

AFTERWORD  
"CURIOS OF SIGNS"

The "process of the mind," as Joyce puts it in an early essay "A Portrait of the Artist," is important because it provides an alternative to "our world" which "recognises its acquaintance chiefly by the characters of beard and inches." For those who are "estranged" from such an acquaintance with the world, some seek, through "some process of the mind that which is their individuating rhythm, the first or formal relation of their parts." But, Joyce makes clear, "for such as these a portrait is not an identificative paper but rather the curve of an emotion."<sup>1</sup>

The "process of mind," first explained in Joyce's Aesthetic Notebook, is the basis of his "Portrait" essay, his series of short stories in Dubliners, and his novel Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man. In Finnegan's Wake we read of the "genre of portraiture of changes of mind" (165). His redefinition of the genre of the novel is due to his making the operations and the relations themselves objects to be operated upon.<sup>2</sup> Until Ulysses Joyce both wrote about the process and used the process (of depicting relationships to provide a fact about the relationships presented). The passages about the epiphany in Stephen Hero gave us the term

to apply to Dubliners. In Dubliners and Portrait we have important reflections upon the role of gesture and language in structuring experience and revealing nature and culture to our understanding. But in Dubliners we do not have a central character; in Portrait we do. Yet this is not the significant line of development in Joyce's work--toward the expression of one person's cognition-dependent reality. Dubliners has the multifaceted scope, but not the "curve of an emotion" which would sufficiently integrate the details into the novel which was Joyce's desire to write.

In Exiles we have something new. We have a distinction between those things that a person's activities bring into being and the things independent of a person's activities. The plot centers around this dramatic focal point. Before Exiles, the difference between what is dependent and what is independent of our thoughts was never the source of conflict. More importantly, it was never shown as the basis of further insight. This simple distinction in itself can be seen as what is depicted in Ulysses. There is no instance in which the distinction between cognition-dependent and cognition-independent thoughts is given further form in Dubliners or in Portrait.

In Ulysses form embodies the movement from cognition-dependent to cognition-independent thought, and the drama implicit in the process itself becomes the object of the concluding section of the novel. Joyce realizes, as does Peirce, that there are successive stages of inquiry or

thinking. These stages are neither purely subjective nor purely objective. But they can be depicted and they can reveal more truth and reality than has been thought possible. Like Joyce, Peirce was "finally led to prefer . . . a diagrammatic syntax."<sup>3</sup>

As Joyce developed his ability to represent both cognition-dependent and cognition independent elements within one work, the epiphany was no longer dependent upon the insight within one person's (or one character's) mind. The relational system, found even in Chamber Music to some extent,<sup>4</sup> assumed its own importance. The "process of mind" is everyone's.

The process of mind and the formal relation of parts discussed in the above "Portrait" essay, and in the Aesthetic Notebook, Joyce understood finally as equivalent. The relation of parts in a system needs no single mind to refract meaning -- it reveals a process of mind which not only unifies the parts but also makes each part (each detail in each part) seem more than it is. No traditional narrator within the novel as a whole (or in any of its parts) exists, because triadic representation, or the continual process of mediation is used. The process of mind and the formal relation of parts are equivalent.

In other words, the cognitive system of Ulysses makes the traditional laws of narrative (seem) obsolete. Representation includes the interpreting thought. The arrangement expresses it.

Joyce brings us to the point where there is little if any difference between the words on the page and the thought--the same point which Peirce himself describes:

My idea of a sign has been so generalized that I have at length despaired of making anybody comprehend it, so that for the sake of being understood, I now limit it, so as to define a sign as anything which is on the one hand so determined (or specialized) by an object and on the other hand so determined (or specialized) by an object and on the other hand so determines the mind of an interpreter of it that the latter is thereby determined mediately, or indirectly, by that real object that determines the sign. Even this may well be thought an excessively generalized definition. The determination of the Interpreter's mind I term the Interpretant of the sign (NE 3:886).<sup>5</sup>

Just as Joyceans use "arranger" and "ventriloquist" to describe the governing process, Peirceans use the term "Graphist" to replace the existential sign-utterer or sign-giver. Both Joyce and Peirce seem to have understood that within the process (or system) there are "at least two Quasi-minds; a Quasi-utterer and a Quasi-interpreter" which "in the Sign . . . are, so to say welded." And that "accordingly, it is not merely a fact of human Psychology,

but a necessity of Logic, that every logical evolution of thought should be dialogic" (4.551). Perhaps Graphist would be an appropriate term to use instead of the "narrator in Ulysses," for the graphist is known by reflection from what is written, but that which is written traditionally is called the reflection of the narrator.<sup>6</sup>

The Play of Musement fascinates us in Ulysses. The successive stages of the novel engage us in thinking about facts, ideas, and relationships. Ultimately we are brought to an awareness of a Creator independent of them--and this awareness is the value of "The Neglected Argument." Such an awareness achieved through the Play of Musement (in both Joyce and Peirce) indeed is the result of a new philosophy, but neither Joyce or Peirce considered their work either "new" or a "philosophy." Instead, both were quite aware of the sources of their ideas and the fact that the content of their work was the "given," the previously "used." But they made ideas and reality clearer by giving them an expressive system which depends not on the presence of one individual, but on the universal ability of humans to think more clearly.

## Notes to "Afterword"

<sup>1</sup>Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain, The Workshop of Daedalus, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>As Peirce writes, "Of still greater importance is the practice of making operations and relations of all kinds objects to be operated upon" (NE 3:749; as quoted in Fisch, "Peirce's General Theory of Signs," p. 68).

<sup>3</sup>[NE 162]. The reference is to Peirce's existential graphs, which have been the source of much development (see Spencer-Brown, Merrell, and Zellweger). Peirce further remarks: "This syntax is truly diagrammatic, that is to say that its parts are really related to one another in forms of relation analogous to those of the assertions they represent, and that consequently in studying this syntax we may be assured that we are studying the real relations of the parts of the assertions and reasonings; which is by no means the case with the syntax" (NE 164; as quoted in Fisch, p. 49).

<sup>4</sup>William Tindall's discussion of the system which seems to organize the poems (without, of course, recourse to the word system) is among the best; see his "Introduction" to Chamber Music. Of course, the relations found in Dubliners

have been discussed, but not from the perspective implied here.

<sup>5</sup>As quoted in Fisch, p. 55. Joyce was able to find an object of thought, or perspective, quite different from that of the psychologist for this reason. Peirce explains the difference as follows: "If the logician is to talk of the operations of the mind at all . . . he must mean by 'mind' something quite different from the object of study of the psychologist. . . . Logic will here be defined as formal semiotic. A definition of a sign will be given which no more refers to human thought than does the definition of a line as the place which a particle occupies, part by part, during a lapse of time" (NE 4:20; as quoted in Fisch, p. 56).

<sup>6</sup>For the term Graphist, see Fisch p. 55. For the best explanation of how this process of cognition is only known analytically, upon reflection, see Deely, Introducing Semiotic, Appendix II. This is in part the reason for our own difficulty in finding the process of thought in Ulysses. And, for this reason, here I apologize for any tediousness involved in getting to the point. The end, as Beckett writes, is the beginning.