

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Uniting the World of the Pairs of Opposites

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Abstract James Joyce's coming-of-age novel is a structural exploration of the myths which inform Western culture. Stephen Dedalus, the main character, is a representation of the mythic hero. He embodies a number of related myths, including Minos, St. Stephen, Christ, Dionysus, Orpheus, and Narcissus. The structure of the novel is like the Minotaur's labyrinth, from which the reader must find a way out. A variety of critical methodologies can be drawn on to explicate the novel; however, Archetypal Criticism provides the language and the starting point allowing the reader a window into Joyce's narrative.

Keywords: myth, opposites, contradiction, labyrinth, archetype

ジェイムズ・ジョイス作『若い芸術家の肖像』： 対立し合う世界の統合

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要旨 ジェイムズ・ジョイスによるある若者の成長過程に関する小説は、西洋文化を満たしている神話に関する構造的な探求である。主人公のスティーヴン・ディーダラスは神話の英雄を表している。彼はミノス、聖ステファン、キリスト、ディオニソス、オルフェウス、ナルシサス等の数多くの神話を具現化している。小説の構造はミノタウロスの迷宮に似ており、読者はそこからの出口を探さねばならない。本作品を解明するには様々な批評的分析手法を用いることができる。しかし「原型主義的批評法」こそがジョイスの物語に読者が踏み込むための言葉と出発点を与える。

キーワード：神話、対立、反駁、迷宮、原型主義

Ah, dearo! Dearo, dear! And her illian! And his willyum! When they were all there now,
 matinmarked for lookin on. At the carryfour with awlus plawshus, their happy-ass cloudious!
 And then and too the trivials! And their bivouac! And his monomyth! Ah ho! Say no more about
 it! I'm sorry! I saw. I'm sorry! I'm sorry to say I saw! (Joyce, *Finnegans* 581)

On the second floor of the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo is a painting by the Renaissance artist Tintoretto. The painting is of a young man holding a sword. In the background is a man whose head has been severed from his body, and behind him is a rabblement. The painting is entitled *Portrait of a Young Man as David*. One is struck by the similarity in content between it and Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Both are portraits of young men informed by mythology. Both are carrying a symbolic object: David is carrying a sword; Stephen carries a walking stick, which he calls "his ashplant" (Joyce, *Portrait* 194). Both have ostensibly passed through a great trial: David has killed Goliath and Stephen is escaping the labyrinth of his society. And both are shown alone, separate from the mob. We cannot really get to know either young man. Tintoretto's young man is enigmatic: Who is he? Why is he represented as David? Stephen is approachable only through his own vision of himself, which, like everyone else in the novel is "portrayed almost exclusively from Stephen's point of view" (Henke 307). The narrative reflects an autobiographical bias; however, it is presumptuous to say Joyce and Stephen are analogous. Because the center of focalization is exclusively Stephen—the narration is filtered through his mind—he is an unreliable narrator. He admits as much when he berates himself for misremembering a line of poetry: "He had not even remembered rightly Nash's line. All the images it had awakened were false. His mind bred vermin. His thoughts were lice born of the sweat of sloth" (Joyce, *Portrait* 202). We cannot know how others in the novel feel about him, except that we hear (through Stephen's mind) that his father thinks himself "a better man than he [Stephen] is any day of the week" (Joyce, *Portrait* 91). He is the romantic hero of his own life, which is as it should be. We are all the heroes of our own lives. Stephen Dedalus is a displaced monomythic hero on a quest to discover his true vocation and thereby his true self.

Portrait manifests a concentric series of myths. There is evidence of the myths of Minos (specifically the mythic character Daedalus), St. Stephen, Christ, Dionysus, Orpheus, and Narcissus. These archetypes inform the structure; for example, the labyrinth of Daedalus. The structure can also be likened to the gestation of a human

fœtus. Spiritual gestation is an appropriate structure because a major theme of the novel is initiation into adult life. The structure also suggests music with its overture at the beginning of chapter one and the leitmotifs which are developed throughout the novel. There are compelling reasons to suggest it is both a displaced romance and a displaced irony. This ambiguity leads us toward Deconstructionism, which Ross C. Murfin claims, quoting J. Hillis Miller, reveals “the existence in literature of structures of language which contradict the law of non-contradiction” (qtd. in Murfin 329). This concurrence of two critical methodologies demonstrates that diverse methods are not mutually exclusive, but can be used together to explicate a text. The essays in R. B. Kershner’s edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* use Archetypal Critical techniques and language in their explications of the novel.

Archetypes

Portrait is imbued with myth. One cannot consider the novel without considering the myths which inform it. At its center—the navel of the novel—is the monomyth. Although *Portrait* contains evidence of many archetypes, they “will be always the one, shapeshifting yet marvelously constant story that we find . . .” (Campbell, *Hero* 3). An understanding of the novel and its main character can be invested by an examination of some of the myths at its heart. Joyce’s *bildungsroman* is built on a concentric series of myths which inform Stephen’s character. Most obvious are Daedalus, architect of the Minoan labyrinth. Daedalus “is the hero of the way of thought—singlehearted, courageous, and full of faith that the truth, as he finds it, shall make us free” (Campbell, *Hero* 24). This is also an apt description of Stephen, and it is the way he sees himself. Our understanding of Stephen is communicated exclusively through his mind; therefore, we can only see him as he sees himself. In his diary at the end of the novel Stephen states his purpose: “to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race” (Joyce, *Portrait* 218). These are the words of a transfigured hero; he wants to bring the treasure he has won back to his society, to become the world-transfiguring hero. His words suggest a “higher spiritual dimension [has been] attained that makes possible the resumption of the work of creation” (Campbell, *Hero* 17). Although, one cannot resume what one has not yet begun. This provides an element of irony. An argument can be made that Stephen’s heroic journey is just beginning. Campbell tells us “of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation—initiation—return* . . .” (*Hero* 30). Stephen is in the process of separation. On the other

hand, each chapter contains the monomyth in miniature. The epiphanies which conclude each chapter are displaced apotheoses.

Another archetype used by Joyce, also apparent in Stephen's name is St. Stephen, protomartyr. St. Stephen's preaching offended a group of people who had him stoned. The offending words were, "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footing: what house will ye build me? saith the lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" (*Holy Bible*, Acts 7.48-50). This means that God does not dwell only in temples, but dwells everywhere. There is a displaced version of this idea in Chapter V of *Portrait*; however, it comes from Cranly rather than Stephen: "The church is not the stone building nor even the clergy and their dogmas. It is the whole mass of those born into it" (Joyce, *Portrait* 212).

Another Christian archetype, slightly more veiled, is the myth of Christ. Of course, there is constant reference to Christianity and its images and symbols; for example, Stephen's "mind is supersaturated with the religion" (Joyce, *Portrait* 207). There is a suggestion inherent in his role that Stephen is a displaced Jesus. This symbolism can be extended to his family: there is Dedalus the father and Dedalus the son, and Mary is his mother's name. One scene in particular is a mock baptism with Stephen's mother and sister acting as priest and intercessor on his behalf, and his father is present merely as a whistle and a disembodied voice, like "[a] shout in the street" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 28):

—Well, it's a poor case, she said, when a university student is so dirty that his mother has to wash him.

—But it gives you pleasure, said Stephen calmly.

An earsplitting whistle was heard from upstairs and his mother thrust a damp overall into his hands, saying:

—Dry yourself and hurry out for the love of goodness.

A second shrill whistle, prolonged angrily, brought one of the girls to the foot of the staircase.

—Yes, father?

—Is your lazy bitch of a brother gone out yet?

—Yes, father.

—Sure?

—Yes, father.

—Hm! (Joyce, *Portrait* 153-154)

Stephen sees himself as a possible savior for Ireland: “I go . . . to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (Joyce, *Portrait* 218). He carries an ashplant walking stick, representing “an archetypal World Savior, World Tree motif” (Campbell, *Hero* 33). Christ on the cross, the Buddha sitting beneath the Bo Tree, Wotan “self-crucified on the World Ash as an offering to himself” are archetypes for Stephen (Campbell, *Masks* 111).

In Chapter IV, leading to the major epiphany of the book—Stephen’s transformation—a group of acquaintances calls to him: “Stephanos Dedalos! Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous Stephaneforos!” (Joyce, *Portrait* 149). Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch suggests “the incantation sums up not only Stephen’s passing from the proposed priesthood of the Christian religion to the chosen priesthood of the ‘Dedalean’ creed, but the whole of his Dionysian passion, death, and resurrection” (115). The garlanded ox, even more obviously, is a link to the myth of the Minotaur: King Minos was supposed to sacrifice a magnificent bull sent to him by Poseidon, “but when he beheld the majesty of the beast that had been sent and thought what an advantage it would be to possess such a specimen, he determined to risk a merchant’s substitution—of which he supposed the god would take no great account” (Campbell, *Hero* 13-14). Therefore, Stephen is the creator of the labyrinth and the bull to have been slaughtered, but he is also shown honor with the epithets called out by his friends: he “is the bull not as victim but as victor, epiphany of the god risen from death, exalted, and glorified, shaking off the fetters of earth to attain full apotheosis” (Bernhardt-Kabisch 115).

Bernhardt-Kabisch has drawn a connection with Dionysus. The myths of Christ and Dionysus are connected: “the resemblance of the Christian legend of the killed and resurrected redeemer to the old myths of the killed and resurrected gods, Tammuz, Adonis, Dionysus, and Osiris . . .” (Campbell, *Masks* 154). Dionysus is an archetype for Christ. Furthermore, Campbell has shown a connection to Orpheus, who, like Dionysus, is also torn apart: “the god whose symbol is the vine. . . . Of old he was known as Dionysus-Orpheus-Bacchus” (*Masks* 26). Death and resurrection is an important part of initiation rites. Sir James Frazer attests to tribes in which “it is customary for lads at puberty to undergo certain initiatory rites, of which one of the

commonest is a pretence of killing the lad and bringing him to life again” (692). In short, Stephen is initiated into adulthood with a displaced initiation rite where he symbolically dies and is resurrected. At the heart of the labyrinth, his journey through the underworld, during the sermons of Chapter III, which “form the center-piece of the novel” (Holland 282), he experiences a spiritual death: “One soul was lost; a tiny soul: his. It flickered once and went out, forgotten, lost. The end: black cold void waste” (Joyce, *Portrait* 127).

Structure

Labyrinthine Structure

The labyrinth provides a structure for the narrative and a suggestion of its content. Cheryl Herr in her deconstruction of *Portrait* suggests “Ovid’s Daedalian maze stands as an equivalent to the narrative structure of *Portrait* and paces the unchartable accretion of meanings in Stephen’s story” (353). The labyrinth, she explains in her essay, is both unicursal (a single path) and multicursal (many paths). The narrative unites these opposing ideas in Stephen: he walks a single path, but his decisions along the way represent multiple possibilities; for example, false turns such as considering the wrong vocation: the priesthood. The labyrinth is also what the reader must make his or her way through in reading the novel; for example, it is unclear whether Stephen will ever escape his confining society. He is “a person of immense contradictions” (Herr 343). He contains both Daedalian and Icarian aspects. Suzette Henke suggests “[t]he hyperbolic resonance of Stephen’s invocation leads us to suspect that his fate will prove Icarian rather than Daedalian” (324). It is impossible to say which will be his fate, actually, because both possibilities exist simultaneously in the novel. The Stephen of *Ulysses* had escaped, but returned somewhat humbler. We know that Joyce succeeded, but it is unwise to draw a direct correlation between Stephen and Joyce. We know only that Stephen desires to escape. He puts it in this way: “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church . . .” (Joyce, *Portrait* 213). We know, too, that he claims not to be afraid of failure: “I do not fear to be alone or to be spurned for another or to leave whatever I have to leave. And I am not afraid to make a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake and perhaps as long as eternity too” (Joyce, *Portrait* 213).

Each chapter is a different level of the labyrinth. Release from each level comes as a transfiguring epiphany. His first major epiphany comes at the end of Chapter I

after telling the rector of Clongowes about the unfair pandying he had received from Father Dolan: "The cheers died away in the soft grey air. He was alone. He was happy and free . . ." (Joyce, *Portrait* 62). However, in the proceeding chapter his triumph is ironically inverted. Stephen's father relates how he heard the story, and how Father Dolan and the rector "had a great laugh over it" deflating Stephen's memory of his perceived success (Joyce, *Portrait* 73).

In short, the structure of the story is labyrinthine. The layers are interconnected, leading us forward and backward using repeated images and symbols such as the use of smells and sounds; for example: "from here and from there came the sounds of the cricketbats through the soft grey air. They said: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain slowly falling in the brimming bowl" (Joyce, *Portrait* 48). Within chapters images are repeated and transformed: "wondering at the multitude of corks that lay bobbing on the surface of the water in a thick yellow scum" (Joyce, *Portrait* 68) is transformed into, "[h]is heart danced upon her movements like a cork in a tide" (Joyce, *Portrait* 70). The images are also extended to other chapters; for example, Joyce's repetition of certain colors, such as grey and white, and his use of the five senses. In Chapter I he writes of "the silence of the soft grey air" (Joyce, *Portrait* 51); this image is a litany of sorts, thus in Chapter V he still refers to "the grey rainy light" (Joyce, *Portrait* 197). Events of his childhood, such as Wells' pushing "him into the square ditch" (Joyce, *Portrait* 22) are also recalled to Stephen's memory throughout the novel; for example, at the beginning of Chapter V: "[t]he yellow dripping had been scooped out like a boghole and the pool under it brought back to his memory the dark turfcoloured water of the bath in Clongowes" (Joyce, *Portrait* 153). This use of images suggests the young Stephen is already transforming the world he experiences into a world of art. It also provides a musical structure for the novel, not contrary to the labyrinth.

Musical Gestational Structure

The opening pages are an overture, containing the entire novel in a microcosm. Sheldon Brivic suggests "Stephen's first six years are represented in the section that takes up the first page and a half of *Portrait*, introducing many key images, including his looming, hairy father and the 'nicer smell' (p. 19) of mother" (252). The novel is a musical gestation: the themes wind and intertwine throughout like a fugue, developing and expanding the leitmotifs introduced at the beginning. This structural concept

works concurrently with another: the gestation of a human fœtus: “For *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is in fact the gestation of a soul, and in the metaphor Joyce found his new principle of order” (Ellmann 39). Norman N. Holland reminds us that “[t]hroughout the novel there are recurring fantasies of rebirth, but of a spiritual, not a sexual kind . . .” (288). Stephen’s development is a spiritual gestation.

Each chapter has transfiguring experiences leading one to speculate that each chapter is the monomyth in miniature. And to draw a connection again with Orpheus, with each transformation he leaves a piece of himself behind; however, another part of himself—that authentic nucleus—he carries with him. It is the connective tissue between the child and the youth. Henke draws a connection to the myth of Narcissus: females in the novel are “[s]een through his eyes and colored by his fantasies, they often appear as one-dimensional projections of a narcissistic imagination” (307). Stephen shuns companionship, but longs for substitutes for his mother in such people as a neighborhood girl, Emma, a prostitute, and the girl on the beach in the major epiphany of the novel: “Narcissus instinctively seeks a return to the mother as a sanctuary from violence” (Hughes 16). Stephen is simultaneously drawn to and repelled by his mother. He, like Narcissus, “is time-traveller and unity-seeker, drawn to the womb-pool not as the end of his quest but as the vehicle of his travel and his search” (Hughes 16). The narrative pattern of the novel functions in the same way: it is seeking unity, bridging the law of non-contradiction, and crossing the threshold of the “world of the pairs of opposites” (Campbell, *Power* 55).

Romance

The cyclical structure of the novel suggests the romantic narrative pattern. Northrop Frye indicates, “[t]he complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero” (187). *Portrait* presents us with a displaced version of this pattern, except that the exaltation at the end is ironic. The only exaltation is in Stephen’s mind. We cannot be sure whether or not his quest is or will be successful. How can he be exalted before beginning his transfiguring act of creation? As was mentioned earlier, Stephen, as the son of Dedalus, has strong Icarian tendencies. That notwithstanding, the structure is cyclical and repetitive, like a romance; his development is presented as a series of trials

he must pass through— “preliminary minor adventures” —leading to “the crucial struggle,” which is with Ireland, the Church, his family, and himself and his sins (Frye 187). These minor adventures each lead to a new chapter in his life.

The “four distinguishable aspects of the quest myth” as outlined by Frye are also apparent in the novel. The four aspects are as follows: “First, the *agon* or conflict itself. Second, the *pathos* or death. . . . Third, the disappearance of the hero, a theme which often takes the form of *sparagmos* or tearing to pieces. [. . .] Fourth, the reappearance and recognition of the hero . . .” (Frye 192). *Portrait* contains these aspects, but they are displaced: the conflict is with his family, state, church, and, ultimately, himself. In other words, it is the struggle of the individual with society’s institutions; it is the struggle toward oneself. His displaced death is represented by the sermons “concerning the last things” (Joyce, *Portrait* 103). During the retreat Stephen envisions his own hell: “Creatures were in the field; one, three, six: creatures were moving in the field, hither and thither. Goatish creatures with human faces, hornybrowed, lightly bearded and grey as indiarubber” (Joyce, *Portrait* 124). As was mentioned earlier, he experiences a spiritual death, and this leads to a kind of disappearance.

In Chapter IV he is very pious, cleansed of sin, but he has not yet reappeared. He is not entirely himself. His true self is repressed beneath a piety based on fear of hell. He begins his return with the realization that “[l]ately some of their [the Jesuit priest’s] judgments had sounded a little childish in his ears and had made him feel a regret and pity as though he were slowly passing out of an accustomed world and were hearing its language for the last time” (Joyce, *Portrait* 139). It is almost the last time. Not only is he leaving the cloistered world of Jesuit theology, he is planning to leave Ireland. A short time later, seeing the girl on the beach, he has his major epiphany and discovers his artistic vocation. In an earlier scene when the director of Belvedere college asks him if he has felt a call to the priesthood, the director is “slowly dangling and looping the cord of the other blind”—the imagery of hanging. It is a warning to Stephen that he was about to make a false move, in other words hang himself with his false decision. In short, the evidence suggests the narrative pattern is a displaced romance. As a displaced romance the narrative demonstrates aspects of the second phase, which “brings us to the innocent youth of the hero”; the third phase, which is the traditional hero’s quest; the fourth phase, the central theme of which is “the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience”; and the sixth phase, characteristic of which is “the lonely hermit absorbed in

occult or magical studies” (Frye 199-202). All these phases inform aspects of Stephen’s character.

Irony

Evidence also exists suggesting the pattern is a displaced irony; for example, each of Stephen’s successes, represented by epiphanies, are subverted in the subsequent chapters: “Each chapter ends with a triumphant sense of uplift as he finds his goal. . . . But soon this new goal begins to disappoint . . .” (Brivic 261). As Suzette Henke puts it: “the child, apparently triumphant, later discovers an ironic sequel to his ostensible victory” (311). Henke makes a compelling argument for irony when she suggests, “[t]he sexual imagery at the end of Chapter II is ironically inverted. [. . .] The fusion of erotic and romantic imagery degenerates into a vague rite of sexual initiation that reverses traditional symbolism” (314). She goes on to suggest an ironic reading of the major epiphany of the novel:

The irony of this romantic moment is subtle but implicit. If Stephen feels sexual arousal in the presence of exposed female thighs, he quickly sublimates erotic agitation beneath effusions of purple prose. Confronted with an attractive nubile form, he immediately detaches himself from participation in the scene. (318-319)

Portrait shows many of the qualities of a displaced second phase satire “in which the sources and values of conventions themselves are objects of ridicule” (Frye 229). Stephen himself is an object of ridicule: his aesthetic theory “has the true scholastic stink,” says his friend Lynch (Joyce, *Portrait* 186). Yet, when he creates his villanelle for Emma, he is not detached from his handiwork as he suggests in his aesthetic theory an artist should be. Henke suggests, “Stephen paradoxically composes the villanelle out of the same pornographic urgency that his Thomistic theory earlier censured” (322-323). In this way Stephen embodies contradictions. In short, Joyce presents Stephen as both a romantic hero and an ironic anti-hero. The irony is executed primarily in two ways: by maintaining an ironic detachment “like the God of the creation, [remaining] within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails”; and by inverting in the subsequent chapter the success of the transforming epiphanies which conclude each chapter

(Joyce, *Portrait* 187). This technique suggests the futility and fruitlessness of Stephen's epiphanies, and it exposes a possible Icarian life pattern emerging. Thus the narrative pattern is ambiguous; evidence exists for either interpretation.

The ambiguity of the narrative pattern, however, presents us with a possible escape from the "world of the pairs of opposites" (Campbell, *Power* 55). Joseph Campbell tells us "mythology suggests that behind that duality there is a singularity over which this plays like a game" (*Power* 57). Joyce provides us, as does myth, a doorway to "the abyss into which all pairs of opposites disappear . . ." (Campbell, *Masks* 658). The discovery that *Portrait* can simultaneously manifest more than one pattern is not inconsistent with Archetypal Criticism. Northrop Frye proposes "[t]he four mythoi that we are dealing with, comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony, may now be seen as four aspects of a central unifying myth" (192). This brings us full circle back to the monomyth. Therefore, simultaneously, the full myth manifests all the narrative patterns.

Deconstructionism and Archetypal Criticism

Transcending the "world of the pairs of opposites" as *Portrait* does suggests a point of connection with Deconstructionism (Campbell, *Power* 55). That these two critical schools can share similar vocabulary indicates they do not have to be mutually exclusive; for example, both Archetypal Critics and Deconstructionists refer to binary opposites, to bridging the law of non-contradiction. The previous discussion on both structure and narrative pattern drew heavily on the work of other critics practicing diverse styles of criticism. In turn they use much of the terminology of Archetypal Criticism; for example, Sheldon Brivic writes about "transfiguration" (259) and a "treasure" (260); Norman N. Holland writes about the "goddess" (286) and "the call" (287); Suzette Henke refers to myth (307), "at-onement" (317), and "the Other" (319); Cheryl Herr's deconstruction of *Portrait* uses the myth of Daedalus extensively, suggesting an archetypal reading of the novel; and R. B. Kershner uses the terms "transformation" (379) and "the Other" (382). This is only to mention a very few instances of the many correspondences with Archetypal Criticism. The language of criticism, at least in regards to Joyce, is saturated with Archetypal Critical vocabulary and methods. That Joyce inspires critics to use such language demonstrates the importance of his writing to Joseph Campbell. One can conclude that the language and methods of Archetypal Criticism are essential to other schools of criticism. Just as literature does

not exist in a vacuum, neither can criticism exist in a vacuum. Archetypal Criticism brings together and draws from the disparate strands of criticism. It is inclusive, allowing the critic to draw from a number of resources simultaneously. By its very nature it encompasses both Psychoanalytic Criticism and the New Historicism. Archetypal critics and psychoanalytic critics are both concerned with initiation rites and how they inform literature. Like the New Historicists, Archetypal critics are concerned with the relationship of the text to its society and the vast interconnected web of human cultures. Instead of bickering about methodology, critics must look toward a unified theory of criticism whereby the critic may draw on any tools that open a passageway into a text.

In the end, in the same way that myth draws us in, makes us feel a part of the action, and speaks to something deep within our souls, so too does *Portrait*. A sensitive reader will recognize Stephen's humanity, and perhaps even recognize him or herself in Stephen Dedalus. Archetypal Criticism provides us a tool with which to peel away the façade of the text to reveal the trellis on which Joyce constructed his narrative.

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