James Joyce Journal
25.2 (December 2019): 37-53

Being and Difference in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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Linearly recording the protagonist's youthful development, *A Portrait* falls within the distinct genre of bildungsroman. As "the voice of the third-person narrator is completely invaded by Stephen's own psyche, and the style follows the protagonist's linguistic development" (Pelaschiar 45), identity issue and the serious matter of "being" loom large right from the beginning of the novel. The question of "What is your name?" has beleaguered Stephen since as early as the beginning of Clongowes days. When interrogated by Nasty Roche about "what kind of a name" (*P* 9) the name Dedalus is, the still febrile Stephen is hard pressed to come up with any answer. Nasty Roche's next question hits on the "being" of his next of kin—"What is your father?" (*P* 9) The pun in the "nasty"-sounding, interrogative word "what" suggests duplicity of references—interrogating both the profession as well as the essence or "being" of the inquired subject. To engage in meaning-hunting activities and, furthermore, to look for a secure sense of being are much on Stephen's mind and agenda from early on.

Imitating a juvenile mode of thinking, the first part of *A Portrait* marks a

distinctly inquisitive style of narration, as it is shown to implant numerous rhetorical questions in its free indirect third-person narration. The first major quandary posed for the little Stephen is his lack of clear guidance as to *correctly* respond to his fellow pupil's practical joke to sneer at his kissing his mother before bedtime. Neither "yes" nor "no" *is* the answer to Well's jeering question. Stephen experiences a disturbing snuff by the factual inconsistency presented in this abusive scenario: the fact that "Wells was in third of grammar" and "must know the right answer" (*P* 14) aggravates Stephen's anxiety over the former's "ungrammatical" response to reject both of Stephen's opposing answers. It works a disconcerting after taste on the little Stephen: He inquires himself—"What did that mean to kiss?" and "Why did people do that with their two faces" (*P* 15). This rhetorical question sets the tone for the ensuing pattern of Stephen's thinking and narrating modes—i.e. his rather "elementary consciousness" (Connor 40) and concern with but bafflement over the meaning-hunting act.

Thus, numerous questions arise as a result of Stephen's systematic stumbling on identity issues which oftentimes revolve around "the problem of the incongruence of ends and beginnings" (Connor 40). After the kissing conundrum, Stephen is subsequently confronted with his family's political row over "which was right, to be for the green or for the maroon" (16) and yet another quandary whether to side with Casey or Dante over the priests' involvement in politics (35). On the school front, he is befuddled over comprehending both the behavior and the setting in the school incident of "the smugging in the square" (*P* 42; 43). On the nature of the Jesuit-run Clongowes, Stephen is confused over the institution of Catholic order in his imagined question—"Was he [Br. Michael] not holy enough"—to account for the latter's less patriarchal status (*P* 23). Then he experiences a sense of confusion and hence injustice over the church fathers' punishment onto him and fellow students "to suffer for what fellows in the higher line did" (*P* 46). He is subsequently bewildered by Fr. Arnall's un-Christian behavior of getting into "a wax," which leads to his wondering "what Fr. Arnall ... would have become in the world" if not a Jesuit (*P* 48). These series of queries occupy Part I of the novel

in visibly large numbers and stylistic features. Wh-words such as "what," "why," "which," and "where" abound in the narration. He is blatantly inquisitive of the meaning of "to kiss," "politics," "smugging," and "the order," among others.

While he is beleaguered by so many uncomprehending questions from his family and school education in Part I, he takes upon himself the role of an active answerer of some of his own puzzling questions every now and then. He decisively employs the definitive verb-to-be sentence form of "That was" many times. As early as the beginning of the story is his famous identification of the wild rose blossoms on the green place to be "his"—"That *was* his song" (*P* 7, emphasis added). Later, he congratulates himself for "thinking of things" to successfully "understand them," such as words like "ivory" and "gold" (*P* 43). When he cracks open the mystery of "the meaning of Tower of Ivory" by associating it with Eileen's "long and white and thin and cold and soft" hands (*P* 36), he thinks he succeeds in resolving Protestants' mockery of the Catholic iconography of the Virgin by declaring "That *was* the meaning of Tower of Ivory" (*P* 36, emphasis added). Then, when he is disturbed by Fr. Arnall's un-Christian behavior of showing anger, he reasons that all the church clerics may be absolved of their sins by going to confession administered by their superiors in a hierarchical manner. Stephen thus characteristically comes up with a clever insight into how the religious institution works in phrasing his thought into the verb-to-be unit—"That *was* called the order" (*P* 48, emphasis added).

The verb-to-be sentence format is significant in disclosing Stephen's keenness to secure the meaning and define the essence or "being" of "things" happening around him. However, a concurrent or an even more prominent feature in the narrative of Part I are actually the repeated occurrences of the word "different," the effect of which blatantly undermines Stephen's obsessive wish to pin down the being and truth of the matter. Almost from the beginning, Stephen notices the Vances being "different parents" from his own (*P* 8). Then, at school, he notices "different clothes and voices" and "a different way of walking" of his classmates (*P* 13). In geography class, he has trouble learning "all different places that had

those different names" (*P* 15). In religious learning, Stephen comes to acknowledge that "there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world" (*P* 16). At the infirmary, Stephen notices Br. Michael having a "different kind of look" from the majority of church fathers in his school (*P* 23). Fearful of the pandybat punishment, Stephen is nonetheless dwelling on the thought of distinguishing "different kinds of pains for all the different kinds of sounds" which various punishment tools make (*P* 45). Speculation on what clergy members like Fr. Arnall might become if not being Jesuits leads Stephen to be aware of the necessity of imagining "them with different colored coats and trousers and with beards and moustaches and different kinds of hats" (*P* 48). Growing out of the early childhood days, Stephen feels that "he was different from others" when he hears "the noise of children at play" (*P* 64). All these highly visible observations and reflections in Stephen's indirect speech on "differences" pinpoint a disturbing split or non-correspondence between the signifiers and the signifieds/meanings surrounding the young Stephen's life.

Closely related to acknowledging differential levels of signification are Stephen's equally pervasive reflections on the ambivalence or multivalence of some key words and concepts found in his life experience. In the same vein as questioning the meaning of people kissing "with their two faces" (*P* 15) and puzzling over the obscurity of the act of "smugging" and the location of the "square," Stephen is shown to be troubled by common words' multivalence like "giving someone a belt," "suck," "ivory," and even "priest" (as in the formation of the sentence: "The prefect of studies was a priest but that [the punishment he received for not writing the Latin theme] was cruel and unfair" (*P* 52)). Stephen's early intuitive recognition that "those different names" (*P* 15) preexist, which he finds in world geography, resonates with his personal experience of the multiplicity of references for the same objects and actions. For another example, the euphemism of "turkey" for the feared pandybat which Mr. Barrett at Clongowes calls his tool puzzles Stephen about their lack of correspondence (*P* 30).[1)]

1) Derek Attridge has helpfully analyzed "Stephen's encounter with language" (67) right in

What can be observed on Stephen's part in the face of the disturbing differences between the surface signs and their significations as well as multivalences in people's usage of words, which he registers in his early daily life, is a process of "intellection" which is a crucial way of validating the truth of things (Webb 95) insofar as "By thinking of things you could understand them" (*P* 43). Within this process, his consistent strategy is notably one of replicating both aural and verbal signs, so that the meanings behind them would appear genuine and spontaneous. Young Stephen's instinctive and persistent urge to reproduce the aural impressions in his surroundings can be detected in strings of sonorous signs clamoring, as it were, in early parts of the novel. The "music" of the keys train guards carry is transcribed in four repetitions of the same word sign—"click, click; click, click" (*P* 20); the four sounds of the cricket bats on the Clongowes playground are heard by Stephen the first time, for "They said: pick, pack, pock, puck" (*P* 41) and then later recalled verbatim (*P* 59). Indeed, these vividly and repetitiously sounding representations aim for creating a spontaneous impression of the events, seeking to replicate the being behind them.

As for attempting to restore the being behind verbal signs, this can be seen most clearly after the incident of Casey's and Dante's rout over Catholic Church's involvement in the Parnell case in the Christmas dinner scene (*P* 35). Stephen can be observed to resort to the law of repetition in this first incident to gradually make sense of the many differences or non-correspondence between appearance and being. That is, keen to command the complicated Irish political knowledge and thereby comprehend truth(s), Stephen is intuited to the magic of repetition in bringing out the self-sameness of the events or incidents, so he "said over and over to himself words which he did not understand... till he had learned them by heart: and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him" (*P* 62). Such

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the opening paragraphs of *A Portrait* and pointed out that "single words" (64) like "belt," rump," "suck," "kiss," "God," "wine," and "smugging" are for Stephen cruxes to meet "the language of the other" (67). Then, Peter Mahon, too, highlights "language's doubleness" (10) in his interpretation of such common words as "belt" and "suck" and "names" of "cold and hot" on the "two cocks" that Stephen sees in the visit to a hotel.

intuition about the faith in the ability of restoring political/religious truths by repetition, then, sees its materialization in sec. B, Part III at the significant moment of Fr. Arnall's ending his sermons by leading the prayers and then the whole congregation's repeating and doubling them literally. Almost an entire page tirelessly reproduces the exact repetition of the prayers in Stephen's answer "phrase by phrase" (*P* 135). Helene Cixous significantly notes, such liturgical reproduction "has imprinted itself on his memory like a geometric line, its sincere repetition banishing all doubt" (82).[2] Next, crucial verbal repetition can be seen right in Fr. Arnall's fearsome hell sermon in Part III. In his vivid image of analogizing the hell to a "great hall," "the ticking of a great clock" as can be heard in the hall translates to the saint-hearer to be "the ceaseless repetition of the words: ever, never, ever, never" (*P* 132) and Fr. Arnall literally repeats these four words only thirteen lines later (*P* 133). Notice the priest's emphatic reference to the repetitive motion of the general state of hell, as if to resonate with Stephen the hearer's own repetition-minded state of mind. Maud Ellmann rightly interprets "This is the rhythm of exile from the sight of God," bespeaking "Stephen's exile from home, and his desire to return to origins" (198). The above are blatant proofs to show and enact the preoccupation with self-sameness of being on Stephen's and the narrator's (i.e. virtually his indirect mouthpiece's) minds.

Other likewise verbatim repetitions occur frequently and hence prominently starting from the next section C of Part III. Still in the aftershock of the retreat, Stephen tries to deny all his senses which have led him astray to his unrestrained desires, but to no avail, for he continues to be under the influence of his sensuous impressions. It is at this time that he starts to imagine the sights and smell of what Steve Pinkerton describes as "filthy, concupiscent goat-men, figures for his own lust

2) Derek Attridge also pinpoints "prayer and liturgy" to be the evidence that "the speaker surrenders individual command over language to the community" and interprets the repetition of the discourse of prayers in the novel an act indicating that the speaker "invests the precise words spoken with a peculiar power in excess of their ordinary linguistic functioning" (67). This "peculiar power" may be akin to Stephen's "investment" to replicate the self-same truth behind the religious discourse.

and guilt" (32). Their presences and movements are described by the phrase "hither and thither" which appears in high concentration of three times in just one paragraph alone (*P* 137-38). Then, in sec. B, Part IV in the scene where Stephen is asked by the director about whether he has a calling for the priestly vocation, his doubts arise and "flew hither and thither" (*P* 157) and four pages later, when fantasizing about the impending communal life in priesthood, Stephen is troubled by his memory of the Clongowes life, which "drove his reasoned thoughts hither and thither" (*P* 161). Moreover, in the climax scene or epiphany of the birdgirl at the seaside, the same phrase "hither and thither" appears three more times, too, in just one paragraph, describing her foot movements the first time and the water movements the second and third times in a row (*P* 171). And finally, in the penultimate section of the novel (sec. c, Part V), about to have another epiphany confirming his future artistic vocation in the figure of "the hawklike man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osierwoven wings", Stephen starts to recall Swedenborg's thoughts "on the correspondence of birds to things of the intellect" in their "shapeless" and "hither thither" forms (*P* 224).

These altogether nine-time appearances of the same phrase in high concentration[3] mark the symptomatic display of the urge for repetition of

3) In fact, an earlier single occurrence of the phrase can be spotted in sec. B, Part III, right after Fr. Arnall's first sermon, when Stephen was made to first fear for "the state of a beast" in which he had sunk. In such a state, he registered that "The letters of the name of Dublin lay heavily upon his mind, pushing one another surlily hither and thither with slow boorish insistence" (*P* 111). Of worthy note, a variation in the form of "here and there" can also be observed to appear close to five times from both the early and the latter parts of the novel. Beginning from sec. B, Part I, Stephen recalls seeing peasant men standing "here and there" when driving through Clane (*P* 20) and Stephen observes that fellow students are talking "here and there" in little groups on the playground and then "from here and from there" sounds of other students' playing cricket can also be heard while the incident of students caught smugging is hotly discussed in sec. D, Part 1 (*P* 41); in sec. A, Part III the manner of yellow lamps lit up is said to be "here and there" in "the squalid quarter of the brothels" (*P* 102) and in sec. B, Part IV "here and there" refers to the disorderly fashion of the kitchen table at Stephen's home after the evening meal time (*P* 163). Such toying with repeated phrases can contribute to and

sameness, so much so that persistent repetitions of one single word become highly visible toward the climactic section of Part IV, too. Repeated single words "recede," "again," "yes," and "on" significantly either precede or follow the epiphanic scene of the seaside birdgirl to take shape in a memorable form of word strings: "the [confused] music [within him] seemed to recede, to recede, to recede"; "Again! Again! Again!" (*P* 167); "Yes! Yes! Yes!"; "On! On!" (*P* 170); "On and on and on and on he strode"; "On and on and on and on" (*P* 172). Such inclination to repeat key words and phrases in the exclamatory form resurfaces in Part V in the critical stage of Stephen's trying to compose a villanelle to Emma: "Weary! Weary!" and "Let be! Let be!" on the same page (*P* 222). These emphatic appearances tend to converge on the final three pages of Part IV and linger on in Part V, as if these verbal formations both prophesize and contribute to Stephen's new revelation of his future art inspired by the adoration of the birdgirl at the seaside and then practiced in the attempted composition of the villanelle.[4)]

As a matter of fact, apart from the aforementioned exact and insistent repetitions, repetition of the plotline or motifs has found its way early in and throughout the narrative, so much so that in telling Stephen's bildungsroman, the narrator oftentimes tells some of its sub-plots and -stories more than once—i.e. "over and over." Examples abound. Firstly, as early as almost at the beginning of the novel, at Clongowes, Stephen already recalls being bullied by Wells who shoulders him into the square ditch (*P* 10). Then the "cold and slimy" sensation gets repeated once more in Stephen's thought associating Well's present bullish

enhance the rule of repetition to emerge in largess in the above discussion.

4) Joyce's past work is argued by R. Brandon Kershner to have been also operating on the principle of "repetitions": he claims that "in Joyce's Dublin nothing happens only once" (168) and in analyzing "Counterparts," he posits the observation that "We are caught here ["Counterparts"] in a universe of compulsive repetitions. . ." (169). Significantly, Seamus Deane puts forward a rather similar observation on the form of "A Painful Case" in the story's last paragraph "composed of eight anaphoric sentences, each beginning with "He. . ." stating that "The closed repetitive structure of Mr. Duffy's inhuman life has resumed" (25). Deane insightfully argues that "the intensification of repetitive rhythms. . . betoken[s] morbid self-obsession" (25).

behavior of laughing at Stephen's wrong answer to his question (i.e. whether or not he kisses his mother before bed) with this previous memory (*P* 14) and then in fellow students' talking about the incident specifying the unpleasant location where it takes place (*P* 21). In other words, the same motif of ditch water and its unsavory sensation is already repeated three times in the very beginning of the novel.

Second, Stephen recalls that he and Eileen had stood looking into the hotel grounds one day in sec. D, Part I and Eileen jokingly put her hands into Stephen's pocket (*P* 43). A similar amorous scenario occurs when he imagines trying to follow E.C.'s seductive body movements on the tram steps in their leave taking scene at the tram station later in sec. B, Part II (*P* 69). Not surprisingly, it is at this juncture that the love-tormented Stephen recalls, on the side, his puppy love, Eileen's flirtatious move of shuffling her hand into his pocket. Then, this memory or imagination of the stand-off with E.C., unsurprisingly, recurs just a few pages later again in the next section C, the occasion being his staging a role in a school play and E.C. being in the audience in his second year of the Belvedere days. He flashes back on the "stream of moody emotions" and "the old restless moodiness" coursing through him two years earlier and on "the poem he had written about it" (*P* 77). This later recollection of writing E.C. a letter was, in turn, a re-run of the event the next day after their leave taking at the tram station (*P* 70)—at that time Stephen had tried to write E.C. a letter but failed, as in his recollection, to find "an outlet in verse" (*P* 77). The reader, thus, sees such a prominent relay, or a chain of repetitions, of these topically related events strung together literally "hither and thither" by Stephen's progressive liaisons with two respective potential lovers.

Third, Stephen's emboldened protest to Fr. Conmee in sec. D, Part I (*P* 56-59) famously—to appropriate Simon Dedalus' own wording of "We had a famous laugh together" (*P* 72)—gets retold by Stephen's father in section B, Part II with the two verbs of "reassumed" and "repeated" to initiate Simon Dedalus' move of dramatizing and replicating Fr. Conmee's mocking of the wronged Stephen (*P* 72), thereby bringing about the effect of deflating Stephen's faith in the church patriarchs' authority and infallability.

Fourth, the telling of Stephen's desire to "encounter" Mercedes' "unsubstantial image" (*P* 65) and of the effect this would have on him—"He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then . . . he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment" (*P* 65)—is rehearsed over 30 pages later with the last line repeated almost verbatim (*P* 99). And Stephen's romance-imbued imagination to search for Mercedes in the Dublin cityscape actually anticipates and foreshadows his eventual visit to the prostitute, the climax scene in Part II, where the descriptions "In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself" and "between [her lips] he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or ordour" (*P* 101) are overt echoes to—or déjà vu of—his previous reveries about the encounter with the fictional character of Mercedes incarnate in his real life.

Fifth, that Stephen is bullied into a confession is also played out twice in the novel. At the school play scene, Heron's "familiar stroke of the cane against his calf" and "familiar word of admonition: Admit [that E.C. is Stephen's sweetheart]" (*P* 78) triggers Stephen's recollection of the experience of having been bullied by the same set of school fellows, in the same manner by verbal and physical abuse, into the hegemonic, school-taught literary canon first time around two years earlier at Belvedere. The injunction "Admit" works "as if by magic" (*P* 78) on Stephen's memory, triggering the replay of a prior and different event but with almost the same cast, scene, and even the gist of the plot—almost a parody of the working of the involuntary memory triggered by the famous madeleine tea cake for Swanne in Proust's novel.

To cap, the above frequencies of repetitions either of exact words and phrases or plot arrangements all suggest a clear inclination that Stephen "seeks the meanings within himself, almost without reference to others' meanings, and then, having 'made' meanings for the words, uses them as windows on the world" (Harkness 55) as his strategic way to "deny the relativity of truth" (Harkness 29) of the kind to which Stephen's many references to "differences" have undesirably

yielded.

While this vast number of repetitions of the same motifs and episodes evince the narrative's urge for the replicability of the same truths, the novel concurrently plays with and activates repetition with a difference to the extent that, to quote Kershner, "As Marx recognized, there is really no such thing as repetition, only repetition with a difference" (173). Similarly, exercising post-structuralist reading, Maud Ellmann has masterfully alerted us to the deprivation of the novel's "originality" on the "logic of repetition" (196) prevalent in *A Portrait*. An intricate play with the dialectic of sameness vs. difference and identity vs. variation is actually the earlier cited string of aural expressions for the sound of cricket bats heard on the field of Clongowes narrated twice: "They [cricket bats] said: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain slowly falling in the brimming bowl" in sec. D, Part I (*P* 41); ". . . the sound of the cricket bats: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl" at the very end of the same section (*P* 59). While the exact repetition of the four aural signs creates a loud impression that both sentences are identical as discussed earlier in my text, these two versions still feature, albeit very slight, differences. In addition to the "slowly falling" vs. "falling softly" variation, the first-time description gives an active metaphor by comparing the sounds of the cricket bats to human speech, whereas the second one is without this metaphor, plus the first is a complete sentence on its own while the second one is the second half of a longer narration. Not only do these minute differences exist to challenge the readers' memory and recognition of (recurrent) significations, but "a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity" (Gibbons 81), or "differential－relational and thus relevant－knowledge can emerge" (Renggli 50) virtually in Stephen's new Irish art in *A Portrait.*

In effect, it is a denial of "total knowledge" (Renggli 46) or dismantling of "the ideal of unity" that entails from Stephen's intuitive interplay between (repetition of) sameness and (repetition with a) difference. Such will spell a negative and even devastating message for Stephen at strategic points in time, often related to the

"dissolution of total systems" (Renggli 46) such as religion, thus rendering the gist of the novel as "a model of dissonant identity" (Wolfreys 63). First time this disturbs Stephen is when his renewed religiosity fails to sustain after the retreat: "A restless feeling of guilt would always be present with him: he would confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly" (153). Alan Friedman has rightly pointed out that "the sins of his past remain in the present. . . and must be recounted *repeatedly*. . . The part of confessor, having been learned well, seems to be his in perpetuity" (76, emphasis added). Indeed, stylistically, exact repetitions literally appear in the above sentence. The pattern of "confess and repent and be absolved" repeats itself "again and . . . again"—testifying to Stephen's habitual method of resorting to the law of repetition in the matters of arriving at the truth of being; however, by this time, Stephen is openly admitting to its fruitlessness. Then, in the next section after Stephen's meeting with the director to discuss the possible clerical vocation, "The voice of the director urging upon him the proud claims of the church and the mystery and power of the priestly office" "repeated itself" in his immediate memory, but only "idly," because "he knew now that the exhortation he had listened to had already fallen into an idle formal tale" (162). Stephen has finally come to the sense that orthodox Catholic teachings are, after all, emptied of their sustainability in that they have been imparted to him in a highly formalized or institutionalized way.

He later expands such awareness of emptiness to all the written words surrounding his environs: "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 shriveled up, sighing with age as he walked on in a lane among heaps of dead language" (178-79). Nihilistic as this may sound, it is also at this darkest moment that "His own consciousness of language was ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves which set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms" (179). Stephen, thus, tries out a pure linguistic game of arbitrarily combining diverse images to forge a new one, such

as "ivory ivy," disregarding conventionality and believability in combining the color yellow and certain objects like "ivy" and "ivory."[5] His experiment with the image of "ivory" is indeed worth noticing, given Stephen's earlier conundrum about the Catholic iconography of Tower of Ivory. From this point on, one can observe that the old or heavily religious mode of knowing his world is emptied out to usher in a new difference or possibilities with the crucial matter of the truthfulness of being, which Renggli affirms as "exploring the productiveness of what is not known, of the lacunae that open up in the homogeneity of the self-evident" (49).

Granted that the word "forge" in Stephen's well-known proclamation right at the denouement of the novel "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*P* 253) "means not only 'make' but also 'fake'," Derek Attridge posits the useful observation that "the pun is always waiting round the corner, and its effect can never be fully controlled" (66). As shown in Stephen's preoccupation with the crux of being, Stephen's new mission of forging both his conscience and art necessarily acknowledges and then entails difference. The doubleness or even multivalence (entailing differential knowledge) of some single words as discussed above have troubled the still young and immature Stephen to the extent that he unconsciously exercises the urge for repetition in the hope of reaching the totality of knowledge. However, while the pattern of repetition of the same makes its existence visible, variations and differences invariably surface not only to unsettle but even emancipate the desire for sameness. As a matter of fact, from early on, intuitively "by changing the red rose to a green and dislocating the spelling, [Stephen] makes the song his own" (Kenner 11), thus openly toying with absurdity—difference from being at its most severe—such as in the image of *his*

5) Derek Attridge aligns Stephen's nonsensical "whining ivy" image with the "green rose" that Stephen has famously come up with in his childhood. He insightfully stresses the effect of nonsense "together with repetition...becomes the vehicle for rhythm and melody" impacting especially little Stephen's encounter with language. To keep up his deconstructive reading, he also notes that "Some of Joyce's own highly repetitive passages of lyrical prose in *A Portrait* run the risk of the . . . emptying out of meaning" (68).

"green rose." If "the pun is always waiting round the corner" as Attridge reminds us, then the style of *A Portrait* fleshes out the artist God who "remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork... paring his fingernails," (215) because His art can be seen "*re*-fined" and "in-*different*," capturing in this vision the dialectic between the being and difference underlying the textual space of *A Portrait*, the "somewhere in the world you could [have an absurd being like a green rose]" (*P* 12).

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Abstract

Being and Difference in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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Befitting the linear development of the bildungsroman genre, A Portrait is replete with many child-characteristic puzzles and rhetorical questions, especially in the beginning two parts of the novel, concerning the protagonist's identity in the family, school, society, and, ultimately, the universe. These many puzzles and questions quickly tie in with other prominent features in the narration—i.e. the blatant repetition of some key words or phrases, such as "difference," "over and over," "Again!" and "On!" and distinctly repetitive methods of narration. Puzzles and questions and tentative answers in repetitions, thus, manifest a pattern of a dialectic ceaselessly at work in the novel—that between being and difference. More often than not, despite intentional repetitions of the same events are maneuvered with a view to replicating the self-same truthfulness of being, disturbing variations or differences inevitably arise to forestall that. My paper will argue that in insisting on playing out the differential patterns of his thoughts and ideas, Stephen has found a strategy to "forge" (in its double senses of creating and fabricating) his new art.

■ Key words : repetition, difference, new Irish art, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, bildungsroman

Received November 13, 2019
Reviewed November 30, 2019
Accepted December 9, 2019