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The Death of the Subject in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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I.

Joyce's autobiographical work, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, has been often described as a *Bildungsroman*, or *Kunsterroman* (Beebe 67-77; Mitchell 61-76). One fundamental tenet of the *Bildungsroman* tradition arises from the concept of *bildung*: the self develops over time toward a desired end by way of a set of formative experiences. In *A Portrait* Stephen Dedalus as a protagonist is a developing artistic consciousness, from his earliest childhood recollections to his moment of self-imposed exile when he finally invokes his mythical namesake and leaves for a life of artistic freedom and creativity. Jerome Hamilton Buckley supports this argument:

> [T]he Portrait is developed with the recognizable general framework of the Bildungsroman. It is an autobiographical novel of 'education,' tracing the growth of the hero from infancy to young manhood, describing his slowly decreased

> dependence on father and mother, his schooldays, his adolescent fantasies, his choice of a career, and his ultimate approach to his maturity or at least to his legal majority. (Buckley 230)

In spite of its superficial conventionality, however, *A Portrait* as modernist text transgresses the traditional norms of the genre. The change of the norms is described by Tzvetan Todorov:

> The major work creates, in a sense, a new genre and at the same time transgresses the previously valid rules of the genre. . . One might say that every great book establishes the . . . reality of two norms: that of the genre it transgresses, which dominated the preceding literature, and that of the genre it creates. (Todorov 43)

Joyce's *Portrait* both makes use of and discredits its own genre conventions. The novel's reliance on the *Bildungsroman* frame has been challenged by Joyce's critics from the day of its publication. Wyndham Lewis's attack on the character of Stephen as a priggish, mawkish young artist is a typical example (Lewis 114); in 1947 Richard Kain viewed *A Portrait* as inferior to Joyce's other works, seeing it "more limited in scope," in the vein of Walter Pater (Kain 142). Hugh Kenner also claimed long ago that "we are not to accept the mode of Stephen's 'freedom' as the 'message' of the book," emphasizing Joyce's irony in the text (Kenner 132). All of these negative views concerning the central character, in addition to the important question of Joyce's aesthetic distance from his subject, deny that Stephen emerges as the finally developed self, one of the underlying principles of the *Bildungsroman* (Sosnowski 43-63).

The more recent readings of *A Portrait* from postmodern critical perspectives, on the whole, radically dispute the connection of the novel with the genre. While modernist writers seem to accept the idea of a strong unitary selfhood, postmodern writers stress the "death of the subject," the self's variety, its lack of unifying center, over time. Thus, postmodernist interpretations highlight the claim that "self" is a fiction that covers multitudinous diversity. A full radical autonomy, which

proclaims the pure difference of each moment in isolation, imagines a self that is entirely new in each instant. At all points, Joyce's novel is a portrait, a representation, but only because it shows the becoming of the subject in writing. Rather than portraying the development of the well-rounded character, it shows the serial fading of the subject. *A Portrait* represents a Stephen Dedalus, not developing but devolving, not achieving selfhood but dissolving into a nameless fictional identity (Riquelme 48-85).

The author shows the fictional construction of the subject, here particularly the subject of autobiography. The language in *A Portrait* does not seek to express or represent experience, but constructs it. Instead of evolving growth we have periodic metamorphosis and recurrent repetition; instead of unfolding story we have discourse montage; instead of sequential argument we have perpetually alternating perspectives. Even before *Ulysses*, Joyce has involved breaking down the "self" in the breaking-up of language. And by doing so, *A Portrait* calls into question all the ways in which selfhood can be represented. This article will be focused on those points—how does Joyce's modernist text deconstruct the narrative form of the *Bildungsroman* tradition and the traditional concept of self in terms of Joyce's fictionalization of the autobiographical subject and its continual displacement in writing.

II.

A conventional reading of *A Portrait* based on the *Bildungsroman* tradition is that Stephen's development of consciousness is reflected in his learning of language and his imposition of a name which will establish his identity. It has come increasingly to be recognized that the process of personal growth traced in *A Portrait* is largely a linguistic one, as is appropriate to the portrait of a literary artist(Kershner 604-19). Perhaps the most remarkable difference between the representation of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait* and in what remains of *Stephen*

Hero is the introduction into the Portrait of numerous passages that show Stephen grappling with the meanings of particular words and with the nature of language in general. So insistent is Joyce that the story of Stephen is transformed into the story of his struggle with language—on the one hand with the language into which he was born, and on the other hand with the language that he must create if he is to become an artist. In rewriting *Stephen Hero*, Joyce has designed his novel so that Stephen's language changes in pace with his world, and in so doing Joyce made *A Portrait* into the first characteristically twentieth-century story of a young man's education.

The narrative of Stephen's absorption in words poignantly expresses the establishment of individuality, because language learning is a socializing process. Particularly, Stephen's initial attempts to fix himself and his surroundings through names occupies the consciousness of his childhood in the first chapter of the work. Naming confers the establishment of identity. Stephen has grasped the language used to name him and wrenched it into new shapes, becoming himself an imposer of identities.

However, identity, constructed as a claim for a privileged meaning for one's proper name, collapses into Joyce's "fluid succession of presents" once the name's true nature as a word is revealed(Joyce 60). While Stephen struggles to focus on a vision of himself, we can follow the operation on him of the true, but contingent, forces that shape him. Stephen undergoes in *A Portrait* what all words undergo, a continual redefinition according to situation and function when these words, being nominally self-conscious, confront their own mutability. Stephen's identity and consequent fate remain indeterminate, allowing his name, "Stephen Dedalus," to become mere words caught in an endless web of words.

Joyce's treatment of names emphasizes that a name can imply many different persons or things, and puts the ontological fixity of the person, too, in doubt. Jacques Derrida's comments about names, especially proper names, are suggestive. Derrida insists that names are never static quantities:

> . . . the name, especially the so-called proper name, is always caught in a chain or a system of differences. . . . Metaphor shapes and undermines the proper name. The literal [proper] meaning does not exist, its "appearance" is a necessary function—and must be analyzed as such—in the system of differences and metaphors. The absolute parousia of the literal meaning. . . should be situated as a functional responding to an indestructible but relative necessity, within a system that encompasses it. (Derrida 89)

As Derrida points out, the name once given cannot stabilize a referent forever. Only the name itself remains fixed, obscuring by its relative stability the endless variation of that to which it once referred and never will again.

Following up the quest for meanings which had begun in Dubliners, *A Portrait* appears largely as a study of the poetic connection between language and reality, between signifier and signified. Stephen explores on many levels the creative power of language to modify or define reality, until at last his vocation is revealed as also determining and determined by words and names. *A Portrait* functions as the reflexive counterpart to Stephen's sense of identity provided by the signs around him that constitute what world he has. Stephen's desire, as it reveals itself in his development as an artist, can be descried as a search for presence in language. Let me first examine Stephen's quest for the presence of language and identity.

Stephen's words come into the world not paired-up with things, but in the language of fables. And language does not enter alone into the child's consciousness: it brings the child's sense of his own identity with it: "He was baby tuckoo."

> 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. . . . (*AP* 7)

When Stephen first finds himself, he finds himself inscribed in a story, named by the language of his father's story. In *A Portrait*, Stephen will try to transform, through thought and art, the language and the identity that the world imposed upon him during childhood.

Stephen's changing words and worlds, as an infant and a schoolchild, can be seen in miniature through his changing thoughts about a "green rose." The tale of baby tuckoo presents him with a mirror in which he can see himself placed in a world: "He was baby tuckoo"(7). But immediately thereafter Stephen forms language, and by that act he creates a song that is his own: "That was his song"(7). He makes the song his by putting his mark upon it, and through that metamorphosis comes creation: "the wild rose" becomes "the green wothe"(7).

With this metamorphosis, we can see the ways in which Stephen himself is produced in quite distinct relation to the world. We get the first outline of a model for the way signification or sensation situates the young Stephen. "When you wet the bed, first it is warm," thinks Stephen, "then it gets cold"(7). The first distinctions the child remarks are distinctions in and of themselves, almost for their own sake. Indeed, the next two paragraphs accelerate and intensify the centrality of differentiation as the real dynamic of the child's inscription into the world. "His mother had a nicer smell than his father"(7)—again the comparative.

The paradigm is elaborated in the memorable emblem of Dante's "two brushes": "The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael Davitt and the brush with the green velvet back was for Parnell"(7). Not only does the child now recognize difference between maroon and green; he is also able to understand how such differences are in turn coded to symbolize other things which they are not. Consequently, he becomes conscious that the Vances "had a different father and mother"(8). This sense of difference is picked up later when he feels inferior to the other boys because his father is not a magistrate: "All the boys seemed to him very strange. They had all the fathers and mothers and different clothes and voices"(13). Anyway, Stephen has come to accept as natural the linkage of "green" and "red" to the names Parnell and Davitt, even though the arbitrariness of association reveals itself later when that linkage falls apart during the Christmas dinner scene.

Stephen's early schooling reflexively elaborates the structure of difference at increasingly higher levels of abstraction. In his geography book, Stephen considers names in general and their relation to material referents:

> He opened the geography to study the lesson; but he could not learn the names of places in America. Still they were all different places that had those different names. They were all in different countries and the countries were in continents and the continents were in the world and the world was in the universe. (15)

Stephen's confusion over symbols and objects, names and objects, has leaked into his conception of the physical world, since the "physical" world represented in his geography book is really a world of names, not of their unseen referents.

The dispiriting outcome of this geography lesson prompts a return to the primary question of Stephen's personal location:

> He turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name, and where he was.
>
> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> County Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe
> The World
> The Universe. (15)

The introduction to the list specifies Stephen's attempt to establish a static identity for himself within a static system: "himself, his name, and where he is." But his reasoning leads to a puzzling assertion if the meaning of "himself" is considered in juxtaposition with "his name." What is the difference between them—between signifier and signified? In the entire opening section of *A Portrait* Stephen is obsessed with disproving any difference, together with the accompanying desire to attach names and meanings to some ontological anchor; but this project is doomed to fail.

Taking his identity as unproblematic, Stephen starts to locate God's essence by means of God's name:

> God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. Dieu was the French for God and that was Gods name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said Dieu then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. (16)

This inquiry too leads to confusing results. Stephen begins by demonstrating and at the same time ignoring the difference between "God" and "God" in "God was God's name," a fact that negates any privileged connection between word and thing. The implicit instability of that connection propagates through the next two sentences, in which the names for God multiply uncontrollably, until at last Stephen releases himself from the mess he has gotten into by denying it altogether. It is a denial of the operation of difference in meaning.

But, side by side with the assertions of referential fixity, there are signs of an opposite view. Stephen puzzles over the apparent slippage of meaning in the cases of the name/word "belt," "suck," and "cock." For example, the word "belt" has a particular significance for Stephen. Remembering someone saying that he'd like to give Cantwell a "belt"—a punch—Stephen reflects that he wears a "belt round his pocket" (9). Stephen recognizes that a "belt" can signify altogether differently in another context.

Another equally exemplary word is "suck," which appears only a few pages later on. "Suck," says an already punning Joyce, "was a queer word"(11). It means, thinks a puzzled young Stephen, both a flunky and the sound heard, for example, "in the lavatory of the Wicklow Hotel" as "the dirty water went down through the hole in the basin"(11). Joyce thereby also rejects the onomatopoeic fallacy of signification—that a sign is naturally motivated by what it signifies, such as the sound of the water in the basin. Stephen's bewilderment here is that, despite the apparent possibility of such motivated signification, each meaning of a word is only one in a number of meanings that a signifier can simultaneously detonate. Hence,

Joyce's notion of language is not of the fixed or transparent signification of states or objects.

Indeed, the lavatory memory elaborates Joyce's notion of language even further if we continue to follow the chain of Stephen's associations.

> To remember that [the sound of water in the drain] and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing. (11)

Here Stephen again learns that the same signifier ("cock") can mean two different things at once ("hot" and "cold"). The lack of any natural link between the names on the cocks and the actions they perform, such as between "suck" and the sound, must be what makes the correlation of name and thing "very queer." Joyce already lays out the differential and temporal conditions of language at the start of the novel.

Deconstuction, which moves beyond presence/absence and its metaphysical ground, shows that Stephen's desire for presence in language is an impossibility because absence always haunts presence and is always contained within presence as possibility. Joyce knows the impossibility of Stephen's desire when Stephen tries to associate words with things. Each word and lien of literature Stephen seeks to retain represents a link in a chain of signifiers which reveals difference and which is held together by Stephen's unconscious desire.

Ferdinand Saussure, in the *Cours de linguistique generale*, has already introduced the concept on the arbitrary nature of the sign in general. Language has no necessary tie to reality; a name is not necessarily connected to its referent, or to another word. Stephen's growing awareness of the perplexing nature of the sign leads him voluntarily to link words with realities, like the boy in "The Sisters," even though he may not know what all of them mean:

> 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)

This is what Stephen comes to comprehend when he thinks puzzlingly about the phrases "Tower of Ivory" and "House of Gold" from the catholic litany.

> Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing tig she had 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. (36)

> . . . [A]ll of a sudden [eileen] had broken away and had run laughing down the sloping curve of the path. Her fair hair had streamed out behind her like the gold in the sun. Tower of Ivory. House of Gold. by thinking of things you could understand them. (43)

The meanings of the phrases are made by him in a more or less voluntary effort of his intellect. He exerts here his intellectual control over the relationship between signifier and signified.

Joyce's depiction of Stephen's early self-consciousness toward language is meant to dramatize one of the earliest stages of his artistic development. The earliest episodes of the *Portrait* show Stephen learning the nature of identity by realizing the arbitrary nature of language. One of Joyce's goals in *A Portrait* is to expose the structure of personality as a dialectic between internal and external determinants when both fixity and fate are illusory, regardless of their form or supposed source. In moving from Stephen's realization that the associative power of language is a plastic one, to his first attempt at actually writing poetry, we move more deeply into the drama of Stephen's dissolving subject as an artist.

Joyce's description of the sparse and nearly lifeless poem Stephen creates in imitation of Byron's poetry emphasizes how his dependence on traditionally stylized forms hampers his ability to translate something of life into his art.

> There remained no trace of the tram itself nor of the trammen nor of the horses: nor did he and she appear vividly. The verses told only of the night and the balmy breeze and the maiden lustre of the moon. Some unidentified sorrow was hidden in the hearts of the protagonists as they stood in silence between the lifeless trees. (70-71)

The apparent vapidness and moodiness of Stephen's overly mannered lyric as described, convinces us of the inadequacy of his poem.

The failure of Stephen's poem marks an important point in Joyce's book. Stephen's failure is in part due to the incongruity between the nature of his own emotions and the stylized and hollow form of the verses he composes to release them. When he is able, later in the book, to achieve a more effective kind of poetic release, it is only after he has begun to detach himself explicitly from the traditional "voices" of authority that have surrounded him:

> . . . 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 . . . . And it was the din of all these hollowsounding voices that made him bolt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades. (83-84)

Joyce characteristically focuses here as much upon the language of authority as upon authority itself, since Stephen's individuation as a writer depends throughout *A Portrait* on his growing recognition of the crucial relationship between the two. In order to forge for himself his own authoritative voice, he must first detach himself from a constraining relationship to figures of authority in his past, a detachment that is preceded by his break with their language and with the rhetoric of their authority. Thus, this initial and tentative awakening to the need to be "far" away from the "hollowsounding voices" of his father and his masters is the first

stirring of his later need to "fly by" the "nets" of home and church by seeking exile from them.

The changing scene of Stephen's relationship to his father—a scene of "family romance"(Parrinder 87)—is important for his new start. It is on his visit with his father to Cork that Stephen realizes that his "childhood was dead or lost"(*AP* 96). This visit to Cork is, as Maud Ellmann notes, a return journey to origin(1982: 81). Throughout the visit Simon superbly patronizes his son, telling the story of his life and covering up present financial failure with nostalgia for his cavalier youth. But for Stephen his torrent of self-indulgence is overshadowed by a single word cut on a desk in Queen's College—the word "Foetus," which seems to express all the "monstrous reveries" and "monstrous images" of his awakening consciousness of the body (90). Yet the shock of the word "Foetus," unloosing the "infuriated cries within him" (*AP* 92) and closing his ears to his father's wearisome voice, is a salutary one. The nameless and speechless foetus is a challenge to his own knowledge of origin and personal identity. Maud Ellmann has observed about this scene:

> The section represents an autobiography within an autobiography: for it describes Simon Dedalus's sentimental journey to his origins in Cork, and his struggle to remember his fugitive history. His nostalgia reaches its climax in the search for his own initials, carved as indelibly as the name of Wordsworth's "murderer" in the dark stained wood of a school de나. While the father's rehearsals of his past, and his excavation of his name, seem to represent a repossession of identity, the brute material motive of the journey belies his sentiment. For he returns to his origins only to sell them away. He is to auction his belongings, and to dispossess himself and his resentful son. Remembering reverts to disremembering. (1981: 195)

The decline of Simon Dedalus's financial fortunes requires the sale of his Cork property at auction. The miserable condition of his return to the scenes of his youth prompts in the old man nostalgia, self-pity, fear, and defensiveness in the face of his impending decline and fall.

> —Draw it mild now, Dedalus. I think it's time for you to take a back seat, said the gentleman who had spoken before.
>
> —No, by God! asserted Mr Dedalus. I'll sing a tenor song against him or I'll vault a five-barred gate against him or I'll run with him after the hounds across the country as I did thirty years ago along with the Kerry Boy and the best man for it.
>
> —But he'll beat you here, said the little old man, tapping his forehead and raising his glass to drain it. (95)

Stephen learns of his mythic struggle with his father through his senses and his consciousness—by listening to the tavern banter of the old men, by noting his father's displeasure at the little old man's hints that he should relinquish his post to his son. The realization at Cork that his childhood was either dead or lost marks a crucial stage in Stephen's individuation, since it is the point at which he begins consciously to throw off does not, of course, come without a struggle—a struggle mediated once again by language. When "the memory of his childhood suddenly grew dim," Joyce writes, Stephen

> . . . could scarcely recognise as his own thoughts, and repeated slowly to himself:
>
> —I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names. (92)

Here Stephen tries to "glimpse" reality through its names, to reorient himself by naming the present. Turning from these names in the present, Stephen begins to search through his memory for some glimpse of himself, but as "he tried to call forth" some "vivid moments" from his past, his consciousness fails him. He could recall "only names: Dante, Parnell, Clane, Clongowes"(92-93). Both of these attempts to "recover," to re-identify himself, become futile. "His mind," Joyce writes, "seemed older" than his father's and his father's friends(95): "He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries" (100). Thus, he

comes to the point of mentally disowning his family altogether: "He felt that he was hardly of the one blood with them but stood to them rather in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother"(98).

Stephen envisions his withdrawal from his own past and his embracing of the reality of experience as a kind of "destiny," one in which he would progressively and consciously become "elusive of social or religious orders"(162). This growing realization, as we have seen, is accompanied by the conviction that he must also become "elusive" of the "order" constituted by their languages. Thus, Joyce writes that during this period Stephen felt not only "as though he were slowly passing out of an accustomed world," but also that he was "hearing its language for the last time"(156).

III.

After Stephen's rejection of the priesthood in chapter four, his conscious break with traditional sources of order—and his concomitant detachment from the sources of that order in language—accelerates: "His own consciousness of language," Joyce writes, "was ebbing" away from him(179). Walking through Dublin, Stephen's exile from the language around him seems to prefigure the actual exile he will embrace some pages later:

> . . . 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. (178-79)

In linking the "shrivelling" of Stephen's soul to the "heaps of dead language" surrounding it, Joyce emphasizes the relationship he is drawing between the self and the language with which it is constituted. The reconstitution of self, and the

reconstitution of language, are becoming for Stephen two aspects of a single activity: the growth of the poet's mind.

In the final analysis, Stephen's bold declaration of his intention to go into exile is only the last in a series of efforts to turn away from the "hollowsounding voices" of a language whose authority he is trying to reject:

> I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to sue—silence, exile, and cunning. (246-47)

Stephen's exile will not be simply from home, fatherland, or church; it will be an exile from a rhetoric of authority signified by these names: the names themselves have finally become for him like "hollowsounding voices" of authority. To express himself he must seek a mode of art free from their rhetoric.

However, Stephen's break with the past and its language is becoming less a break *per* se than a kind of displacement, the displacement of one kind of tradition for another. At this final stage, language remains for Stephen both the very stuff of consciousness and the material from which he is "forging" his consciousness as an artist. In this displacement, however, it is no longer the "hollowsounding" language of his father or the "dried up sources"(152) of the language of the church fathers that permeates his consciousness; now it is the language of those writers who are becoming his poetic fathers. Thus, Joyce's earlier observation that it was through "words which he did not understand" that Stephen "had glimpses of the real world about him," comes to have its analogue in chapter five in Joyce's description of his walk to the unviersity:

> The rainladen trees of the avenue evoked in him, as always, memories of the girls and women in the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann. . . he foreknew that as he passed the sloblands of Fairview he would think of the cloistal silverveined prose of Newman . . . he would recall the dark humour of Guido Cavlacanti .

> . . the spirit of Ibsen would blow through him like a keen wind . . . [and] he would repeat the song by Ben Jonson. . . . (176)

Stephen's individuation, which is by now a part of his conscious development of an individual artistic perspective, is still growing in relationship to a past. But it is a past not of his family, his church, or his nation; it is an individually selected —and therefore a somewhat willful—literary past, drawn from sources of authority. Stephen's attempt to become independent of his past has become incorporated in a much wider attempt to create for himself another "artistic" past he can depend on. At this stage in his growth as an artist, the life of Stephen's mind and the language of the artists with whom he feels a kinship have merged into one. Such a merger vivifies the way in which his growth has eclipsed the language of his personal and his cultural pasts.

Taken this way, Stephen's story would not be about his discovery of his true identity as an artist, but about his determination neither to discover nor to inherit a self: if he is to have a self, it must be entirely self-created. Stephen's progress is written in terms of a recurring pattern of representation and reassertion. And each new rebellion dissolves the provisional identity that had preceded. Then, Stephen's so called "will to modernity"(Meisel 129)—Stephen's liberation and freedom—becomes a function not of remembering a past identity but of continual self-deconstruction. It is not directed toward recovery of the past or toward reunification with an original identity, but toward uprooting its traditional foundations.

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Abstract

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In *A Portrait* Stephen Dedalus as a protagonist is a developing artistic consciousness, from his earliest childhood recollections to his moment of self-imposed exile when he finally invokes his mythical namesake and leaves for a life of artistic freedom and creativity. In spite of its superficial conventionality of the *Bildungsroman* genre, however, *A Portrait* as modernist text transgresses the traditional norms of the genre. Joyce's work both makes use of and discredits its own genre conventions.

Joyce's novel is a portrait, a representation, but only because it shows the becoming of the subject in writing. Rather than portraying the development of the well-rounded character, it shows the serial fading of the subject. *A Portrait* represents a Stephen Dedalus, not developing but devolving, not achieving selfhood but dissolving into a nameless fictional identity. *A Portrait* calls into question all the ways in which selfhood can be represented. Stephen's liberation and freedom becomes a function not of remembering a past identity but of continual self-deconstruction. It is not directed toward recovery of the past or toward reunification with an original identity, but toward uprooting its traditional foundations.

■ Key words : *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, subject, *Bildungsroman*, postmodern, deconstruction, liberation, signification (『젊은 예술가의 초상』, 주체, 성장소설, 포스트모던, 해체주의, 해방, 의미화)