical community. "Order," of course, also refers to a classification system. Because the Society of Jesus has a system of authority, it is "ordered"; however, that order does not affect the common elements of its members; all are priests, and all priests can hear Confession. Stephen, however, conflates the different meanings of the word when he imagines that if Father Arnall needs to go to Confession, "Perhaps he would go to the minister. And if the minister did it he would go to the rector: and the rector to the provincial: and the provincial to the general of the jesuits. That was called the order" (P48). While Stephen's thinking is logical, his conclusion is incorrect: priests choose their confessors based upon personal reasons, not upon hierarchical order. Stephen's mistaken conclusion suggests the arbitrary nature of linguistic codes, and, therefore, of social codes.

Stephen makes other attempts to deduce meaning logically, based upon the assumption that words have a one-to-one correspondence with referents. Stephen has problems because language is not as simple as he supposes. As Saussure noted, *"language is a form and not a*

substance:[11] meaning is not fixed, but floating. "Tower of Ivory," for instance, is not literal, but figurative. Dante tells Stephen, "protestants used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin"(P35), probably because Protestants disapprove of Catholic veneration of Mary, not because they cannot understand the language. Stephen, however, attempts to understand the metaphor through sensory associations: "Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing tig she put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*" (P36). Later, he repeats what he thinks he understands:

> 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. One day he had stood beside her looking into the hotel grounds. A waiter was running up a trail of bunting on the flagstaff and a fox terrier was scampering to and fro on the sunny lawn. She had put her hand into his pocket where his hand was. She had said that pockets were funny things to have: and then all of a sudden she had broken away and had run laughing down the sloping curve of the path. Her fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun. *Tower of Ivory. House of Gold.* By thinking of things you could understand them. (P43)

Actually, of course, Stephen does not understand the meaning of "Tower of Ivory, House of Gold" because the terms are not literal description; they are figures for inestimable value through comparison with material things of great rarity and monetary value, a different but conventional meaning. Stephen has used the wrong associations of the word "ivory."

The text also indicates that some meaning is neither literal nor

conventionally figurative. This second reminder of the puzzling "Tower of Ivory" follows Stephen's reminiscence about Boyle's nickname, Tusker, which Boyle received because he once said "an elephant had two tuskers"(P42). The relationship between Boyle and his signifier is not one which can be arrived at intuitively or through exposure to standard cultural references. There is also a metonymic association connecting Boyle and Eileen which probably explains Stephen's mental association of one with the other: elephants' tusks are the source of ivory, and both Boyle and Eileen have delicate hands. Again, this association illustrates that not only can meaning be associative, associations can be idiosyncratic, entirely dependant upon an individual's experience, and, therefore, open to infinite possibilities.

Puns also involve meaning by association. Athy's joke involves a pun: "Athy is the town in the county Kildare and a thigh is the other thigh" (P25). Similarly, the graffitti on the water closet wall also involves a pun: *Julius Caesar wrote the Calico Belly* (P43), relies upon the similarity between the Latin *Bello Gallico* and the English words, "calico," which originally referred to inexpensive cotton cloth from Calcutta, and "belly," which entered English from Old High German. Because *calico* is cheap cloth and *belly* is also unpretentious English, Julius Caesar's classic is substantially deflated by the pun: words carry connotative as well as denotative meaning.

Puns also play upon the difference between phonemes and morphemes; and by the utter incongruities they create, puns

effectively destroy the logical consistency of language. With puns, words can have two meanings that exist at the same time. Stephen cannot understand Athy's pun because punning is outside the logic system which he is training his mind to use. Puns illustrate that language does not necessarily abide by the rules of logic which are based upon language.

Indeed, Richard Ellmann suggests that puns play an important part in Joyce's aesthetics which is closely tied to Joyce's sense of politics. Ellmann believes that through puns which join "sense" and "countersense," (even nonsense, one might add), Joyce uses linguistic play to suggest the range of possibility which rigid social codes attempt to stifle.[12] Although Joyce's use of puns in *A Portrait* is limited, his use increases in *Ulysses* and becomes profuse in *Finnegans Wake*. In the *Wake*, Joyce declares that paper --like punning--is "meed of, made of, hides and hints and misses in prints....So you need hardly spell me how every word will be bound over to carry three score and ten toptypsical readings...."[13] In his mature writing, Joyce delights in linguistic play, repeatedly illustrating the multiplicity, even absurdity, of language: it is the "hides and hints" which make reading worthwhile, not the transparent transmission of "truth" from paper to reader.

Stephen, on the other hand, struggles throughout the first chapter in his attempt to make language logical while the text illustrates that language is an arbitrary system. Barthes suggests that questioning the assumption that the Black soldier means that French

imperialism is good and natural could lead to less complacency and possibly improved social conditions. Similarly, the arbitrary nature of language in *A Portrait* suggests that other social codes may be arbitrary as well. It also calls into question the authority of those, like Stephen's father, who seem to control language.

The text also illustrates that far from being a transparent medium, language, and other social codes, is overdetermined with implications from previous uses. When Nasty Roche asks Stephen, "What is your father?"(P9), ""What" asks a question of class and power. Clearly, children at this elite Irish Catholic boarding school have imbibed their parents' British-inspired class values. In another instance of schoolboy harassment modelled on British public school behavior, Simon Moonan's double-bind question, "do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?"(P14), places Stephen in the position of being either unfeeling, or babyish, or incestuous. The question demands a "yes" or "no" answer, but neither answer avoids the trap the question sets.

Moonan's question toys with sexual prohibitions. Sexual mores were also at the base of Ireland's rejection of Parnell. In fact, as Dante's fury during the novel's crucial Christmas dinner scene illustrates, by the end of the nineteenth century, rigid sexual mores had become part of Irish nationalist identification, a means of defining "Irish" as different. Even though Ireland's repressive sexual mores probably date from economic necessity during the Famine and were connected with Ireland's mid-nineteenth century devotional

revolution, by the end of the century, "sexual purity" had become an element of Irishness. As Stephen's nationalist friend, Madden, in *Stephen Hero* proudly claims, "The Irish are noted for at least one virtue all the world over....they are chaste" (SH55). In this the Irish could differentiate themselves from what the Citizen in "Cyclops" calls British "syphilisation."[14]

In the first chapter, then, Stephen learns his culture's way of viewing the world which is, in fact, Western Civilization's general tendency to force either/or relationships, in turn, a reflection, not of nature, but of language. Stephen's indocrination in either/or thinking affects all aspects of his thinking. It is illustrated, for instance, by his confused belief that his failing to complete his bedtime prayers will result in his going to Hell.

> His fingers trembled as he undressed himself in the dormitory. He told his fingers to hurry up. He had to undress and then kneel and say his own prayers and be in bed before the gas was lowered so that he might not go to hell when he died. (P18)

Stephen's worry indicates that he has little comprehension of gradations, only an understanding of alternatives: he has learned that prayers are a religious duty, and Hell is God's punishment.

Binary thinking affects the way in which an individual learns to organize his perceptions of the world. The text suggests how pervasive that influence is upon Stephen. Even before he learns to employ complex logic, he unconsciously pairs opposing sensory impressions. For instance, the frequently opposes the extremes of hot and cold, beginning with the description of his bedsheet: "When you wet the bed

first it is warm then it gets cold"(P7). Later, at school, as he stands out on the playing field, he thinks, "It would be better to be in the studyhall than out in the cold. The sky was pale and cold but there were lights in the castle...It was nice and warm to see the lights in the castle" (P10). Then, as he imagines being warm, "It would be nice to lie on the hearthrug before the fire," he remembers how unpleasant it was to be cold when he was pushed into the square ditch, "how cold and slimy the water had been!" That memory is replaced by another memory of warmth, as he remembers his mother "sitting at the fire....her feet on the fender and her jewelly slippers ... so hot and they had such a lovely warm smell!" (P10). Later, the word, "suck" makes "him feel cold then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and the water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot" (P11). Later still, as he thinks about going to bed, he remembers how the sheets are first cold and then become hot.

In addition, Stephen's mind also pairs visual oppositions. The opposite, or complementary color, of Irish green is red; and in the first chapter, the two colors are repeatedly paired. Stephen changes the red rose of the song into a green rose. Dante's two brushes are maroon and green. Fleming colors a picture of the earth in Stephen's geography book green amid red clouds. When Stephen imagines Parnell's death, he pictures Dante in "a maroon dress and with a green velvet mantle hanging from her shoulders" (P27). Then, when he returns home for Christmas, he sees a "great fire, banked high and red" which

is under the green "ivytwined branches of the chandelier" (P27). Christmas dessert is purple plum pudding decorated with sprigs of red and green holly and a green flag. The ball of candy that Simon Moonan rolls to him is "just like a red and green apple" (P42).

Like the colors of his world, politics, Stephen imagines, has "two sides in it: Dante was on one side and his father and Mr. Casey were on the other side" (P16). For both Dante and Simon, Parnell functions like Barthes's Black soldier: he is a signifier in a social code. For Simon, Parnell represents the possibility of Home Rule in the code of nationalism. For Dante, Parnell represents the devil in her religious code. For both of them, however, Parnell is has lost his individuality, his right to private moral, sexual choices, because he has taken on symbolic significance.

Whether Parnell is a "dead king" or a"devil out of hell," his reality, like the photograph of the Black soldier makes the abstract code more believable, more natural. His existence, thus, allows both Simon and Dante to identify with a cultural system, and that identification is soothing but regressive behavior. Identifying with a social system allows individuals to deny their own responsiblity for their actions or inactions--if Ireland stagnates or Simon loses his job, individuals can believe that it is because Parnell is dead, not because the living are lethargic.

Needless to say, the two codes are contradictory since Parnell ends up both a hero and villain. Either/or thinking allows no room for contradictions, but both people are applying different codes--in

effect, speaking in diferent languages. The scene suggests the pitfalls facing Stephen in identification with Irish cultural systems. Stephen may, like Parnell, find that in attempting to be a hero, he finds himself a villain instead.

At this point, Stephen's mind records the argument which involves politics in the narrow sense. However, as Barthes notes, "One must naturally understand *political* in its deeper meaning, as describing the whole of human relations in their real, social structure, in their power of making the world."[15] The exchange between Dante and Simon, with its mutual unwillingness to accept compromise, suggests that human relationships in Dublin also obey rigid structural patterns.

In addition, this first chapter of *A Portrait*, which details Stephen's acquisition of cultural codes, emphasizes the punishment resulting from breaching those codes. In the chapter's first section, Stephen is warned that the eagles will pluck out his eyes for failing to apologize. In the second section, Stephen's refusal to abide by the prudent schoolboy practice of conceding to the wishes of larger, older boys results in Stephen's being pushed into the ditch and his subsequent illness. In the chapter's third section, the Christmas dinner scene, Stephen notices Mr. Casey's mutilated hand with its three "fingers that could not be straightened" (P 28). Stephen understands the disfigurement is the result of a term of hard labor in a British prison served for dissident political activism. Stephen not only learns that Casey's physical disfigurement resulted from his

defiance of British civil authority, he is told that Parnell's death resulted from his defiance of Dublin's social codes. Simon, a Parnellite, tells Stephen, "The priests' pawns broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave" (P 34). Dante expresses the more hostile version when she states, Parnell "was no longer worthy to lead....He was a public sinner" (P 32). The pandying Stephen receives is also indirectly a result of another breach of sexual propriety: the "smugging" incident leads to increased school discipline just before Stephen breaks his glasses. In this first chapter, then, Stephen not only learns his society's binary codes, he also learns that breaching those codes results in punishment.

Later on, Stephen's aesthetic theory will involve the same binary logic that he learned as a child: "Beauty," he will tell Lynch, "cannot awaken in us an emotion which is kinetic or a sensation which is purely physical. It awakens, or ought to awaken, or induces, or ought to induce, an esthetic stasis"(P206). Stephen further admits that his theory of what art is, and, therefore, what it is not, derives from Aristotle's principle that "the same attribute cannot at the same time and in the same connection belong to and not belong to the same subject" (P208).

Aristotle's principle is flawed, however, because it fails to recognize the difference between universal truth and qualities of language and of conscious thought. Speech exists in time: we can only say one thing at a time, and in order to say anything, other things must be suppressed or temporarily deferred; similarly, conscious

thought requires the temporary repression of everything else in our unconscious. Other possibilities always exist that we cannot simultaneously acknowledge. The world, is full of contradictory realities: puns, for instance, simultaneously contain two mutually exclusive significations; Parnell can be simultaneously both a hero and a villain.

Furthermore, it is language, not the world, which defines through difference, and, thus, establishes the opposition in all binary pairs, like kinetic and static. Indeed, Derrida suggests that "all the paired oppositions on which philosophy is constructed, and from which our language lives" result from a basic similarity between the paired items and represent our need for a "systematic ordering of the same."[16] When we say that one thing is different from, or the opposite of, another, we are actually acknowledging that the two are more similar than different.

Nonetheless, organizing the world into opposing pairs is characteristic of Western thought. In *A Portrait*, Stephen is learning language and semiotic systems. Furthermore, because, as a small child, he learns to view himself as a favored son within his culture, he initially has little incentive to question what he is learning. By the beginning of the second chapter, however, Stephen's family's social position rapidly deteriorates. Similarly, Stephen's temporary triumph as a school hero, after the fashion of Peter Parley's Greeks and Romans, is also short-lived. Inevitably, with his growing awareness of dispossession, Stephen begins to distance himself from

his society: because its logic system has taught him to think in oppositions, he can either identify with his society as it is, or refuse to be a part of it. Therefore, instead of Greek, Roman, or Irish heroes, Stephen chooses Romantic heroes--the Count of Monte Cristo, Shelley, Byron, Lucifer--who are less cultural and more individualistic models. In this chapter, Stephen begins to use his familiarity with language not to attempt to understand social relationships, but to provide himself with the means achieve a distance from his society.

The second chapter focusses upon Stephen's sense of dispossession, and Joyce uses as clear a structural pattern in the second chapter as he had in the first, suggesting that Stephen's dispossession is as much a cultural product as his socialization had been. The second chapter's four sections each begin with a dispossession. The first section sends Uncle Charles to the outhouse because he "smoked such a black twist that at last his nephew suggested to him to enjoy his morning smoke in the little outhouse at the end of the garden" (P60). The second section begins with Stephen's family's removal from their comfortable home in Blackrock, when "Two great yellow caravans...halted one morning before the door" (P65). In contrast to the cozy earlier scene with its fire banked high, that night, the "parlor fire would not draw." Instead of warming his coat-tails, Simon rests "the poker against the bars of the grate," laying down his symbolic authority, and bursts into a "long and incoherent monologue" (P65), suggesting that he has also lost his authority in language.

In the third section of the chapter, the Belvedere chapel has temporarily been emptied for the school play. With the "Blessed Sacrament ... removed from the tabernacle"(P73), it is a church from which God has been dispossessed. In the fourth section of the chapter, Stephen accompanies his father to Cork, where "his father's property was going to be sold by auction" (P87). Stephen feels "no pity" only "his own dispossession"(P87). In the chapter's last section, Stephen's "thinly clad" mother, his brother, and a cousin stand out in the cold with a "keen October wind...blowing round the bank. The three figures standing at the edge of the muddy path had pinched cheeks and watery eyes" (P97). Not only does this graphic picture of people "out in the cold" suggest dispossession, but they are waiting for Stephen and his father who are going into the Bank of Ireland to cash Stephen's prize money orders. The Bank of Ireland represents Ireland's dispossession, its loss of independence: the building had been Ireland's Parliament before the Act of Union, its interior since remodeled to prevent its future use for public meetings.

The dispossession which characterizes the organization of the chapter reflects Stephen's sense of his own dispossession. That sense of dispossession causes him to distance himself from his father, a process which reverses the socialization process of the first chapter. Significantly, in Freudian theory, the child acquiesces to the Law of the Father assuming that at some time in the future he will assume the father's position. What Stephen learns, however, is that his father has lost his land; Simon is dispossessed; and because Simon was

originally a signifier for God and culture, Simon's dispossession is emblematic of Ireland's dispossession. Stephen's familial loss is also his cultural loss, so Stephen has little incentive to continue to identify consciously with his heritage. However, Stephen's conscious rejection cannot cleanse his mind of complex culturally-acquired ways of organizing thought.

At the beginning of Chapter Two, Stephen listens as his elders talk about "subjects nearer their hearts, of Irish politics, of Munster and of the legends of their own family, to all of which lent an avid ear"(P62). Although vaguely aware of his family's worsening financial condition, he imagines he might some day play the role of a Byronic hero, the Count of Monte Cristo, if not a more traditional hero, like one of Peter Parley's Greeks and Romans. But when his family is forced to leave Bray, he no longer listens to his father's "long and incoherent monologue." Instead, he only "became slowly aware that his father had enemies and that some fight was going to take place. He felt too that he was being enlisted for the fight" (P65). Far from any longer wanting to be a cultural hero, Stephen "chronicled with patience what he saw, detaching himself from it" (P67).

An earlier scene in which he had attempted to understand language is revised, revealing his alienation. As he and Eileen ride the tram, he remembers the scene with Eileen at the hotel at Bray:

> And he remembered the day when he and Eileen had stood looking into the hotel grounds, watching the waiters running up a trail of bunting on the flagstaff and the fox terrier scampering to and fro on the sunny lawn, and how all of a sudden, she had broken out into a peal of laughter and had run down the sloping curve of the path. (P69)

This time, however, he is *not* pondering society's meaning of "Tower of Ivory." Distancing himself from Eileen and the world in general, he chooses to ignore her flirtation, instead sublimating his sexual impulse in a poem devoid of referentiality--"There remained no trace of the tram itself nor of the tramman nor of the horses: nor did he or she appear vividly"(P70).

Another revisioned scene is the Christmas dinner scene. Stephen remembers "trying to write a poem about Parnell on the back of one of his father's second moiety notices"(P70) the morning after the Christmas dinner. Second moiety notices are notices in bankruptcy proceedings, suggesting that Simon's dinner table emotionalism represented, not simply his feelings about Parnell, but also his own impending financial ruin. Stephen's attempt at poetry, after his father's impassioned speech the previous day, suggests Stephen's desire as a small child to identify with his father's concerns.

In the narrative present, however, a distance is growing between Stephen and Simon, evident in the effect produced by Simon's recounting of his efforts to get Stephen into Belvedere. Although unable to afford the tuition, Simon clings to bourgeois pretensions in his desire for Stephen to attend Belvedere, away from "Paddy Stink and Mickey Mud" (P71). Simon compensates for his impecunity with Irish political maneuvering. But ironically, in recounting his success with Father Conmee, Simon further strips away Stephen's desire for identification with him. Simon's success with language no longer coincides with Stephen's vision of his heroic destiny as it did in the

moocow story.

Later, at Belvedere, Stephen continues to attempt to distance himself from his father and from the culture which, like Barthes's Black soldier, Simon now represents:

> 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. When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school.(P84)

Ironically, although Stephen believes he has distanced himself from his father and Simon's humiliating circumstances, Stephen is disturbed by "any allusion made to his father by a fellow or by a master" (P76). Stephen's difficulty is due to his "equivocal position in Belvedere, a free boy, a leader afraid of his own authority, proud and sensitive and suspicious, battling against the squalor of his life" (P91). Belvedere is, after all, a prestigious Catholic school; its students are as socially conscious as those of any English public school; and Stephen's sensitivity indicates that he still unconsciously shares his father's and society's values. Stephen's only escape is internal: his mind pursues "intangible phantoms"(P83) in the "company of subversive writers"(P78).

Stephen's recognition of his dispossession has an objective correlative in his relationship to language. Although the novel's

first words are Simon's, linked to Stephen's introduction to language and culture transmitted through language, as his father's powerlessness becomes increasingly apparent, Stephen becomes increasingly withdrawn. He attempts to use language, not as a social medium, but to imagine a solipsistic world. On the way to Cork, his mind forms a prayer, "addressed to neither God nor saint," a prayer that is not a prayer, since religion, the study of God and the saints, is a part of the heritage he wishes to deny. Thus, his prayer becomes simply words, "a trail of foolish words which he made to fit the insistent rhythm of the train" (P87). Later, he thinks that he can "scarcely interpret the letters on signboards.... Nothing moved or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him" (P92).

Cork is Stephen's ancestral home, and it is there that his dispossession and his father's becomes especially apparent. His father has lost both his inheritance from his father and, because he has nothing to transmit to Stephen, his own paternal power. As one of Simon's friends in Cork comments, Stephen "is not his father's son" (P94). As a result, his father's "come-all-you" is one of loss. Simon's attempt to reassert his identity results only in words that are unable to carry meaning. When Simon talks to a waiter, "they spoke at crosspurposes when a name was mentioned, the waiter having in mind the present holder and Mr Dedalus his father or perhaps his grandfather" (P89). Later, when Simon and Stephen go to Queen's College, Stephen watches his father without filial admiration: "he

wondered how his father, whom he knew for a shrewd suspicious man, could be duped by the servile manners of the porter" (P89). Simon's reminiscences about *his* father, like Simon's search for his initials--proofs of his past and ultimately of Stephen's--are meaningless to Stephen. It is not his father's initials, but an anonymous student's carving of the word "*foetus* which jolts Stephen's consciousness: "the sudden legend startled his blood" the word creates a "vision ... which his father's words had been powerless to evoke"(P89). While the word's conscious meaning for Stephen seems to be its connection to his sexual fantasies, it also suggests Stephen's relationship with Simon which his conscious mind rejects.

Stephen's alienation is related to his early lessons in *how* to view the world: colored with two colors, broken in two political sides, in the "eternal dualities" of male and female, in tidy right/wrong, either/or relationships. Because he does not want to become like his father, he rejects all Simon signifies, including his Father in Heaven. In the third chapter, Stephen acts out his alienation through intense concern with his own irreconcilable badness. However, just as Stephen is still employing his society's logic system, he is also still playing out his culturally-assigned role as hero. While in previous chapters, Stephen imagined himself in the roles of Greek and Roman heroes and the Count of Monte Cristo, here Stephen finds himself in the role of the ultimate rebel, Lucifer, whose *"non serviam"* Stephen will later echo.

In order to be a great sinner, Stephen must sin greatly. His

greatest sin seems to be sexual promiscuity, a sin of less than universal significance, since different cultures view it differently. Ironically, Irish sexual mores and Catholic catechism--forms of the very ideology from which Stephen wants to proclaim his difference--provide him with the means for the vast magnification of his sinfulness that he needs to measure his separateness from the culture. With "impurity" as his beginning sin, he imagines his "soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin"(P103):

> From the evil seed of lust all other deadly sins had sprung forth: pride in himself and contempt of others, covetous in using money for the purchase of unlawful pleasure, envy of those whose vices he could not reach to and calumnious murmuring against the pious, gluttonous enjoyment of food, the dull glowering anger amid which he brooded upon his longing, the swamp of spiritual and bodily sloth in which his whole being had sunk. (P106)

Stephen's very attempt to distance himself from his society requires that he have an intimate acquaintance with that society's moral code. Abetting Stephen's self-deception is Irish society's view of the significance of "impurity," the sin responsible for Parnell's loss of political support, and in Irish legend, for his death, as well as, indirectly, for Stephen's childhood pandying. When Stephen does decide to confess his sins, he thinks, "Had it been any terrible crime but that one sin! Had it been murder!"(P142). *Joyce's* point, of course, is that it is *not* murder. Stephen's confessor does not disillusion him, however:

> The priest passed his hand several times over his face. Then, resting his forehead against his hand, he leaned towards the grating and, with eyes averted, spoke slowly. His voice was weary and old.
> --You are very young, my child, he said, and let me implore

> of you to give up that sin. It kills the body and it kills the soul. It is the cause of many crimes and misfortunes. Give it up, my child, for God's sake. It is dishonourable and unmanly. You cannot know where that wretched habit will lead you or where it will come against you. (P144-5)

Adding to the apparent significance of the sin is the seriousness with which the priest addresses it. During the Confession, the priest carefully questions Stephen about the marital status of the women with whom Stephen was involved, although there is no doctrinal reason why the priest must distinguish between fornicaton and adultery in order to confer absolution. Furthermore, as Eileen's complete astonishment at Stephen's undisguised sexual advance in *Stephen Hero* makes clear, the only probable women with whom Stephen might have been involved were prostitutes, married or not. The priest's question, thus, suggests his own naivete about the sexual activity of young Dubliners and about the pervasiveness of prostitution with all its attendant social ills. But at the same time, by suggesting the need to name the sin correctly, the priest reinforces Stephen's belief in the sin's significance. Just as Simon's original authority rested upon his power to name, Stephen's "ghostly father" asserts his paternal authority through his concern with naming. However, the text undercuts that authority by exhibiting the priest's naivete. Just as the extensiveness of Stephen's sinfulness is largely his own verbal invention abetted by Irish Catholic ideology for its significance, Stephen's brief return to the Church is precipitated by Father Arnall's description of Hell, his "composition of place," another example of linguistic viruosity.

Although Stephen has alienated himself from his biological father, he has, in his own mind, dramatically and courageously re-established his relationship as a child with a priest, a religious father. Thus, Stephen can retain his heroic destiny without identifying with his earthly family's squalid reality. Importantly, in the third and fourth chapters, God in Father Arnall's sermons, and the priesthood in the Jesuit director's discussion with Stephen, are associated with awesome power. By returning to the Church, Stephen is aligning himself with the cultural institution in Ireland which retains power and glory despite Ireland's and his family's economic impoverishment.

Stephen's confession, which brings him back into the Church, is deflated by the text; however, because the significance of the sin is actually culturally assigned, it cannot be deflated by the characters within the text: his society supports his self-deception. Interestingly, Stephen's decision to end his self-imposed alienation through a return to a child-like relationship to the Church echoes his society's identification with religious ideology as an escape from the realities of Ireland's economic woes.

In the fourth chapter, Stephen's subsequent religious zealousness is as exaggerated as his previous sinfulness. His dramatic switch once again illustrates Stephen's culturally-induced either/or thinking, his legacy from his fathers. Related to that, his image of a "cash register" (P148) in the sky suggests his desire for a one-to-one relationship between his prayers on earth and their effect in Heaven: that is, between a signifier and a signified. Unfortunately, his

desire to "see the amount of his purchase start forth immediately in heaven" (P148) presents problems in arithmetic:

> By the means of ejaculations and prayers he stored up ungrudgingly for the souls in purgatory centuries of days and quarantines and years; yet the spiritual triumph which he felt in achieving with ease so many fabulous ages of canonical penances did not wholly reward his zeal of prayer since he could never know how much temporal punishment he had remitted by way of suffrage for the agonising souls: and, fearful lest in the midst of the purgatorial fire, which differed from the infernal only in that is was not everlasting, his penance might avail no more than a drop of moisture. (P147)

Stephen's religious zealotry consists of obsessive language, *not* socially beneficial actions. Outside this specific religious ideology, his ejaculations have no recognizable value. But even within that semiotic system, their value is impossible to determine. Since they have value in another world, a world incomprehensible to mortals, they can only be conceived of in temporal terms, but they apply only in a world in which time does not exist.

Ejaculations are a use of language, a social system designed for and by mortals. Religion, like other social codes are dependant upon language, and binarism, a product of language is deeply imbedded in Stephen's thinking. It is, therefore, not surprising that when Stephen's willingness to devote himself entirely to the Church is tested by the Jesuit director's suggestion that Stephen join the order, Stephen's reaction is another opposite turn. Furthermore, Stephen characterizes that turn as a turn away from language: "he was slowly passing out of an accustomed world and ... hearing its language

for the last time" (P156). For the Jesuit fathers, as for Stephen's father, Simon, language is associated with power. The director attempts to win Stephen to the priesthood by telling him,

> No king or emperor on this earth has the *power* of the priest of God. No angel or archangel in heaven, no saint, not even the blessed Virgin herself has the *power* to bind and to loose from sin, the *power* of exorcism, the *power* over them, the *power*, the authority, to make the great God of heaven come down upon the altar and take the form of bread and wine. What an awful *power*, Stephen! (P158, emphasis added)

The director's enticement uses the word "power" six times in one paragraph: his offer to Stephen is an undisguised offer of social power. In addition, the *powers* of absolution, exorcism, and transsubstantiation all involve language. Identification with social systems seems to offer individuals power and status. However, Barthes' Black soldier lends dignity to the abstraction of French imperialism without increasing his own worth or dignity; indeed, Barthes maintains that the soldier's individuality is lost in the process of turning him into a signifier. The Black soldier, like Parnell, is a powerless signifier in a semiotic code. Significantly, while the director verbally suggests that identification with social systems is a means of achieving power, he quietly twists the blind cord into a noose. Stephen's withdrawal indicates that he unconsciously recognizes the death trap hidden in the director's offer.

Stephen's rejection of the director's offer signals his first step towards his attempt to find his destiny outside the social order of religion. Again, the text plays with the multiple meanings available in language through the opening up of the word "order," a term Stephen

earlier attempted to force into a binary relationship with a signified. The director first asks Stephen if he has " a desire to join the *order*" (emphasis added P157): that is, the Jesuit Order. But, as Stephen listens, he realizes that joining the Jesuits also involves joining the priesthood, "the *order* of Melchisedec" (emphasis added P159). The priesthood is joined through the sacrament of Holy "Orders," as the director reminds Stephen, "the sacrament of Holy Orders ... can be received only once"(P160). Besides referring to the priesthood in various ways, the word "order" can describe an environment, a use of the word Stephen then considers. He imagines the "*ordered* and passionless life"(emphasis added P160). In the next paragraph, he again thinks of word in that sense as his mind rejects the "chill and *order*" of the priesthood (emphasis added P161). At the end of that same paragraph, Stephen's mind uses the word in a fourth and broader sense, deciding that he sees himself as "apart from every *order* (emphasis added P161).

Three uses of "order" are repeated. As he leaves the director Stephen wonders which window in the Jesuit house would be his, "if he ever joined the *order*" (emphasis added P161). In the next sentence, he wonders at the "remoteness of his soul" from the effects of all his "years of *order* and obedience"(emphasis added P161). Within the same paragraph, he decides, "He would never swing the thurible before the tabernacle as a priest. His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious *orders*" (emphasis added P162). Thus, within a short space, the various meanings of the word *order* appear, until the word becomes

inclusive of all social orders.

Stephen's decision to be "apart from every order" leads to his imagining a breakdown of one social order, the Jesuit Order, creating in his imagination a "sabbath of misrule":

> The forms of the [Jesuit] community emerged from the gust-blown vestments, the dean of studies, the portly florid bursar with his cap of grey hair, the president, the little priest with feathery hair who wrote devout verses, the squat peasant form of the professor of mental science discussing on the landing a case of conscience with his class like a giraffe cropping high leafage among a herd of antelopes, the grave trouble perfect of the sodality, the plump roundheaded professor of Italian with his rogue's eyes. They came ambling and stumbling, tumbling and capering, kilting their gowns for leap frog, holding one back, shaken with deep false laughter, smacking one another behind and laughing at their rude malice, calling to one another by familiar nicknames, protesting with sudden dignity at some rough usage, whispering two and two behind their hands.(P192)

Having resolved that he would be "elusive of social orders," Stephen choses instead the "*disorder*, the misrule and confusion of his father's house" (emphasis added P162).

Along with other social orders, Stephen imagines the order of language disintegrating. As Stephen walks through Dublin, signifiers are divorced from their signified: "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"(P178). Around him, he imagines "heaps of dead language" (P179). Lacking meaning, language has become only sound, words "band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms" (P179). At this point in his life, words still fascinate him, but it is not because of their use as symbols in a

cultural system of signification:

> after hue: sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the greyfringed fleece of clouds. No it was not their colors: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? (P166)

The sounds which come to his mind are related to "ivory," the word which he had vainly attempted to decode as a child:

> *The ivy whines upon the wall*
> *And whines and twines upon the wall*
> *The yellow ivy whines upon the wall*
> *The yellow ivy on the wall*
> *Ivy, ivy up the wall.*
>
> Did any one ever hear such drivel? Lord Almighty! who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall? Yellow ivy: that was all right. Yellow ivory also. And what about ivory ivy?
>
> The word now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants. *Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur.* One of the first examples that he had learnt in Latin had run: *India mittit ebur*; and he recalled the shrewd northern face of the rector who had taught him to construe the Metamorphoses of Ovid in courtly English, made whimsical by the mention of porkers and potsherds and chines of bacon. (P179)

"*Ivoire, avorio, ebur* translates the word "ivory" into French, Italian, and Latin. Translation is metamorphosis, and Stephen's last name, "Dedalus" recalls one of Ovid's tales. The mention of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also recalls the novel's epigraph, "*Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes,* that is, "And he sets his mind to work upon unknown arts" and continues "and changes the laws of nature." Daedalus attempted to change nature's laws by making it possible for man to fly. Stephen is now beginning, like Daedalus, whom he calls, "Old father, old artificer" (P252), to experiment with "unknown arts," the destruction of social orders, beginning with language. Stephen's

linguistic play with the sound of the word and its various translations divorces "ivory" as a signifier from a seemingly transparent relationship with its signified. His deliberate divorce of signified and signifier here is in direct contrast to his attempt as a child to try to understand the meaning of "Tower of Ivory." Then, he had believed that "by thinking of things you could understand them," that is, that there was a natural relationship between signifiers and signifieds so that meaning could be known intuitively.

Although Stephen resolves to live apart from social orders, his experiences have been deeply etched by Catholicism and Dublin's other social codes. In the fifth chapter, those codes---nationalism, religion, and language--become the nets Stephen is determined to overfly. While earlier chapters concentrate on Stephen's upbringing, this chapter is concerned with the conflicts Stephen faces in attempting to retain a concept of himself, originally developed through cultural interaction, while he attempts to reject the culture which produced him.

The chapter begins with a contrast between Stephen's interior and exterior worlds. His family's fortunes have sunk to an even lower level. He drinks "watery tea" while he fingers pawn tickets. The family is as dysfunctional as its clock which is an hour and twenty-five minutes fast. Simon, who once had an eloquent command of language, now shrilly whistles down the stairs to one of Stephen's sisters, "Is your lazy bitch of a brother gone out yet?"(P175). Stephen's sister lies, and Stephen comments only upon his father's

linguistic lapse, "He has a curious idea of genders if he thinks a bitch is masculine" (P175). No longer the head of his family, Simon is now at best tolerated and at worst derided. Stephen's reaction to his family's dissolution is internal distancing and through the creation of his own system of signification:

> His father's whistle, his mother's mutterings, the screech of an unseen maniac were to him now so many voices offending and threatening to humble the pride of his youth. He drove their echoes even out of his heart with an execration: but, as he walked down the avenue and felt the grey morning light falling about him through the dripping trees and smelt the strange wild smell of the wet leaves and bark, his soul was loosed of her miseries. The rainladen trees of the avenue evoked in him, as always, memories of the girls and women in the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann; and the memory of their pale sorrows and the fragrance of falling from the wet branches mingled in a mood of quiet joy. His morning walk across the city had begun, and he foreknew that as he passed the sloblands of Fairview he would think of the cloistral silverveined prose of Newman, that as he walked along the North Strand Road, glancing idly at the windows of the provision shops, he would recall the dark humour of Guido Cavalcanti and smile, that as he went by Baird's stonecutting works in Talbot Place the spirit of Ibsen would blow through him like a keen wind, a spirit of wayward boyish beauty, and that passing a grimy marinedealer's shop beyond the Liffey he would repeat the song of Ben Jonson which begins:
>
> *I was not wearier where I lay.* (P175-6)

Stephen avoids the grim reality of his external world by living in his imagination. But once at the college, he is forced to confront the contemporary issues important to his peers. Although he can disdainfully refuse to sign their petition for world peace, he cannot as easily dismiss Irish nationalism, since it involves his conception of himself as well as theirs. Even as he attempts to reconstitute his conception of himself, Stephen's ideal is still intimately connected with the society which produced him. His ultimate goal is to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race"(P253).

Irish women are the animae which inspire his art, about whom he asks, "how could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imagination of their daughters, before their squires begat them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own? (P238). The woman who inspires his villanelle is a part of the composite image he carries:

> On all sides distorted reflections of her image started from his memory: the flower-girl in the ragged dress with damp coarse hair and a hoyden's face who had called herself his own girl and begged his hansel, the kitchengirl in the next house who sang over the clatter of her plates with the drawl of a country singer the first bars of *By Killarney's Lakes and Fells*, a girl who had laughed gaily to see him stumble when the iron grating in the footpath near Cork Hill had caught the broken sole of his shoe, a girl he had glanced at, attracted by her small ripe mouth as she passed out of Jacob's biscuit factory....(P220)

Irish nationality has several faces and accents, and Stephen's acute response to those accents is indicative of the extent to which he is immersed in his culture. Stephen reacts to McAlister's "sharp Ulster voice" with irritation: the "voice, the accent, the mind of the questioner offended him and he allowed the offence to carry him towards wilful unkindness, bidding his mind think the student's father would have done better had he sent his son to Belfast to study and have saved something on the train fare"(P193). When the student turns, Stephen worries that he actually communicated those thoughts and reacts with more thoughts that he seems to believe will be transferred: "That thought is not mine, he said to himself quickly. It came from the comic Irishman in the bench behind"(P193).

Although Stephen rationalizes his response as an intellectual

reaction to McAlister's dull-witted question, his annoyance is also a reaction to McAlister's accent, a culturally-conditioned response of a Dublin-born Irish Catholic to a native of pro-British, Protestant-dominated Belfast. His reaction is to turn even his mind away from communication. Thus, Stephen's reaction is one of inculcated values. Language communicates not simply the student's obtuseness, it also communicates his position within Irish culture. Stephen's attempt to shift blame for his thoughts indicates the uneasiness of an Irish Catholic in the presence of that accent. His excuse of the "comic Irishman" suggests the tendency of nondominant groups within a culture to use dominant stereotypes as a means of hiding that uneasiness.

In contrast to the hostility that Ulster accent evokes, Stephen is charmed by his friend Davin"s rural speech with its "rare phrases of Elizabethan English" and quaintly turned versions of Irish idioms" (P195). Furthermore, although Cranly's speech with its suggestion of "the quays of Dublin" and "a Wicklow pulpit" (P195) depresses Stephen, Cranly's unpleasant accent does not arouse the hostility Stephen feels for the Ulster student. Thus, even while Stephen consciously attempts to divorce himself from inculated ideology, the text indicates how deeply ingrained those values are. Furthermore, language, the medium through which Stephen's heroic self-concept was originally created, is closely tied to Irish nationalism which Stephen consciously want to reject, but which unconsciously he retains.

Although both Cranly and Davin represent Irish nationality, it is Davin, "The peasant student" (P180), who most closely personifies

Irish nationalist ideals:

> His nurse had taught him Irish and shaped his rude imagination by the broken lights of Irish myth. He stood towards this myth upon which no individual mind had ever drawn out a line of beauty and to its unwieldy tales that divided themselves as they moved down the cycles as towards the Roman catholic religion, the attitude of a dullwitted loyal serf. Whatsoever of thought or of feeling came to him of English culture his mind stood armed against. (P181)

Stephen disparagingly calls Davin a "tame goose"(P181), but it is Davin whose freckled arm Stephen imagines in his erotic daydream of an incestuous Irish brother and sister. It is also Davin who reveals to Stephen his troubling encounter with a young peasant woman. Although Davin's unquestioning acceptance of Irish sexual mores would make the encounter shameful, to Stephen the tale is a reminder of their joint heritage: he recognizes the young woman as "a type of her race and his own" (P183).

Furthermore, although Stephen refuses to attend Irish language classes, he recognizes that the English he speaks is not the native language of his people; indeed, its usage is a matter of shame. "My ancestors threw off their language and took another....They allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them" (P203), he tells Davin, when Davin attempts to persuade him to join the nationalist movement.

Stephen's awareness of nationality creates a internal barrier with the English Dean of Studies, whose conversion to Roman Catholicism leads Stephen to view the "English convert with the same eyes as the elder brother in the parable may have turned on the prodigal"(P189). While he is distrustful of the Dean's religion, it is the Dean's language to which Stephen most strongly objects. That an

Englishman should be unfamiliar with the word "tundish" excites Stephen's ire. Indeed, Stephen is aware of the foreignness of the other man's speech, an inescapable reminder that the language they speak belongs first to the British, a reminder of years of British domination in Ireland. As Stephen comments about the Dean of Studies' English,

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master* on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of its language. (P189)

While Stephen is unable to resolve his ambivalent feelings toward Irish nationalism and language, questions intimately interwoven into his conception of himself and his destiny, it is his inability to resolve his religious conflicts which directly leads to his decision to leave Ireland. Because, as he tells Cranly, he no longer believes in the Eucharist, he has refused his mother's request to make his Easter Duty. Cranly's arguments illustrate the psychological depth of Stephen's problem. If Stephen simply disbelieved in transubstantiation, he could view Communion as a social ritual; his participation in it as a ritual would be a small price to pay for his mother's peace of mind. Indeed, as Cranly tells him. "There are many good believers who think as you do. Would that surprise you? The Church is not the stone building nor even the clergy and their dogmas. It is the whole mass of those born into it" (P245). Cranly suggests that Catholicism is, first of all, a social bond among its members.

Certainly, religion for Ireland's Catholics is a part of their definition of themselves as a cultural group; for many, group belonging may outweigh religious conviction. It is this view of Catholicism which Mr. Casey expresses in rage during the Christmas dinner scene, "I... am no renegade catholic. I am a catholic as my father was and his father before him and his father before him again when we gave up our lives rather than sell our faith" (P34).

Cranly's argument also points out the logical inconsistency of Stephen's dilemma. Stephen is afraid to make a sacrilegious Communion. However, the significance of a sacrilege is that it is a mortal sin. And a mortal sin, in order to be a mortal sin, must be understood to be sinful by the individual committing it. If an unbaptized individual, for instance, naively received Communion, believing it to be only a social ritual, he would not be committing a mortal sin. Stephen's problem is that he is *not* a naive outsider, nor is he sure enough in his disbelief that he can confidently behave as if he were. If he did not believe he were committing a mortal sin, he would not be. As Cranly tells him, in response to Stephen's insistence he must go where his "spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom," "you are not free enough yet to commit a sacrilege" (P246).

Stephen's upbringing has left him so supersaturated with Catholicism that he is afraid of the "chemical action" upon his soul "by a false homage to a symbol behind which are massed twenty centuries of authority and veneration" (P243). Similarly, he finds it

impossible to consider joining a different denomination. When Cranly asks him if he intends to become a Protestant, he answers, "I said that I had lost the faith...but not that I had lost selfrespect. What kind of liberation would that be to forsake an absurdity which is logical and coherent and to embrace one which is illogical and incoherent?"(P243-4). Because his self-concept ultimately rests upon cultural definition, in forsaking a "logical and coherent" social system, Stephen risks losing his concept of himself as a logical and coherent entity within that system and his heroic destiny of creating a logical and coherent spirit of his race. Stephen is trapped in what Barthes calls "neither/nor" thinking, that is, "stating two opposites so as to reject both".[17] Stephen will neither accept Catholicism in its entirety nor any compromise between his doubts and social requirements.

Stephen's problems with his religious beliefs are yet another example of his deep psychological immersion in binary thinking, even though the text has repeatedly illustrated that the binary is a cultural illusion. His decision to leave Ireland, however, is itself liberating: what he cannot accomplish psychologically, he can accomplished physically. Just as the novel's paratactic first section suggests Stephen's child-like thought processes, the novel's diary-like last section suggests his liberation. Grammatical formalities and empty verbal markers disappear as Stephen escapes social codes which entrap souls in Ireland. Even more important, Stephen allows himself to change his mind: "Then into Nilemud with it!" on 30 March is

followed by "Disapprove of this last phrase," on 1 April (P250), a significant difference from his previous careful, torturous consistency. Here, too, exclamation points appear with astonishing frequency.

Even previous irritations can be gaily dismissed. Instead of evoking annoyance, the Dean of Studies is roundly cursed: "Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? Damn him one way or the other!"(P251). He is now able to take himself less seriously and others more seriously. When he realizes his quick, clever response to the young woman who has long been the object of Stephen's ambivalent sexual interest is rude, he admits, he "felt sorry and mean." In addition, Stephen has a newly apparent sense of humor. The young woman is then subjected to "the spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus, invented and patented in all countries by Dante Alighieri"(P252). And the Irish peasantry, whom he previously feared, becomes the object of an anecdote as pointless as, in Stephen's opinion, is Irish mythology.

Although at the novel's conclusion, Stephen's artistic freedom depends upon his voluntary exile from Ireland, that necessity is psychological and, therefore, culturally acquired. Stephen's culture has produced him as he is. As he tells Davin, "This race and this country produced me, I shall express myself as I am" (P203). Indeed, his art is an expression of the culture which he rejects, expressed in language, the social structure which produced the culture and Stephen,

as well. His attempt to find his destiny outside social orders is, of course, self-contradictory, since his view of himself, including his belief that he has a mythic destiny, ultimately comes from his cultural conditioning, beginning with his father's moocow story.

The problem here is similar to the one Derrida discerns in structuralist Levi-Strauss's *bricolage*, Levi-Strauss's retention of traditional terms in attempting to step outside and describe social structures. Levi-Strauss defends his practice saying that traditional terms are necessary because they are the only ones available, but he does not concede their truth value.[18] Stephen would, of course, make no concessions about the truth value of his destiny to become the great artist. In any case, while Derrida criticizes Levi-Strauss, Derrida concedes that he is unable to offer an alternative to using language and the structures which language imposes. On the other hand, Derrida considers the breakthrough of Saussure and others--which makes it possible to think of the structure of language and social codes, rather than being forced to think within the logic of those structures--to be the most significant achievement of modern thought. Stephen has not entirely broken out of the cultural structures which he learned as a child, as his very belief that he *must* totally reject them makes clear, but he has begun to recognize them, something his father and Dante will never do. He will, therefore, avoid becoming an empty signifier like Barthes's soldier or Parnell, and may indeed, like Saussure, create the conscience of his race.

NOTES

[1] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: Penguin, 1967). All future references to this work are to this edition and will be noted parenthetically as (P).

[2] Critics who discuss Joyce's presentation of the interaction of the individual and culture in *A Portrait* include, for instance, Cheryl Herr. Herr's definitive study of Joyce's dialectic with popular culture, *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture*, concentrates upon *Ulysses*, but Herr comments that *A Portrait* presents Stephen's "genealogy... his *subjecting* from birth to adulthood through the pressures of familial, educational, religious, and political institutions." Cheryl Herr, *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1986) 25. R. B. Kershner, uses M.M. Bahktin's insight that consciousness *is* an individual's dialogue with his culture. Kershner believes that *A Portrait* "embodies...Stephen's possession by the languages that surround him, and his attempts to appropriate them in turn." R.B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature:Chronicles of Disorder*, (Chapel Hill, U of North Carolina P, 1989)154. In addition, Trevor L. Williams's recent work also deals Joyce's presentation of the effects of mass culture upon the individual. Williams believes *A Portrait* details the construction of dominant ideologies within Stephen's consciousness and Stephen's resistance. Williams demonstrates that Joyce employs repeated motifs within the text to duplicate the process by which dominant ideologies are naturalized within the individual's consciousness. Trevor L. Williams, "Dominant Ideologies, The Production of Stephen Dedalus," *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1988), 312-322.

[3] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye in collaboration with Albert Reidlinger, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 111.

[4] Saussure, 20.

[5] Saussure, 117.

[6] Saussure, 117.

[7] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* selected and trans. Annettte Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 116. Barthes applies Saussurean linguistics to attempt a semiological analysis of cultural systems of representation.

[8] Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982), 29.

[9] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (New York: New Directions, 1944), 210. All future references will be to this edition and will be noted parenthetically as (SH).

[10] Jacques Derrida, "Differance," *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973), 140.

[11] Saussure, 127.

[12] Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (New York: Oxford UP, 1977), 93.

[13] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: Viking, 1967), 20.

[14] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans W. Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1986), 1.128-9.

[15] Barthes, 143.

[16] Derrida, "Differance," 148.

[17] Barthes, 153.

[18] Jacques Derrida, "Structure,Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978), 278-292.

WORKS CITED

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Selected and Trans. by Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.

Derrida, Jacques. "Difference" *Speech and Phenomena*. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973. 129-160.

---. "Sign, Structure, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978. 278-292.

Ellmann, Richard. *The Consciusness of James Joyce*. New York: Oxford UP, 1977.

Gifford, Don. *Joyce Annotated*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1982.

Herr, Cheryl. *Joyce' Anatomy of Culture*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1986.

Joyce,James. *Finnegans Wake*. New York: Viking, 1967.

---. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Ed. Chester G. Anderson. New York: Penguin, 1977.

---. *Stephen Hero*. Ed. Theodore Spencer. New York: New Directions, 1944.

---. *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans W. Gabler. New York: Vintage, 1986.

Kershner, R.B. *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Lterature: Chronincles of Disorder*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989.

de Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in General Linguistics*. Ed. Charles Ball and Albert Sechehaye, in collaboration with Albert Reidlinger. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.

Williams, Trevor L. "Dominant Ideologies, The Production of Stephen Dedalus." *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*. Ed. Bernard Benstock. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1988.

VITA

Marguerite Carey Laws

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, September 9, 1947. Graduated from Archbishop Williams High School, Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1965. Recipient of 1965 New England Scholastic Journalism Award. Elected to Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society in 1968. Received B.A. with honors, from Framingham State College, Framingham, Massachusetts, with a major in English and a minor in education, in 1969. Received M.Ed. in Reading, from George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, in 1976. Admitted into the Ph.D. program in American Studies, at the College of William and Mary, in 1990.

The writer is a certified Reading Specialist and English teacher. She taught reading and English in grades 7 through 12 in Virginia public schools from 1971--1977. From 1978-1980, she taught college reading and English classes for Drury College, Springfield, Missouri.

She currently teaches college reading, composition, and literature courses for St. Leo College's Military Educaton Program at Ft. Eustis, Virgina, where she is an adjunct senior associate professor of English. She has been with St. Leo College since 1981.