

Place and Displacement in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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I.

Our geographical and social environments shape our identity. Defining an individual ‘I’ in terms of a parent-child relationship, residence, or nationality means defining the relationship between the ‘I’ and its geographical and social location. The protagonist Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* defines himself by a list—“Stephen Dedalus, Class of Elements, Clongowes Wood College, Sallins, County Kildare, Ireland, Europe, The World, The Universe” (*P* 10)—on his elementary school geography textbook. Looking at the list and his classmate Fleming’s writing, Stephen recognizes that “that was he” (*P* 13), meaning that he accepts Ireland as his nation and Catholicism as his creed, and so he becomes a member of Irish society by recognizing his place and identity determined by Irish geographical and social spaces.

Yet, immediately after he *naturally* identifies himself with the signifiers on the list, where Ireland is indicated as an independent country and part of Europe, he

thinks about ‘Dieu,’ the French word for God—a discrete and particular thing, which is non-descriptive or denoted by the signifier ‘God’—and experiences a severe headache. This reaction demonstrates his awareness of the lack of representation of the signifier and consequently brings elements of doubt into the list and suggests that its signifiers omit or override *something*. As Stephen is too young to confront and understand his identity issues, the headache is his response to what he misses, to what remains unacknowledged, and his subjective symptom which appears as a result of his inability to reconcile the list and the colonial reality of Ireland. He later discovers the omitted signifier, which is colonialist ‘Britain,’ when he realizes the linguistic differences between Irish and English. At the moment the words *tundish* and *funnel* cause a breakdown in communication between Irish Stephen and his British dean, Stephen dichotomizes the two nationals and nations as the colonizer and the colonized. He can no longer accept and identify himself as an Irishman after he realizes his position as the colonized subject in his colonized nation.

A Portrait has been hailed as a modernist milestone, but recently, the text has often been interpreted from a postcolonial studies perspective.¹⁾ Yet, such an analysis does not fully exculpate Stephen’s actions—his harsh blame of Ireland; his refusal to join in a physical, visible resistance against British rule; and ultimately his exile from Ireland—from a charge of his withdrawal from Irish history and politics. The difficulty in answering whether Stephen’s actions can accurately be read as resistance from a postcolonial perspective is that the question shifts the focus of the postcolonial interpretation from the textual Stephen to an exploration of Joyce and the Ireland which exists outside of the text. In this essay, I will analyze the novel as a postcolonial text of a subject developing in colonized Ireland, exploring the flyleaf of Stephen’s geography book that induces a headache,

1) For recent postcolonial analyses of *A Portrait*, see Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Jason Howard Mezey, “Ireland, Europe, The World, The Universe: Political Geography in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,” in *The Journal of Modern Literature* (Winter 1998/1999), pp. 337-48.

his realization of the subjugated Irish identity through linguistic displacement, and his deliberate failure of identification as an Irishman against the invisible net of colonial complicity.

II.

A Portrait begins at the very moment when the protagonist Stephen Dedalus encounters language and forms a sense of self. In the opening of the novel, his father tells him a story about “baby tuckoo.” The advent of his father looking down at him and the language which frames Stephen as the “baby tuckoo” can be seen as the dramatization of Stephen’s entering into the symbolic order under his father’s watchful eye. At the moment Stephen uses language and is identified by the signifier, ‘Stephen Dedalus,’ he is placed in a position that is determined before his birth, as a son of Simon and Mary Dedalus, of Irish descent and of Catholic religion. He comes into being to answer the interpellation, identifying himself with the name. That is, he is restricted by the signifier ‘Stephen Dedalus.’

Young Stephen is expected to act according to his position, and his identity is closely related to the social and geographical spaces in which he belongs. He locates himself within a simple list, which starts with his name and ends with the universe, and identifies himself with these signifiers, claiming that “that was he” when he sees his friend Fleming’s scribble on the opposite side of the list:

Stephen Dedalus is *my* name
 Ireland is *my* nation.
 Clongowes is *my* dwelling place
 And heaven is *my* expectation (*P* 13) [my emphasis]

He identifies his name as Stephen Dedalus, Clongowes as his dwelling place, Ireland as his nation, and further, Heaven (Catholicism) as his expectation.

Yet, the positions thought to be his own are not determined by him, but rather dictated by the space surrounding him. He then accepts his already allotted place and image, which others and society want and expect from him. Moreover, behind his process of identification, that at first seems like an internal and psychological process, lies society's invisible, external process of placement. The established order forces him to take his place regardless of whether he identifies with it. Although the word "my" might create the illusion that he chose it himself, external powers such as discipline and coercion are involved in constructing his identity as a typical Irishman. For example, as an Irishman, Stephen is presumed Catholic. From the beginning of the novel, Stephen's religious binds are demonstrated by his mother's and aunt Dante's threatening lines: "O, Stephen will apologize, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes" (*P* 4), uttered in response to Stephen's wish that he be married to Eileen, a Protestant. This scene clearly exemplifies that regardless of Stephen's internal identification, society compels him to be an Irishman. His acceptance of the flyleaf as "himself, his name and where he was" (*P* 12) demonstrates that through the process of external constraint and internal identification, young Stephen absorbs the regulation of Irish society and successfully becomes its member by embracing given places and roles as his own choice.

In addition, behind young Stephen's identification of himself with the signifiers is his assumption that the signifiers completely correspond with and represent the signified. For young Stephen, god is signified by 'God.' Although he acknowledges that god is "Dieu" in France and that the meaning of god could vary depending on the nation and believer, feeling a headache, he is prompted to conclude that the actual name of god is 'God' and that the signifier 'God' can include all the differences. For him, the signifier is not arbitrary, and there is no gap between the signifier and the signified (the actual being), rather, it is capable of fully representing the signified. Similarly, the signifier 'Ireland' is presented in the list as an independent country which is included under the rubrics of Europe and the World. Thus, the Irish identity of 'Stephen' born in Ireland seems inevitable and

natural in its connection with the signifier 'Ireland' as his national space.

However, young Stephen's seemingly unquestioning belief in the truth of the flyleaf list is challenged by a headache. Immediately after he confirms that the list is right, he starts fretting about *something* beyond the signifiers, and a headache follows. In this scene, by thinking about several meanings beyond signifiers such as the 'Universe' and 'God,' he unknowingly damages the authority of signifiers and raises doubts about their omnipotence. His headache can be interpreted as his uneasiness, resulting from his sense that the signifier doesn't represent reality and that there is *something* beyond it. Here, the headache operates as a signal for revealing the hidden truths beneath this physical reaction and appears in his failure to answer it successfully. It inevitably occurs in the place "where the circuit of symbolic communication was broken" (Zizek 73).² Such a symptom requires Stephen, as well as Joyce's readers, to become its addressee and to explain the *something* omitted from his list that the signifiers may not show. However, young Stephen gives up and turns over the flyleaf.

Looking closely at the flyleaf through the historical lens in which the novel was written, we readers can see what Stephen will find it out later—that the list, which seems simple and clear at first glance, omits an important signifier, 'Britain,' which should be located between 'Ireland' and 'Europe.' During the time that Stephen was educated at Clongowes Wood College and until 1904 when *A Portrait* was written, Ireland was *voluntarily* and *legitimately* colonized by Britain under the Act of Union (enacted in 1801) that was passed by a parliamentary vote taken both in Dublin and London. An independent space that could be called 'Ireland' did not exist geographically and politically at that time, and the national boundary between Ireland and Britain was ambiguous. Furthermore, the Jesuits that ran Clongowes Wood College kept favorable pace with British colonialist policy and taught Stephen that Ireland was part of Britain (Sullivan 27).³ In this regard, the list

2) Zizek also reads symptoms as a "prolongation of the communication by other means; the failed, repressed word articulates itself in a coded, ciphered form" (73).

3) Sullivan argues that the Jesuit fathers received education supporting the incorporation of

omitting Britain and defining Ireland as an independent space is not in accordance with Stephen's geographical education or the reality of an Ireland colonized by Britain. His list differs from the official, colonial version of Irish geography and history.

Jason Howard Mezey interprets the list, which represents the discontinuity of colonial geographical education in that period, as Joyce's resistance to traditional geographical conceptions and his emphasis on the separation between Ireland and Great Britain through the intentional "exclusion of the United Kingdom from the flyleaf" (Mezey 338). Yet, in Mezey's thorough analysis of the list's meaning, Stephen's headache—reflecting his uneasiness and anxiety derived from the incongruity between the list and the reality—is neglected. In *A Portrait*, Stephen's list is implicitly located on a geography book where the complexities of geographical boundaries and political relationships are objectified and simplified in simple graphical representation. In his simplified list, in which the signifier 'Ireland' followed by 'Europe' doesn't represent colonized Ireland, the reality of a colonized Ireland is evaded. Such an omission of 'Britain' from the list makes it impossible for Stephen to see the colonized and fragmented identity of Ireland or to question his own Irish identity. Thus, looking at the seemingly natural list, he immediately accepts his place and Irish identity, resulting from misrecognition and overriding colonized Ireland and the colonizer 'Britain.' However, the headache of young Stephen, who at the time only recognizes politics as an argument between his father and Dante, exposes his uneasiness with the complicated, colonized tension in Ireland and his Irish identity, which is tied to the absence of a legitimate, independent space called Ireland; the reality of Ireland being occupied by Britain; and the discordance of his list and geographical education.

As the headache befalls Stephen, he turns the flyleaf to quell his concerns about his list, but soon after, looking at the green round earth on the geography book, he feels pain. It reminds him of green velvet, which he associates with Charles Stewart Parnell, a political leader of Ireland fighting for Home Rule, while

Ireland into Britain and that that was reflected in Ireland where they served as teachers.

reflecting on his father's argument with Dante. His headache and pain insinuate that the disruption and the colonized circumstance of Ireland, although he hasn't fully acknowledged them yet, are deeply related to Stephen's daily life, which cannot be quelled by merely turning the flyleaf. Most of all, the unpleasant symptoms, all related to his reading of the geography book, foretell his disquiet about the place and displacement of Ireland and his Irish identity. That is, *something* is missing from the list and it will transform his position, which he previously accepted unquestioningly, into the cause of his uneasiness with his identity.

III.

Stephen's Irish English and its linguistic difference from British English reveal to him that 'Britain' is the signifier missing from his flyleaf list. His painful realization that Ireland is colonized and repressed by Britain and that his Irish identity is not united arises from a daily life experience, at the moment Stephen's *tundish* and the dean's *funnel* cause miscommunication between them. Stephen intends to explain that the usage of words should be differentiated in literary tradition and daily life by using the word "detain" (*P* 203). In discussing the different meanings of "detain" with the dean, Stephen assumes that the dean and he are using the same language and that his language and the dean's could be used interchangeably. In this regard, English looks like a means to create a unified field of communication and to enhance the affinity between two people speaking in the same language, rather than the difference. However, the conversation demonstrates how the English language can function as a poignant reminder of the Irish existence as a colonized subject:

- To return to the lamp, he said, the feeding of it is also a nice problem. You must choose the pure oil and you must be careful when you pour it in not to overflow it, not to pour in more than the funnel can hold.

- What funnel? asked Stephen.
- The funnel through which you pour the oil into your lamp.
- That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is it not a tundish?
- What is a tundish?
- That. The ... the funnel.
- Is that called a tundish in Ireland? asked the dean. I never heard the word in my life.
- It is called a tundish in Lower Drumcondra, said Stephen laughing, where they speak the best English.
- A tundish, said the dean reflectively. That is a most interesting word. I must look that word up. Upon my word I must. (P 203-04)

Ironically, Stephen's assertion that *tundish* is right English, which is used even in the Lower Drumcondra region where "the best English" in Ireland is spoken, raises some questions: why Ireland would use a language other than the ancient mother tongue of Gaelic, why the best English used in Ireland needs to be verified by an English dictionary, and why this word persisted and was not replaced by *funnel*.

An Elizabethan word, *tundish*, which is still used in Ireland today and which is classified as a word of British dialect according to Webster's *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, serves as an emblem of the marginality and colonization of Ireland. Stephen's unique version of Irish English abruptly discloses the difference between Britain and other regions under the United Kingdom, a nation composed of equals at first glance.⁴⁾ At the moment in which Stephen recognizes the linguistic gap between himself and the dean, he situates himself as an Irishman, while the dean is an "Englishman in Ireland" and "a countryman of Ben Johnson" (P 205),

4) The issue of Irish English and colonialism is well examined in the article, "What ish My Nation?" by David Cairns and Shaun Richards (*Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). Cairns and Richards argue that in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, especially in Act III, Scene ii, the different use of the English language reveals the second-order citizenship status of the Irish, Walsh, and Scots. They must speak English as evidence of their incorporation within England, yet, their English must be differentiated from the standard form to make and display their subordinate status.

a celebrated author during the Elizabethan Age when the colonization and Britainization of Ireland was conducted in full-scale. Within such a binary division, in which Stephen situates the dean as “courteous foe” and himself as an Irishman, the discourse produced by the process of colonizing Ireland is demonstrated. Since the sixteenth century, England had sought to consolidate Ireland under the name of Britain, employing British colonial policy to reinforce political governance and economic extortion. During this process, the discourse and the strategy that located Ireland as the ‘savage’ other and a counterpart contrary to ‘cultural’ Britain was formulated to justify the colonial process in which the savage other needed to be conquered, civilized, and ordered by the civil management of the British. Alongside the reordering of Irish society under British control, the colonizer required an abdication of Gaelic customs and the introduction of English as the sole official language (Quinn ch.10).⁵⁾

The relationship between the standard English of Britain and the non-standard English of regional dialects reflects the hierarchy between the colonist that propagated the language and the colonized nation that is obliged to lose its mother language. Using the normalized standard language enables the speaking subject on the part of colonizer to produce a racialized and nationalized linguistic authority. *Tundish* is the very Irish English of Irish Stephen, and it makes him feel his otherness within the language: “His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech” (*P* 205). The word is a reminder of linguistic difference, which unexpectedly draws out the real differences between the two people despite their similarity in appearance and ordinary life. At this moment, the language gap reveals to Stephen the inscribed power relationship between his nation, Ireland, and Britain, and soon after he positions himself as a linguistic subject of the master’s language. He locates his soul and his identity in “his [the colonist’s] shadow” (*P* 205) in an analogy of the hierarchical relationship between the actual thing and its shadow.

5) In this scene, the relationship between Stephen and the English dean seems to symbolize the structure of language education in a colonial project.

Moreover, for Stephen, the word is like a fossil, with the archaic language form of the sixteenth century when the colonization of Ireland was carried out, and it acts as a sign of the ‘successful’ colonization of Ireland. Stephen looks it up and finds it “good old blunt English” (*P* 274). The archaism of this word prompts him to recall the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland, conveying the death of Gaelic and the differentiated positions of the master and the secondary learner, and the current usage of the word reminds Irish Stephen of the fact that Ireland is still colonized. It foregrounds the inheritance of a language that is not his nation's own, and consequently, his subjugated identity.

Stephen's flyleaf list assumed that he possessed a unified Irish identity. In contrast, the Irish English language symbolized by *tundish* works as “the cracked looking-glass of a servant” (*U* 1.154) to show the reality of the colonized Ireland omitted from the list and his own subjected, split identity in colonized Ireland. In such a cracked looking-glass, Irish English is allegorized as the fragmented reality of Ireland as a colony where English is used but is nevertheless perceived as “racially and culturally different by the English” (Boheemen-Saff 32). The Irish people necessarily experience otherness by experiencing linguistic displacement in speaking English. Irish English serves as Stephen's mirror, reflecting his subjugated Irish nation and identity.

Actually, the word ‘Irish English’ itself reflects the complicated situation of Ireland. Irish English is acquired by the displacement of the native language and the acceptance of the colonizer's language, with the remaining difference of language always recalling the colonial history of Ireland. There is a distinct separation between the Irish/Ireland and the Irish language. ‘English’ is both a signifier for the English nationality and for the language the English use; they have no gap, whereas ‘Irish’ represents a nationality while English represents the language used by the Irish. ‘The Irish speak English’ seems to be an anomalous juxtaposition and naturally recalls the ‘logical’ phrase, ‘the Irish speak Irish.’ However, there is no place for that seemingly natural phrase. The language demotes the Irish identity into that of the colonized subject and complicates the geographical

and social place of Ireland. That the Irish employ the English language necessarily awakens the colonial history of Ireland. Whether the Irish speak English or Gaelic – a language remote from present-day Ireland, taught in school but spoken by few – they have to negotiate a kind of a gap between the place, Ireland, and their speaking language, English. The dissonance between Ireland – a historical, cultural and racial place – and the English language inevitably creates tension,⁶⁾ and allows for an interpretation of young Stephen's headache as the embodiment of his anxiety and unease with the colonized national space of Ireland as well as his subjugated identity.

IV.

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* can be seen as an example of the *Bildungsroman* genre that paints the protagonist Stephen Dedalus's coming of age. Yet, Stephen's *Bildung* does not follow the expected pattern of the typical protagonist, who in his childhood is surrounded and situated by his environment, and who in adolescence becomes rebellious and searches for his own identity, but ultimately, adjusts to society, internalizes the rules, and takes on his expected role, reinforcing the established order. Stephen initially admits his social position and identity just like traditional *Bildung* protagonists. However, in a colonized and fragmented Ireland, adolescent Stephen is hesitant to accept an Irish

6) The relationship between language and place and identity has been one of fundamental issues in postcolonial discourse. There are mainly two reactions and responses to the imperial language of English: rejection and subversion/appropriation. The discussion of native language and the appropriation of English between James Joyce and William Yeats in the early 20th century is hotly debated in current postcolonial discourse by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who tries to restore a native language and reject English, and Chinua Achebe, echoing Stephen and Joyce, who is doubtful of the restoration of the native language, which has already lost its communicative function, and supports the appropriation of English, the colonial language, as a subversive strategy.

identification that is normatively circumscribed on the social space within which the subject can interact. After he realizes that ‘Britain’ was missing from his list, the colonial space of Ireland disturbs him and he is reluctant to satisfy social expectations. Instead of following a traditional pattern, Stephen intentionally denies becoming *genuinely* Irish as mandated by his nation and religion. Such deliberate failure of identification creates a gap between him and the ideal Irish image granted to him, providing a space of rejection and resistance. Nevertheless, it doesn’t seem wholly correct to label his behavior ‘resistance’ because he denies joining the physical and visible resistance of others, criticizes his colonized nation, and finally flees.

In order to read his action as resistance, we need to verify what he is against—the invisible condition that reproduces the situation of colonized Ireland. Young Stephen, looking at his flyleaf list, identifies himself as Irish as if he chooses his place, yet, he later realizes the hidden mechanism that frames and restricts him as an Irish, stating that “this race and this country and this life produced him [me]” (*P* 220). Here, his recognition of subject formation immediately recalls Louis Althusser’s recognition of the production of the subject. In his study of ideology, Althusser explains that the ultimate objective of production is reproducing the condition itself that enables the continuation of the existing order and system. He points out that for such a reproduction process, the established order, such as the church, educational system, or state, produces an individual as the subject within a net, which is *already always* there before his or her birth. As such, Stephen believes that Ireland reproduces the people born in Ireland as colonized subjects who have to abide by colonial complicity within such structures as education and Catholicism: “when the soul of a man is born in this country, the net holds it back from the flight” (*P* 220). His claims that there was an opportunity, but Ireland deserted it and that the Irish “allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them” (*P* 220) reflect his contention that the Irish unknowingly participate in the continuance of a colonized system. This may also be illustrated by the Act of Union passed by vote in Dublin, and within the text, in the mention of Catholicism’s disruption of

the Irish nationalist party, which led to Parnell's political downfall: "you [the Irish] sold Parnell to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him or left him for another" (*P* 220).⁷ Then, finally, all his reproach of Ireland reaches its climax in "the old sow that eats her farrow" (*P* 220), which implies that the process by which Ireland reproduces the conditions of the colonized is repeated and leads the actual and visible resistance for independence to be disrupted and subsequently fail. The phrase can be interpreted to mean that 'Ireland produces the Irish as the colonized subject and keeps them and itself colonized.' As Stephen recognizes that the continual colonization of Ireland derives from 'unconscious' cooperation based on the process of constructing the Irish subject in the terms of *the net*, he can no longer naturally identify himself as an Irishman. Instead, he intends to distance himself from the seemingly natural process of becoming a member of Irish society, although it causes conflict between him and society.

In this sense, *A Portrait* can be considered a novel about Stephen's intentional failure to become a subject and his decision to instead flee from the *natural* flow of the mechanism that fixes his Irish identity. This tactic is deployed relatively transparently in the text in the form of his "developing resistance to the dictates of Church hegemony," which can be read as "his eventual rejection of a rigidly defined order of affairs prefiguring the struggle among personal autonomy, cultural hegemony, and colonial dominance" (Mezey 348). More significantly and yet more subtly, he postulates two strategies in order to challenge the process: he questions the fixed notion between the subject and the space, and claims that the consciousness of the Irish race is uncreated. Firstly, he states, "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church" (*P* 268), rejecting all the things that home, fatherland, and religion have given to him. Instead, through exile he attempts to correct his list to read 'Stephen

7) In "The Shade of Parnell," Joyce concludes: "In his final desperate appeal to his countrymen, he [Parnell] begged them not to throw him as a sop to the English wolves howling around them. It redounds to their honour that they did not fail this appeal. They did not throw him to the English wolves; they tore him to pieces themselves." A similar tone is repeated in *A Portrait* when Stephen accuses the Irish of failing him.

Dedalus, Europe, the World, and the Universe,' omitting all the places initially allotted to him. This new map can be read as his deliberate effort to shift to an open space rather than remain in the colonial space of a fixed, hierarchical order and the narrowly demarcated space of essentialist nationalism. He challenges the ostensibly unchangeable process of subject formation where the gap and the possibility for resistance can be narrowed. His intention to change the connection between his identity and the space, Ireland, and the fixed relationship between the ascribed identity and the geographic territory, are represented by Stephen's choice to leave Ireland. Stephen does not see the individual as 'being' fixed to a single national space. By shifting his position and surroundings, he intends to shift his existence to a more flexible and selective 'been there' mode rather than the essential 'being' mode dictated by the ascribed identity. Stephen moves his physical body in order to disconnect from a fixed identity rooted in a space and to explore a new identity not constrained by colonialism.

Furthermore, rather than complying with the established order, he states that the Irish consciousness is not yet forged. He rejects the notion that being an Irishman necessitates living in colonized Ireland and leaves Ireland to discover "the uncreated consciousness" (*P* 276) of the Irish. By addressing them as "uncreated," he deliberately tries to deny or at least weaken the authority of the established values and their reinforcement which involves producing the Irish subject as unwitting colonial collaborator. He questions the dominant paradigm through exile and seeks an unfettered consciousness free from colonialism.

Yet, as his friend Lynch suggests, such boundary-crossing within the text can be seen as "retired within or behind handwork" (*P* 233), in other words, as his withdrawal rather than active resistance. Moreover, including 'Stephen Dedalus' in the chain of signifiers and omitting 'Britain' and 'Ireland,' can be seen as his de-territorizing and de-politicizing of the colonized space of Ireland as well as an effort to convert such issues into text. Also, his attempt to find the "uncreated consciousness" looks impossible, just as his Icarus-like figure, calling "Old Father" at the end of the novel, predicts failure as rebellious Icarus falls into the sea.

However, the uncertainty of his success and his anxiety about place and displacement cross the text and are passed onto readers. Stephen admits his biographical identity to be Irish, answering ‘Yes’ to Davin’s question “Are you Irish at all?” (P 219). Yet, *unnaturally*, he doesn’t accept Ireland as his nation, and plans to move his Irish body out of Ireland and to thereby intentionally displace it. Paradoxically, Stephen seeks to find the true nature of his Irish race outside of Ireland. Through this incongruity and paradox, the exile in *A Portrait* tackles questions surrounding positioning and movement and compels readers to find the hidden meaning behind an individual’s anxiety about place. Indirectly experiencing the discordance and displacement between Irish identity and the space Ireland by reading the text, readers are deprived of any opportunity to reduce *A Portrait* to ‘just a novel’ as they turn over the last page. We cannot clearly explain what the “uncreated consciousness” is or why this dissonance and uneasiness happen. It all inevitably draws the net and the reality of Ireland out to the readers, who have to figure out what remains unacknowledged. Just as Stephen’s headache appears as his response to what he cannot explain, readers may experience a kind of headache when faced with such questions. And there, colonized Ireland and its reality always exist as that which cannot be reduced to the text. Ireland is not a textual or symbolic world, but a real space replete with colonial tension where readers live. By moving an Irish body called ‘Stephen’ outside of Ireland, the text reveals the formation of his identity and forces us to negotiate the artist’s biological identity and his denial of it as the artist’s expression of his pain and displacement. *A Portrait* depicts the anxiety of place and displacement and challenges readers to consider how this dissonance happens, thereby reflecting and laying bare the real Ireland and its ongoing problems outside of the text.

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Abstract

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A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

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Young Stephen identifies himself with a list of signifiers given to him by his Irish geographical and social space. Yet, thinking about something beyond the listed signifiers, he feels a headache, which can be read as a symptom of the reality omitted from the list, the reality of Ireland's colonization. His headache ensues as a response to the discordance between his list and his geography lesson, and above all, to the dissonance between the political and social reality of Ireland and the 'Ireland' on his flyleaf list. He turns over the flyleaf, but later, realizes his displacement and his colonial otherness through his engagement with the Irish English language, which dissolves his previous sense of a unified identity. He inevitably feels anxiety about the space of colonized Ireland and his identity as an Irishman.

However, such uneasiness doesn't lead him to join the contemporary rebellion against colonialism. He resists the insidious reproduction of the colonial situation by intentionally refusing to be categorized or established as an Irish subject who unknowingly and unconsciously colludes with the British colonization of Ireland. Searching for the possibility of and space for resistance, Stephen defines his race's consciousness as "uncreated" and through exile, attempts to differentiate himself from the traditional net which compels him to fix his identity to a social or national space. Offering an anti-*Bildung* narrative, an account of anxiety caused by place and displacement, and the suggestion of an undiscovered Irish consciousness and identity, *A Portrait* draws attention to the reality of the displacement of the Ireland that exists beyond the text and demands that readers react.

■ Key words : *A Portrait*, (dis)placement, headache, subject formation,
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