

Female Characters in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Text Within the Text

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines three passages in Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, from the perspective afforded by text linguistics, although the analysis ultimately surpasses this frame to offer a literary interpretation of the linguistic data discussed. The central contention of the paper is that the three episodes which involve Stephen's encounters with female characters, although occurring in different chapters of the book, are designed and marked by the author as a textual unit, a subtext within the larger text of the novel. The first part of the paper studies the *cohesion* and *coherence* of this subtext, or, in other words, how the internal coherence of the three passages is reflected in the linear succession of linguistic units, in the surface text. In so doing it borrows the concepts of "recurrence series," "nominative chain" and "referential series" from text linguistics. Once the question of "how" has been answered, the next question is "why": why has the author designed the three episodes as a textual unit? The second part offers an answer to this question by interpreting this textual unit in symbolic terms and relating it to Joyce's literary ideas and to the rest of the novel.

The introduction of the notion of text as an object of study in linguistics, at the expense of the sentences of traditional linguistics, has given rise to a new discipline—text linguistics. From this new perspective, a number of attempts to explain the nature and features of "texts" have been made. All of them seem to share, no matter how they choose to define the unit "text," the new emphasis on texts as cohesive and coherent communicative units,

constructed and organized according to a series of strategies which only texts—and not sentences, clauses, phrases—display, and therefore which can only be studied on this textual level. The reading of literary works bearing these notions of “text,” “cohesion” and “coherence” in mind may be a new and very fruitful field for literary criticism. Some of the tenets and methods of the new discipline may be useful instruments to explain and support interpretations whose linguistic, and therefore objective, foundations would otherwise pass unnoticed. Such is the aim of this paper, which makes use of these notions to orient and carry out a linguistic analysis of certain passages of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* whose unitary sense has been perceived by some readers, but which can be integrated in a sound and hopefully new interpretation only when such linguistic analysis has provided a firm basis for it.*

Reading novels as “texts” immediately calls for a hierarchical organization on the textual level, that is, for them to be broken into smaller units that are somewhat coherent and cohesive in themselves, although subservient to the overall coherence and cohesion of the whole. This structuring of texts into “subtexts” is common to all forms of discourse, but it is particularly relevant in novels for several reasons: the most obvious, their extension—which generates their own text division into chapters, parts, books—but also their mimetic basis—they portray characters who produce texts of their own within the larger text of the novel—as well as their artistic nature—which generates a set of possible additional divisions, the order or structure imposed by the writer as well as by the different readers on the whole. It is precisely this central part reserved for the reader in fiction that makes the establishment of a structure of subtexts within the text in a novel something “problematic,” since it is a task open to interpretation and subjective criteria. Depending on the meaning we attach to the overall work, we will set different limits to the parts of the text we consider as self-contained unities of intention and meaning, as subtexts. Our choices, no matter how striking they may be, will be proved correct or at least acceptable if they are sustained by the criteria provided by text linguistics. If a text, as defined by Sergej Gindin, is what the speaker considers as such or sets limits to as such by making use of special indicators (qtd. in Bernárdez 1982: 83), then, as long as we are able to locate and interpret these indicators, we can read as subtexts fragments which at first sight may not seem to be so, and draw the pertinent conclusions. This opens interesting possibilities for the interplay of text linguistics and literary criticism, one of which will be explored in this paper.

* The possibilities offered by text linguistics for the study of literary texts was the topic of a graduate seminar taught by Pilar Alonso at the University of Salamanca. The embryo of this article was the result of that insight, which Pilar Alonso has developed and explored not only in her graduate courses, but also in several articles. Consequently, I must acknowledge my indebtedness and gratitude to her for her teaching and support.

This possibility is that of a textual unity, with a distinctive coherence and communicative intention of its own, and therefore operative through distinctive means of cohesion, which is not presented as such. I am referring to a subtext which is not a single occurrence, which does not appear as a whole and complete fragment of the narrative (like chapters, scenes, or the single utterances of different characters), but is made up of different and distant fragments, linked through their internal coherence and cohesion but not through space contiguity (in the same way as the totality of a character's utterances in a novel can also constitute a subtext within it). This is the case of three passages where Stephen, the protagonist of *A Portrait of the Artist*, meets female characters. The first one, occurring in Chapter two (pp. 58 and 60), narrates his "mental" involvement with Mercedes, the heroine of *The Count of Montecristo*. Mercedes is for Stephen the harbinger of a transcendental encounter with something or somebody which she represents in an obscure and imprecise way. This encounter will actually take place at two different moments later in the book, which are the second and third episodes with female characters. One is the encounter with the prostitute, at the end of Chapter three (pp. 91-94), which stands for Stephen's awakening to life and sin. The other is the decisive encounter with a girl on the beach at the end of Chapter four (pp. 153-157), in the course of which Stephen decides to become an artist.

In these three passages, there are textual indicators, not found in other parts of the book, which relate these passages to each other despite the distance between them, and isolate them from the rest of the text. In other words, the fragments possess a "private" coherence, which is highlighted by a series of devices, by a distinctive usage of language or cohesion, for this is the expression in the surface text, in the linguistic "texture," of the coherence of the textual world, and only through it can readers have access to coherence.² In order to "recover" the coherence of the three passages as a textual unity, this paper will first study the linguistic devices or texture which are its expression. Then it will offer an interpretation of that internal coherence, of that intra-textual organization (the text within the text), showing how it responds to a plan, a communicative intention, which presents itself disguised in symbolic terms. A symbolic reading of these episodes will be proposed as the key to this plan that structures the fragments as a whole, as a text, and makes them "coherent" in a way which goes beyond text linguistics coherence.

I. THE TEXTUAL UNITY OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS

The question to be answered in this first part is very simple: how can fragments of a text separated by considerable distance be linked and integrated in a subtext? The answer is, through a series of cohesive linkages.

And the first of them to be considered here will be structure. Encounters with female characters share a common structure, a similar organization of the information, although the amount of information is increased progressively through them. The first episode is a sort of embryo of the structural pattern and features which are fully developed in the last one.

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(i) Mercedes, the protagonist of the first episode, is not really a character, but her presence is real enough in Stephen's imagination to be considered as such for our purposes. She is first mentioned on page 58, but it is not before page 60 that she acquires real significance. Here we learn that her image causes *unrest* in Stephen's soul ("as he brooded upon her image, a strange *unrest crept into his blood*"). This mental condition leads him "*to rove alone*," and in his wanderings the outer world is briefly introduced: the gardens Stephen crosses, "*the noise of children at play*." Then we are taken back to his spirit, to his imagination, which foresees an encounter with an undefined image he associates with Mercedes' image, after which *he will be transfigured*. The structure of the episode can be represented as follows:

HIS SPIRIT	OUTER WORLD	ENCOUNTER
UNREST, FEVER	WALKING	IMAGE
Unrest crept into his blood	Voices of children at play	He would be transfigured
<i>Prelude</i>		<i>Encounter</i>

(ii) The encounter with the prostitute is a much longer passage, but it has basically the same structure. In this episode the prelude, the analysis of Stephen's soul that precedes the encounter, is more extended and complete than in the previous episode (91-92). As in (i), there is unrest in his spirit, but now it is of a radically different kind, it is lust, sin, a *dark presence*, and this makes him feel the need to find an outlet, the need for *crying*. Once more this feverish and anxious condition leads him to wander in search of a sedative that will bring peace back to his mind ("*His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets...*" 91), so the outer world is again introduced. A whole paragraph (92) narrates how "He had wandered into a maze of narrow and dirty streets," where he hears "*bursts of hoarse riot and wrangling and the drawling of drunken singers*," and sees women and girls. Eventually his wanderings lead him to the prostitute, and their encounter is narrated at length (92-93). He is not transfigured, as was announced in (i), but the prostitute's lips are "the vehicle of *vague speech*," of a pressure "darker than the *swoon of sin*" (93), and this is the structural equivalent of that "transfiguration." This equivalence between both passages is shown by this diagram:

HIS SPIRIT	OUTER WORLD	ENCOUNTER
PRESENCE, CRY	WALKING	PROSTITUTE
His blood was in revolt	Noises, women and girls	Vague Speech, swoon of sin
	<i>Prelude</i>	<i>Encounter</i>

(iii) The last passage takes this structural pattern to its fullest extension, introducing a few variations as well. The prelude starts again by describing Stephen's state of mind, but now acquires so much relevance that it almost becomes an episode itself (153-154). The controlling feeling in Stephen's spirit is now *ecstasy*, the sensation of *wild flight*, aroused firstly by his friends' banter ("Stephanos Dedalos"), and then by the symbolic significance Stephen attaches to it. He feels the call of life and art, and this feeling brings about again the familiar fever or unrest which characterizes his spiritual processes preceding and introducing these encounters. This fever (*once more of a different nature, exalting and exulting, not lustful or sinful*) makes him move to recover calm, as happened in the other fragments: "*He started nervously from the stoneblock for he could no longer quench the flame in his blood*" (154). Then the outer world is described: the beach, the sea, the clouds, "*voices childish and girlish in the air*" (155). After this, the encounter which must necessarily follow these preparations takes place (155-156). In this case, however, its significance and transcendence is not merely hinted at, as in previous passages (transfigured, vague speech), but fully grasped and analyzed in Stephen's mind as he walks away from the girl (156-157). She is "*the angel of mortal youth and beauty*," and is calling him to live and recreate life in art. The vague speech has thus become a meaningful message. He runs up the beach, finds a place where he lies and, "in the languor of sleep," he feels his soul is "*swooning into some new world*" (157). He is thus finally transfigured. This last part of the passage may seem a new element in the common structure, but it is in fact a development of the obscure intuitions provoked by encounters in the previous episodes. As can be observed in the following chart, it closes the episode's structure symmetrically by returning to his mind, his spirit:

HIS SPIRIT	OUTER WORLD	ENCOUNTER	HIS SPIRIT
FLIGHT, ECSTASY	WALKING	GIRL	SIGNIFICANCE
The flame in his blood	Voices of children		Angel of mortal beauty
			Swoon into new world
	<i>Prelude</i>	<i>Encounter</i>	

The structural features shared by the three passages point to a certain unity of conception and execution. If this unity is to be considered textual, a subtext within the text, cohesion must be somehow maintained in the linear succession of linguistic units in the surface texts of the three episodes. This paper will examine first the preludes, and then the encounters, to show how this cohesion is attained.

In the preludes to the encounters cohesion is maintained through a particular usage of language that relies heavily on “recurrence” (one of the most important cohesive devices analyzed by Beaugrande and Dressler, 1980 and 1981), lexical and semantic (repetition of words and repetition of meanings), total and partial. Recurrence weaves lexical webs, it creates series of related words within each passage, and also outside them, since similar or semantically equivalent series appear in the three preludes. In this fashion, these series open semantic paths running through distant textual occurrences and create what Dieter Viehweger (1976, 1977) has called “nominative chains.” This concept refers to a series of terms which maintain some kind of semantic relation, namely the strict repetition of a certain semantic feature, or some sort of connection between the referents of the terms in the world evoked by them. The cohesive effects of these series and nominative chains are twofold: firstly, they introduce a split in the narrative continuum, they mark a difference from discourse coming immediately before and that coming after (in this sense it is significant that these devices are concentrated before the encounter, in the prelude, as if marking the entrance into a new territory); secondly, they create chains of terms repeated or semantically related which maintain certain themes or ideas throughout the three passages, thus reinforcing their unity. Repetition of structure is thus paralleled by lexical and semantic repetition. Identity in the sequence of parts is echoed by identity in the sequence of words.

(i) These cohesive devices are already observable in the very short Mercedes fragment, so it is worth quoting it in full:

He returned to Mercedes and, as he brooded upon her IMAGE, a strange UNREST *crept into his blood*. Sometimes a FEVER *gathered within him* and led him to rove ALONE in the evening along the quiet avenue. The peace of the gardens and the kindly lights in the windows *poured a tender influence into his RESTLESS heart*. The noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others. He did not want to play. {{He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial IMAGE which *his soul* so constantly beheld }}. He did not know where to seek it or how; but a premonition which led him on told him that this IMAGE would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. They would meet quietly as if they had known each other and had made they tryst, perhaps at one of the gates or in some more SECRET place. They would be ALONE, surrounded by DARKNESS and SILENCE; and in that *moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured* . He would *fade into something impalpable* under her eyes and then in a *moment he would be transfigured* . Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic *moment*. (60)

Two central ideas are present in major series of repeated terms: IMAGE and UNREST (capital letters). The two series are related to each other: the image of Mercedes, becoming later in the passage the “unsubstantial image” Stephen wants to meet, produces unrest and fever in him. There are also minor repetitions that create a peculiar linguistic tissue but that are not very significant: tender, moment. The IMAGE series is further extended by semantic associations suggested by its meaning. The “image” referred to by the text is mental, and therefore incorporeal, so it is naturally connected, first, with the adjective “unsubstantial” applied to it, and second, with “impalpable,” which is applied to Stephen to qualify his condition after he has met that “unsubstantial image”. “Premonition” should also be included in this IMAGE series, for it shares the incorporeal trait and belongs to the same area of mental existence. Consequently, the whole series stands as follows:

IMAGE—unsubstantial IMAGE—Premonition—IMAGE—
Impalpable

The UNREST series is interesting because of the predicates associated with it:

UNREST crept into his blood—a FEVER gathered within him—
poured...influence into his RESTLESS heart

The three predicates share the idea of penetration, of movement inside Stephen, who is referred to by the sequence [possessive+part of the body] (*his blood, his heart, his soul*). This will become a constant feature of the three episodes, a sort of textual indicator of the spiritual transformations Stephen undergoes in them.

But recurrence is a cohesive device not only as a stylistic feature shared by the three passages, but also inasmuch as there are series of words that are repeated in all of them (external recurrence, through the three episodes, as opposed to internal recurrence, within a single passage). The clearest example is the “frame” series: when Stephen meets the unsubstantial image, they will be ALONE, surrounded by “darkness” and “silence.” ALONE also appears at the beginning of the fragment, and the three properties are evoked by “secret” place. This series recurs in each of the encounters, acting as a sort of frame of them, in a linguistic (the discourse in which they take place) as well as a pragmatic sense (the situation in which they take place). The other two major series also recur, although not in such an obvious way: their terms are not repeated, but associated with new series of terms to form nominative chains.

(ii) The link between this first episode and the next one—the prostitute’s—is made explicit by the narrative even before the latter starts. The image of Mercedes comes to Stephen’s mind—and in similar terms to

those discussed above— when he is walking towards the encounter with the prostitute:

...the IMAGE of Mercedes traversed the background of his memory...At those moments the soft speeches of Claude Melnotte rose to his lips and eased his UNREST. A tender *premonition touched him of the tryst he had then looked forward to* and, in spite of the horrible reality which lay between his hope of then and now, *of the holy encounter he had then imagined at which weakness and timidity and inexperience were to fall from him.* (91)

Stephen experiments the same premonition of a “holy encounter” that was mentioned in (i), and that is going to take place presently. From this point the author begins to spin the linguistic web that precedes all encounters and characterizes the preludes, using lexical threads left by the previous episode, and adding a few new ones:

The verses *passed from his lips* and the inarticulate CRIES and the unspoken brutal WORDS *rushed forth from his brain to force a passage. His blood was in revolt.* He wandered up and down the DARK slimy streets peering into the GLOOM of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any SOUND. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. { He wanted to SIN with another of his kind, to force another being to SIN with him and to exalt with her in SIN }. He felt some DARK PRESENCE *moving irresistibly upon him* from the DARKNESS, a PRESENCE SUBTLE and MURMUROUS and a FLOOD *filling him* wholly with itself. Its MURMUR *besieged his ears* like the MURMUR of some multitude in *SLEEP*; its SUBTLE STREAMS *penetrated his being.* *His hands clenched convulsively and his teeth set together as he suffered the agony of its penetration.* He stretched out *his arms* in the street to hold fast the FRAIL SWOONING FORM that eluded him and incited him: and the CRY that he had strangled for so long in *his throat issued from his lips. It broke from him* like a WAIL of despair from a hell of sufferers and died in a WAIL of furious entreaty, a CRY from an iniquitous abandonment, a CRY which was but the ECHO of an obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of an urinal. (91-92)

Once again the most remarkable trait of the passage is recurrence, either of the same term, or of words related in meaning or equivalent in that context. The main group of related terms is the CRY series, but there are other interesting ones:

1. inarticulate CRIES—unspoken WORDS—SOUND—moaned—MURMUROUS—MURMUR—MURMUR—CRY—WAIL—WAIL—CRY—ECHO
2. PRESENCE—PRESENCE SUBTLE—FLOOD—SUBTLE STREAMS

3. DARK—GLOOM—DARK—DARKNESS—SLEEP
4. TO SIN—TO SIN—SIN

Of these series, apparently only one continues a path initiated in the Mercedes episode, the “frame” of the encounter (alone—darkness—silence—secret), that is extended in the DARK series of this prelude, and is recovered (with some other series) at the end of the episode.³ However, a closer analysis of the prostitute passage reveals the textual connections of the new series with the previous ones.

The first clue to these connections is the similarity between the sentences (1) “unrest crept into his blood” (line 2 in [i]) and (2) “his blood was in revolt” (line 3 in [ii]). They have the same elements, though in inverted order, and “revolt” is obviously an intensification of the meaning of “unrest.” We are thus confronted with the same idea of “fever gathering within him,” the only difference being the absence from (2) of the idea of penetration present in (1). Nevertheless, this absence is soon made up for by the PRESENCE-FLOOD series, which has in its predicates this idea of penetration, of getting inside Stephen, and this gives us a clue to the semantic connection of this series to the UNREST one of the previous passage.

PRESENCE and FLOOD refer to the same idea in the text. They appear coordinated in the same sentence in the center of the fragment (Stephen felt a presence *and* a flood within him), they are similarly qualified (the presence is “subtle” and “murmurous”; the flood has a “murmur,” its “streams” are “subtle”), and they also share the same predicates, they do the same thing (a presence is “moving irresistibly upon him,” a flood is “filling him,” its murmur “besieged his ears,” its streams “penetrated his being”). These predicates clearly correspond to those of the UNREST/FEVER series of (i), so they provide the idea of penetration (the “agony of penetration”, as the text says) missing in the sentence “His blood was in revolt”. The presence and flood filling him are somehow a description of this revolt, of the fever within him, as is made clear by the final part of the passage, where the idea of fever appears again, as the effect of the disturbing presence in his blood, in a sequence of heterogeneous terms: “clenched convulsively,” “suffered,” “agony,” “strangled,” “despair,” “hell of sufferers.” All this gives us a sound foundation to think that the “revolt in his blood” and “the dark presence moving upon him” are very closely knitted together and are the equivalent of the “unrest that crept into his blood.” They all belong to the same nominative chain. Hence it happens that a new thread (PRESENCE) is apparently substituted for the old one (UNREST), but semantic equivalence actually weaves them back together. The new series extends the previous one with new elements and also intensifies its meaning (from fever to revolt, agony, despair...).

The result of this intensifying process is the introduction of a new thread. Fever becomes so painful that it requires an outlet. This explains the

necessity of CRYING, which becomes with the PRESENCE series the governing idea of the passage. Unrest has progressively been transformed into revolt, a dark presence, and finally a cry. In contrast to the PRESENCE series, the predicates associated with CRYING suggest outlet, moving out. In all these predicates conveying expulsion, as well as in those of penetration, Stephen is referred to through the parts of his body, as in (i): *his lips, his brain, his blood, his ears, his hands, his teeth, his arms, his throat.*

And yet something is missing: the ideal image Stephen craved is not within him any more. There is, however, something replacing it. The new element within the same frame (Stephen's mind and longings) is indicated by syntactic parallelism, that is, new terms within the same syntactic structure. In episode (i) we were told that Stephen "wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image." In this one, "he wanted to sin with another of his kind." Stephen substitutes SIN, that will later take the form of the sinful body of the prostitute, "another of his kind," for the incorporeal and heavenly IMAGE evoked by Mercedes. Accordingly, this image he wanted to meet in a moment of supreme tenderness, created by his pure aspirations, has become now a "frail swooning form" he stretches out his arms to grasp, that eludes him and entices him, created by that longing for sin. (The connection between sin, prostitute and swooning form is underscored at the end of the episode, when the prostitute's lips become the vehicle of the "swoon of sin.") To round off the parallelism, the "unsubstantial" and "impalpable" qualities associated with the image are now echoed by "inarticulate" cries and "unspoken" words—therefore equally incorporeal—associated with his desire.

(iii) In the second passage two nominative chains that give a particular coherence to the two fragments are articulated: the UNREST series of (i) is extended into the PRESENCE series, and a new one born out of them (CRY) is added to complete one chain; another new series (SIN-form) is connected to a previous one (IMAGE) by functional and semantic equivalence, and together they form a second chain. In the last passage, the longest and most complex of the three, all nominative chains and threads concur. The prelude becomes almost an episode in itself which now very clearly, through a particular usage of language, marks the entrance into a different, but at that time already familiar, domain, the subtext of female characters:

... Now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a PROPHECY... Now, at the name of the famous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a WINGED FORM FLYING above the waves and slowly CLIMBING the air. What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of PROPHECIES and SYMBOLS, a hawklike man FLYING sunward above the sea, a PROPHECY of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a SYMBOL of the artist

forging anew in his workshops out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new SOARING *impalpable imperishable* being?

His heart TREMBLED; his breath came faster and a WILD spirit passed over his limbs as though he were SOARING sunward. His heart TREMBLED in an ECSTASY of fear and his soul was in FLIGHT. His soul was SOARING in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude and made RADIANT and commingled with the element of the spirit. An ECSTASY of FLIGHT made RADIANT his eyes and WILD his breath and TREMULOUS and WILD and RADIANT his windswept limbs. (153-154)

Once again we have a central series of related terms organizing text discourse and thus taking the place of the UNREST and the PRESENCE series:

1. winged—FLYING—CLIMBING air—hawk—FLYING
sunward—SOARING—spirit—SOARING sunward—FLIGHT—SOARING—air—spirit—ecstasy of FLIGHT—wind

Internal recurrence is here lexical (repetition), semantic (synonymous and meaning relationships) and grammatical (repetition of ing-forms, which increases the feeling of movement). There are also smaller series:

2. PROPHECY—PROPHECIES—SYMBOLS—PROPHECY—SYMBOL
3. WILD—WILD—WILD
4. TREMBLED—TREMBLED—TREMULOUS
5. RADIANT—RADIANT—RADIANT
6. ECSTASY—ECSTASY

There are obvious textual links with the prostitute episode. The reference to the “winged form flying” echoes the “frail swooning form” of the second fragment (which was the counterpart of the “image” of the first one). The connection between them may be established in terms of grammatical, lexical and semantic equivalence. The sequence “frail swooning FORM” parallels “winged FORM flyING”. In both cases “form” points to an image produced by Stephen’s imagination in the moment of turmoil, and probably as a result of it, that always precedes the encounter with a “real” form, the female character. In (ii) we saw how this imaginary frail swooning form agreed with, and somehow foreshadowed, the real one, the prostitute. The same happens here. If the form in this episode is a winged flying one, the female character encountered will be a girl who “seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird” (155), a *bird-girl*. This idea of ascension is present throughout the passage in the FLIGHT series: the new being Stephen will create as an artist will also be a “soaring being”; and Stephen himself, after this vision, feels he is “soaring sunward.” There is no surprise

then when we discover that the female character is presented as a flying creature. The later description of her body (see below) continues this bird image and extends the FLIGHT series (legs like a *crane's*, thighs/hips with drawers like *feathering of white* down, waist with skirt kilted and *dovetailed*, bosom like a *bird's/dark-plumaged dove*).

The parallelism between “frail swooning form” and “winged form flying” thus underscores their equivalence, but also the central difference between them: the -ing words (flying, swooning) mark clearly a contrast between movement upwards and downwards. The unsubstantial image Stephen wanted to meet in (i) is thus first debased to a frail swooning form and a prostitute by his yearning for sin in (ii), but now it regains its elevated nature as a winged flying form and a birdlike girl thanks to the vision of the artist. This process suggests a spiritual development, marked by a movement downward (“swooning”), a descent to earth (sin, life) from the heights of Mercedes and the unsubstantial image, and then a movement up (“flying”), back to heaven, from the earthly substance of the prostitute, the “matter of earth,” to a soaring being “impalpable” and “imperishable” (which again evoke the “impalpable” and “unsubstantial” associated with the image of [i]). The nominative chain thus created is completed by PROPHECY and SYMBOL, terms which are applied to the flying form, and obviously related to the “premonition” associated with image and swooning form in (i) and (ii). So we have an unsubstantial IMAGE/premonition—SIN/swooning form—flying form/PROPHECY/SYMBOL chain, starting in the Mercedes fragment.

The other nominative chain of the previous fragments (UNREST/FEVER), is also completed in the second paragraph of the passage, where the rest of the series (TREMBLE, WILD, RADIANT, ECSTASY) express the idea of internal agitation associated with FEVER, and this idea is stressed by the familiar reference to Stephen through parts of his body: *his heart* trembled (twice), *wild...his limbs, body...radiant*, *radiant his eyes*, *wild his breath*, *tremulous and wild and radiant his limbs* (this last example puts the three series together and links them to Stephen's limbs). However, this inner agitation is now interspersed with the FLIGHT series, which projects it upwards and gives it a positive value. As a result of this, fever and unrest become “ecstasy,” which perfectly epitomizes this new state of mind of “flying, trembling, wild and radiant fever,” and is therefore the point where all four series of the second paragraph converge. In this fashion, the two nominative chains that link (i) and (ii) appear again in (iii), one in the first paragraph (IMAGE chain), the other in the second one (FEVER chain), although both are influenced and modified by contact with a new series which is now dominant and controls the whole passage, the FLIGHT series.⁴

Finally, the third nominative chain previously examined, the “frame,” appears also in the episode of the bird-girl just on the threshold of the encounter:

He was ALONE. He was unheeded, happy and near to the WILD HEART of life. He was ALONE, and young and wilful and WILDHEARTED, ALONE amid a waste of WILD air and brackish waters and the seaharvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sun *light* and gay clad *lightclad* figures of *children* and *girls* and voices *childish* and *girlish* in the air. (155)

Stephen is alone, and his loneliness is emphasized by repetition, as darkness was emphasized in (ii). What is interesting in this fragment is the accumulation at the end of repetitions and sound games whose only purpose seems to be ludic and poetic. They highlight what is a key feature of the language of the three preludes that has been just discussed: its poetic nature, the fact that it draws attention to itself as much as to the worlds it evokes, its self-referential as well as referential nature. By calling attention to the language itself, the reader is forced to recognize that he is in a new textual space, *different from the rest of the text but common to the three episodes* discussed, with a particular level of cohesion. It is a non-referential, or rather *beyond* the referential, space, like the language itself: a symbolic territory. On the threshold of the encounters a linguistic threshold is created through a specific usage of language. It is time now to look closely at the encounters themselves (the second and third, the first one being only a premonition), and see how coherence is created and maintained in them.

3

The most obvious similarity between the two scenes results from the fact that both narrate encounters between Stephen and a girl. This fact alone is a source of coherence between them, since, in both cases, most linguistic units refer to these two individuals in one way or another, so the notion of “referential identity,” as defined by van Dijk (1977), is especially relevant to explain their coherence. “Arguments of different propositions,” writes van Dijk, “may have the same individual as their value, where the argument expressions themselves need not be identical” (93). Van Dijk draws attention to how apparently unrelated utterances may be coherent because they refer to the same individual. What seems to be striking in the prostitute and the bird-girl episodes is that coherence between them is created in the opposite way. Despite the fact that the individuals are different, the prostitute and the girl, they are referred to by identical terms, through continual repetition of pronouns and parts of their bodies, since they do not have names to differentiate them.

Let's first consider the encounter with the prostitute:

... He tried to bid *his tongue* speak that *he* might seem at ease, watching HER as SHE undid HER GOWN, noting the proud conscious movements of HER PERFUMED HEAD.

As *he* stood silent in the middle of the room SHE came over to *him* and embraced *him* gaily and gravely. HER ROUND ARMS held *him* firmly to HER and *he*. seeing HER FACE lifted to *him* in serious calm and feeling the warm calm rise and fall of HER BREAST, all but burst into hysterical weeping. Tears of joy and relief shone in *his* delighted eyes, and *his* lips parted though they would not speak.

SHE passed HER TINKLING HAND through *his* hair, calling *him* a little rascal.

— Give me a kiss, SHE said.

His lips would not bend to kiss HER. *He* wanted to be held firmly in HER ARMS, to be caressed slowly, slowly. In HER ARMS *he* felt that *he* had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of *himself*. But *his* lips would not bend to kiss HER.

With a sudden movement SHE bowed *his* head and joined HER LIPS to *his* and *he* read the meaning of HER movements in HER FRANK UPLIFTED EYES. It was too much for *him*. *He* closed *his* eyes... conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of HER SOFTLY PARTING LIPS. (92-93)

In this passage the prostitute gets her identity through her body (and so does Stephen), through the sequence [possessive+part of her body]. She is made up of the continuous mention of her parts, portrayed by the actions of her limbs. Together with all the pronouns referring to her, they form a “referential series,” as van Dijk (1977: 98) has called such a group of terms designating the same individual. Two or more “referential series” can run through a text and make it coherent, in a way similar to that of the “recurrence series” studied above, the former based on referential identity, the latter on lexical or semantic identity of some kind. In the encounter with the prostitute there are two referential series, the SHE-series and the HE-series, both constituted by pronouns and parts of the body, and both combined in the same sentence, usually through a verb, in most of the sentences of the passage. Sometimes the SHE-series is subject and the HE-series is object or complement; sometimes it is the other way round. Besides, the predicates usually associated to each series when it is subject are related. The predicates assigned to the prostitute imply movement, activity, decision: *undid her gown, came over to him and embraced him, held him, passed her hand through his hair, calling him, bowed his head, joined her lips*. On the contrary, predicates associated with Stephen suggest stillness, passivity, lack of decision: *tried to bid his tongue to speak, watching her, stood silent, feeling the warm calm, his lips... would not speak, would not bend to kiss, wanted to be held, to be caressed, his lips wouldn't bend to kiss*.

The same SHE-series and HE-series are found again in the encounter with the bird-girl. Like the prostitute, this girl undergoes a dismembering process which breaks her into her body parts. This process is emphasized by the detailed description of her body and her actions, portrayed as her eyes', her feet's, her cheeks' actions:

A GIRL stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. SHE seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird. HER LONG SLENDER BARE LEGS were delicate as a crane's and pure save where the emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon THE FLESH. HER THIGHS, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the *HIPS* where the white fringes of HER DRAWERS were like featherings of soft white down. HER SLATEBLUE SKIRTS were kilted boldly about HER WAIST and dovetailed behind her. HER BOSOM was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But HER LONG FAIR HAIR was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty. HER FACE.

SHE was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when SHE felt *his presence* and the worship on *his eyes* HER EYES turned to *him* in quiet sufferance of *his gaze*, without shame or wantonness. Long, long SHE suffered *his gaze* and then quietly withdrew HER EYES from *his* and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with HER FOOT hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence... and a flame trembled on HER CHEEK. (155-156)

The SHE-series has changed its reference, but not its linguistic components, thus creating the impression of being in front of what is maybe a metamorphosis of the same creature or at least of being in the same textual domain as in the former encounter. A few variations are noticeable, however. The selection of parts of her body is different: in the former mostly moving limbs or organs, in this one mostly flesh; the breast that rises and falls calmly in one, the bosom soft and slight as a bird's in the other. And, more importantly, the relationship between the SHE-series and the HE-series has changed. The HE-series is now completely absent in the first paragraph, for it is a description of the bird-girl. Only in the second paragraph is the familiar pattern recovered: the two series woven together in a series of sentences and with the same kind of predicates attached to them when they are subject (SHE moves, HE gazes). And yet the interlacement of both series is not so complete as in the previous encounter: the HE-series is always subordinated to the SHE-series, the latter tends to be subject and the former object or complement, or, in van Dijk's terminology (1977), the SHE-series is "topic" ("what is being said [asserted, asked, promised]," 114) and the HE-series is "comment" ("what is being said 'about' it," 114). If we apply this distinction to the interplay of the referential series throughout the three encounters, we will be able to discern a line of development out of which the female character emerges as topic.

The first encounter is an imaginary and non-existing one. Mercedes evokes or represents an image which Stephen looks forward to meeting. She is a fleeting presence, an "unsubstantial" figure, so the SHE-series of the second and third episodes is completely absent. It is absorbed into the "THEY" that is the subject of a couple of sentences ("They would meet

quietly.... They would be alone...”), strangled by the HE-series which precedes it (“He wanted to meet in the real world...”), and follows it (“He would be transfigured...”). Hence the topic is THEY, Stephen and the image, undifferentiated, for the image is part of him, it exists only in Stephen’s mind. The second encounter is not articulated by a “THEY,” but by the syntactic interlacement of the two linguistic series attached to the individuals, the HE- and the SHE-series. These two series alternate topic and comment functions (when HE is topic, SHE is comment, and viceversa). The female figure has not only been endowed with her own series, but also with a series of predicates which emphasize her will, her actions, her movement (as opposed to Stephen’s passivity and contemplative attitude), and therefore place her in the foreground. In the last encounter this growing importance is confirmed, since the bird-girl and her actions are described at length, the distribution of information now centers entirely around her. We are told what she looks like and what she does, she is always topic. The HE-series is either absent or it is comment. The bird-girl topic will be further extended in the angel topic, when she is seen and described as an angel of mortal beauty by the narrator.

As a result of all this, the following pattern of development of the topic-comment structure emerges:

[1. THEY] [2. HE/SHE] [3. SHE (he)]

This pattern makes clear a kind of *rise* of the female character, who goes from absorption in the HE, through differentiation to predominance. This is the textual reflection of the growing relevance of the female figure in the encounters and the narrative, which is also paralleled by the growing extension of the episodes. The significance of this rise will be commented on in the second part of this paper. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that it parallels Stephen’s rise as an artist.

II. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE FEMALE CHARACTERS

We have seen how cohesion and coherence of textual occurrences appearing in different chapters of the book are maintained by lexical series, which create through repetition or semantic relationship, and through referential identity, nominative chains and referential series respectively. These linguistic features point to a coherent subtext within the text. We must now find out why this textual organization has been created and what it is trying to convey as such. For these purposes, other factors than the merely textual must be considered: *con-textual* (our knowledge of the world, the author, his other works..., that is, the pragmatic situation in which the text was produced) and *co-textual* (our knowledge of the rest of the work, the text of which the subtext is part and whose overall meaning and

coherence it contributes to create). Making use of all this, an interpretation which accounts for the internal cohesion and coherence of these episodes, and their status as a text within the text, must be found.

1

Such an interpretation cannot be provided by a literal reading of the passages discussed. There is nothing in the facts narrated in them, apart from the fact that all of them narrate encounters with female characters, that may account for the pains the author has taken in writing these episodes as a textual unity. The encounters must mean something *other* that they seem to do, and, most important, they must mean something *together*. The first clue leading to this interpretation beyond the literal is the language *itself and its poetic, beyond the referential, quality. There is also a set of words that places the encounters with the prostitute and the bird-girl in a magic, transcendent, religious context, investing them with resonances of the other world and pointing to their symbolic significance: transfigured, magic moment in (i); altar, rite, other world, vehicle of a vague speech, in (ii); worship, holy, ecstasy, angel, glory, magic, wonder, new world, fantastic, in (iii). Female characters seem to be the vehicle of something, to mark the entrance to some secret and sacred place, to some other or new world.*

This symbolic nature of female characters seems to be underscored by their lack of personality as characters. Their appearance is brief and fleeting, no information is provided about them beyond their physical aspect, and they do not appear again. They have no entity, even identity, since they lack even a name, as if it would not make any difference who or what they are, since only the revelation, the symbol they are the vehicle of, matters. They appear as objects to be contemplated by Stephen, not to be addressed. Stephen just watches them and somehow “reads” them, gets the message they have for him. Before Mercedes’ image he will fade into something impalpable and will be transfigured. The prostitute’s lips are the vehicle of a vague speech. The bird-girl is an “angel of mortal beauty,” an “image that passes into his soul” and takes him into a “new world,” the call of art “to recreate life out of life”. *The symbolic nature of the girl is thus explicitly stated in the text. Furthermore, her apparition is preceded and foreshadowed by the “flying form” that Stephen imagines and interprets as a “prophecy of the end he had been born to serve,” as a “symbol of the artist forging...a new...being.”* If the bird-girl is obviously a symbol that Stephen reads, why cannot the other female characters be symbols too that Stephen fails to read and the narrator refuses to make explicit? Stephen’s failure must not necessarily imply the reader’s. It is precisely the linguistic evidence of a textual unity supplied by our analysis that gives us, as readers, the basis to extend the symbolic reading of the bird-girl episode to the

previous ones (this extension, in turn, will modify and enrich our perception of the obvious symbolic significance of the last episode). But, if the female characters are symbols, symbols of what? The clue to the answer is also provided by the bird-girl: something related to beauty, art and the artist. The symbolic nature of female characters is confirmed by a con-textual index: Joyce's theory of epiphanies; the aesthetic orientation of this symbolism by co-textual indexes: the title of the work, its theme and Stephen's theory of art. Let's briefly examine these indexes.

Joyce's theory of the epiphany was formulated in his first long narrative, *Stephen Hero*, a work which would later be rewritten as the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. There the epiphany is conceived as a sudden spiritual manifestation which an epiphanic object produces on the epiphanic subject, or, in Morris Beja's words (1971: 13), "a sudden illumination produced by apparently trivial, even seemingly arbitrary causes." This epiphanic illumination has an ambivalent nature in Joyce's praxis, since it refers both to the object perceived and the perceiving subject: it reveals the true nature of the epiphanic object, but at the same time there may be some sort of new knowledge gained on the subject's part. This ambivalence between the subject's insight and the revelation of the object has been explained by Beja (1971: 80) as one between the epiphany as "experiential" (subject) or as "aesthetic" (object). Joyce seems to favour the aesthetic aspect of epiphany in his theoretical formulation in *Stephen Hero*, where the protagonist explicitly associates epiphany with the last phase in the apprehension of beauty. In this phase, which is called "claritas," the real nature of the object is illuminated by the sudden understanding of its "whatness". This leaves room for a symbolic interpretation of epiphany, as Stephen himself remarks in *A Portrait* when commenting on Aquinas' definition of this phase: "... it would lead you to believe that he [Aquinas] had in mind *symbolism* or idealism. The supreme quality of beauty being a *light from some other world*, the idea of which the matter is but the shadow, the reality of which is but the *symbol*" [my italics] (192-93). Epiphany is thus associated with the revelation of the "whatness" of the object, of its symbolic nature as a vehicle of a different, higher reality, although epiphany is not exactly the same as symbol, since, as I have already mentioned, it also has an experiential aspect, it also involves insight on the subject's part.⁵

The importance of this recognition of epiphany as a symbolic device can be easily appreciated if we notice that Stephen's encounters with the prostitute and the bird-girl are widely accepted as epiphanies. Hence they are encounters with an object through which the "the light from some other world" is shining, whose "whatness," whose true nature, lies beyond its matter and is cast upon the reader, though not always upon Stephen (although he usually has the feeling of "new knowledge," no matter how vague and unarticulated this may be). Manuel Gómez Lara (1982) has studied and analyzed Stephen's encounter with the bird-girl from a linguistic

point of view as such an epiphany, and has concluded that acknowledgement of the epiphany is based on its perception as an *anomaly* in the narrative continuum (87). This relation of epiphany to changes in style and language confirms this paper's contention about a specific use of language that unifies three episodes which are epiphanic in a symbolic subtext.⁶

Once that a contextual index confirms that female characters symbolize something together, their co-text, the literary work they are an integral part of, should specify their symbolic meaning, and it will do so in the same direction the bird-girl did. Their symbolism must be related to the themes and ideas of the novel if the novel as a whole is to be coherent. *A Portrait of the Artist* is a *bildungsroman* that narrates the development of a character, Stephen, from childhood to youth, focusing, as the title indicates, on its making as an artist and culminating with his decision to leave Ireland in order to dedicate his life to art. Art and beauty are thus relevant topics in the book, especially in the last chapter, in which Stephen explains his aesthetic theory to Lynch in a long conversation. The moment is significant as the culmination of Stephen's struggle towards artistry: the boy has become a young would-be artist, so he states his credo. This credo is paramount for understanding what the encounters with female characters mean, since their symbolism is closely linked to the contents of Stephen's theory of beauty.

This theory is mainly Thomist, borrowed from Aquinas, though with substantial variations, as Maurice Beebe (1984) has argued. It rests on the formal nature of artistic beauty asserted by Aquinas, who defines art as "a stasis brought about by the formal rhythms of beauty" (Beebe: 153). Stephen echoes this idea when he affirms that,

Beauty expressed by the artist...awakens,...induces, an aesthetic stasis...a stasis called forth, prolonged and at last dissolved by what I call the rhythm of beauty... Rhythm..., is the first formal esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole or of an esthetic whole to its parts or of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part" (187).

The main difference between Aquinas and Stephen, however, concerns the importance attached to this formal nature of beauty. For Aquinas form is a means, for Stephen an end in itself.⁷ This is clear when Stephen defines art as "the human disposition of sensible and intelligible matter for an aesthetic end" (188), as the expression of an image of beauty "from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour, which are the prison gates of the soul" (187). He later adds that, "These relations of the sensible, visible to you through one form and to me through another, must be therefore the necessary qualities of beauty" (189-190). These words leave no doubt about what kind of beauty Stephen thinks art must pursue. The alternative posed by the dean some pages before between moral beauty

and mortal beauty⁸ is answered by Stephen now in his conversation with Lynch. For Stephen, beauty is something sensual, perceived and relished by the senses and, more specifically, something seen, found in the rhythm or proportion of the object, not an ideal, abstract, sublime image in the mind. This material, formal, mortal beauty, and not moral or ideal beauty, is the object of art.

Stephen also discusses (once again following Aquinas) the three qualities of beauty, which correspond to the three stages in the process of apprehending beauty, that is, which appear successively in our perception of a beautiful object: “integritas” (wholeness), “consonantia” (harmony), and “claritas” (radiance). Anthony Burgess (1965) has very aptly summarized the contents of Stephen’s disquisition on this topic:

First the apprehending mind separates the object—“hypothetically beautiful”—from the rest of the universe and perceives that “it is one integral thing”; it recognizes its integrity and wholeness. Next, “the mind considers the object in whole and in parts, in relation to itself and to other objects, examines the balance of its parts, contemplates the form of the object, traverses every cranny of the structure.” As for the third stage—“radiance”—that is Stephen’s translation of Aquinas’s *claritas*—it is a sort of *quidditas* or whatness shining out of the object. (37)

The radiance of the object is its true self, its real nature, its “whatness,” which, as we have seen, in *Stephen Hero* is said to be revealed by the experience of the epiphanies.

The significance of Stephen’s aesthetic theory can be grasped if we realize that, in Stephen’s encounters with female characters, the same questions are posed, and they are answered in the same way. At the moment of its appearance at the end of the novel, this theory is not something new in the book. In fact, before Stephen is in a position to formulate his theory of beauty, he has had to *live* it in these encounters, he has worked it out through them, even though he was not aware of it. The theory has been *acted* by female characters before its formulation, since they symbolize beauty as encountered by, and presented to, Stephen at different stages in his development as an artist. The properties attached to these characters are the properties of beauty. Only when that beauty which is appropriate and proper to art is found, can the artist being forged in Stephen’s soul come into existence. This happens in the encounter with the bird-girl, who embodies beauty and art as defined later by Stephen. She represents the last stage in Stephen’s ascent towards artistry, in the process of the making of the artist which can be traced in Stephen’s relationships with female characters. In these symbolic encounters a theory of art and artistic beauty unfolds, as will be shown by a brief review of them.

2

(i) Mercedes is a doubly fictional character. She is fiction within fiction, she represents literature, and literature, at this particular time in Stephen's life, is starting to play a key role in his awakening to beauty, as Harry Levin (1960) has noted: "Stephen is beginning to appreciate beauty, but as something illicit and mysterious, something apart from the common walks of life. Literature has begun to colour his experience, and to stimulate his mind and his senses" (57). This beauty "apart from the common walks of life" is embodied by Mercedes. She is something ideal, incorporeal, an abstract image in his mind, and this remoteness is clearly perceived by Stephen, who wants to meet this image "in the real world" (60). Mercedes incarnates a sublime and ideal image of beauty, too pure, unattainable and distant to be found in this world and to serve as an effective stimulus for the artist. Mercedes' ideal purity is closely knitted to Stephen's intense religious feelings at this stage of his life, so she represents a sort of "moral beauty." This moral quality is underscored by the fact that she comes to Stephen's mind just before his encounter with the prostitute to remind him of the "horrible reality which lay between his hope of then and now" (91), to make him—and us—aware that he has lost the purity she represents to enter a new life of sin.

(ii) The prostitute represents this new life, Stephen's breaking with the religious world he has lived in and his embracing of a new world of the flesh and the senses. An implicit connection between sin, life and art, and an opposition between these and religion, or rather between two kinds of religion, begins to be articulated in this encounter (it will be later completed by the bird-girl), and this makes the prostitute relevant for the implicit theory of beauty and art. The first hint of this can be observed in how the encounter is rendered as a kind of coming-of-age ceremony, an initiation ritual with religious overtones, by describing Stephen's arrival in the brothel quarter as if he was marching towards a temple where some kind of ceremony is to be held:

The yellow gasflames arose before his troubled vision against the vapoury sky, burning as if before an altar. Before the doors and in the lighted halls groups were gathered arrayed as for some rite. He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries. (92)

The application of a religious frame to Stephen's initiation to sin is a contradiction in terms, but a very meaningful one, since it endows the latter with the seriousness and significance of the former, and suggests that religious priesthood, which until then seemed to be Stephen's ultimate destiny, is going to be replaced by "life priesthood." Stephen's ordination is the ceremony about to start, and in this rite the prostitute, or rather her body (since the language emphasizes her body), acts as the high priest.

Unlike Mercedes, and very significantly, the prostitute is more than anything her flesh, seen and felt through Stephen's senses. She is the first embodiment of sensual, material beauty with which Stephen is presented, the call of the realm of sin and life where that material beauty is to be found, a transition taking him away from Mercedes ("beauty apart from the common walks of life") into the bird-girl (beauty in the common walks of life), for the search for artistry and beauty goes through sex and sin, as Levin reminds us: "In Stephen's mind a symbolic association between art and sex is established, and that precocious revelation helps him to decide his later conflict between art and religion" (58). This association is clearly shown by the fact that Stephen's decision to leave religion (his refusal to join the jesuits) and his embracing of life and sin ("He was destined to learn his own wisdom...wandering among the snares of the world...The snares of the world were its ways of sin," 148), precedes his first reflection on language, words and artistic creation, and his encounter with the bird-girl (that is, beauty as encountered in the flesh, in "the snares of the world," in life). The connection between sin, life and art is further reinforced by the climactic point of this process which goes from religion and "moral beauty," through sex, sin and life, to art and "mortal beauty": the bird-girl episode.

(iii) This is already evident in the prelude preceding this last encounter, when Stephen sees a winged form flying, which he interprets as a "a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop *out of the sluggish matter of the earth* a new soaring impalpable and imperishable being" (154). The artist uses the matter of the earth to create something new, he takes his materials from this world, from life, from the earthly substance of the prostitute, whose body was a harbinger of the bird-girl's body. Art creates from "the gross earth," from "sound and shape and colour," Stephen will say later in his conversation with Lynch. Accordingly, the girl's body is rooted in the sensual and the tangible, as its description quoted above makes clear, but, unlike the prostitute's, it is now endowed with that flying quality provided by art and the artist, because the artist forges a new soaring being, a flying form, out of the matter of earth. This is why the duality earth/flight posed by the symbolic winged form of the prelude is extended in her description, which associates her *flesh*, the different parts of her body (the earth series), with a bird (flight series). This clearly points to the girl's symbolic condition of artistic beauty, not simply of material beauty, but of that beauty artistically transformed and elevated to a higher realm by art, which is, as Stephen himself will affirm later "the human disposition of sensible and intelligible matter for an aesthetic end." This disposition for an aesthetic end gives her wings, makes her an artistic object. In this context, the linguistic data analyzed above, i.e. the presence of the FLYING series throughout the whole episode colouring all other nominative chains from the prostitute's episode, becomes significant, since "flying" makes the difference between the formal beauty represented by the prostitute's and the girl's bodies.

The artistic nature of the bird-girl's beauty is confirmed by her description, since this fully accords with the qualities attached to beauty later by Stephen: wholeness, harmony and radiance. The description clearly follows these three stages in the apprehension of beauty. The bird-girl is first perceived as an integral thing (wholeness: "A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea," 153). Then, she is broken into her parts, like the prostitute ("Her long slender bare legs were delicate... and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face," 155-156), but, unlike her, now the harmony and balance of these parts are fully considered, the narrative concentrates on them, her body is not only dismembered but also contemplated. The rhythm of her body parts is the rhythm of beauty (relations among parts in the aesthetic whole, and of parts to the aesthetic whole). Here lies the significance of the girl's emergence as topic discussed above: her topic position is just a linguistic reflection of this contemplation of her rhythm, of her new status as aesthetic object, not as object of desire. She is made of the same matter of earth as the prostitute's body, as is underscored by using the same referential series of body parts for two different individuals. But Stephen's eyes are now different, they are now the artist's. He does not long for the body, but contemplates its artistic beauty, appreciates its rhythm. This newly-discovered rhythm of beauty is reflected in the rhythm of the prose, which approaches poetic diction, with continuous comparisons and images introduced by "as" and "like," as if it was the result of this new artistic sensibility.

As a final step in the apprehension of the aesthetic object, its "quidditas," its whatness, is revealed to Stephen. The radiance of the girl shines through her body, and her real nature is understood by Stephen. The epiphanic revelation takes place at last:

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leapt at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on! (156)

The bird-girl is an "angel of mortal beauty." All the symbolic significance of the female character is contained in this short phrase, and Stephen at last grasps that significance, so her whatness "passes into his soul." She represents BEAUTY, as the other female characters did, although he was not able to realize this. And this beauty is not spiritual, ideal, moral, but MORTAL, hence it calls him "to live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life," that is to say, to live and to sin because it is in this earthly life, in the "common walks of life," that he will encounter the matter to be

recreated in art, the matter of artistic beauty. This beauty, however, is the result of the transformation and elevation of that matter by art, so she is an ANGEL, that is, a flying being, a flying carrier of earthly beauty. The duality earth/flight, present in the winged form and the bird-girl, appears again to describe the formal beauty of art. Besides, “angel” belongs to the religious sphere which was so significant in the prostitute’s episode. The religious simile is again present in this encounter (“angel,” “worship,” “profane,” “holy,” “glory,” belong to this religious sphere), marking it once more as the entrance into a new kind of priesthood, artistic priesthood, and making this an extension of the previous “life priesthood”. Stephen is now able to appreciate this, and, as a result of it, the aesthetic stasis referred to later in his theory, the stasis induced by artistic beauty and its rhythm, represented here by the bird-girl, is reflected in the ecstasy experienced by Stephen after the contemplation of the bird-girl, who enacts this rhythm of beauty in the poetic unfolding of the parts of her body.

Perhaps the best evidence that the beauty symbolized by the bird-girl is the beauty that is proper to art is that it is the decisive stimulus towards artistry in Stephen’s development. She illuminates Stephen in a way the “moral” beauty of Mercedes was unable to do, and after that he decides to become an artist. She is fully epiphanic—she is loaded with experiential insight—and not merely symbolic. Stephen has thus found the answer to the dean’s alternative between moral and material beauty as the object of art even before this alternative is presented to him. His answer, when eventually stated in his theory, has not been learnt from Aquinas, but from experience: art is concerned with the earthly beautiful, not with the heavenly sublime. The representation of that truth as experience (encounters with female characters), instead of thought (an aesthetic theory), is the privilege of fiction.

3

The symbolic pattern in Stephen’s encounters with female characters clearly emerges from this analysis. Mercedes represents an ideal or spiritual beauty tinged with intense religious feelings. This sublime, moral beauty, is just an ideal image, unattainable, so Stephen looks forward to encountering it *in the real world*. The beauty he will eventually find there is of a quite different nature, and it is represented by the bird-girl, who embodies mortal, material beauty (as opposed to Mercedes’ moral, spiritual beauty), but is endowed with a heavenly, flying quality by the art which recreates it. This beauty is foreshadowed in the encounter with the prostitute, in which Stephen’s senses are “awakened from a slumber of centuries,” from the spiritual world he had dwelled in, to life and sin, to the earthly world of artistic beauty. Although this beauty will pass unnoticed to Stephen for the moment, it will allow him to apprehend formal beauty through his senses when the moment comes, and

recognize this material beauty found in life and represented by the bird-girl as the object of art. Artistic priesthood will then take the place of religious priesthood.

The three characters not only represent different concepts of beauty and Stephen's tentative search for the beauty proper to art, but also a process of learning in the apprehension of beauty, in which each new character adds a new quality of beauty not perceived before and therefore a new phase. With Mercedes only unity, wholeness, is perceived, and little else. She is too abstract to be analyzed. The analysis of the whole into its parts takes place with the prostitute, the rhythm of parts and whole is suggested by the description of the encounter, but Stephen fails to perceive its aesthetic potential, and therefore a synthesis, radiance, "claritas," is still lacking. This synthesis is accomplished with the bird-girl, when the three qualities of beauty are brought together and beauty as the object of art is attained. Throughout the three encounters Joyce has been pointing to the symbolic nature of female characters, to their whatness, but Stephen has not been able to decipher it. When, in the last encounter, he does so, he becomes a would-be artist, and he looks at the character and her beauty as the artist would. When he reads the symbol, when he is aware of the epiphanic revelation and is touched by the radiance of beauty, his development is completed, and then he will be able to create beauty himself.

From the preceding arguments we can grasp the internal coherence of the three episodes, and how their "reading together" is coherent with the aesthetic theory stated by Stephen at the end of the book, which can be considered also a subtext. Both subtexts, female characters and aesthetic theory, whose subjects are respectively the author and the hero, are not only coherent with each other, but also with the work as a whole, in a very subtle and sophisticated way.

We can regard encounters with female characters as the author's discourse. The implied author, the author as realized in the work, is responsible for the organization and presentation of its materials, and therefore the ideas derived from this organization are his. In this sense, the aesthetic theory encoded in the subtext of female characters is the author's. He is showing a character groping for artistry through successive encounters with different forms of beauty. How, when, and with whom this search is culminated, is necessarily to be taken as the author's implied statement about the nature of beauty and art. What is striking is that this statement should coincide with Stephen's theory of art. The author's aesthetic theory, stated through the manipulation of characters and action, is the same as Stephen's, stated in his own discourse. Author and hero say the same thing, though not in the same way and not at the same time. The author has supplied his aesthetic ideology when Stephen still lacks his own one. When he can eventually present us with his own ideology, this turns out to be the same as the author's. If we consider that, for both, as artists, this ideology is probably their defining and central trait, we can conclude that the character has

become the author. The two subtexts show how the adolescent Stephen who strives after artistry becomes the artist Joyce who is writing the book.

And this is precisely what the book is about. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce narrated and recreated in fiction how he became an artist. The autobiographical nature of the novel has been sufficiently studied for us to insist on it. Considering this nature, the fact that Stephen, the alter-ego of the adolescent Joyce, turns out to be identified with the artist Joyce, the author of the book, is not surprising at all. In *A Portrait of the Artist* Joyce is telling us how he became what he actually was at the moment of writing that very same book, how he became the author of the book. In this fashion, the plan and the coherence of the subtext we set out to establish and analyze at the beginning of this essay, fits into the plan and the coherence of the overall text, of the novel.

NOTES

¹ By "subtexts" I mean a textual organization, possessing its own textual features and especially its own level of cohesion but coherence, but included in a higher level of cohesion and coherence, a larger text of which it may be considered a component part. A subtext is a text within the text. The notion of subtext implies a hierarchical order, so the same fragment of discourse may be a "subtext," when considered as part of a larger text, or a "text", when studied in isolation, independently.

² Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) have studied some devices of cohesion (recurrence, parallelism, paraphrase, ellipsis, tense, aspect...) and declare that "the cohesion of the surface text rests on the presupposed coherence of the textual world" (4). In his study of these devices, Bernárdez (1982) draws attention to the fact that they are a reflection of the existence of coherence by calling them "forms of textual coherence" or "formal indicators of coherence," and he affirms that a text is not coherent because of the relations established by the sentences that make it up, but, inversely, these relations exist as a result of the coherence of the text (157). He adds that coherence and cohesion are both aspects of the same phenomenon, and that, to a certain degree, "coherencia" hace referencia al proceso de estructuración del texto por el hablante, mientras que "cohesión" se refiere a la interpretación del texto por el oyente, es decir, al 'descubrimiento' de la coherencia por el oyente" (162).

³ "He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the DARK pressure of her softly parting lips... they were the vehicle of a vague SPEECH; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure. DARKER than the swoon of SIN, softer than sound or odor" (93).

⁴ The UNREST chain appears in its original purity, that is, without contamination with the FLIGHT series, and directly related to the terms of the series in the prostitute episode (revolt/presence/cry) and the Mercedes episode (fever), reading forward in the prelude:

"His throat ached with a desire to cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly of his deliverance to the winds. This was the *call* of life to *his soul*, not the dull gross *voice* of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman *voice* that had *called* him to the pale service of the altar. An instant of WILD FLIGHT had delivered him and the *cry* of triumph which *his lips* withheld cleft *his brain*. (154)

He started up nervously from the stoneblock for he could no longer quench the *flame in his blood*. He felt *his cheeks aflame* and *his throat throbbing* with song. There was a lust of wandering in *his feet* that *burned* to set out for the ends of the earth. On! On! *his heart* seemed to *cry*." (154-155)

The connection of the sequence [CRY–CRY–call–voice–called–CRY] with the prostitute episode goes without comment, and so does such a phrase as “the flame in his blood” (“unrest crept into his blood,” “fever,” in [i], “blood in revolt” “hell of sufferers,” in [ii]), which recurs in “his cheeks aflame,” “his throat throbbing,” and “his feet...burned.” The series of parts of Stephen’s body recurs too, as it always does with the FEVER series. The relationship between “fever” and “cry” as members of the same nominative chain established in (ii), is here nicely conveyed and confirmed by the next part of Stephen’s body in the series, “his heart,” which is not aflame, as could be expected, but “seemed to cry.” Hence the variation is not surprising at all. The FLAME series is also explicitly connected to the TREMBLE series, and therefore to all the series related to it, elsewhere in the episode (“his cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling,” 156), and this underscores their belonging to the FEVER chain. In short, the UNREST/FEVER—REVOLT/PRESENCE/CRY chain is extended to include the TREMBLE/WILD/RADIANT/ECSTASY/CRY/FLAME series.

⁵ Morris Beja warns us in this respect: “In the same way, and despite obvious associations, we cannot identify epiphany with symbolism either, for epiphany involves not merely representation, but revelation as well. The epiphany per se is not a symbol or image, though it may arise from it” (75).

⁶ Gómez Lara goes further to define epiphany by linking the symbolism they are the vehicle of with that specific usage of language: epiphanies result from “the transformation of experience in signs that are invested with their real meaning when included in phonological and semantic models, which transform the individual, passive experience of the character into a verbal symbol accessible to the reader” [my translation] (89).

⁷ “Joyce stops short before *what*, according to the Thomists, the aesthetic *stasis* reveals. If the context is denied, the rhythm of art reveals only the mechanical harmony of parts and parts with whole... It does not reflect the harmony of God’s universe. Seen thus, Joyce is thinking simply of the importance of form, the well-made work of art, and the point of Stephen’s theory is closer to Henry James than to S. Thomas” (Beebe 1984: 156).

⁸ “And to distinguish between the beautiful and the sublime, the dean added. To distinguish between moral beauty and mortal beauty. And to inquire what kind of beauty is proper to each of the various arts. These are some interesting points we might take up” (172).

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