Panepiphanal World
MacDuff, Sangam

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Joyce reuses fourteen epiphanies in *Stephen Hero* and twelve in *Portrait*, with many further echoes and similarities. Phrasing from several epiphanies can also be discerned in Joyce’s 1904 essay, “A Portrait of the Artist,” suggesting that Scholes’s claim that *Stephen Hero* is structured around the epiphanies (*WD* 6) holds good for each version of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In fact, the case is much stronger for *Portrait* than *Stephen Hero*, since less than half the latter survives, with neither the beginning nor the end of the manuscript,¹ whereas the relevance of the epiphanies to *Portrait* is immediately apparent from their use in the novel (table 1).

As the table illustrates, *Portrait* begins and ends with an epiphany. There are epiphanies in every chapter, often occurring before a climactic moment, like the end of chapter 2, and the central epiphany occurs near the center of the novel, just after the moment Kenneth Burke calls “the point of farthest internality” (324). The importance of these epiphanies at the beginning, middle, and end is self-evident, but all twelve play key roles in the narrative.

Although a good deal of work has been done on the epiphanies, no one has yet shown how the structure of *A Portrait* grows from them.² In the following analysis, I will demonstrate their role in *Portrait*, both as climactic moments in the narrative and as exemplary passages that shed light on its organization. By focusing on the differences between Joyce’s *Portrait* epiphanies and their earlier versions, I argue that the genesis of the novel reveals its fundamental structural principle: the difference between repetitions creates the possibility for endless proliferation. Walter Benjamin associates this echoing gap with Proust (201–16), but it is equally characteristic of Joyce, because difference-in-similitude constitutes the underlying structure of Joyce’s epiphanies and the genitive principle of *A Portrait of
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Table 1. Epiphanies in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

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Note: a. Numbers refer to those given in WD and PSW; the titles are taken from Beja (in Bowen and Carens, 712–13). Page numbers are keyed to the Penguin edition used throughout this book; the part and section designations are taken from John Paul Riquelme’s edition (New York: Norton, 2007), 307–308.

the Artist as a Young Man. Borrowing Derrida’s term, the recycling of the former in the latter can be regarded as Joyce’s “signature” (1992, 33–75), an ever-varying repetition of the same epiphanic structure. Just as every signature is different, though each guarantees authorship, Joyce’s signature epiphanies differ in every iteration (“A Portrait,” Stephen Hero, Portrait) while providing a mark of identification across each of Joyce’s works.

Patterns of repetition and variation are evident from the first epiphany:

[Bray: in the parlour of the house in Martello Terrace]

Mr Vance —(comes in with a stick) . . . O, you know, he’ll have to apologise, Mrs Joyce.

Mrs Joyce —O yes . . . Do you hear that, Jim?

Mr Vance —Or else—if he doesn’t—the eagles’ll come and pull out his eyes.

Mrs Joyce —O, but I’m sure he will apologise.

Joyce —(under the table, to himself)
—Pull out his eyes,
Apologise,
Apologise,
Pull out his eyes.

Apologise,
Pull out his eyes,
Pull out his eyes,
Apologise.

Kenner proclaimed that “every theme in the entire life-work of James Joyce is stated on the first two pages of the *Portrait*” (1948, 365)—something of an overstatement, perhaps, but there is no doubt that the opening section adumbrates the central concerns of the novel, particularly in the epiphany that concludes the overture. Mr. Vance represents the first in a sequence of fearful male authority figures, such as Fathers Dolan and Arnall; the unnamed transgression suggests the burden of sin and guilt Stephen struggles against; Joyce’s refusal to apologize foreshadows Stephen’s rebellion; and the retreat into language, turning Vance’s threats of blindness into chiastic verse (a paradigm of varied repetition), becomes prophetic of Stephen’s vocation as an artist.³

At first sight there is little difference between the original epiphany and the scene as it appears in *Portrait*, but the changes Joyce introduces are significant:

He hid under the table. His mother said:
—O, Stephen will apologise.
Dante said:
—O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes.

*Pull out his eyes,*
*Apologise,*
*Apologise,*
*Pull out his eyes.*

*Apologise,*
*Pull out his eyes,*
*Pull out his eyes,*
*Apologise.* (4)
The most obvious alteration is that Vance’s role is transferred to Dante. This makes good sense, since Dante plays a more significant role in the novel, and the combination of biblical threats with strict moral instruction introduces her character; but the change of speaker also affects the portrayal of gender and authority: Dante’s threat, following Mrs. Dedalus’s insistent declarative, ensures that female figures become the center of power and punishment in *Portrait* (Henke 1982).

Isolating the threat of punishment from the crime, Joyce creates an oppressive atmosphere in which Stephen is threatened with terrifying consequences for reasons unknown, and this generalized fear is strongly reinforced by the second change from epiphany to novel: eliding the second half of the original stage direction “(to himself),” we never know who says the famous lines. Indented and italicized, the verses float freely; we can imagine Stephen repeating them to himself (an early example of interior monologue) or that he overhears them. With no speech heading or quotation marks, there is no reason to suppose that the words are spoken at all, and this lack of deictic reference leaves space for other sources of textual quotation. For instance, Gifford notes that Dante’s threat is derived from Isaac Watts’s *Divine Songs Attempted in the Easy Language of Children*, where in “Obedience to Parents,” Watts warns the child that “breaks his father’s law, / Or mocks his mother’s word”:

What heavy Guilt upon him lies!
How cursed is his Name!
The Ravens shall pick out his Eyes,
And Eagles eat the same. (8–12; 1761, 33)

In the original epiphany, Stephen has crossed Mr. Vance, and in *Portrait* he is threatened with the consequences of defying his mother’s word, so Stephen’s “heavy guilt” and the punishment he faces can be traced to Watts, who alludes to Proverbs: “The eye that mocketh at his father, and that despiseth the labour of his mother in bearing him, let the ravens of the brooks pick it out, and the young eagles eat it” (30.17). Thus, the lines in *Portrait* can be seen as a palimpsest of quotations: the scriptural text, Watts’s didactic song, Joyce’s epiphany, and the published stanzas.

The novel begins with an epigraph from Ovid and ends by quoting Stephen’s diary; in between, there are quotations on virtually every page. In Bakhtin’s terms, the density of intertextual allusion makes *Portrait* a supremely dialogical novel, constantly interacting with the texts it repeats,
while the contextual difference between “original” and quotation, including Joyce’s recycling of his epiphanies, is an example of heteroglossia, the principle that each utterance, even a single word, is dependent on context for meaning, and therefore unique (Bakhtin 1987, 41–68). Bakhtin’s terms help show how Portrait’s dialogism opens lines of communication with other literary texts, and earlier versions of the novel, allowing for endless chains of connection, while each quotation differs in context and is therefore heteroglot. But quotation is a form of repetition, while heteroglossia generalizes difference, pointing back to Joyce’s fundamental mechanism of repetition and variation.

Originating in the epiphanies, this structure shapes the novel. Organized around a series of striking incidents separated by considerable intervals of time and space, there are numerous gaps in the narrative; since these incidents are frequently repeated, the series is both elliptical and iterative. For instance, the novel’s opening words follow a fairy tale formula; the “Baby Tuckoo” story is often retold; Stephen has wet the bed and smelled the oilsheet daily, sung his green rose song and danced to the sailor’s hornpipe before. In their (re)telling, these events initiate new series—Simon Dedalus’s storytelling, the queer smell of the oilsheet, the rose motif—creating the leitmotivistic structure. Of course, repetition is never identical: if nothing else, the context changes, and rereading is never the same. The gap between repetitions is charged by difference, and this gap opens the space for what Benjamin calls the “image” (201–16). As J. Hillis Miller explains, “The image is the meaning generated by the echoing of two dissimilar things. . . . It is neither in the first nor in the second nor in some ground which preceded both, but in between, in the empty space” (9). Benjamin compares a large sock in the laundry, which, to an imaginative child, might recall a Christmas stocking; in the absence of the real thing, this pairing allows the sock to become a sack, filled with imaginary presents (Benjamin 1999, 204–5). In the same way, patterns of repetition and variation in Joyce’s epiphanies allow us to perceive both similarities between iterations and their differences; the charged gaps that emerge provide openings for Benjamin’s image.

Returning to the epiphany, this process is enacted in the change from Vance to Dante, or from Proverbs to Watts to the chiastic verse in Portrait, because the difference between quotations (including the genesis of the text from its earlier iterations) opens a space for reflection. In the change from masculine to feminine, Protestant to Catholic figures of authority,
we are invited to speculate on broader questions of gender, religion, and power in the novel. Since Vance, a Protestant, quotes “Obedience to Parents,” a didactic song by the English churchman, Isaac Watts, while the second epiphany identifies Stephen with Parnell (a point I will return to), Vance could be associated with the tyrannical father of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, while the switch to Dante, as a kind of wicked stepmother, shows the punishing control of the Catholic Church in Ireland. These images become more complex still because the difference between Watts’s song and its scriptural source opens a textual space that invites readers to speculate on questions as diverse as obedience and disobedience, guilt, blindness, punishment, mockery, parturition, the law of the father, and the maternal word—all of which are connected to Stephen’s first confrontation with authority (that of his parents, but also God the father, Mother Church, and Mother Ireland).

In terms of chronology, Joyce’s self-quotation in the Portrait epiphanies provides the mechanism that sets his structures of repetition and variation ticking, though in practice, the repetitive movements of the novel are inseparable from its epiphanic workings. A good example is the second epiphany in Portrait, a moment as carefully prepared for as the endings of Dubliners. Confined to the infirmary after having been shouldered into the square ditch, Stephen thinks, “How pale the light was at the window!” (25), recalling a series of phrases like the “cold sunlight outside the window” (21–22) that echoes back to the pale chilly air and the gray light at the beginning of the section (4). These repetitions serve as temporal and physical markers, correlated with Stephen’s febrile condition as he drifts in and out of fitful sleep (he wakes to see a “pale sunlight,” feeling “weak” and “rough,” while “his face and body were very hot” [18]). A few lines later, “The sunlight was queer and cold,” and it is the “queer” word “suck” that reminds Stephen of the water cocks in the lavatory at the Wicklow hotel, making him “feel cold and then hot” (“That was a very queer thing” [8]). Thus, the strange power of a word Stephen considers onomatopoeic comes to dominate the section (cf. Attridge 2001, 59–77) as hot and cold become repeated motifs in which the cold of the playing fields and the cold slime of the latrine, the cold dark sea, and cold smell of the chapel are contrasted with the fire at home, or in the peasants’ cottages, and the warmth of his bed (a theme first heard in the overture: “When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold” [3]).

At the end of the section, Joyce recalls both these motifs through the
associations of pale, cold light and warm firelight, metamorphosing into waves that introduce the epiphany:

How pale the light was at the window! But that was nice. The fire rose and fell on the wall. It was like waves. Someone had put coal on and he heard voices. They were talking. It was the noise of the waves. Or the waves were talking among themselves as they rose and fell.

As the waves are personified, Stephen sees them taking shape:

He saw the sea of waves, long dark waves rising and falling, dark under the moonless night. A tiny light twinkled at the pierhead where the ship was entering: and he saw a multitude of people gathered by the waters’ edge to see the ship that was entering their harbour. A tall man stood on the deck, looking out towards the flat dark land: and by the light at the pierhead he saw his face, the sorrowful face of Brother Michael.

He saw him lift his hand towards the people and heard him say in a loud voice of sorrow over the waters:
—He is dead. We saw him lying upon the catafalque. A wail of sorrow went up from the people.
—Parnell! Parnell! He is dead!
They fell upon their knees, moaning in sorrow.
And he saw Dante in a maroon velvet dress and with a green velvet mantle hanging from her shoulders walking proudly and silently past the people who knelt by the waters’ edge. (25)

This passage offers a wavelike repetition of the original epiphany:

A moonless night under which the waves gleam feebly. The ship is entering a harbour where there are some lights. The sea is uneasy, charged with dull anger like the eyes of an animal which is about to spring, the prey of its own pitiless hunger. The land is flat and thinly wooded. Many people are gathered on the shore to see what ship it is that is entering their harbour.

Unlike the first epiphany, which is similar to its sources, the differences here are pronounced, yet several features suit the epiphany to this point in the narrative. The first is its dreamlike quality, combining a series of simple, anaphoric sentences (“The ship,” “The sea,” “The land”) with subtler patterns of repetition and variation, ranging from the aural echoes
of alliteration, assonance, and rhyme (“which . . . waves gleam feebly,” “night/lights,” etc.) to imagistic transformations (gleaming waves—lights in the harbor—glowering eyes). This lyrical-symbolic mode is particularly effective because it provides a culminating moment for the section, drawing together Stephen’s earlier imaginings and linking them to the imagery of cold and heat, darkness and light, sickness and convalescence. Illness and recovery indicate another function: when the scene is reused in Portrait, it goes beyond feverish fantasy to symbolize death and resurrection. Brother Michael returns to announce the death of Parnell, but the phrase he uses (“We saw him lying upon the catafalque”) recalls Stephen’s earlier daydream, when he imagined dying like Little and having a requiem mass, with “yellow candles on the altar and round the catafalque” (P 22). In his reverie, Stephen imagines being “buried in the little graveyard of the community” (P 22), and as Hans Walter Gabler has pointed out, Stephen’s return to health is carefully synchronized with the return of Parnell’s body to Ireland, so as Stephen returns from his imaginary death, he is symbolically linked to the spirit of Parnell.4

This link is strengthened each time the scene is recalled. Its first repetition occurs in the Christmas dinner scene when Stephen “remember[s] the evening in the infirmary in Clongowes, the dark waters, the light at the pierhead and the moan of sorrow from the people when they had heard” (35). Given Casey’s remark that “the priests’ pawns broke Parnell’s heart and hounded him into his grave” a page earlier, it is natural that Stephen recalls his vision here, especially after his father’s outburst: “Sons of bitches! . . . When he was down they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats in a sewer” (33). Recalling that Stephen fell sick after being shouldered into an open sewer where “a fellow had once seen a big rat jump” (11),5 there is a subtle link between Stephen and Parnell, and just as Parnell’s career was torn apart by powerful religious and political tensions, Stephen finds himself caught between the same violent tensions at his first family Christmas.

This memory is clearly formative because in chapter 2, when Stephen’s “monstrous” sexual fantasies throw him “beyond the limits of reality,” so that he can “scarcely recognise . . . his own thoughts” and even the most basic placeholders of existence (origin, identity, location) are chiasistically reversed and emptied of meaning (“Victoria [Hotel] and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria.”), he recalls four names clearly: “Dante, Parnell, Clane, Clongowes” (98). As “the memory of his
childhood suddenly [grows] dim,” he involuntarily remembers the moment when he

watched the firelight leaping and dancing on the wall of a little bedroom in the infirmary and dreamed of being dead, of mass being said for him by the rector in a black and gold cope, of being buried then in the little graveyard of the community off the main avenue of limes. But he had not died then. Parnell had died. (98)

Again, Stephen is linked with Parnell, his return to vitality at the moment Parnell dies associating Stephen with the uncrowned king of Ireland. There is as much irony here as in “Ivy Day,” where Hynes’s poem summons Parnell to “Rise, like the Phoenix from the flames” (D 132), but the connection remains important until the end of the novel, when Stephen goes forth “to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race” (277). Many readings of this line are possible, but all gain potency from the associations with Parnell. Read straight, as the triumphant cry of a godlike artist, one can hardly overlook the nationalist rhetoric that inspires Dedalus’s literary aspirations, especially in the light of the rapid political events that unfolded in the years following Portrait’s publication; read ironically, there is perhaps a pun on “forge,” linking Dedalus’s hubris to Piggot’s forged confession of the Phoenix Park murders, whose disclosure provided Parnell with a brief moment of triumph before his fall.

In the first two chapters, Parnell is a dominant presence, but by the end of the novel, “[t]he Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seem[s] to have receded in space” (199), Stephen has roundly rejected Davin’s nationalism (220), and the infirmary scene is forgotten. It last occurs during the retreat, when Stephen recalls the cemetery “where he had dreamed of being buried; the firelight on the wall of the infirmary” and “the sorrowful face of Brother Michael” (116). “His soul, as these memories came back to him, became again a child’s soul,” as though to contrast Stephen’s childish innocence with his state of sexual experience at the start of chapter 3. This change may explain why the scene is not repeated further, but it also indicates how Stephen’s character is constructed around a series of striking memories. Memories like the firelight in the infirmary, when Stephen imagined his death and dreamed of Parnell, hold the place for his own lost identity as a boy (“How strange to think of him passing out of existence in such a way, not by death but . . . by being lost and forgotten” [99]). Facing symbolic death, these memories provide the record of Stephen’s being,
which helps explain both the structure of Portrait and why readers find it so vivid: constructed around a series of unforgettable scenes, each of which contains a cluster of eidetic images, the novel constantly returns to its key moments, like variations on a theme. This structure ensures that incidents like the infirmary epiphany are never forgotten for long—or rather, the half-forgotten is forever being recalled, weaving complex images that soon escape the woof and warp of binary logic. This is partly a problem of overdetermination, as Joyce’s matrices constantly overlap, not only within the text but also through intertextual echoes. But it is not only a problem of complexity: even a fully glossed paleographic text would be inadequate to account for the kind of meaning Portrait generates, because the gap is a necessary condition for the echo. Even the most finely woven cloth is a tissue of holes, and as Joyce discovered in the epiphanies, it is these very gaps that produce new images and new meaning.

I have shown three effects of repetition and variation in the infirmary scene: first, the passage draws together the major themes of section two; second, it aligns Stephen with Parnell, overlaying his portrait with the history of Irish nationalism; third, by reflecting on memory and textual memory, the echoes from “The Ship” to Stephen’s self-image in Cork suggest that the structure of Joyce’s epiphanies is akin to the epiphanic structure of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. This is particularly clear in the diary section that concludes the novel, where Joyce uses three epiphanies (#29, #27, #30) in four pages. Although the Workshop numbers are conjectural, there are clear stylistic and thematic links between the last epiphanies in Portrait and the missing epiphany in the sequence, “The Ship” (#28). In fact, the source for all four is Stanislaus Joyce’s “Selections in Prose from Various Authors,” where they appear in reverse order: #30, #27, #29, #28. This is probably no more than chance, but given the importance of chiastic structures in Portrait, the parallel may be significant; in any case, the similarities are close enough that the infirmary epiphany proleptically echoes the ending, which may explain why Joyce uses “The Ship” so early in the novel.

In chapter 2, I showed how “The Spell of Arms and Voices” is linked to Stephen’s Janus-faced self-portraiture, imagining himself as both Daedalus and Icarus, and in the next section I will demonstrate the role of the Portrait epiphanies in forging Stephen’s identity, but for the present
my purpose is to uncover the structural matrix they establish. “The Spell” brings together a series of echoes from earlier epiphanies, the most important of which is “The Ship.” The “tall ships that stand against the moon” in the former are reminiscent of the ship entering the harbor in the latter, though there it is “[a] moonless night.” In “The Spell,” the ships carry a “tale of distant nations,” just as “The Ship” carries the news of Parnell’s death in *Portrait*. These tidings are conveyed by the raised hand and voice of Brother Michael, before his cry is taken up by the people (*P* 25); likewise, epiphany #30 casts a “spell of arms and voices” in which “the black arms of tall ships” are “held out to say: We are alone,—come. And the voices say with them, We are your people.” In *Portrait*, the epiphany ends with the figure of Dante “walking proudly and silently past the people who knelt by the waters’ edge,” just as “The Spell” ends with the narrator’s kinsmen “making ready to go”; and both texts echo epiphany #27, which concludes with the sound of distant hoofs hurrying “to what journey’s end—what heart—bearing what tidings?”

These “hoofs that shine amid the heavy night like diamonds” begin another chain, recalling the “lank brown horses” in “The Last Tram” who “shake their bells to the clear night, in admonition” (*P* 72). In *Portrait*, this epiphany is reused after a series of three vignettes, each beginning “He was sitting” (*P* 70–71), which serve to introduce Emma, providing the occasion for Stephen’s first poem. Hence, Stephen’s fledgling artistry is directly inspired by a moment based on “The Last Tram,” and this moment is recalled when Stephen composes his villanelle. The second vignette is based on epiphany #5 (“Is That Mary Ellen?”), one of three scenes in which Stephen “chronicles with patience what he [sees]” (70), “reshaping the world about him into a vision of squalor and insincerity” (69), recalling Joyce’s dramatic epiphanies. In *Portrait*, the firelight and distant voices of the epiphany are expanded to echo “The Ship”; at the same time, “the sound of voices at the fire” leads Stephen to imagine “winding galleries and jagged caverns” (71), foreshadowing “Images of Fabulous Kings” with its “long curving gallery” and “pillars of dark vapours” (*P* 272).

Again, silence and repetition create the conditions for the image, a process Benjamin connects to dreams (204–5). “Images of Fabulous Kings” is explicitly introduced as a dream in *Portrait*, and the passages based on “Hoofs” and “The Spell” probably record dreams as well, just as “The Ship” is feverish and dreamlike. All four share close thematic and imagistic
echoes, but beyond these similarities, it is the lyrical language of “Fabulous Kings” that links it to the other dream epiphanies.9

In this regard, it may be significant that, aside from minor changes in punctuation, the only difference between “The Spell” epiphany and the text in Portrait is the word “people,” which becomes “kinsmen” in the diary, bringing additional associations of “relationship, affinity, genus, race” and “generation” into play (Skeat). Similarly, only one word is changed from “Images of Fabulous Kings,” where “ascend” replaces “arise.” There are a few more alterations to “Hoofs,” but these can mostly be explained by context: “summer” is omitted, since the entry is dated April 10; “Dublin” is cut, as the setting is clear; “town” is changed to “city.” In contrast to the radical revision of “The Ship,” Joyce inserts his epiphanies virtually unchanged, because the diary provides a perfect narrative structure for a series of fragmentary texts, with little need for introduction or explanation. Nevertheless, Joyce ensures continuity by making many of the diary entries resemble epiphanies, recording “the vulgarity of speech or of gesture” or “a memorable phase of the mind” (SH 216): in addition to four dream epiphanies, there are lyrical passages of reflection, such as Stephen’s thoughts on time and beauty (273), the old man from the West (274), and Platonic love (275), while Stephen also notes “little errors and gestures—mere straws in the wind” (MBK 126) by which people betray themselves (270, 275).

This stylistic resemblance between diary and epiphanies is strongly reinforced by their structural similarities. Like the epiphanies, Stephen’s diary is discontinuous, with a gap of four days after the April 10 epiphany, and ten days after the last epiphany; even when multiple entries are recorded on the same day, there is always a break between them. Then again, Joyce creates continuity by returning to earlier concerns and repeating phrases within the diary. In the first entry, Stephen records a “long talk with Cranly” about his “revolt” and “love for one’s mother,” apparently referring to the discussion they have just concluded (270; 259–69), and he pursues the same theme on March 24, March 30, and the penultimate entry, April 26. Similarly, when Stephen recalls the word “tundish” on April 13, this is only the most obvious of many verbal echoes from earlier scenes, including a raucous reappropriation of phrases from the climax to chapter 4: “Wild spring. Scudding clouds. O life! Dark stream of bogwater . . . Eyes of girls . . . Houp-la!” (273). Repetition is also frequent within
the diary, from the “exhausted loins” and freedom of the first three entries, to the play on “mud” and “crocodiles” (272–73), to the final repetition, “Old father, old artificer.”

Thus, Stephen’s diary, like Joyce’s epiphanies, comprises a series of linked but discontinuous moments, both radiant in themselves and reflecting on each other. As mentioned, the novel is composed of a series of striking vignettes separated by narrative breaks—the same basic structure that governs the diary and the epiphanies is replicated in each of its chapters. Any outline of part 1 would surely include the apologize, square ditch, infirmary, Christmas dinner, pandybatting, and rectorate scenes, but it would also have to indicate gaps between sections (e.g., the jump to Christmas between 1.2 and 1.3 and the return to Clongowes), as well as those within each section. The problem with a linear summary is that Joyce’s scenes are discontinuous yet interwoven, bridging narrative ellipses with repetition. Exacerbating the difficulty, Joyce provides few deictic indications for temporal and spatial shifts, leaving readers to rely on other clues for orientation, like the imagery of fire, holly, and ivy at the beginning of section three, which provides a link back to Stephen’s thoughts of Christmas (18, 25–26). Here, plot is subordinate to patterned imagery, indicating that the novel is not fixed and sequential but reciprocal and self-varying, “an endless reverberation” (P 177) of echoes.

The structure of each part is even more evident in the novel as a whole: with little explicit indication, shifts between chapters, like the jumps from Clongowes to Blackrock to Dublin (spanning some eight or ten years), emphasize the elliptical narrative, organized around epiphanic scenes. As mentioned, many of these are based directly on epiphanies, such as the apologize scene, the infirmary, the encounter with the prostitute, and Stephen’s vision of “the hell reserved for his sins” (P 148–49); others, like the moment Stephen meets Emma and writes his first poem, his composition of the villanelle, and the diary, are structured around several epiphanies, and significantly these are the key moments in which we see Stephen’s growth as an artist. It is not surprising, therefore, that other climactic moments not based on any known epiphany, like the fetus scene or the bird-girl on the strand, are frequently dubbed epiphanies. These set pieces stand out for their lyrical qualities and their evident symbolic function, but just as often, the passages based on epiphanies in Portrait are unremarkable—only a reader familiar with the “Mary Ellen” or “Last Tram”
epiphanies is likely to notice any difference between their occurrence in the novel and the paragraphs surrounding them. Critics have tended to focus on the first kind, but the second group gives a much fuller picture of the extent to which both the structure and style of *A Portrait* are based on the epiphanies, not only in the climaxes to each chapter but also in the quiet lulls that follow. Indeed, these unobtrusive, largely unnoticed epiphanies point to a shortcoming in previous studies of the *Portrait* epiphanies, where critics typically read back from climactic moments in the novel (the bird-girl, etc.) to the epiphanies, and not the other way around. Their approach is legitimate in view of the relative importance of each text in Joyce’s oeuvre, but by putting the focus on *Portrait*, they obscure the crucial role of the epiphanies in structuring the novel.

*Portrait’s Stylistic Fusion*

The epiphanies provide nodal points for *Portrait’s* major articulations, as well as the twin strands of repetition and variation that run like a double helix through every twist and turn of the novel. It follows that any passage will exhibit the structural and stylistic principles of the epiphanies, but just as there is a genesis from the epiphanies to *Portrait*, so too there is clear stylistic development within Joyce’s *Künstlerroman*, reflecting Stephen’s maturing consciousness through growing linguistic complexity.

The epiphanies shape this stylistic development, with Stephen’s artistic growth reaching its fullest expression in his final journal entries, many of which are modeled on epiphanies. Likewise, Stephen’s first poem is inspired by two epiphanies (#3, #5; *P* 72–74); the “instant of inspiration” (235) that occasions the villanelle comes immediately after “The Girls, The Boys” (234–35); in the midst of its composition, he recalls a scene based on “She Dances with Them in the Round” (238) that furnishes “the radiant image of the eucharist” to complete the poem; and immediately upon doing so, he returns to “The Last Tram” to reflect on his artistic development (241). Thus, Stephen’s art in *Portrait* grows out of Joyce’s art in the epiphanies, and Stephen’s growth as an artist leads him to precisely the point when he is able to write the Joycean epiphany.

In the last section, I showed how little Joyce revised the diary epiphanies, but there is one significant change: in *Portrait*, he adds an entire paragraph after epiphany #29:
25 March, morning. A troubled night of dreams. Want to get them off my chest.

A long curving gallery. From the floor ascend pillars of dark vapours. It is peopled by the images of fabulous kings, set in stone. Their hands are folded upon their knees in token of weariness and their eyes are darkened for the errors of men go up before them for ever as dark vapours.

Strange figures advance as from a cave. They are not as tall as men. One does not seem to stand quite apart from another. Their faces are phosphorescent, with darker streaks. They peer at me and their eyes seem to ask me something. They do not speak. (272)

The “[s]trange figures” may represent a new dream or a continuation of the epiphany; in either case, the rhetorical mode of the second paragraph is indistinguishable from the first. It may be based on a lost epiphany, just as the Mabel Hunter and Harold’s Cross sections that begin “He was sitting” (P 70–72) may be drawn from more than thirty epiphanies that seem not to have survived, but it is equally likely that Joyce composed the scenes for Portrait; either way, the dream is framed as Stephen’s epiphany, highlighting how closely the style of the diary, and Portrait as a whole, is modeled on Joyce’s ur-texts.

Nevertheless, there is a clear evolution in the way epiphanies are reused in Portrait. At the beginning of the novel, there is little if any irony in the “Apologise” epiphany or the infirmary scene, but by the end of the diary, Stephen distances himself from his April 10 epiphany: “Read what I wrote last night. Vague words for a vague emotion” (274). As Bowen argues, this seems to prepare the ground for Stephen’s ironic view of the epiphanies in “Proteus” (Bowen 1979; U 3.141–44), but it is also possible to read the comment positively (“Would [Emma] like it? I think so. Then I should have to like it also” [274]). In chapter 4, Stephen contemplates “an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose” (181), suggesting that if the emotion is as vague as a dream, its representation demands an equally dreamlike style, which is precisely what the dream epiphanies create. All Stephen’s reveries, whether waking or sleeping, have this quality, and the diary has many such passages, but by the end of the novel, their rhythm has changed, becoming increasingly staccato.
One would expect the lyrical-symbolic mode of the dream epiphanies to create an unbroken flow of associations, but Stephen’s diary combines this with frequent ellipsis, which punctuates the rhythm. This combination plays a key role in shaping Dedalus’s stream-of-consciousness style in *Ulysses*, but it is important to recognize that this is not a fundamentally new voice; on the contrary, it unfolds from Joyce’s underlying structure of silence and repetition. For instance, the entry for March 21, night, reads:

Free. Soulfree and fancyfree. Let the dead bury the dead. Ay. And let the dead marry the dead. (270)

Despite rapid-fire sentences, Joyce’s prose remains supple and periodic. This syncopated rhythm is created by runs of repetition and variation (the first playing on “carefree,” the second on the Gospels), so that the pauses between sentences are more graphic than aural, indicating Stephen’s train of thought. Likewise, the previous entry, dated the same morning, combines short, staccato sentences with recondite reflection, inviting readers to join Stephen’s elliptical thoughts into a coherent stream of consciousness. Interestingly, both passages allude to epiphanies in Luke and Matthew, propagating further associations.

This conjunction of silence and repetition suggests the diary is analogous to the epiphanies, but *Portrait* goes much further in fusing the poles: whereas the dramatic epiphanies foreground resonant hiatuses, and the dream epiphanies are characterized by lyrical symbolism, by the end of *Portrait*, Joyce combines them in equal measure.

This tendency is already apparent in the overture, with its “quick-cut glimpses” (Kenner 1991, 12) of childhood: in a page and a half, Joyce presents the tale of baby tuckoo, “the wild rose” song, wet beds, “the sailor’s hornpipe,” Uncle Charles and Dante, Dante’s brushes for Michael Davitt and Parnell, the Vances, and the injunction to “Apologise.” Each paragraph provides a snapshot, like a discontinuous sequence of early memories; even the sentence structure is paratactic. Yet repetition bestows order and continuity on the sequence, like the final pages of *Portrait*. As with the diary, Joyce combines lyrical-symbolism with ironic realism: two songs on the first page foreground repetition (“Tralala lala / Tralala tralaladdy”), accruing symbolic associations through variation (“O, the wild rose blossoms / . . . O, the geen wothe botheth”), while the overture concludes with the first epiphany, a dramatic sketch constructed around the resonant
hiatus of why Stephen is being punished and the silence of who says, “Pull out his eyes” (4). Thus, for all their apparent differences, the structure of the opening mirrors the diary at the end; Stephen’s language and reflections become more complex, but the underlying pattern remains.

The generative structure of *A Portrait* becomes apparent when the dialogue and narrative of *Dubliners* are compared to those of *Portrait*: whereas in *Dubliners* the two are relatively distinct, and can be characterized, respectively, by Joyce’s modes of ironic realism and lyrical symbolism (chapter 3), *Portrait* brings them together. That is, the dialogue in *Portrait* is frequently elevated to lyrical or impassioned rhetoric, while even its most lyrical passages are undercut by irony. Regarding the former, epiphany #1 provides a perfect example, as young Stephen transforms spoken threats into poetry (“Pull out his eyes / Apologise . . .”). In *Portrait*, these lines are no longer even dialogue, but a pure form of lyrical symbolism. Mutatis mutandis, the power of the Christmas dinner scene is created not only by the realism and irony of its dialogue (though it has that in spades) but also by its impassioned rhetoric, which thrills, terrifies, and enflames Stephen (38–39), making the visceral power of language a highly charged motif. Another example is provided by Stephen’s thirteen-page disquisition on aesthetics, which culminates in a narrative epiphany no more, and no less, lyrical than Dedalus’s monologue (*P* 221–33; “The Girls, The Boys”). The same point holds true for the dialogue in chapter 5: for all their irony and realism, the long conversations with Davin, the dean of studies, Lynch and Cranly are replete with lyrical symbolism, and this mode applies as much to Stephen’s interlocutors as to himself. For instance, Davin’s tale, recounted in a lilting Hiberno-English brogue, “[calls] up before Stephen’s mind a strange vision” (196) whose lyrical associations (“The last words of Davin’s story *sang* in his memory”) of “a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself” (198) are repeated verbatim as Stephen forges an image to complete his villanelle (239–40). Lyrical-symbolic effects such as these are found in every chapter, such as Uncle Charles’s refined diction, which colors the surrounding narrative by association (62; see Kenner 1975, 15–38); the jouissance occasioned in young Stephen by Dumas’s line, “Madam, I never eat Muscatel grapes” (65); the strange power of the *Confiteor*, which awakens a “sudden memory” in Stephen, carrying him “as if by magic” to “another scene” (82); Father Arnall’s hell sermons (126–45);19 the voices of Stephen’s brothers and sisters modulating from the boro-boro
language of children into an angelic choir (177); and the boyish whoops of joy that echo in Stephen’s ears as he goes to encounter the bird-girl on the beach (182–83).

Hence, the dialogue in Portrait retains the ironic realism of Dubliners and the dramatic epiphanies but adds the lyricism and symbolic significance associated with dream epiphanies; conversely, the narrative mode of Portrait is always undercut by irony. This is typically the result of a gap between Stephen’s romantic imaginings and the apparent reality of the situation he describes; yet this deconstruction of lyricism through tonal ambiguity enhances its power. Perhaps the best example is the famous ending to chapter 4, where a girl gazing out to sea—possibly a cocklepicker—undergoes a lyrical-symbolic metamorphosis in Stephen’s imagination: “She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird” (185). One has only to compare similar passages in Synge and D’Annunzio to see the delicacy and intensity of Joyce’s lyricism, but his emphasis on “her long slender bare legs” and full thighs, “bared almost to the hips,” revealing “the white fringes of her drawers” (185), counteracts the symbolism of Stephen’s extended avian simile. Stephen’s natural desire casts doubt on the purity of the angelic “image” he creates—“a wild angel . . . , the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life”—leaving “the holy silence of his ecstasy” ringing with rapturous longing, and these carnal motivations are written into his credo: “To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!” (186, my emphasis). Joyce’s line resonates on many levels, picking up on all the major themes of chapters 3 and 4, but it is significant that at the moment Stephen affirms his self-sufficiency as an artist-creator, the text underscores his Daedalian ambitions with the basic instincts of reproduction.

These sexual drives can be read ironically, as John McGowan does when he interprets the scene “in terms of Stephen’s troubled relation to women; his separation from the girl, with whom he exchanges ‘no word’ makes his substitution of the warm embrace of mother earth take on a comic note” (439; see P 187). This is perceptive, and McGowan is right that “Stephen’s sexual confusions” ask us to interpret “his aesthetic theories in relation to his frustrated romantic longings” (439; see P 187). Joyce seems to mock Stephen’s artistic pretensions as flowery aestheticism by reflecting on the lurid description of sunset: “A world, a glimmer, or a flower?” (187). But this doesn’t negate the dreamlike beauty of the sunset passage; rather, it
opens another perspective, allowing us to enjoy Joyce’s lyricism all the more by disarming critical resistance. Likewise, the satirical potential of sexual undercurrents does not undermine the epiphanic quality of the bird-girl passage; in fact, by yoking Stephen’s creative impulses to reproductive instincts, Joyce offers the possibility of physical incarnation to art and imagination, making the bodily and the spiritual one, which actually reinforces the “heroic” reading of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

This paradoxical function of irony and realism to heighten Joyce’s lyrical symbolism is seen in the climax to each chapter. At the end of chapter 2, for instance, Stephen’s encounter with the prostitute expands on the poetic language of epiphany #31, whose “dark presence” moves “subtle and murmurous as a flood” through the passage (*P* 106), adding the religious symbolism of gas lamps “burning as if before an altar” and prostitutes arrayed “as for some rite” to the “maze of narrow and dirty streets” in Dedalus’s Nighttown; at the same time, this lyrical symbolism is interpenetrated by the ironic realism of the encounter, powerfully manifest in a series of puns and double entendres (“Good night, Willie dear” [cf.106–8]). As with the ellipses in *Dubliners*, these euphemisms may be explained by the pressures of censorship, which allows Joyce to tease the reader with the ambiguity of what takes place. Hovering between (French) kiss and intercourse (in both senses), this ambiguity allows Joyce to make the physical movement of “her softly parting lips” a fluid exchange of tongues, speech, fantasy, and sex: here, ironic realism creates a teeming, indeterminate orifice that presses upon Stephen’s “brain as upon his lips,” and presumably his penis, “as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech,” disseminating meaning through the confluence of language, fantasy, and sexuality.

The uncertainty about what happens at the end of part 2 creates a euphemistic silence that stems from the repetition of “Upon Me from the Darkness,” and this conjunction is replicated in the many phrases that recall Stephen’s “mortal sin” at the beginning of chapter 3. “From the evil seed of lust all other deadly sins [spring] forth” (113), we read, but the chapter begins with Stephen’s gluttony and ends with his eager anticipation of white pudding, sausages, eggs, and tea “the morning after the communion” (158), adding a homely, ironic-realist twist to his reflections on the simplicity and beauty of life as he receives the host. Again, the effect is not so much to negate the significance of Stephen’s communion as to return the symbolism of transubstantiation to the substance of survival.
Almost all the meals in *Portrait* are overlaid with eucharistic imagery, like the sad, parentless supper of tea and sugared bread supplemented by the children’s singing in chapter 4 (176–77) and the breakfast of watery tea and crusts of fried bread at the start of chapter 5 (188), where the “dark pool” of dripping recalls the “turfcoloured water of the bath in Clongowes” (188) as well as the last figures islanded in “distant pools” at the end of chapter 4 (187). Thus, the movement of climactic, even epiphanic, chapter endings followed by down-to-earth, ironic-realist openings described by Kenner, Booth, and Riquelme is reductive, for the two modes are continuously in operation: the lyrical symbolism of the endings is enhanced by levels of realism and irony, just as the apparently realistic scenes that commence each new chapter are overlaid with lyrical and symbolic associations, like the Eucharistic breakfast and baptismal bath at the beginning of chapter 5.

This conjunction of stylistic modes governing the climax of each chapter, and the novel as a whole, also applies in each of its parts. As I argued in chapter 3, the purest and simplest form of Joyce’s ironic realism is silence, while the quintessence of his lyrical-symbolism is repetition. It follows that the synthesis of these modes involves the union of silence and repetition. Since the two modes originate in the epiphanies, it is not surprising to find them in the *Portrait* epiphanies, but whereas straightforward repetition of the early texts would imply a stylistic movement from the first dramatic epiphany to the lyrical epiphanies in the diary, as Gabler suggests (*JJA* 7.xxvii), the novel brings the poles together. This interweaving of silence and repetition is explicit in the diary, where “silence is cloven by alarm as by an arrow” (“Hoofs”; *P* 274). Sundering and adhering to the silence, the “arrow” is a sign of repetition—primarily of the “hoofs upon the road,” which are first heard “through the silence,” then on the bridge, then again under the windows, and finally far away, “hoofs that shine amid the heavy night as gems.” I have already shown how this phrase echoes “The Last Tram,” which is itself recycled twice in *Portrait* (72, 241), and how the diary entry as a whole is linked to epiphanies #28, #29, #30 and the passages based on them. The arrow-like repetitions of the hoofs that cleave (to) the silence ripple outward, with the ambiguity of the verb “to cleave” indicating how repetition oscillates between bifurcation and doubling, giving form to silence by opening a space for (self-) reflection while simultaneously bridging the difference.
The impulse generated by this oscillation shapes the wavelike surface of Joyce’s text, an endlessly repeated succession of ever-varying crests separated by troughs of silence, and the same pattern is evident in the genesis of Portrait’s epiphanies. As noted, the major difference between epiphany #1 and Portrait is the loss of speech headings and stage directions, which leave the repeated verses either unspoken or unattributed. Elsewhere, speech is reduced to pure materiality, the repetition of meaningless sound. For instance, Joyce’s revision of epiphany #6 makes the satirical “Half-Men, Half-Goats” move repetitively “in slow circles, circling closer and closer to enclose, to enclose, soft language issuing from their lips.” Their malleable utterance is as unintelligible as the fecal matter that surrounds them, so that in Joyce’s “Epiphany of Hell” (Cornell 2.A.16), speech is figured as logorrhoea, or verbal diarrhoea, an endlessly repeated, reified, and unintelligible production. Semantic reduction, accompanied by the reification of sound, can also be seen in the transformation of “Upon Me from the Darkness,” whose cry “for an iniquitous abandonment” (PSW 191; P 106) becomes almost “inarticulate” as Stephen “moan[s] to himself like some baffled prowling beast,” feeling the murmurs of a dark presence break from him in “a cry which was but the echo of an obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing wall of a urinal” (106).

In these epiphanies, speech is rendered as inarticulate or unintelligible sound: a silence of signification reduces spoken language to empty repetition. These physical properties furnish one half of Stephen’s epiphantic theory of language incarnate; the other comes from its signifying function, represented as silence that speaks. In the last quotation, an “obscene scrawl” on “the oozing wall of a urinal” (note the sound patterns) is echoed in a cry (“Fuck”?): silent letters speak through repetition. This indicates that, as well as representing the materiality of language “silently emptied of instantaneous sense” (P 193), the Portrait epiphanies figure speech and writing as repetition in silence.23 For instance in epiphany #24, Joyce describes a young woman (perhaps Hannah Sheehy) whose “eyes have revealed her—secret, vigilant, an enclosed garden” (PSW 184). This window to her soul echoes the Song of Songs, evoking a response in the speaker: Inter ubera mea commorabitur (Songs 1.13). In Portrait, the epiphany is reused to describe the “inaudible voice” Stephen hears caressing his soul as he reads Alphonsus Liguori, echoing back phrases from the canticles, until Stephen hears his “soul answer with the same inaudible voice, surrendering
herself: *Inter ubera mea commorabitur* (P 164). Here, the young woman’s revealing eyes set off a train of association that makes the silence speak. Likewise, in “Images of Fabulous Kings,” the eyes of statues are “darkened” with opaque significance, but in the paragraph Stephen adds, “strange figures . . . peer at [him] and their eyes seem to ask [him] something,” though “they do not speak” (P 272).

In the bodily production of inarticulate language and silent reflections of the gaze, these epiphanies define two patterns: the repetition of silence and the silence of repetition. Ultimately, these interwoven patterns form a single braid, but it is easier to see this by separating the strands. Silence in repetition first. The “Images” epiphany (#29, quoted above; P 272) provides a ready example: the “weariness” of the “fabulous kings” who gaze with “darkened eyes” on the errors of men echoes Stephen’s villanelle (“Are you not *weary* . . .” 236, 243), Jonson’s lyric, “I was not *wearier* where I lay” (190), Newman reading Virgil (177), and a whole sorry tale of weariness going back to Stephen’s reflections on the green earth and maroon clouds in his geography textbook, weighed down as they are by politics and the name of God (13). It is impossible to bear all these reverberations in mind, because ancillary associations with Jonson, Newman, Virgil, Parnell, Davitt, and so on create a potentially infinite regress. One moment in the chain is particularly striking, however, because it expresses this very condition. As Stephen listens to his siblings singing in the gathering dusk, he hears “with pain of spirit . . . the overtone of weariness behind their frail fresh innocent voices”: “He heard the choir of voices in the kitchen echoed and multiplied through an endless reverberation of the choirs of endless generations of children: and heard in all the echoes an echo also of the recurring note of weariness and pain” (177). This “recurring note of weariness and pain” might recall “the hole we all have” (*WD* 29), but its overtones reverberate endlessly precisely because its associations are imaginary. Stephen listens to his siblings’ voices, no doubt with echoes and harmonics, but the overtones he hears are not confined to sound: in his imagination, a metonymic chain of choirs sings the same note to infinity, creating a genuinely resonant hiatus. The musical analogy adds a certain complexity, since overtones can be sung by different voices, but in literature, at least, the “subtle or elusive implication[s] or association[s]” of *figurative* overtones (*OED*) lie wholly within the text. Indeed, the multilevel implications of overtones bring attention to the tonal properties of
language. Describing voice and color, tone is discerned in music, speech, and writing, yet it has no overt marker: whatever overtones or undertones we may detect, the text remains the same. In this sense, the tone of writing is silent, an invisible mark of difference in repetition (note, for instance, the difference between identical lexical items in the sentence quoted above, like the subtle shift from literal voices to figurative echoes in the repetition of “heard”). The irony so many readers detect in *Portrait* illustrates this perfectly: opening a gap between what is said and how it is understood, meaning multiplies. Yet irony is only one aspect of the tonal ambiguity that characterizes all of Joyce’s work, from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake*; like the ironic-realism of the dramatic epiphanies, it universalizes the potential for semantic ambiguity, opening an invisible gap or silent mark of difference that makes every word resonate.

As well as the silence within repetition, there is also repetition in silence. “[C]hiasmic symmetry pervades” *A Portrait*, from the “quick-cut glimpses” of the overture reflected in the final diary fragments, or the counterpart visions of prostitute and bird-girl that end chapters 2 and 4, to countless examples of chiasmus in the text (Kenner 1991, 11–13). As Kenner points out, at the structural center of the novel, between the second and third of four sermons that form the innermost section of the central chapter, “The preacher took a chainless watch from a pocket within his soutane and, having considered its dial for a moment in silence, placed it silently before him on the table” (*P* 126). At the center of the novel, then, is a moment of silence, a pause, a hush, like the tain of the mirror, which reflects everything but itself. That is to say, the mirrored repetitions that form *Portrait*’s chiastic structure are centered on a moment of silent reflection. Indeed, Kenner’s analogy between self-portraiture, like Rembrandt’s “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man” (of which there are several) and Joyce’s autobiographical novel, implies that silence is to the text as the mirror is to the painting:

| Background Painter Mirror Painter’s image Background’s image | Dublin Joyce Stephen “Dublin” |

Kenner argues that books provide silent mirrors of the world: “When the busy sounding world has passed through the novel’s kind of mirror into a book, its sounds lie hushed in the mimicry of silent type” (13). Traditional notions of mimesis might justify Kenner’s conclusion, but Joyce’s work challenges mimetic theories of art by foregrounding the materiality of
language. Insisting on graphemes as textual objects, Joyce suggests that the “kind of mirror . . . silent type” provides is not fundamentally representational but self-referential. In this model, textual silence is analogous to the thin layer of tinfoil that makes reflection possible, though it cannot reflect itself; likewise, the materiality of language is a condition for representation, although it cannot signify itself. It follows that, in addition to the material form of the signifier, there must be a gap for representation to take place; this space is the silence of signification. Just as there is never a total absence of sound, or a material void, textual silence cannot be represented directly: all representation necessarily contains a space of silence, but silence can be summoned into being only through representation. Again, the poles are uroboric: representation (the relation of similitude-in-difference) depends upon silence, and silence depends upon material representation. If this seems abstract, consider the diagram above. When Kenner invites the reader to inscribe silence in the blank space of its absence, a genuine hiatus carries the trace of its own signifier, offering a paradigm of the linguistic epiphany.

Kenner’s reading is paradigmatic because Portrait’s chiastic structure hinges on silence: a central silence enfolds all others, even as it opens the space for mirrored repetition. Borrowing Derrida’s term, silence in Portrait is “la brisure,” the hinge that joins and divides; “designating difference and articulation,” it is the “origin of all repetition,” instantiating “the differance which opens appearance and signification” (1976, 65). Likewise, Joyce’s silence both cleaves and is cloven by repetition, because the silent pause at the center of Portrait’s chiastic structure is mirrored by silence within each repetition, pointing to a silence that lies before inscription and beyond the text.

As this suggests, the same structure is replicated throughout the novel, so that Kenner’s central silence is one of many. Kenneth Burke situates the “point of farthest internality” (324) just after the retreat, as Stephen prays silently on the threshold to his room:

He waited still at the threshold as at the entrance to some dark cave. Faces were there; eyes: they waited and watched.

—We knew perfectly well of course that though it was bound to come to the light he would find considerable difficulty in endeavouring to try to induce himself to try to endeavour to ascertain the spiritual plenipotentiary and so we knew of course perfectly well—
Murmuring faces waited and watched; murmurous voices filled the dark shell of the cave. (147)

Burke’s choice of center is cryptic, but the one clue he provides—“circular” (147)—may refer to the chiastic structure of the passage: “dark cave. Faces . . . waited and watched . . . perfectly well . . . try to induce himself . . . induce himself to try . . . perfectly well . . . faces waited and watched . . . dark . . . cave.” This mirrored repetition replicates in miniature the structure of the book, and here too it encloses a moment of silence. In the central paragraph, the words quoted are thought, not spoken; echoing in Stephen’s mind, they recall a motif: “The echoes of certain expressions used in Clongowes sounded in remote caves of his mind. // His ears were listening to these distant echoes amid the silence” (170; cf. 71, 193, 272 and epiphanies #5, 29).

Burke’s “point of farthest internality,” deep in the cavern of Stephen’s self, offers an alternative center to Kenner’s, but others are equally plausible. Indeed, the epiphany that begins on the following page is more deeply embedded than the scene Burke singles out, where Stephen’s room is presented as a cave (147): when Stephen crawls into bed and wraps himself in his blankets, trying to shut out the memory of his sins and close “the senses of his soul” (148), he has gone much deeper into himself than when he stands on the threshold of the room. It is at precisely this moment that Stephen has his personal vision of hell, based on Joyce’s “hell” epiphany (“Half-Men, Half-Goats”), which, as the central epiphany in Portrait, provides another structural center to the novel. I have shown how Joyce adapts the epiphany to reflect on silence and repetition, but Stephen’s vision also reflects the “vision of hell” Father Arnall describes a few pages earlier:

—A holy saint (one of our own fathers I believe it was) was once vouchsafed a vision of hell. It seemed to him that he stood in the midst of a great hall, dark and silent save for the ticking of a great clock. The ticking went on unceasingly; and it seemed to this saint that the sound of the ticking was the ceaseless repetition of the words—ever, never; ever, never. (143)

Following Burke’s logic of internality, this point could be taken as central, and here again, we find the same repetitive mechanism ticking ceaselessly in the silence.
The word silence appears almost a hundred times, including its adjectival and adverbial forms; virtually every scene in Portrait is accompanied by silence, from the silent air over the playing fields in the opening to the cloven silence of the dream epiphanies in Stephen’s diary. In between, there are awkward silences at the Christmas dinner table, a “dead silence” before the pandybatting, and silence in the rectorate; when Stephen meets Emma, his manner is silent and watchful (70–72, cf. epiphanies #5 and #3); his vision of the word “foetus” arises in the silence of the anatomy theater, just as “Stephen’s inarticulate cries” break the silence of the prostitute’s chamber at the end of chapter 2. In part 3, Stephen takes pleasure in “penetrating into obscure silences” (113), and there are plenty of them in the loaded silences before and after the retreat, as well as between the sermons, where Stephen suffers silently in his need for confession (136). Afterward, his soul is “clear and silent” (158), but he knows that he will “fall silently” back into temptation, for he already feels “the silent lapse of his soul” (175). The bird-girl scene is suffused in an atmosphere of “holy silence” (186), as is the composition of the villanelle, and after writing out his poem, Stephen feels an “oceanic silence” (245) filling his heart. This moment recalls “the enchantment of the heart” Stephen describes in “the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure,” which summons up “a thoughtenchanted silence” (231), and silence is of course the first of Stephen’s “arms,” simultaneously a means of attack, defense, and expression (268–69).

Like the inaudible backdrop to Dubliners, there is an everpresent air of silence in A Portrait, and this silence, the silence of language, is unchanging, yet the silences in each narrative have a different quality. In the last chapter, I identified silence as the essence of Joyce’s ironic realism, creating resonant hiatuses in the text, and this, I believe, is their primary function in Dubliners, whereas the “oceanic” silences in Portrait are both lyrical and symbolic. The silence of language is necessarily present in narrated silences, so the difference is not fundamental, but the implicit mechanism of Dubliners becomes increasingly explicit. Portraying the “thoughtenchanted” silences of Portrait in a lyrical-symbolic vein, Joyce implies that silence gives rise to repetition, while each repeated image runs back into the same silent sea. Just as repetition enfolds silence, even when there is no marked difference (e.g., through tonal ambiguity), this fusion of the poles means that the named silences in Portrait explicitly embody their propensity to proliferate.
Language Incarnate: The Epiphany of the Word

If the structural and stylistic principles of the epiphanies are conjoined throughout the novel, then *Portrait*’s language is itself epiphanic. In this section, I take up this argument, showing that for Joyce, the real site of epiphany is the word, as language becomes a manifestation of spirit. To flesh out this notion of linguistic embodiment, I adopt Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s concept of the remainder.

As Derek Attridge explains, for Lecercle, “[a]ny language [. . . ] operates in accordance with four propositions”:

1. Language is a material product of the body.
2. Language is an abstract system, independent of the body.
3. The speaker speaks the language, saying freely what he or she means.
4. The language speaks, and meaning belongs to the community before it belongs to the speaker. (Attridge 2001, 65)

The “commonsensical” view of language relies on propositions 2 and 3 (Lecercle 1995, 107); but when 1 and 4 “transgress their allotted frontiers . . . we become aware of the remainder” (66). Examples include glossolalia (“De-revaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!” [*D 33*]), liturgical language (e.g., the act of contrition in *Portrait*, which is prescribed by the community, not the individual: *P 146*), and words that carry a bodily or sexual charge (“rump,” “suck,” “kiss,” “smuggling”). Attridge focuses on the third group to show how “a word can resonate physically and often erotically” (77). In passing, he mentions the role of nineteenth-century philology in emphasizing the “historical and material specificity” of words (70), implying that words can be “made strange” (73) either by *divesting* them of meaning or by *investing* them with a complex history of morphological and semantic change, which explains why the remainder “may just as easily be manifested in an excess of meaning as in a lack of it” (66).

As I showed in chapter 2, Joyce’s lyrical and dramatic epiphanies manifest precisely this excess and lack of meaning, although the relationship between them is uroboric. Likewise, semantic proliferation and indeterminacy are defining characteristics of the epiphanies in *Portrait*, determining the structure and style of the novel. More fundamentally, these qualities are present in the materiality of language, with all its supra-individual networks of signification. As such, these dual aspects of the “remainder” are
not fractional leftovers but ubiquitous properties of language. In Portrait, they are presented in quasi-divine terms, as the epiphany of the word.

This is evident in two ways. First, Stephen dwells on the materiality of language, a bodily production with a physical life of its own. This body is, of course, composed of sound waves and graphic inscriptions, which Portrait figures as repetition in silence, but Stephen’s immaculate conception of the word made flesh, with its recurrent imagery of watery words precipitating from ethereal clouds (235–42), provides a powerful image of language formation as a spiritual incarnation. Second, Stephen gradually realizes that the language he speaks is not his own: English belongs to others, like the dean of studies, before him (205), while speaking through them both, like a “tundish” funneling meaning (203–5, 274). The “unrest of spirit” Stephen feels is not simply a matter of colonial history; language always casts a “shadow” (205) because any word undergoes phonological, graphological, and semantic change. Since the history of these changes lies behind each utterance, the physical form of language provides a conduit for thought. Representing the symbolic manifestation of an intelligence greater than any individual, Lecercle’s fourth proposition provides a succinct account of this aspect of Joyce’s linguistic epiphany, continuously affirming the human spirit as each word modifies a history of repetition and variation.

*   *   *

Attridge demonstrates the visceral power of words like “suck” and “kiss,” emphasizing the erotic charge of the “remainder,” but the physical production of language is stressed from Stephen’s first utterance (“O, the geen wothe botheth”: Riquelme 2007, 1.12), while the nascent sexuality encoded in words like “smuggling” is linked to Stephen’s artistic growth, allowing him to reproduce his creative fantasy through incarnated language. In The Incarnation of Language, Michael O’Sullivan gives a good example of linguistic embodiment:

A soft liquid joy like the noise of many waters flowed over his memory and he felt in his heart the soft peace of silent spaces of fading tenuous sky above the waters, of oceanic silence, of swallows flying through the sea-dusk over the flowing waters.

A soft liquid joy flowed through the words where the soft long vowels hurtled noiselessly and fell away, lapping and flowing back
and ever shaking the white bells of their waves in mute chime and mute peal, and soft low swooning cry; and he felt that the augury he had sought in the wheeling darting birds and in the pale space of sky above him had come forth from his heart like a bird from a turret, quietly and swiftly. (245)

O’Sullivan notes how “[t]he words of the description become part of the description itself; the vowels hurtle and lap, taking on the physical and material state of the waves that have caused his epiphany” (87). Perceptive as this is, the scene is not based on any extant epiphany (although stylistically it resembles the lyrical prose poems), and O’Sullivan implies that Stephen is by the sea, while it is primarily the nomadic swallows that exalt him as he stands on the steps of the National Library in central Dublin. In this context, the hurtling, falling vowels imitate the flight of the birds and their “soft low swooning cry” (P 245), suggesting that Joyce’s language embodies the paths of the birds traced at the start of the scene, re-creating their cries through lyrical runs of softly modulated alliteration and assonance. Significantly, it is only when the free indirect discourse embodies their movement and gives voice to their cries that Stephen feels “the augury he had sought in the wheeling darting birds . . . come forth from his heart like a bird from a turret” (245).

Nevertheless, marine imagery is as present as avian imagery in the text, so O’Sullivan’s impression is not ungrounded. Indeed, it can probably be explained by the fact that the “soft liquid joy” flowing over Stephen’s memory and the “soft peace” he feels “in his heart,” along with the bird motif and the “silent spaces of fading tenuous sky above the waters,” recall the end of chapter 4, where Stephen’s “outburst of profane joy” at the birdlike woman slowly subsides into “the peace and silence of the evening” above the shallow water (186–87). In this way, Stephen’s experience on Sandymount Strand seems to hover over the scene, explaining why the passage “imbibes the form of the villanelle Stephen has just mouthed to himself” (O’Sullivan 87). Although the immediate context points back to Yeats’s lines from The Countess Cathleen, the “soft liquid joy” of these “soft long vowels” flowing over Stephen’s memory recalls the end of the previous section (5.2), where language is figured as liquid and mysterious, a bodily production that takes fluid form, even spilling into the text with the reproduction of the completed villanelle.26 There is a kind of jouissance in its repetition: Stephen feels “a glow of desire” kindle his soul and
fire his body as he imagines Emma, “the temptress of his villanelle,” becoming “conscious of his desire”; her dark, languorous eyes return him to a state of rapture in which “[h]er nakedness yielded to him,” causing “the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, [to flow] forth over his brain,” just as the poem flows forth over the text.27

Onanistic implications throughout the section provide a comical subtext to the villanelle as a kind of linguistic ejaculation, the bodily production of Stephen’s jouissance.28 There is surely irony in these autoerotic undercurrents, but the underlying conception of language is central to the novel. Joyce’s use of “soul” and “spiritual life” for the realm of fantasy recalls the climaxes to chapters 2 and 4, illustrating how language, sexuality, and fantasy are interwoven in Portrait; there is an implicit analogy between the imaginative ardor of sexual fantasy that issues in orgasmic ejaculation and the ecstasy of the spirit that issues in language. This analogy can be traced back from Emma’s “nakedness yield[ing]” to Stephen’s fantasy (242)—causing the poetic emission of the villanelle—to his earlier projection that “she would unveil her soul’s shy nakedness” to an ordinary cleric, “rather than to him, a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life” (240). Here, the artist is portrayed as epiphanist, manifesting the sacred through the profane, and in a sense, Stephen’s poem is itself an imaginative transmutation of everyday desire into a “eucharistic hymn,” whose “ardent ways” combine passionate emotion, religious fervor, and flaming desire. Giving physical embodiment through “liquid letters” to immaterial fantasy, Stephen envisions poetry (< ποεῖν, to create) as incarnation: “In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh.”

It has been suggested that Stephen’s “dewy wet” soul is a euphemism for nocturnal emissions as he wakes from a wet dream, providing a humorous, down-to-earth interpretation of “the word . . . made flesh.” The possibility is certainly implied, contributing to the satirical reading of Stephen, but at the same time it makes Stephen’s doctrine of the logos comically real: language is literally incarnated through the physical embodiment of fantasy, the dewy distillation of thought. Effectively, Joyce suggests that an immaculate conception takes place each time thought arises in the imagination. As a literary product, Stephen’s images naturally take shape in sounds and letters, a shape no less tangible, or potentially fertile, than his bodily emissions. This emphasizes the bodily incarnation of language, a literal interpretation of John 1.1–14, and this vision of the linguistic epiphany is
strongly reinforced by descriptions of Stephen giving form to the villanelle through a cloudlike condensation of spirit.

The section opens with a series of decadent, almost Pateresque periods about Stephen’s morning inspiration, leaving “His soul . . . all dewy wet” (235). “An enchantment of the heart!” Stephen thinks, recalling his dream, and also the phrase used by Luigi Galvani, which Stephen likens to “a spiritual state” produced by “the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure” in his theory (235, 231). Recalling Shelley’s description of the mind as a fading coal at the moment of poetic inspiration (235, 231), Stephen’s aesthetic theory hovers behind the “instant of inspiration”:

The instant of inspiration seemed now to be reflected from all sides at once from a multitude of cloudy circumstance of what had happened or of what might have happened. The instant flashed forth like a point of light and now from cloud on cloud of vague circumstance confused form was veiling softly its afterglow. (235–36)

Again, the potential irony of Stephen’s Romanticism in no way invalidates his epiphanic vision; rather, by undercutting univocal claims to truth, Joyce’s second degré discourse multiplies significance, exactly as described: Stephen’s “instant of inspiration” flashes forth like lightning and is reflected back on all sides from a “multitude of cloudy circumstance.” These vague, oneiric clouds are both the source and reflection of Stephen’s luminous inspiration; their light fills his spirit with “the purest water, sweet as dew” (235), and at the end of the section, the image of his muse, Emma, enfolded him like a shining cloud, enfolded him like water with a liquid life; and like a cloud of vapour or like waters circumfluent in space the liquid letters of speech, symbols of the element of mystery, flowed forth over his brain. (242)

Joyce’s recurrent use of cloud imagery here, in which poetic inspiration is represented as a shining cloud of vapor that precipitates liquid letters, draws on Exodus, where God appears as “a pillar of cloud” by day and “a pillar of fire” by night to lead the Israelites to the promised land (13.21–22).29 This Old Testament shekinah becomes increasingly important in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, where cycles of water and light become dominant linguistic tropes. As this development indicates, Joyce reifies the heavenly apparitions offered by biblical clouds, which ultimately congeal into language. In Finnegans Wake, Issy, in the guise of “Nuvoletta” (“little
“A day of dappled seaborne clouds”: A Portrait of the Artist’s Epiphany · 133

cloud” [FW 157.8]), condenses into tears and urine, only to return, like
Marvell’s dew, to her heavenly source, and there is a similar cycle in Portrait, whose watery words return to their nebulous origins.

This cycling and recycling of language is most apparent in chapter 4, when Stephen draws “forth a phrase from his treasure”:

—A day of dappled seaborne clouds.

The phrase and the day and the scene harmonised in a chord. Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to glow and fade, hue after hue: sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the grey-fringed fleece of clouds. No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose? (180–81)

Here Stephen reflects on both the material and supra-individual properties of the remainder. The phrase is presented as a product of the body: in the treasure-house of memory Stephen stores precious words, prizing their shape and sound, and he draws them out by speaking them aloud. Phrase, day and scene (contextual and intertextual), harmonize “in a chord,” which brings both the spatial dimension of geometric chords and the aural field of music into accord. This musicality is present in “the poise and balance of the period itself,” a perfect line of iambic tetrameter (a day of dappled seaborne clóuds) whose regular rhythm and alliterative opening are offset by the harmonious modulation of short and long vowels. It is significant that this “rhythmic rise and fall of words” is found in an apparently banal line of prose (the phrase comes from Hugh Miller’s Testimony of the Rocks, a book on sacred geology), emphasizing that aural qualities are not the exclusive province of poetry.

For Stephen, every phrase has its rhythm, even when apparently devoid of sense: the “wayward rhythms” of lines like “The ivy whines upon the wall, / And whines and twines upon the wall . . . band and disband” as Stephen’s “consciousness of language . . . ebb[s]” and “trickl[es] . . . into the very words” (193). Stephen dismisses the verse as “drivel,” a waste
bodily fluid “trickling” from his brain, but tellingly, this poetic “remainder” arises when Stephen finds himself “glancing from one casual word to another . . . 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 . . . as he walked on in a lane among heaps of dead language” (193). Echoing the Cork scene where Stephen “could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops” (98), literary legends are reduced to pure materiality, “heaps of dead language,” yet, paradoxically, they bind Stephen’s mind like a spell (193).

Likewise, the associations of “legend and colour” mesmerize Stephen in “A day of dappled seaborne cloud,” because the processes of reading (legere) and writing activate the legends, or stories of words through association. These associations emphasize verbal vitality, rather than Stephen’s dead letters, illuminated by his choice of colors:30 “sunrise gold” connects to the dawning of “a day”; “seaborne” suggests “azure” waves; the provenance of “greyfringed fleece of clouds” is self-evident. These correspondences imply that “dappled” is “the russet and green of apple orchards,” and it is here that the “associations of legend” go with color, for etymologists compare “dappled” with Old French pomelé, and Old English “æppled,” as in “æpplede gold” (OED). Skeat, quoting Wedgwood, regards the resemblance as accidental (perhaps because he focuses on apple-grey), but in the OED’s first citation, Mandeville describes the giraffe as “a faire beste, wele dappled” while the Cotton manuscript has “a best pomelee or spotted.” Whether Joyce knew this source,31 read it in the OED (first entry 1894), or discovered the connection elsewhere, “the russet and green of apple orchards” that color “dappled” reanimate the word with the associations of an obsolete legend.

As well as explaining the colors, the phrase explains what Stephen means by the associations of “legend”: reading back through a written record to rediscover the story of a word. Seeking his own identity in the name of his forbear, Stephen Dedalus is as enthusiastic about etymology as the character he is derived from. In Stephen Hero, Daedalus, whose name is closer to the Greek, reads “Skeat’s Etymological Dictionary by the hour” (32): “It was not only in Skeat that [Daedalus] found words for his treasure-house, he found them also at haphazard in the shops, on advertisements, in the mouths of the plodding public. He kept repeating them to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables” (SH 36). Again, Stephen’s alexia is linked to both
loss of meaning and heightened signification. Reduced to pure sound, phonemes become “wonderful vocables,” an estrangement of sense that manifests the strange form of language. At the same time, Stephen finds “the plodding public” “strangely ignorant of the value of . . . words,” while he is “hypnotised by the most commonplace conversation” because he resists semantic “reduction” and therefore hears “wonderful vocables” in the constituents of speech (SH 32, 36). This is a prime example of Lecercle’s fourth proposition, where “[t]he language speaks, and meaning belongs to the community before it belongs to the speaker” (Attridge 2001, 65), which means that the words in Stephen’s “treasure-house” embody both aspects of the remainder: materiality and the language of the community. Indeed, the doubly “wonderful vocables” are two manifestations of Joyce’s linguistic epiphany, and both are present in Stephen’s treasured phrase, “[a] day of dappled seaborne clouds”—although demonstration will require a diversion into Victorian philology.

Philology was one of the most dominant intellectual disciplines of the late nineteenth century, influencing new fields like linguistics, anthropology, and psychology. Stephen’s own approach can be characterized as sacred philology: “Phrases came to him asking to have themselves explained. He said to himself: I must wait for the Eucharist to come to me: and then he set about translating the phrase into common sense. He spent days and nights hammering noisily as he built a house of silence for himself wherein he might await his Eucharist” (SH 36). Following two references to Skeat, here Stephen extends etymology into quasi-mystical reverence. Paradoxes abound: personified phrases seek their own interpretation; Stephen awaits communion with consecrated language but attempts to translate it back into “common sense”; he hammers noisily to build a house of silence. There is no way to resolve these contradictions, but it is interesting to note the conjunction of repetition and silence in Stephen’s Eucharistic image of language, which gives a personal twist to one of the mainstays of Victorian philology: the idea that language embodies eternal truth and that etymology provides the means to discover it.

In the preface to his Etymological Dictionary (1882), Skeat concludes: “The speech of man is, in fact, influenced by physical laws, or in other words, by the working of a divine power. It is therefore possible to pursue the study of language in a spirit of reverence similar to that in which we study what are called the works of nature; and by aid of that spirit we may gladly perceive a new meaning in the sublime line of our poet Coleridge,
that ‘Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God’” (xii). Skeat’s views can be explained by his turn to philology from theology, but he is not alone in his sentiments. Richard Chenevix Trench, perhaps the most popular and influential philologist of the nineteenth century, whose papers “On Some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries” (1857) provided the impetus for the New (later Oxford) English Dictionary, held similar views. In the first lecture of *The Study of Words* (1851), Trench urges his audience to “behold the great spiritual realities which underlie our common speech,” for God has “pressed such a seal of truth upon language, that men are continually uttering deeper things than they know.” As dean of Westminster, and later archbishop of Dublin (1864–1884), Trench believed that “God gave man language, just as He gave him reason, and just because He gave him reason; for what is man’s word but his reason, coming forth that it may behold itself? They are indeed so essentially one and the same that the Greek language has one word for them both”—*logos*. Nevertheless, Trench stopped short of believing that all speech was divine. In *Proverbs and Their Lessons*, a book Joyce owned (Gillespie 1986, 240–41), Trench offers an extended commentary on the Latin proverb, *vox populi vox Dei*: “If it were affirmed in this that every outcry of the multitude . . . ought to be accepted as God’s voice speaking through them, no proposition more foolish or more profane could well be imagined. But the voice of the people here is something very different from this. The proverb rests on the assumption that the foundations of man’s being are laid in the truth; from which it will follow, that no conviction which is really a conviction of the universal humanity, but reposes on a true ground” (130). The difficulty for Trench is to discover “that true voice of humanity, which . . . we have a right to assume an echo of the voice of God,” so as to be sure “that we have not taken some momentary cry, wrung out by interest, by passion, or by pain, for the voice of God” (131). Interestingly, this is exactly what Stephen does in “Nestor,” when he hears the hockey players celebrate a goal and tells Mr. Deasy, “That is God . . . A shout in the street” (*U* 2.378–86), suggesting that Joyce extended Trench’s view of the divine origins of language and the sacred truth of proverbs to every utterance.

It is significant that Joyce kept *Proverbs and Their Lessons* in his Trieste library while writing *Portrait*, for there are important similarities between Stephen’s epiphanic vision of language and Trench’s. Although Trench died when Joyce was four, in September 1904 Joyce shared the Martello Tower with Trench’s grandson, Samuel (later Dermot) Chenevix Trench, who
became the principal model for Haines in *Ulysses*. Joyce may have rejected Trench’s Unionist politics and religion, but the connection to Dermot, the book he owned, and Richard’s fame means there is every likelihood Joyce would have known of Trench’s other work, especially his most popular book, *The Study of Words*. The first sentence of Trench’s introductory lecture acknowledges the commonplace that in “worthy books are preserved and hoarded the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which the world has accumulated” (my emphasis). “[N]ot in books only,” Trench continues, “but often also in words contemplated singly, whether they relate to highest spiritual things, or our common words of the shop and the market . . . , there are boundless stores of moral and historic truth, and no less of passion and imagination,” from which “lessons of infinite worth may be derived” (1; cf CW 28, 29). Whereas *Proverbs and Their Lessons* expounds the moral teaching contained in the “treasure of our native proverbs,” especially those drawn from “the rich treasure-house of the Eternal Wisdom,” in *The Study of Words*, Trench regards all of language and literature as a source of treasured wisdom, much as Stephen Dedalus does in *Portrait*.

Indeed, the metaphor Trench uses to describe the buried treasure of language is revealing with regard to Stephen’s reflections on language. Borrowing the phrase from Emerson, Trench characterizes language as “fossil poetry”: “Just as in some fossil, curious and beautiful shapes of vegetable or animal life . . . are permanently bound up with the stone, . . . so in words are beautiful thoughts and images, the imagination and the feeling of past ages . . . preserved and made safe for ever. . . . Many a single word also is itself a concentrated poem, having stores of poetical thought and imagery laid up in it” (18–19). This concept of words as concentrated poems containing stores of ancient wisdom lies behind Trench’s advocacy of etymology, first citations, and chronological accounts of semantic change for the *New English Dictionary*; it also sheds light on Stephen’s conception of language in *Portrait*. The phrase Stephen recites, “a day of dappled seaborne clouds,” is adapted from Hugh Miller’s *Testimony of the Rocks*, whose subtitle, *Geology in Its Bearings on the Two Theologies, Natural and Revealed*, indicates Miller’s purpose: by digging into the fossil record (the natural theology of the book of nature), Miller attempts to uphold the literal truth of the Bible. Attempting to explain how the earth could have been created in six days and have existed for little more than six thousand years, Miller interprets “the six days of creation as vastly extended periods” corresponding to geological ages. This endeavor to reconcile “the Geologic
and Mosaic Records” leads Miller to essay “a possible poem,” whose argument sketches out an epic vision of creation. On the first day, after the war in heaven, Lucifer and the fallen angels are expelled to “our present earth, existing as a half-extinguished hell” (275; cf. Gen. 1:1–5). Countless centuries roll by; land forms; volcanic activity subsides; plant life takes root; animals appear; the sixth day dawns, and we await the arrival of man (275; cf. Gen. 1:6–24). In wonder, Lucifer watches “scene [succeed] scene, and creation [follow] creation,” “and when calling up in memory what once had been, the features of earth seemed scarce more fixed to his view than the features of the sky in a day of dappled, breeze-borne clouds” (277–78). Thus, the phrase Stephen recalls links earth and sky in a vivid image of protean transformation as the world takes shape. Each day and scene in Miller’s account lasts eons, adding intertextual overtones to Stephen’s reflection that “the phrase and the day and the scene harmonised in a chord.” Like Miller, Stephen treasures “the rhythmic rise and fall of words,” writing a “lucid supple periodic prose” that aspires to poetry. Framed by invocations to Milton and Coleridge, Miller’s account of creation is a vision of “poems that might be” (279); at its center, the “day of dappled, breeze-borne clouds” anchors Miller’s epic vision in a precise, natural image. Representing creation in flux, the phrase synthesizes everything from the primeval creation of the earth upon the void to the “sublime revelation” when “man enters upon the scene” as “God, made manifest in the flesh” (278–79).

Joyce’s choice of phrase for Stephen’s treasure is surely not accidental. As a novel about the formative years of an artist, culminating in his first literary creations, and his final intention “to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race,” there are various senses in which A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man can be read as a creation myth. With his mythical links to Daedalus and Icarus, Stephen’s mazes and imaginative flights are rooted in “the fabulous artificer” (183), but the first epiphany also links him to Prometheus (P 4) and the creation of man. Stephen seeks his destiny in the mythological origins of his name while trying to forge a personal identity through the various roles he assumes—sinner, saint, artist manqué—each of which is presented as a spiritual rebirth. Yet he arrives at his poetic vocation only by growing into language, developing his craft to the point at which he can create his own self-portrait in the diary. And as Miller’s phrase reveals, Portrait’s creation myths go beyond Stephen, touching on the creation of the wor(l)d.
In Miller’s “poem,” the whole history of creation passes before Lucifer’s eyes in the moment before the birth of man; for Stephen, all of language is present like distant nebulae behind each epiphany of the word. Whereas Miller literally digs into the book of nature to unearth ancient fossils that will reveal the truth of scripture, for Stephen, language is a kind of “fossil poetry” whose etymological roots offer the promise of true meaning. For Miller, there are two sources of revelation: natural theology and the Bible; for Stephen, nature has to be read and interpreted (“Signatures of all things I am here to read” [U 3.2]), while not just sacred scripture but all of language becomes “a sudden spiritual manifestation.” No matter how ordinary or banal the thought behind it, spoken language is literally in-spirèd (inspīrāre: to blow or breathe into), and spirit is always incarnate in the word, whether through the physical embodiment of language or the diachronic networks of signification that stretch beyond any individual; both aspects pertain to the remainder, and both are present in Stephen’s reflections on “[a] day of dappled seaborne clouds.”

* * *

The material body of the word and its collective histories are present whenever Stephen reflects on language, because Joyce creates an image of language in the process of becoming, manifesting a “continuous affirmation of the human spirit” through each verbal production. From the beginning of the novel, the visceral impact of words is amplified by Stephen’s nascent sense of their polysemy, from the two meanings of “belt” (5) to the “queer word,” “suck” (8), and his extended preoccupation with “smuggling” (42–45), whose meaning belongs to a community beyond the speaker. Smuggling can mean to caress or fondle (OED), possibly even to copulate, as in Bob Doran “fornicating with shawls” (slang for prostitutes) “and hugging and smuggling” them in “Cyclops” (U 12.803–7), but it is more common as a dialect term for juvenile petty theft (Hotten’s Slang Dictionary). Both meanings are in play in Portrait, where the word carries an obscure sexual charge related to the boys’ activity in the latrines (42–43), as well as being connected to the putative theft of altar wine or a monstrance from the sacristry (47). The latter is significant because the word can also mean stealing, copying surreptitiously, hushing up or arresting (OED): the boys have been arrested; their misdemeanor has been hushed up; having broken his glasses, Stephen copies his spelling crib surreptitiously (46); and Joyce has smuggled all these suggestions into a
word whose powerful affect belies its uncertain origins. In the midst of these reflections, Stephen returns, via Tusker Boyle, to Eileen’s “long thin cool white hands . . . like ivory; only soft,” providing a bodily explanation for “Tower of Ivory,” just as her golden hair explains “House of Gold” (43; cf. 35), but it takes him many years to connect the materiality of the word “ivory” to a living tradition that makes the word shine “brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants. Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur.” Stephen’s etymology, via French and Italian to Latin, is not a return to a “dead language” (193) but a recognition that language is “a complex coherent organism . . . that can maintain its identity as it grows and evolves in time; that can remember, that can anticipate, that can mutate” (Kenner 1979, 96). As Kenner says, “Latin is not a dead language; everyone in Paris speaks it, everyone in Rome, everyone in Madrid. The poetic of our time grows from this discovery” (Kenner 1979, 96), and in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man we see Stephen making it.

Linking the bodily production of language to its diachronic development, Joyce’s linguistic epiphany is in the process of becoming. Miller’s “day of dappled breeze-borne clouds” provides an image of the creation of the world, and Joyce’s variations on the same phrase suggest that language is constantly in flux. Still thinking of the line, Stephen looks back along the bay to Dublin, which appears “[l]ike a scene on some vague arras [< a town in Artois, ca. 1400], old as . . . the thingmote,” a large Scandanavean mound that stood in the center of Dublin until 1685. Gazing through language to the distant past, Stephen forms “an image of the seventh city of christendom” (perhaps recalling the seven churches, seals, and trumpets of Revelation), and then turns to “the slowdrifting clouds, dappled and seaborne. They were voyaging across the deserts of the sky, a host of nomads on the march, voyaging high over Ireland, westward bound. The Europe they had come from lay out there beyond the Irish Sea, Europe of strange tongues and valleyed and woodbegirt and citadelled and of entrenched and marshalled races” (181). Precursors of the migrating swallows in chapter 5, which are themselves figures of thought and language, these nomadic clouds convey waves of political and linguistic invasion: European vagrants slip into the strange tongues they speak, embodied in the contrast between Latinate terms (“valleyed,” “citadelled,” “entrenched”) and those with Germanic roots (“woodbegirt,” “marshaled”). Although the meaning and etymology of these words are distinct, the conjunctions and genitives
seem to fold them together, as though Europe had one history and one language. This may explain why Stephen hears “a confused music within him as of memories and names which he was almost conscious of” as he tries to uncover the origins of these words, and why, although they keep receding from consciousness, “from each receding trail of nebulous music there fell always one long drawn calling note, piercing like a star the dusk of silence” (181–82).

In this image, language is a kind of cloud-music whose trails blaze across the sky like shooting stars and whose long-drawn-out notes pierce the silence. Combining repetition and silence with trails of cloud and light (cf. Exodus 13.21–22), language is presented as a heavenly apparition. Stephen’s “one long drawn calling note” implies belief in unitary truth, but Joyce immediately undercut this notion of transcendence with the cries of Stephen’s schoolmates “calling” to him: “—Hello Stephanos! /—Here comes The Dedalus!” (182). Their calls put a different light on the “one long drawn calling note” Stephen hears, and by playing on his name (“Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous Stephaneforos!”), they put the notion of identity into flux. This is crucial, because Stephen Dedalus seeks his identity in the meaning of his name. From the start of the novel, he is trying to answer Nasty Roche’s question, “What kind of a name is that?” (5). Inscripting his jotter: “Stephen Dedalus / Class of Elements / Clongowes . . . / Ireland . . . / The Universe (12),” he tries to affix his name and place. Although he soon realizes that “there were different names for God in all the different languages,” Stephen still thinks “God’s real name was God” (13). Likewise, even when the boys call him in Latin (“Stephanos Dedalos!”), and mock him in Greek (“Stephaneforos”), Stephen believes in his destiny: “Now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a prophecy” (183). His soul “soaring sunward,” he vows to “create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful” (184). Yet the boys’ banter, accompanied by unaffected whoops of joy (183–84), brings Stephen’s artistic aspirations back down to earth, offering an epiphany in the here and now, rather than the mythical past or its predestined future. This is important, because even at his most triumphant moments of affirmation, Stephen is plagued with doubts (“What did it mean? . . . Where was his boyhood now? . . . Where was he?” [183, 185]). These questions speak to Stephen’s uncertainty, and
his loss of connection to the past, suggesting that there is no stable identity to repose on, bringing us back to the “queer name, Dedalus,” which, like Athy’s queer name, poses a riddle.

This riddle raises two key points. First, the changing identity of the character named Stephen Dedalus provides Portrait’s most extended example of linguistic mutation, replacing fixed meaning (“one . . . note”) with endless self-variation. As I have shown, this structure of repetition and variation is replicated throughout the text, creating an image of language in the process of becoming. For instance, in its final repetition, the “day of dappled seaborne clouds” merges with Stephen’s vision on the strand, mirroring cloud and sea in chiastic silence: “the clouds were drifting above him silently and silently the seatangle was drifting below him.” (185). This vision affects Stephen powerfully: “a new wild life was singing in his veins” (185), allowing the “wild angel” who calls his “soul . . . to recreate life out of life” to be traced back to the treasured phrase that inspired Stephen’s vision of language and his vocation to “create . . . a living thing” (184). Yet Joyce’s variations on Miller’s line, which gradually mutates almost beyond recognition, mean that the image of linguistic creation it embodies is not one of original and permanent being but perpetual becoming.

Second, as Stephen seeks to forge himself, his language, and his race, he is constantly confronted by lack of identity, linguistic uncertainty, and the gap to the other. On a journey back to his ancestral homelands, when Stephen seeks his father’s (and his own) initials in the anatomy theater, he is struck by the strange word “Foetus,” whose engraved “legend” sends Stephen “beyond the limits of reality” (98). Maud Ellmann points out that the fetus is connected to Stephen’s “strandentwining cable of all flesh” (U 3.37) at the navel, a scarified knot of the umbilicus (1982, 96–97). But this “scar” is also an aperture; like the hole in epiphany #19, it can open again, a powerful reminder of “the hole we all have here,” which is also a remainder, the hole in language. And with this in mind, it is striking that the one word Stephen looks up, the word “tundish” whose origin he seeks, shares a structural similarity with the umbilicus. As the fetus is nourished through the umbilical cord, Stephen’s tundish is a funnel or conduit to fill the lamp of the intellect. But since the lamp he refers to is, initially at least, the aesthetic illumination provided by “one or two ideas of Aristotle and Aquinas” (202), its light is the inspiration of language. When the dean of studies tries to bring this lamp back down to Epictetus’s homely objects of iron and earth, Stephen recalls the philosopher’s remark that
“the soul is very like a bucketful of water,” and soon the words become fused with “the smell of molten tallow” as the dean of studies lights the fire. “[T]he jingle of the words, bucket and lamp and lamp and bucket,” indicates the presence of the remainder in the chiastic repetition of empty words, although Stephen too is trying to ignite the fire of his intellect in answer to the dean’s questions about his aesthetic theory. But this remainder, which at first seems devoid of meaning, becomes supersaturated with significance when the dean returns to the metaphorical lamp, advising Stephen to choose his authorities (i.e., his reading) with care: “You must choose the pure oil and you must be careful when you pour it in not to overflow it, not to pour in more than the funnel can hold” (203). Thus, language is figured as a liquid fuel that fills the bucket of the soul or lamp of the intellect—an image that is reminiscent of the “drops of water falling softly . . . into the brimming bowl” at Clongowes and the “liquid letters of speech” distilled from the “shining cloud” of Stephen’s poetic inspiration (61, 242). In each case, language is presented as an epiphany through the incarnation of spirit in the word, but there is always a hole, a silent unknowable, whether in the virgin womb of the imagination, the immaculate conception of the word, the silence of the air, or the obscurity of the word “tundish.”

Both Stephen and the dean dwell on the word, uttering it six times in twenty lines, with the dean vowing twice to look it up. At the end of the novel, Stephen records in his diary, “That tundish has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us” (274). This “little word” that turns the “rapier point of his sensitiveness” against the dean clearly has historical and political import. After eight centuries of English oppression, Stephen is right to feel sensitive, because the history of words is the history of their use, but at the same time, this linguistic history goes further than the colonial imposition of English on the Irish. It is not only to Stephen that the English language is “so familiar, so foreign”; however different the words “home, Christ, ale, master” on the dean’s lips and Stephen’s (a question of pronunciation, or the bodily production of the word, as much as Anglo-Irish history), “Christ” comes from the Greek, “master” is Latinate, “home” is Teutonic, and “ale” is as close to Gaelic as Anglo-Saxon. Nor is it by any means clear that “tundish” is “good old blunt English”; Skeat traces “tun” back to low Latin tunna (also found in
Irish), and “dish” is Latinate (from *discus*). Hence, the word is not simply a Shakespearian relic (cf. *Measure for Measure* 3.2.72) preserved by the Irish and forgotten by its colonial masters; its origins are uncertain, and no amount of etymological digging in the fossil records of language will unearth it. There is no single source or meaning; the word is founded on the void, and for all its symbolic significance as the conduit of light, spirit, thought, and power, Joyce suggests that it is in this silence, if anywhere, that the epiphany of language shows forth.