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## James Joyce and Post-Imperial Bildung: Influences on Salman Rushdie, Tayeb Salih, and Tsitsi Dangarembga

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JAMES JOYCE AND POST-IMPERIAL *BILDUNG*: INFLUENCES  
ON SALMAN RUSHDIE, TAYEB SALIH, AND  
TSITSI DANGAREMBGA

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
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## ABSTRACT

### **James Joyce and Post-Imperial *Bildung*: Influences on Salman Rushdie, Tayeb Salih, and Tsitsi Dangarembga**

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Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* functions as an axis around which writers from former British colonies—Salman Rushdie (India), Tayeb Salih (Sudan), and Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe)—construct their own *Bildungsromane*. This nodal point is possible because Joyce's *Bildungsroman* represents a unique rendering of the genre which has proven useful for narratives of growth and development in newly independent nations. This dissertation focuses on a single narrative paradigm which acts as a common thread among the four authors. In each text (Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*), the use of political issues acts as a driving force for the protagonist's *Bildungsprozess*—the ongoing course of growth, maturation, and development which allows the *Bildungsheld* to find his or her place in the wider world—as much or more so than providing political commentary. Political issues are thus often subordinated in the text to the narrative of development. The protagonist's *Bildung* in turn acts as a microcosm for the difficulties and growth process of a fledgling nation, and it exhibits the author's vision for his or her nation's future path.

The critical element of Joyce's *Bildungsroman* is Stephen Dedalus's virtual obsession with individualism, his seemingly ceaseless efforts to separate himself from

everyone and everything around him, including his father, his mother, his country, his church, and the British Empire. These efforts force Stephen to attempt to avoid direct political involvement at all costs, even though the novel's most explicitly political moment—the Christmas dinner incident of chapter one—acts as a springboard for his personal development and for his desire to remain apart and removed. Moreover, his efforts to remain detached from politics and public life are destined to failure. The result is a narrative of development which suggests an inextricable link between public and private, between individual *Bildung* and national progress. That paradigm for the narrative of development proves valuable for Rushdie, Salih, and Dangarembga as they interrogate their own nations' progress after independence. The Joycean model of the *Bildungsroman* has thus proven to be particularly appropriate in the midst of the rapid emergence of new nation-states in the aftermath of empire, and as the world continues to evolve, the *Bildungsroman* will undoubtedly grow with it and maintain its relevance.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is my contention that Joyce's *Bildungsroman* functions as a nodal point around which writers from former British colonies—Salman Rushdie (India), Tayeb Salih (Sudan), and Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe)—construct their own *Bildungsromane*. This nodal point is possible because Joyce's *Bildungsroman* represents a unique rendering of the genre, a rendering which has proven useful for narratives of growth and development in newly independent nations. The relationship of the private life of the protagonist to the public sphere sets the stage for a narrative of individual development with national implications.

James Joyce looms large over the literature of the twentieth century. His stylistic innovations, irreverence toward traditional authority, and countless other aspects of his narratives have influenced virtually every writer who has read Joyce's work. His impact is especially noticeable in writers from Ireland, where his influence is palpable in the works of Kate O'Brien, Flann O'Brien, Edna O'Brien, and even some writers not named O'Brien, like Frank McCourt and, of course, Samuel Beckett. In "James Joyce and Post-Imperial *Bildung*," however, I emphasize his influence outside of Ireland and Europe, focusing on writers from regions that gained independence from the British Empire after Ireland, and on texts in which *Bildung* plays a vital role in the author's portrayal of his or her homeland.

Joyce is uniquely situated to comment on Ireland's political circumstances and its changing place in the world. After having been born and raised in Dublin, he left Ireland for good at age twenty-two, living the rest of his life in Trieste, Paris, and Zurich. Yet his

writing remained firmly grounded in Ireland. His distance from his homeland allowed for emotional separation as well as geographic. In his self-imposed exile, Joyce was simultaneously Irish and not-Irish. His circumstances allowed him to remain personally connected to his homeland without being swept away by the rising tide of nationalist fervor that characterized much of Irish politics in the early twentieth century. With the benefit of that detachment, Joyce uses the *Bildungsroman* as a tool to write an honest and candid assessment of Ireland's place in the community of nations.

Rushdie, Salih, and, Dangarembga share important elements of Joyce's biography. They are all lived abroad for substantial periods in their careers, including for all or part of their educations. Rushdie, like Joyce, has not lived full time in the nation of his birth at any point in his adult life. Both as citizens who are intimately connected to their homelands and as observers from afar, they each are able to examine the state of their respective nations in the aftermath of independence. As they do so, they each participate in a combination of literary traditions: the *Bildungsroman* tradition, their respective national literatures, and the practice of using literature to respond to the imperial system. These facets of the authors' lives and their literary influences provide crucial building blocks for Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988). This introduction looks at the origins of those elements in each of these novels. It describes the *Bildungsroman* tradition into which Joyce forcefully inserted himself, the scholarly positions that link Joyce to the postcolonial world, and critical assessments of the way each author's fiction relates to history.

Recently there has been an increased scholarly interest in the *Bildungsroman*, and much of that scholarship investigates the ways the genre has evolved to meet the demands of a changing world. In the two centuries since the genre's traditionally recognized inception in the late eighteenth century (Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*), literary, geographic, and political landscapes have been irrevocably transformed—writers have engaged in extraordinary artistic innovation and experimentation while political revolutions erupted, empires crumbled, and new nations arose. Throughout that tumultuous history, the flexible conventions of the *Bildungsroman* allowed the genre to adapt to endlessly changing political and social situations while still maintaining its fundamental identity as the “novel of formation” or “novel of development.” It is exactly that flexibility which Joyce uses to his advantage in creating a new model for the genre, a model which proves an effective tool for responding to conditions in newly independent nations as they (like the protagonists of so many *Bildungsromane*) grow, develop, and find their voices in an increasingly treacherous world.

Two recent studies have examined the nature of changes within the *Bildungsroman* during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Gregory Castle's *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006) and Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth* (2012). Castle and Esty share a common thread in that they both focus on *Bildungsromane* which deviate from the classic *Bildungsroman* plot in a specific manner: the *Bildungshelden* of these novels do not harmoniously integrate into their respective societies.<sup>1</sup> Castle argues that this failure acts as a critique of the *Bildungsroman* which returns the genre to its origins: *Bildung* in the German Romantic sense of the word—

complete personal cultivation and development. He maintains that the Victorian British twist on *Bildung* (socially pragmatic *Bildung*, to use his terminology) represents a faulty ideal for modernist *Bildungshelden*, particularly in colonial environments like Ireland. Esty refers to a similar phenomenon from a different perspective. He speaks of the trope of “frozen youth,” an inability of the *Bildungsheld* to fully mature, and he relates that phenomenon to the difficulty nations or colonized regions have in progressing to a sense of national maturity, thus conflating the notions of adulthood and nationhood.

Despite this wealth of scholarship on the *Bildungsroman*, these studies are far from complete—the potential for further fruitful analysis is indicative of the complex and highly nuanced nature of the genre. One element underdeveloped in Castle’s and Esty’s studies is a discussion of the specific narrative paradigms through which the tropes of failed social integration and stunted youth are enacted within the texts. Moreover, while both Castle and Esty discuss writers from colonies, neither delves into the realm of the postcolonial, instead limiting their studies to the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Separately, other scholars have written about the *Bildungsroman* specifically in postcolonial settings.<sup>3</sup> My analysis bridges this gap from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end, or from the modernist to the postcolonial.

In the process of bridging this gap, I examine four authors, beginning firmly in the high modernist period with James Joyce. The narrative phenomenon I describe below is deeply embedded in Joyce’s texts, so much so that his work acts as an archetype for the later use of similar narrative devices. Later in the twentieth century, Salman Rushdie, Tayeb Salih, and Tsitsi Dangarembga engage in a modified form of colonial mimicry,

mimicking not the British colonizer, but rather Joyce and his literary treatment of the colonial condition.

I focus on a single narrative paradigm (though a fairly complex and nuanced paradigm) which acts as a common thread among the four authors. The texts' use of political issues acts as a driving force for the protagonist's *Bildungsprozess*—the ongoing course of growth, maturation, and development which allows the *Bildungsheld* to find his or her place in the wider world—as much or more so than providing political commentary. Political issues are thus often subordinated in the text while the narrative of development, the story of the protagonist's growth from youth to maturity, is thrust to the forefront. The protagonist's *Bildung* in turn acts as a microcosm for the difficulties and growth process of a fledgling nation, and it exhibits the author's vision for his or her nation's future path. “James Joyce and Post-Imperial *Bildung*” addresses the question of why this narrative phenomenon is so valuable in a postcolonial context. What does it contribute to the depiction of the colonial or postcolonial world that makes it so useful, first to Joyce and later to others? What are the implications of the use of this narrative device for the *Bildungsroman* genre and its tradition?

By the time Joyce started composing *Stephen Hero*—later to become *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*—in 1904, the *Bildungsroman* had existed as a genre for over a century. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was completed by 1796, and the term “*Bildungsroman*” originated at least as early as 1819.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of those hundred-plus years, an elaborate tradition had developed, and generic conventions had been established. Unlike many genres of the novel, however, “the *Bildungsroman* is tremendously elastic, its conventions . . . few and relatively simple” (Castle 4). The

elasticity which characterizes the *Bildungsroman* makes it important to recognize those conventions and characteristics which define the genre. At the same time, the varied forms and phases of the genre make strict formal definitions difficult, if not impossible.

A useful starting point for defining the *Bildungsroman* is Jerome Buckley's sketch of the genre in *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (1974), a seminal study of the English-language *Bildungsroman*:

A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he had gained from unprescribed reading. . . . He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence). . . . By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. (17–18)

This pattern of events, by Buckley's own admission, does not precisely describe the plot of any individual novel, but it does provide a useful overview of most *Bildungsromane*, particularly those from the early stages of the genre's history up through the late nineteenth century. The utility of Buckley's definition lies not only in the fact that it offers an accurate description, but also in that it provides the means to discriminate between *Bildungsromane* and other forms of the novel. The definition provides a catalogue of key elements which must to a large degree be maintained in any new

formulation of the *Bildungsroman*, regardless of how else the genre is adapted. However, those necessary elements are broad in nature, and they offer authors tremendous liberty in how they are included.

That flexibility allows Joyce to deviate from the strictures of Buckley's model while still maintaining the fundamental components of the *Bildungsroman*. Joyce shifts the protagonist's birthplace away from the "provincial town" to a colonial setting—just as the provincial town exists on the margins of urban society, the colony exists on the margins of the empire. As Buckley's traditional *Bildungsheld* decides "the sort of accommodation" he can make to the modern world, Joyce's Stephen Dedalus examines the accommodations he can make not only to the modern world, but also to the authority of the British Empire and to the equally oppressive influence of his stagnant homeland. Moreover, he does so in a way that comments upon how Ireland may eventually fit into the global community.<sup>5</sup>

G. B. Tennyson, in "The *Bildungsroman* in Nineteenth-Century English Literature" (published in 1968, six years before Buckley's study), lists five key characteristics in one of the most clear and concise definitions of the *Bildungsroman* available:<sup>6</sup>

(1) the idea of *Bildung*, of formation, cultivation, education, shaping of a single main character, normally a young man; (2) individualism, especially the emphasis on the uniqueness of the protagonist and the primacy of his private life and thoughts, although these are at the same time representative of an age and a culture; (3) the biographical element, usually supplied from the author's own life in what Dilthey calls the

‘conscious and artistic presentation of what is typically human through the depiction of a particular individual life’; (4) the connection with psychology, especially the then-new psychology of development; and (5) the ideal of humanity, of the full realization of all human potential as the goal of life. (136)

Tennyson, like Buckley, provides tools differentiating between *Bildungsromane* and other novelistic forms. However, Tennyson takes a very different approach to characterizing the genre. Whereas Buckley provides a list of plot elements which must, for the most part, be present, Tennyson emphasizes character elements, giving an illustration of the protagonist and his or her development.<sup>7</sup> His description emphasizes the genre’s Germanic origins, specifically the root of the genre’s name, *Bildung*. *Bildung* is an important concept not only for the seeds of the genre, but also for its evolution over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Interpretations of *Bildung* and what it means to achieve *Bildung* vary from one text to another, and they vary even more across different cultures and time periods. The way in which Joyce, and later Rushdie, Salih, and Dangarembga interpret the notion of *Bildung* establishes the crucial link between individual development and national development.

In many ways, the history of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre is a history of varying interpretations of *Bildung*. The traditionally recognized origin of the genre is late eighteenth-century Weimar Germany, specifically Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* and Wilhelm von Humboldt’s educational theory. They emphasize Romantic *Bildung*, in which “the emphasis is laid on self-cultivation and the self-sufficiency of inner culture” (Castle 256.n13).<sup>8</sup> The word “*Bildung*” has no direct English translation, a fact which



exacerbates the complications of defining the *Bildungsroman*. The German Romantic use of the term refers to more than simply growth, maturation, or coming-of-age; it involves complete inner personal and spiritual cultivation and development. Elements of the process are emotional, psychological, and social, as well as sometimes formally educational. While developing *Bildung* was considered an individual process, the notion of *Bildung* was social as well as personal. The era in which this idea emerged was a period of dramatic political and cultural revolution. The United States declared independence from the British crown, a popular uprising in France overthrew Louis XVI, and in Germany this period coincides with rising nationalistic sentiment. The notion of *Bildung*, particularly in Humboldt's formulation, is concerned with being a good citizen as well as being a fully-formed individual.<sup>9</sup>

In later decades and in other parts of the world, the interpretation of *Bildung* often shifts to reflect other cultural values or, in some cases, to allow native concepts to supplant the Germanic model. In the early nineteenth century, British Romantics focus on the value of individual cultivation espoused by their German counterparts. This conception of *Bildung* is perhaps best represented by *Frankenstein's* monster. The character, when first created, not only lacks language and communication skills, but more importantly lacks any personal identity. His story, the story he tells to Dr. Frankenstein in the cave near Montanvert, involves elements of his linguistic and intellectual education but revolves primarily around his personal development. His tale reveals how he became the mature adult creature who murders Frankenstein's brother.

Later in the nineteenth century, Victorian writers often de-emphasize individual growth and cultivation in favor of the other crucial aspect of Germanic *Bildung*, the way

one fits into society. In this case, successful *Bildung* typically implied earning financial success and climbing the social ladder, reflecting a cultural fixation with attaining the status of the idealized English nobility.<sup>10</sup> In *The Way of the World* (1987), Franco Moretti discusses the importance of this incarnation of *Bildung* within modern history. He remarks that the genre is used “to indicate . . . one of the most harmonious solutions ever offered to a dilemma conterminous with modern bourgeois civilization: the conflict between the ideal of *self-determination* and the equally imperious demands of *socialization*” (15). Whereas Humboldt—in his earlier German model of *Bildung*—describes the attainment of Romantic, spiritual *Bildung* as a natural pathway to socialization, Moretti perceives an inherent conflict between them in modern culture, and in his view, the *Bildungsroman* is fundamentally a genre which illustrates ways to navigate and resolve that conflict. This resolution occurs as the *Bildungsheld* progresses through a more-or-less standardized experience. Moretti explains that “our civilization, which, having always been pervaded by the doctrines of natural rights, cannot concede that socialization is based on a mere compliance with authority. It is not enough that the social order is ‘legal’; it must also appear *symbolically legitimate*” (16). In effect, it is the social duty of responsible citizens to bestow legitimacy upon the government and upon civic and social leaders; however, this responsibility must be enacted freely, without any coercion from authority figures. Thus successful individual development actively engages in the process of providing social and political authority with legitimacy, and any form of personal development which fails to foster that legitimacy must be a failed or stunted development.

This conception of *Bildung*, however, produces inherent difficulties in a colonial environment, and has the potential to create additional difficulties in a postcolonial context. If true *Bildung* requires legitimization, then a colonial subject is in an impossible position, as such legitimization reinforces imperial dominion over his or her homeland and culture. These difficulties become ingrained in the *Bildungsroman* genre during the modernist period. In Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, we see a *Bildungsheld* attempting to achieve *Bildung* without legitimizing the imperial oppressor, and later in the century we see similar issues of legitimization with regard to neocolonial influence and to flawed (though hopefully improving) governments of newly-established, independent nations.

Jed Esty further elucidates the shift away from social legitimization as a necessary component of *Bildung* (which is typical of Victorian British *Bildungsromane*). Even the title of his book, *Unseasonable Youth*, alludes to Buckley's *Season of Youth*. Buckley's analysis primarily examines traditional, pre-modern *Bildungsromane*. Esty's title implies that Buckley's model is no longer applicable. In examining modernist *Bildungsromane* dealing with the colonial periphery of the British Empire or other margins of society, Esty observes that such novels often "thwart the realist proportions of biographical time that had, from its inception, defined the *Bildungsroman*" (2). This effect is produced via *Bildungshelden* who exhibit symptoms of frozen youth, uneven development, too rapid maturation (essentially skipping the maturation process entirely and moving abruptly to adulthood), or in some cases, sudden death. He thus establishes a connection between the flow of biographical time throughout the text and the social success of the *Bildungsprozess*: disruptions in the flow of time equate to an uneven, stalled, or flawed

integration into society. Esty further extends the flow of time to the allegorical process of national development, asserting that

the developmental logic of the late bildungsroman [sic] underwent substantial revision as the relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny gave way to a more conspicuously global, and therefore more uncertain, frame of social reference. . . . The figure of youth, increasingly untethered in the late Victorian era from the model and telos of adulthood, seems to symbolize the dilated/stunted adolescence of a never-quite-modernized periphery. (6, 7)

While the German Romantic *Bildungsroman* represents individual cultivation which fosters a sense of national belonging and the Victorian *Bildungsroman* values social advancement and the image of the aristocracy, the modernist peripheral *Bildungsroman* represents skepticism and uncertainty towards both national identity and established social roles. This theory supports Gregory Castle's assessment of the modernist *Bildungsroman*. *Bildungshelden* exhibit the failure to integrate smoothly into society as a result of the uncertainty regarding national identity and regarding the exact nature of the nation or society into which they might integrate.

Esty thus observes that the frozen youth or unnatural development of modernist *Bildungshelden* "disrupts the naturalized relationship between souls and nations as co-subjects of an allegory in progress." He remarks that Moretti's discussion of *Bildungshelden*'s place in society leaves unexplored "the crucial symbolic function of nationhood, which gives a finished form to modern societies in the same way that adulthood gives a finished form to a modern subject." He therefore wishes to "track the

changing nature of the soul-nation allegory as it faces increasingly globalized conditions after 1860” (13, 4). The changes during this period in the *Bildungsroman* and in the “soul-nation allegory” act as a prelude to repurposed function of the genre a century later, in the even more globalized conditions which develop after 1960.<sup>11</sup>

In the second half of the twentieth century, the *Bildungsroman* was embraced by many writers from former colonies. Historically speaking, postcolonial writers’ use of the *Bildungsroman* follows logically from the genre’s Germanic origins. Just as the Germany of Goethe, Humboldt, and their contemporaries coincided with political and cultural revolutions, newly-independent nations experience similar dramatic changes. Moreover, as Walter P. Collins, III points out regarding the history of African *Bildungsromane*, “colonialism traces its roots to the height of nineteenth-century European growth and expansion. The connection between the German genre and African novels of development lies ultimately in the fact that African colonial history is inextricably linked to European history” (Collins 34). In the early aftermath of independence, new nations thus have a cultural and literary link to the European *Bildungsroman* at a time when questions of national identity are virtually unavoidable.

In the postcolonial contexts in which Rushdie, Salih, and Dangarembga write, the concept of nationhood is very much in flux. “James Joyce and Post-Imperial *Bildung*” explores the way in which those authors utilize the narrative of individual development to critique the functions and directions of their burgeoning nation-states. This narrative process implies a fundamental connection between the protagonists’ private lives and the public world of colonial-imperial relations, neocolonial influence, and the growing pains associated with political discourse in a newly independent country. The relationship

between public and private, and the relevance of that relationship within literary texts, is the subject of Frederic Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (1986), itself a controversial and much debated text. Jameson's claim that "All third-world texts are necessarily . . . *national allegories*" almost immediately sparked an intense backlash, most famously from Aijaz Ahmad (69).<sup>12</sup> While it's important to recognize the validity of many of Ahmad's criticisms of Jameson (most notably that Jameson's assertion is overly broad, even if it's accurate in some specific cases), in my investigations into Joyce, Rushdie, Salih, and Dangarembga I will repeatedly return to the phenomenon from which Jameson claims third-world national allegories originate: the commingling of public and private.<sup>13</sup> He writes that "[t]hird-world texts . . . necessarily project a political dimension," whereas "in the west, conventionally, political commitment is recontained and psychologized or subjectivized by way of the public-private split" (69, 71). It is important to add a caveat to Jameson's hypothesis: that his observation applies to many texts, but not to all. I argue that this phenomenon has its roots in a colonial, rather than postcolonial, literature: the Irish literature of James Joyce. And moreover, this fusion of public and private—and a protagonist's reaction to that fusion—becomes a foundational element of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*.

Looking at the history of the *Bildungsroman* in terms of varying or evolving interpretations of *Bildung* is useful, but it is certainly not only way of thinking about the genre. Mikhail Bakhtin—himself a transplant and an exile—uses an entirely different approach, providing a formalist classification which illustrates the genre's distinctiveness. In "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism

(Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)” (1986), Bakhtin divides the novel into four categories: the travel novel, the novel of ordeal, the biographical novel, and the *Bildungsroman*.<sup>14</sup> He distinguishes amongst the four categories by looking at two narrative phenomena: 1) the degree to which narrative time mirrors historical time, and 2) the degree to which the hero undergoes change during the course of the novel.<sup>15</sup> Both of these ideas are crucial in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and in Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), and Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions* (1988). All four authors’ *Bildungsromane* involve deviations between narrative time and historical time which emphasizes the *Bildungsheld*’s developmental process, an idea Bakhtin refers to as “becoming.” Vern W. McGee notes that Bakhtin uses the Russian word “*stanovlenie*,” which is translated as “becoming,” though the concept is perhaps better described by the German *das Werden*, “the process of development that is never complete in the course of an individual. It is Bakhtin’s way of insisting that identity is never complete” (Bakhtin 55.n4). Bakhtin uses this ongoing process as a foundation for his system of categorization, separating the *Bildungsroman* from the other three categories of novel.<sup>16</sup> Deviations between historical time and narrative time reveal the *Bildungsheld*’s relationship to the historical and political circumstances in which he or she lives.

The particular relationship between Joyce’s novels and such historical and political circumstances has been the subject of a lengthy and constantly evolving scholarly debate. For most of the twentieth century, Joyce criticism eschewed politics entirely, treating the author as a cosmopolitan aesthete and his work as idealized art, largely divorced from the real world. In the 1920s and 30s, while Joyce was still alive,

virtually no one read his works in terms of Ireland's colonial status or in terms of other relevant political issues. It wasn't until Joyce had been dead for several decades that scholars introduced politics into Joyce criticism, beginning perhaps with Colin MacCabe's *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* (1978), one of the first full-length studies to treat politics as a fundamental aspect of Joyce's work. However, as Leonard Orr points out, even after MacCabe's *Revolution*,

it was not until the 1990s, with the paradigm shift in critical theory to new historicism, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies . . . , that what had previously been denied or ignored became apparent (if still complex and contradictory). It was no longer possible to ignore the aspects of empire, colonialism, postcolonialism, nationalism, and constructions of race and gender in Joyce's work. (5)<sup>17</sup>

This explosion of politically rooted scholarship on Joyce in the 1990s began the process of filling a void in the field. Emer Nolan introduces her book *James Joyce and Nationalism* (1995) by claiming that she "aims to offer a corrective to pervasive and systematic misreadings of Joyce [and] illustrate how these misinterpretations symptomatize a crucial failure on his critics' part" (xiii). This notion of the "corrective" is a common theme during that decade of Joyce criticism, and I would like to mention three approaches—from Vincent Cheng, Enda Duffy, and James Fairhall—to correcting that error. While these scholars provide useful interpretations and approaches to Joyce which have been beneficial to own analysis, my analysis differs from theirs in one key respect. Most Joyce scholarship dealing with postcolonial topics is backward looking: it applies theory and approaches developed in the late twentieth century to Joyce's novels



from the early 1900s, treating them as postcolonial texts or approaching them through the lens of postcolonial theory. My approach moves in the opposite direction, temporally speaking. It is forward looking, examining the ways in Joyce's writing helped to shape and develop the concept of the postcolonial as it emerged in the decades after his death.

Vincent Cheng, in *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (1995), focuses on the way Joyce was influenced by and the way he responds to the racial discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cheng shows that in "the Irish context, the issues of 'race' and Irishness are . . . inextricably involved with issues of empire and colonialism" (8). His overview of the racial ideology of the period reveals that the imperial subjugation of Ireland was vociferously defended not only on the grounds of political expediency and economic benefits, but also on the basis of perceived biological superiority of the Anglo-Saxon Briton over the Celtic Irishman. This perceived difference is a key component of the Imperial British mindset: "[N]ations participate in the activities of the Ego/Self, and in the consequent dynamics of Self and Other – in which the Self attributes to itself qualities 'foreign to other people' who are thus labeled barbarians" (19–20). Joyce was well aware of this dynamic and incorporated its effects into his novels.

As an Irishman writing about Ireland (even if living elsewhere), Joyce is invariably drawn into this dynamic, and his oeuvre represent an attempt to speak both as a member of and on behalf of a politically and racially subjugated group. His texts therefore must, either directly or implicitly, address the question, "[I]f the racialized and colonized Irish subalterns must be represented, how can they be represented? How can Joyce represent them, and thus create / represent the uncreated / unrepresented conscience of his race? Should he speak as an Irishman, or must he use the language and

cultural systems of the oppressors?” (Cheng 43). By addressing these questions, Joyce provides a foundation and framework for authors from other colonized regions who wish to answer the same questions, for other subalterns trying to find a voice.

Cheng emphasizes Joyce’s attempts to escape the Manichean duality which forces Ireland into the position that makes those questions necessary. He points out that “Nativist positions” are typically unproductive, as they mirror the cultural hierarchy of the colonizer (54). Joyce attempts to break this pattern by encouraging the Irish to

‘cease to be provincial and folklorist and mere Irish;’ he rejected the limitations of a narrow and provincial nationalism in order to speak to a wider, international (and not purely “English”) forum, advocating internationalism over provincialism . . . rather than trying to define itself within English constructions of empire, race, and nationhood. (47)<sup>18</sup>

Traditional means of opposing racial constructions are therefore ineffective because, by utilizing the same fundamental racial discourse, they perpetuate those same constructions. Rather than accepting the racial discourse at face value (as colonial collaborators might do) or directly opposing it, Joyce attempts to break free from that Manichean duality entirely, forging a middle path.<sup>19</sup> This approach enables Joyce, via his fiction and his fictional characters, to lay the foundation for a shift away from the racial and political oppression represented by the British Empire: “Choosing Europe and the internationalist perspective [rather than a British perspective] of a world community would allow Joyce and Ireland to break free from the binary operations of a closed system . . . in which the rules have already been constructed always to favor the first of the two terms in each set of oppositions” (67).

Most importantly, Cheng also briefly alludes to the role of the *Bildungsroman* in this process, as Stephen's personal growth illustrates Joyce's reading of Ireland's shift away from Imperial strictures:

For the young Stephen Dedalus, the various and constraining structures of authority and institutional power are imperial in that they have empire over him, they deny him personal autonomy and personal home rule. What he is concerned with most, by the end of both [*A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*], is the development of his personal liberty and artistic freedom; any force that would constrict such development is suspect, including the Nationalist movement. (Cheng 58)

Joyce thus establishes a link between personal liberty and national autonomy, both of which must be achieved through the middle path, rather than the ineffective strategy of using diametric opposition to racial discourse. In doing so, "Joyce repeatedly gave voice in his works to those silenced and exiled to the margins of dominant cultures. . . . In this sense, many of Joyce's works can be viewed, in part, as attempts to explore the alternatives – alternatives to the discursive and hegemonic constructions of a dominant culture" (7). The explorations of those alternatives is one of Joyce's lasting influences, and his archetype serves as a model for countless other authors writing from the margins.

In *The Subaltern Ulysses* (1994), Enda Duffy approaches the topic of politics in Joyce by looking at the specific historical context in which Joyce was writing—particularly as he wrote *Ulysses*—and examining Joyce's response to the events of that period. Like Cheng, he argues that treating Joyce as an apolitical modernist aesthete results in an inadequate understanding of Joyce's work. He even goes so far as to say that

*Ulysses* is “the first postcolonial novel, rather than the last metropolitan one” (68). This statement is particularly notable because Ireland was still a colony when *Ulysses* was first published (though the soon-to-be nation was actively engaged in a transitional period), so referring to *Ulysses* as postcolonial grants Joyce credible prescience and bestows a sense of retrospectivity upon the novel.

An important component of Duffy’s argument is the significance of the contemporary. Duffy points out that *Ulysses* was written during the years 1914-1921. That period saw the Rising of 1916, “the setting up of the secessionist Sinn Fein Irish parliament in 1918,” and the War of Independence and the Anglo-Irish treaty (2). Joyce was not living in Ireland at the time, but he kept a keen eye on the events in his homeland, and expressed an “ambivalent interest” in the move toward independence.<sup>20</sup> Duffy claims that “this ambivalence meant that *Ulysses* . . . could become a highly sensitive record of its author’s reactions to Irish independence” (12). The postcolonial novels I examine in chapters two through four all share this characteristic; they were written in the early aftermath of independence and take place during transitional periods in their respective national histories. The novels reveal reactions to independence, transitional difficulties, and thoughts about the future. Moreover, Duffy’s stated goal in *The Subaltern Ulysses* is to return the novel to Irish readers, to reclaim it “as *the* text of Ireland’s independence, and by doing so, return it to readers everywhere as a novel preoccupied . . . with both the means by which oppressed communities fight their way out of abjection and the potential pitfalls of anticolonial struggles” (1). It is those means, and their literary representation, that make Joyce’s work so fundamentally valuable to the postcolonial writer.

Perhaps the most important scholarly attitude toward Joyce and the political comes from James Fairhall. In *James Joyce and the Question of History* (1993), Fairhall emphasizes the imprecise and blurry distinction between history and fiction. The effect of that method is to present Joyce's writing, *Ulysses* in particular, as a form of historical record. Fairhall, for instance, examines the case of the Phoenix Park murders. He summarizes, as much as is reasonably possible, the facts of the case as they are known, relying primarily on the research of Tom Corfe and Malcolm Brown, as well as the account of Patrick Tynan.<sup>21,22</sup> He follows that information with descriptions of the references to the incident in *Ulysses* and the way the novel's characters discuss the case. Looking at all the information about the events in Phoenix Park on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1882, he concludes, "What happened there was real—all too real—even though we have no direct, empirical knowledge of" the murders. Fairhall's initial description of the event itself therefore "has a referent in reality which does not owe its existence simply to [his] own or others' words. But [he] was able to approach the murders . . . solely through their 'prior textualization'—that is, through the narratives of Tynan, Corfe, brown, and Joyce" (26). Fairhall quickly adds the caveat that only one of those sources—Tynan—has any direct knowledge of the event, and his account of the incident is irredeemably biased and often relies on speculation. As such, Joyce's version of the events, which involves fictional characters with flawed memories, is just as valid a means of remembering the incident as any of the more traditional historical approaches. *Ulysses* therefore represents one version of this episode in the story of Ireland. Rushdie's, Salih's, and Dangarembga's novels likewise provide one version of their respective nations' stories, and it is those versions of the stories of development that interest me.

For Salman Rushdie's novels as well, the relationship between fiction and history has proven a critical focal point. Rushdie himself has often emphasized this relationship. For him, fiction by necessity involves both personal and political history. He writes that one of his motivations for writing *Midnight's Children* was to recapture the past, to bring history to the present, and to reclaim a lost piece of his personal heritage. He adds, though, that for "exiles or emigrants or expatriates" like him, "reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost" is virtually impossible." Instead, he must "create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind" ("Imaginary Homelands" 10). This statement is an explicit declaration from Rushdie that his novels, *Midnight's Children* in particular, are meant to reflect history though they are not traditional history. Rather, they are remembered history, one version out of many.

Moreover, the exercise in writing a work of fiction which is rooted in history is necessarily a political act, and the act of describing a world in a particular way "is a necessary first step toward changing it. And particularly when the State takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs. . . . And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" (14). Rushdie sees his novels as a small step in the fight against state-sponsored tyranny. He does not write historical fiction. He writes a version of history so as to ensure that version is not eradicated. Fiction is therefore inseparable from the real world and the way historical events are recorded and remembered.

Unfortunately for Rushdie, less than a decade after the publication of *Midnight's Children*, the historical world of his novels collided with the real-world all too violently. *The Satanic Verses* sparked an angry backlash among some Muslim readers (and some

other Muslims who had never read it). On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini, then supreme leader of Iran, issued a fatwa condemning Rushdie to death under Islamic law, forcing Rushdie to live underground and with police protection for the next decade. In essence, the cause of this controversy is that, in Timothy Brennan's words, "Rushdie had written a novel that, by all accounts, had become a matter of state" (107). If Rushdie says novels are a means to combat that state's version of history, there is nothing to prevent state leaders from creating their own fiction, and Rushdie was a victim of that process.

The so-called "Rushdie Affair" highlights the real-world impact of the relationship between fiction and history. Much of the outcry involved charges that Rushdie had misrepresented historical figures, most importantly the prophet Mohammed. Since Rushdie's novel is a work of fiction, this accusation implies an important question about the very nature of literature: to what extent can (or should) a work of fiction be read as a portrayal of historical fact? In addressing this question specifically with regard to Rushdie's novels, Alok Yadav proposes a revision of the way people read fiction in general. He argues that the reading of fiction "follows along very similar lines to those guiding our reading of nonfiction. . . . [R]ecognition of the shared ground between our reading of fictional and nonfictional discourses is crucially important for the practice not only of postcolonial criticism but also of political criticism of literature in general" (191). According to this view, the key component of any historical novel lies in the commingling of the factual and the fantastical; or as Yadav summarizes, "the historical subtext is seen as having a purchase on the fictional discourse of the novel" (192). There are several noteworthy corollaries to Yadav's argument. The most important is the idea that in virtually any novel, regardless of subject matter, the historical setting and the

context in which it was written should play a significant role in how the text is read. That idea is central to a text like *Midnight's Children*, in which historical events like Indian Independence and Partition, the Bangladesh Liberation War, and the 1975 to 1977 Emergency Period play a crucial role in the plot. The plot may be largely fictional, but the novel nonetheless has indisputable real-world implications. Yadav posits that readers should recognize fiction not because its contents necessarily deviate from actuality; rather, “the fictionality of fictional discourse resides . . . in its mode of presentation” (195). The staging of Saleem Sinai’s narrative thus provides the novel with its backbone of fictional discourse, and therefore with its commentary upon real-world events and circumstances.

The use of fiction as a tool to portray a version of history also dominates scholarship on Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*. Critics often approach this topic via *Season*’s intertextual relationships, most commonly the connection with Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Byron Caminero-Santangelo provides a succinct breakdown of the parallels between the two novels:

Salih employs a narrator who tells an extremely disturbing story from his own experience to a group of auditors and uses that story to reflect on the significance of his experience. Furthermore, . . . Salih’s narrator includes the stories of others told in their own words, and the use of these other voices reinforces the breakdown in the notion of a stable truth embodied by a single perspective. The narrator’s story has two main figures. . . . The connection between these two men is the Conradian secret double relationship. (71)



As a result this narrative congruence, *Heart of Darkness* is often portrayed as a text with which *Season* is inextricably linked, either as a motivation for Salih, or an influence on him, and this link becomes a dominant motif in the body of scholarship on *Season*.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said utilizes this intertextual link to place *Season of Migration* into a global literary context and to imbue the text with a serious political undercurrent. He presents the novel as a classic example of the postcolonial author writing back against racist and orientalist imperial constructions. He claims Salih reverses key aspects of *Heart of Darkness* in order to undercut its imperialist assumptions:

Conrad's river is now the Nile, whose waters rejuvenate its peoples, and Conrad's first-person British narrative style and European protagonists are in a sense reversed . . . in that Salih's novel concerns the northward voyage of a Sudanese to Europe; . . . Mostapha Said, a mirror image of Kurtz, unleashes ritual violence on himself, on European women, on the narrator's understanding. . . . [W]hat results is not simply a reclamation of the fictive territory, but an articulation of some of the discrepancies [between Conrad's portrayal of Africa and Salih's] and their imagined consequences muffled by Conrad's majestic prose. (211–12)

Said's word "reclamation" is significant, underlining his view that Conrad, in a sense, stole something from Africa, and this theft—enacted via literature—acts as a metonym for the long history of imperial oppression and injustice. Salih, in writing a fictional response to Conrad's fiction, takes back what Conrad had stolen. The other key phrase in this part of Said's assessment is the double-entendre "fictive territory." The phrase refers

first to geographical territory, (i.e. the fictional village in which most of *Season* takes place). The novel concludes in 1956, the year of Sudanese independence. *Season* therefore chronicles the time when this “fictive territory” is literally reclaimed by Sudan. But “fictive territory” refers not only to territory that is fictional, but also to the territory of fiction—Said views Salih’s novel as a means of inserting an African voice into a narrative (both literary and historical) that had been long dominated by voices from elsewhere. Salih carves out a place for Sudan so that the Sudanese voice can be heard alongside the words of Conrad and other Europeans who have attempted to portray Africa.

Wail Hassan builds on Said’s interpretation. He argues that Said’s reading of *Season* is insufficient, that while Salih reverses Conrad’s discourse and reclaims territory, it’s important to recognize that he also does more than that. Specifically, he “deconstructs colonial discourse itself” (90). Salih accomplishes this goal by making his characters, particularly Mustafa Sa‘eed and the unnamed narrator, multifaceted. Sa‘eed, for instance, “is many contradictory things at once: an intellectual prodigy and a villain; a selfish and diabolical Don Juan (in England); and enlightened and a selflessly patriotic reformer (in Wad Hamid); a wife killer . . . and an ideal husband” (90). These contradictions—as well as the method by which these pieces of information are received by both the narrator and the reader—create an unreliable description of Sa‘eed, making him difficult to pigeonhole, even though many characters (particularly those in England), tend to do so, often as a result of colonial or racial discourse. The unreliable image of Sa‘eed reveals such labeling attempts as fallacious, and illustrates the flawed nature of the discourse in which they are rooted.

*Nervous Conditions* differs from the other novels I address insofar as its author and its protagonist are female. This aspect of the novel dominates much of its critical history. With regard to the relationship between history and fiction, most scholars approach *Nervous Conditions* differently than they would *A Portrait of the Artist*, *Midnight's Children*, or *Season of Migration to the North*. Since the timeframe of the novel is relatively recent, critics generally do not explicitly view the novel as a version of history. Rather, Dangarembga addresses the specter of colonial rule in Rhodesia as the region transitioned to into a recognized independent nation-state and also in contemporary Zimbabwe. Neocolonial influence is even more pronounced in this region than in India or Sudan because from 1965 to 1979 it was ruled by a de facto apartheid government. Dangarembga's novel focuses on the difficulties in developing an individual identity in the midst of such difficult circumstances in the immediate aftermath of colonial rule. Moreover, scholarly interpretations of the way *Nervous Conditions* handles those struggles almost always incorporate gender-issues.

Much like *Season*, *Nervous Conditions* attacks the Manichean dichotomy of nativism vs. neocolonialism, and it incorporates into that attack a statement about the role of women in the young nation of Zimbabwe. Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter argues that Dangarembga "allows her female characters to protest the predicament of African women not by positioning themselves in opposition to their oppressors . . . , but by depicting African women's identity in terms of constantly shifting positionality" (232). In many ways, it is the difficulties of women in Rhodesia in the 1970s which expose the problematic nature of fully embracing nativism or neocolonial influence and ignoring other parts of the history and culture of Rhodesia as the colony becomes a nation and

seeks to carve out its own identity in the modern world. Moreover, as Sally McWilliams points out “The intimation of the complexities of identity and individuality relate to both feminism and post-colonialism” (105). The critique of independent Zimbabwe’s growing pains in *Nervous Conditions* cannot be separated from the novel’s portrayal of the systemic subjugation of women in both the traditional culture and European-influenced neocolonial culture. Tambudzai Sigauke, the novel’s protagonist, must navigate all these historical and cultural obstacles as she grows and determines her own personal identity.

“James Joyce and Post-Imperial *Bildung*” asserts an intimate connection between fiction and history in the novels of all four of these authors, and further argues that the subordination of explicit political content to narratives of personal development strengthen the tie between fiction and history and the tie between individual and nation. The first chapter offers an examination of *Bildung* in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, focusing on specific elements which contribute to the process of becoming and the way those narrative elements shape the texts’ treatment of politics and history. The crux of my chapter is the famous Christmas dinner incident from the first chapter of *A Portrait*, which acts as a turning point in Stephen’s development, shaping his path toward *Bildung* over the remaining chapters of *A Portrait*. A crucial component of this analysis involves Stephen’s mode of viewing the world around him (and therefore also his mode of viewing the events of the Christmas dinner). This mode of perception is primarily aesthetic, a fact which separates Stephen from the adults around him and dictates the effect of the dinner argument on Stephen as he grows and develops. This impact involves a deliberate attempt to avoid future political involvement, a struggle with which Stephen is never truly victorious, yet always continues to battle. The paradox of

Stephen's development—an ongoing battle to avoid the public sphere while constantly being drawn into it—evokes the public/private fusion Jameson claims is a hallmark of third-world national allegories, suggesting Stephen's personal struggle has national implications and that his difficulties mirror contemporary Ireland's. Stephen's attempt to navigate these difficulties and forge a new path reflects Joyce's assessment of Ireland's best chance to successfully create a place for itself as an independent nation in the modern world.

The remaining three chapters are each dedicated to one postcolonial author from the half-century after Joyce's death. Chapter two begins with a discussion of Joyce's influence, broadly speaking, on Salman Rushdie, then narrows to focus primarily on Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children*. Saleem bears many similarities to Stephen Dedalus, the most important of which is the way he embodies the idea of *Bildung*, particularly with regard to the relationship between public and private. Saleem, like Stephen, is simultaneously part of the public world and apart from it, leading to a failure of socialization into Indian culture. The relationship between public and private, and Jameson's views on that relationship, is particularly important for *Midnight's Children* because the novel explicitly presents itself as an allegory. On the novel's very first page, Saleem claims, "my destinies [are] indissolubly chained to those of my country" (MC 3). The chapter analyzes the manner in which Saleem's *Bildung* plot contributes to this allegory and to Rushdie's statement about the early decades of India's independence and where the country is heading. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of *The Satanic Verses*, in which the Joycean model of *Bildung* persists,

showing the value to Rushdie in his fictional portrayals of India and the migrant experience.

Chapter three shifts the discussion of Joyce's impact to Africa. Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* was published in 1966, about a decade after Sudanese independence, and it takes place (in one of the novel's primary narrative frame) when independence is imminent. I focus on the way in which Salih critiques mid-century Sudanese politics during this period via the stories of the two main characters, the unnamed narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed. For each of them, *Bildung* plays a crucial role in their relationship to the society around them, both in Sudan and in England. Both main characters are faced with difficulties similar to those of Stephen Dedalus: how can one reject colonial oppression without implicitly accepting homegrown oppression? This is the same difficulty facing Sudan as a nation at a crucial juncture in its modern history. Finding what the narrator describes as "the middle way" proves elusive, but Salih concludes on an optimistic note, both for the narrator and the nation (*SMN* 108).

Chapter four looks at the Joycean model of *Bildung* in Tsitsi Dangarembga's seminal 1988 novel, *Nervous Conditions*. This novel, which takes place in the late 1960s and early 1970s in what is now Zimbabwe, presents an interesting test case in that it is the only novel I analyze that has a female *Bildungsheld*. This aspect of the text complicates the traditional obstacles to *Bildung* in a colonial or postcolonial context because Tambudzai, the protagonist, must confront culturally inherited gender roles as well as the racial and colonial subjugation of late-imperial Rhodesia. The presence of Nyasha, Tambudzai's cousin, further complicates this state of affairs, as the difficulties of growth, maturation, and development, and the symptoms of imperial subjugation are divided

among multiple characters. *Nervous Conditions* confronts neocolonial circumstances as a significant issue in late-colonial Rhodesia, as problematic as the poverty and social ills of the firmly anti-European nativist culture. The challenges for *Bildung* faced by Tambudzai and Nyasha spring from the difficulties of being trapped between these options.

CHAPTER 2  
PERSONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS: *BILDUNG* IN  
JOYCE'S *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*

When discussing the “Nestor” episode of *Ulysses*, Frank Delaney casually remarks that “Joyce is always included whenever people talk about the great modernists.” This seemingly straightforward and innocuous statement actually reveals quite a bit about the way scholars and writers perceive Joyce and situate him in the literary history of the twentieth century. He is one of the “great” modernists, perhaps given that title more often than any other writer. It is therefore not surprising that later writers who incorporate elements of modernism in their own writing tend to appropriate Joyce’s narrative methods. The salient feature *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* which connects the story of Stephen Dedalus to the condition of Ireland holds a prominent place among those appropriated techniques.

I argue that the critical element of Joyce’s *Bildungsroman* is Stephen Dedalus’s virtual obsession with individualism, his seemingly ceaseless efforts to separate himself from everyone and everything around him (including his father, his mother, his country, his church, and the British Empire). Throughout *A Portrait of the Artist*, these efforts force Stephen to attempt to avoid direct political involvement at all costs and lead him to believe that Ireland itself inhibits successful *Bildung*.<sup>23</sup> The political, and the public sphere in general, is subordinated within the novel to the narrative of development. However, the novel’s most overtly political moment—the Christmas dinner scene in chapter one—acts as a springboard for Stephen’s development, and moreover, his efforts



to remain removed from politics seem destined to failure. The result is a narrative of development which suggests an inextricable link between public and private, between individual *Bildung* and national progress. That narrative of development would prove valuable for postcolonial writers in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The defining and distinguishing feature of Joyce's *Bildungsroman* involves the question of how *Bildung* is interpreted. What does it mean to achieve *Bildung* in the context of this novel? What constitutes successful personal growth and development? For Stephen, the answer involves personal independence and individuality. Successful cultivation of the self requires separation from others (both from individual relationships and from participation in collectives). He therefore embraces an attitude that he is distinct and separate from all those around him. This view of himself appears quite prominently in the latter half of *A Portrait*, beginning with the moment Stephen contemplates joining the Jesuit order before rejecting that possible career path. When he briefly envisions himself as a member of the first estate, performing the morning rituals with his fellow clerics, he wonders, "What had come of the pride of his spirit which had always made him conceive himself as a being apart in every order?" (*P* 161). This is perhaps the most explicit expression of his self-perceived differentiation and individuality. He considers himself "as being *apart* in every order," belonging to no order, no group—and by extension, no family and no nation. It is also noteworthy that he recognizes that this conception of himself is caused by a "pride of the spirit." He acknowledges the vanity of his view of himself and embraces it.

Stephen emphasizes this self-perception as he concludes firmly he cannot join the priesthood: "His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of

the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (*P* 165). Whether blazing new trails or learning what others could teach him, Stephen insists that he will be on his own. The reappearance of the word "apart" is a significant repetition here, underscoring Stephen's desire to detach himself from other people and their institutions.<sup>24</sup>

The manifestation of this attitude culminates with an ongoing association between Stephen Dedalus and the Daedalus of antiquity. Having rejected the priesthood, Stephen joyously proclaims his desire to embrace an artistic destiny: "His soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her graveclothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore" (*P* 170). The image of arising "from the grave of boyhood" suggests a leap toward adulthood and maturity.<sup>25</sup> As a child, Stephen views himself as "apart" from orders, groups, and other people. As an adult (or at the very least, a self-declared adult), he will strive to maintain that apartness. He must become that separate and distinct individual, and he does so by fashioning himself after a legendary figure, Daedalus the artificer. He reinforces this view of himself with an invocation to the mythic man in the novel's final diary entry: "Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead" (*P* 253). Here Stephen identifies himself as the intellectual descendent of the legendary Daedalus rather than the biological descendent of Simon Dedalus. He chooses to be apart from his family just as he chooses to remain apart from the Jesuit order. He likens himself only to a mythic figure, showing that he is unlike anyone in the land of the living.

Stephen's virtual obsession with defining himself as an individual and separating himself from those around him illustrates the idea that Gregory Castle argues is the fundamental feature of the modernist *Bildungsroman*—the failure of *Bildungsheld* to become harmoniously integrated into his or her society. According to Castle, such failure of socialization necessitates a shift away from the “socially pragmatic” form of *Bildung* typical of British Victorian *Bildungsromane* and a return to the classical *Bildung* typical of the German Romantic period.<sup>26</sup> In *A Portrait* (and again in *Ulysses*), Stephen Dedalus exemplifies the inability—or perhaps unwillingness—to embrace the mainstream attitudes of his Irish society, necessitating the shift away from the pragmatic form of *Bildung*. Part of Stephen's return to classical *Bildung* is enacted by his tendency to dissociate himself with politics, social issues, and the public sphere in general, instead viewing the world around him through the lens of aesthetics and embracing affective response as a source of motivation for his actions and decisions. He finds, though, that such dissociation is difficult, perhaps even impossible, and his devotion to that attitude further alienates him from those around him and prevents him from ever feeling at home in colonial Ireland. However, in terms of *Bildung*, such alienation is not inherently negative; in fact, it becomes virtually a necessity in Stephen's path toward serious personal development and cultivation.

Stephen's attitude, which enables him to achieve *Bildung* in the classical sense, in some ways represents a failure to reach traditional maturity. At the end of *A Portrait*, Stephen seems locked in a perpetual adolescence characterized by an overly idealistic perception of his place in the world and a refusal to accept pragmatic realities.<sup>27</sup> This aspect of his development illustrates Jed Esty's hypothesis about *Bildungsromane*

centered on the margins of the British Empire during the modernist period. In *Unseasonable Youth*, Esty writes argues that colonial *Bildungshelden* often experience what he calls “stunted youth,” an inability to mature fully. Such uneven development is often the result of colonial conditions, and *Bildung* must by necessity be incomplete or interrupted.

Both Castle’s and Esty’s observations about the nature of *Bildung* in *A Portrait* help to distinguish the novel from *Bildungsromane* of the previous century and help to define *A Portrait* as the modernist *Bildungsroman par excellence*. Stephen Dedalus not only fails to harmoniously socialize into his environment, he embraces that failure, internalizing it and making it part of who he is as a person. He not only avoids assimilation into the norms of his society, he goes to great lengths to distinguish himself from those around him and to emphasize his individuality, at least in his own mind. This process of individuation (or self-perceived individuation) is rooted in Stephen’s aesthetics- and affect-based experience of the world, and it is essential to his progression toward *Bildung*. Compare this attitude to that of a traditional Victorian *Bildungsheld*, such as Pip from *Great Expectations*, or to an early modernist *Bildungsheld* like Jude Fawley. Pip’s goal is exactly the opposite: he wishes to become *like* a group of other people. In his case, he wants to be like wealthy gentlemen, to become indistinguishable from those who were born into wealth and privilege. While he fails to achieve that goal, he succeeds in joining the merchant middle class. Jude, early in his life, wishes to join the ranks of the educated, which is the reason he goes to Christminster. Even after this dream falters, he desperately desires to live a normal and accepted life with Sue, despite the social stigmas which prevent acceptance from the community. Stephen Dedalus, on the

other hand, wants to be like no one else. Individuality and differentiation are paramount to him. What he finds, however, is that there are limits to the extent to which he can separate himself from the various groups of people around him, and the constant struggle to be an individual while constantly being absorbed into a group (or groups) serves to define and shape his *Bildungsprozess*.

Stephen's focus on individuation, his goal of dissociating himself from all others around him, is rooted in what appears on the surface to be the most explicitly political moment in the novel, the Christmas dinner scene. That progression from a single political moment toward *Bildung* occurs because Stephen Dedalus embodies an idea that Frederic Jameson claims as the defining attribute of "third-world literature" (69). Specifically, in Stephen we see the union of public and private; his personal response to this overtly political moment shapes his conception of politics and of the public sphere in general, which becomes the driving force in molding the young adult he is to become at the conclusion of *A Portrait*.<sup>28</sup>

This dynamic between individual development and the public realm defines the way the narrative presents politics. Most of the time, the political is largely, if not entirely, elided. The Christmas dinner scene is a notable exception, and there are a few less dramatic exceptions, primarily in chapter five. Political issues play no overt role in the remainder of the novel, though at times they may lay dormant beneath the surface. I posit that this avoidance of politics is a manifestation of Stephen's direction in life and is thus inseparable from his *Bildungsprozess*; those traits of his *Bildung* which make it unprecedented in literary history have their genesis in the text in the Christmas dinner. This highly-politicized origin for Stephen's attempted apolitical attitude imbues the text

with its inseparability of public and private. The less dramatic political moments in chapter five then serve to reinforce that inseparability and the direction of Stephen's personal development.

Perhaps the clearest way to see the suppression of the political is to look at the evolution of the narrative world in *A Portrait*—or more accurately, its lack of evolution. There exists in *A Portrait* a distinction between the world of the narrative and the historical world in which that novel takes place. The narrative world is contained almost entirely within Stephen's inner thoughts. Wayne Booth describes the nature of what is narrated to readers of *A Portrait*: "We are not told about Stephen. . . . [I]t is not his actions that are dramatized directly, not his speech that we hear unmediated. What is dramatized is his mental record of everything that happens. We see his consciousness at work on the world" (162–63). The way this consciousness views the world outside itself remains fixed throughout virtually all of *A Portrait*. Nothing in that narrative universe ever really changes. The nature of Stephen's inner monologue is the same in chapter five (when, for instance, Stephen discusses the nature of beauty with his friend Lynch) as it is in chapter one (when Stephen determines the meaning of the words "hot" and "cold," and wonders whether it's appropriate to kiss his mother goodnight). From beginning to end, from Clongowes to University College, Stephen exists in an unchanging narrative milieu.

The absolute lack of development of the narrative world is perhaps a little surprising given the fact that the historical world around Stephen undergoes seismic changes. The historical Ireland at this time sees the rise of the Irish Parliamentary Party, the Kitty O'Shea scandal, Parnell's death in 1891, and the growth of the Irish Renaissance amidst increasingly adamant nationalistic sentiment that eventually led to

the Easter Rising and the War of Independence. Yet Stephen's world remains quite static. In fact, these political events rarely work their way into the narrative at all (with the obvious exception of the Christmas dinner scene). Readers who are not well-versed in Irish history could be largely forgiven for thinking that, based on the contents of *A Portrait*, the political situation in Ireland had not changed much during the timeframe of the novel (the mid 1880s through 1902). There is thus a stark distinction between the narrative world in which readers meet Stephen Dedalus and the historical world in which Stephen lived, and this pointed difference indicates that the absence of political elements from the narrative must be a meaningful omission. This omission not only mirrors Stephen's attitude toward politics and toward art, but also emphasizes the extra-political value of those instances in which politics intrude on the narrative. The presence of the political serves multiple purposes, as is typical of virtually everything in Joyce's oeuvre. In addition to political commentary, it also serves apolitical ends. Specifically, it drives Stephen's *Bildung* plot and gives direction to his personal development. This link between the political and *Bildung* resists the "public-private split" Jameson claims characterizes Western literature, perhaps suggesting a question as to where Ireland falls within Jameson's definition three worlds division of the globe (71). That question further implies that Stephen's experiences may be more than just personal; they may have national implications as well.

The Christmas dinner scene epitomizes the distinction between Stephen's world and the larger world around him. For Stephen, the significance of this incident is affective experience which, though he does not yet know it, will propel his *Bildungsprozess* and push him toward independence and individuality and away from the realm of politics. On

the other hand, for Simon Dedalus, Mr. Casey, and Mrs. Riordan (and in fact, for most critics), the scene exemplifies Ireland's political situation at the time. Tracey Teets Schwarze, for instance, claims that the scene displays the contentious division in Ireland in 1891, a division which reared its ugly head in the wake of Parnell's fall from grace and his death: "Stephen momentarily recalls happier days when both sides united against British imperialism. . . . But with Parnell's fall, the union he had forged fractured; in the Dedalus dining room, faces darken in anger [and] and fists crash onto the table" (247). Michael Toolan further points out that the first time one of Joyce's characters in this scene makes a direct reference to Parnell occurs when Simon Dedalus asks, "Were we to desert him at the bidding of the English people?" (*P* 32). Parnell is not actually named, but rather takes the form of a personal pronoun. Yet everyone at the table knows the unstated antecedent of "him," a fact which emphasizes "that, as a topic of discourse, [Parnell] was already conversationally 'in play,' already in the minds of the participants" (Toolan 395). Parnell is thus the subject of this entire episode, even before he is explicitly mentioned and before the conversation turns to politics. Toolan also examines the very early part of the episode, in which Joyce sets the stage, and shows that the characters' relative positions in the room anticipate the opposing sides of the forthcoming argument: Mr. Casey on one side, Dante Riordan on the other, with Stephen between them. The staging is thus designed to reflect the political argument, showing that this conflict will dominate the scene.

For Hans Walter Gabler, the scene is designed to create a symbolic link between Parnell and Stephen Dedalus, a process which Gabler argues begins in the Clongowes section which precedes the Christmas dinner episode. According to Stephen's countdown



of the days until Christmas break, “the novel opens on a day [October 9<sup>th</sup>] which falls exactly between the day of Parnell’s death (October 6<sup>th</sup>) and that of his burial (October 11<sup>th</sup>)” (33). Gabler further points out that as Stephen falls into a feverish sleep in the Clongowes infirmary, “he has a dream or vision which synchronizes his time and Parnell’s. . . . In Stephen’s sleep of convalescence, Parnell’s death stands for his own. . . . Parnell dies so that Stephen may live.” This connection between Stephen and Parnell corresponds to Joyce’s view of himself: “As he grew up he was to see an increasingly close parallel between his own plight and Parnell’s” (Ellmann 33). In this reading, Stephen’s eventual artistic ambitions are linked to Ireland’s political and historical context. Just as Ireland would reject Parnell, it would reject Stephen, and he would reject Ireland in turn.

While Gabler persuasively argues for the link between Stephen and Parnell, I would counter that this link is largely symbolic; it exists for readers, not necessarily for Stephen himself. *A Portrait* clearly shows that in the aftermath of the Christmas dinner, Stephen avoids political involvement and once he has become a young man attending university occupied with thoughts of self-exile, he never describes himself as a Parnell-like figure. In fact, it is impossible for him to view himself thus, as he considers himself distinct from all others and apart from all orders, organizations, and collectives. Seeing himself as aligned with Parnell would necessitate an association with the independence movement—or at least the home rule movement—and would therefore require deliberate political activism which Stephen never exhibits.

Certainly, though, there are other connections between Stephen’s experience at the Christmas dinner table and his subsequent life choices. To get an idea of how Stephen

perceives and responds to the events of the Christmas Dinner, let's first examine the way Stephen observes other aspects of the world around him, as depicted in the segment of the novel immediately prior to the Christmas dinner scene. This is the first section of *A Portrait of the Artist* (excepting the infantile overture of the first few pages), and it chronicles Stephen's first experiences at Clongowes Wood College. What we find is that Stephen views everything he observes in purely aesthetic terms. The mode of understanding the world that Stephen exhibits in this section of the novel never leaves him. Throughout the rest of *A Portrait*, it dictates how he interacts with those around him and with society at large. It leads him to try to avoid political involvement, but also prevents him from achieving that goal. This mode of viewing the world is often called by philosophers of aesthetics the "aesthetic attitude" or the "aesthetic state of mind."<sup>29</sup> For those thinkers who subscribe to the notion of the aesthetic attitude, an object or a work of art does not possess any intrinsic aesthetic value; rather, they claim aesthetic attributes and value are a property of the manner in which the object is perceived by an observer. The best description of this phenomenon comes from Jerome Stolnitz, who defines the aesthetic attitude as "a distinctive kind of 'looking'" characterized by "disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone" (29, 35). Stolnitz's explanation of the various components of this definition largely mirror the workings of Stephen's young mind.

"Disinterest" is a crucial element of the aesthetic attitude.<sup>30</sup> Observing with disinterested attention, the percipient will not "look at the object out of concern for any ulterior purpose. . . . [He or she is] not trying to manipulate the object" or utilize it for any pragmatic purpose (Stolnitz 35).<sup>31</sup> Disinterested attention is opposed to practical

attention, such as the act of observing cloud formations to determine whether it is likely to rain. One who observes clouds with a disinterested aesthetic attitude, on the other hand, is concerned them solely for the sake of the visual experience, not with an eye toward any future event.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, according to Eliseo Vivas, when seen with the proper aesthetic mindset, an object will be perceived solely as an aesthetic object, and not, for instance, as a historical record, or a work of social criticism.<sup>33</sup>

This is exactly how we see Stephen's mind operating. Near the beginning of this episode at Clongowes, Stephen describes a scene in his mind: "The evening air was pale and chilly and after every charge and thud of the footballers the greasy leather orb flew like a heavy bird through the grey light" (*P* 8). This description provides readers with crucial insight into how Stephen's young mind operates. First, the spherical football (the "leather orb") which plays a prominent role in this image is an extension of the previous section of *A Portrait*. That initial section ends with the image of the eyeball pulled out of the head; the eyeball is then transformed in the new scene into the flying leather orb of the football, thus emphasizing the importance of the visual. This emphasis on the visual is clear as Stephen begins his description by portraying the air synaesthetically, by assigning the invisible air a visual characteristic, "pale." The description of the football flying "like a heavy bird through the grey light" similarly employs excessively visual language in way that imbues a mundane object with aesthetic qualities. In effect, Stephen's mode of perception turns an ordinary experience into an extraordinary experience.

This disinterested, aesthetic mode of perception not only dominates Stephen's descriptions of the scenes and incidents at Clongowes; it also shapes the way he gains

knowledge. Much of this episode chronicles Stephen's process of cognition as he learns new words and concepts, often teaching himself based on his perceptions. As he does so, we see Stephen gaining understanding primarily on aesthetic terms—most often through visual aesthetics, but the visual is often combined with other senses to create a fuller aesthetic impression. An excellent example is Stephen's understanding of heartburn: "when Dante made that noise after dinner and then put up her hand to her mouth: that was heartburn" (*P* 11). For Stephen, heartburn is not a painful burning sensation in the chest; it is a sound accompanied by an image.

Repeatedly throughout this first section of *A Portrait*, Stephen exhibits this disinterested thought process as he tries to understand various aspects of the world around him: human behavior, abstract concepts, words and language, and perhaps most importantly, how words and language correlate to the abstract concepts and human behavior. We see this thought process clearly as Stephen contemplates the meanings of the words "suck," "hot," and "cold:"

Suck was a queer word. The fellow called Simon Moonan that name because Simon Moonan used to tie the prefect's false sleeves behind his back and the prefect used to let on to be angry. But the sound was ugly. Once he had washed his hands in the lavatory of the Wicklow Hotel and his father pulled the stopper up by the chain after and the dirty water went down through the hole in the basin. And when it had all gone down slowly the hole in the basin had made a sound like that: suck. Only louder.

To remember that and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came

out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing. (*P* 11)

Stephen's goal in this scene is cognitive understanding. He is trying to figure out the meaning of words and other symbols. And he approaches that goal by creating a sense of psychological distance between himself and what he is trying to figure out. In doing so, he perceives the words and symbols in solely aesthetic terms. The word "suck," for instance, first enters Stephen's mind because another student calls Simon "McGlade's suck." Stephen distances himself from the insult (and from the entire scene of the insult), thinking instead of the aural impact of the word "suck," and the sound and image of the draining basin. He understands the word "suck" not lexically, contextually, or based on how he observes people using the word; rather, he understands the word based on its sound. The spoken word itself is "ugly" to his ears; note again the synaesthetic portrayal, giving the sound a visual description. Moreover, he associates the word with the loud sound of the water draining from the basin (i.e. being "sucked" through the hole in the basin) in a scene from his memory. The ugly sound of the word and the image of the receding dirty water inform Stephen that this word is negative. Stephen thus knows, via this mode of understanding and interpretation, that when the other student tells Simon Moonan, "You are McGlade's suck," that this remark is designed to be insulting (*P* 11). It is in this way that Stephen gains the cognitive understanding he seeks. In fact, the psychological distance remains even after Stephen has completed his process of learning about the word; in the case of "suck," the text never explicitly indicates that Stephen later reconnects his newfound comprehension to the original scene which motivated it. He remains detached.

The same aesthetic mode of perception dictates Stephen's understanding of "hot" and "cold." He turns the cocks on the faucet and feels the water. Just as the sound of the word "suck" and the sound of the draining water leaves an impression on Stephen, so too the sensation of the hot and cold water informs him of the meaning of those two words. It's only afterward that he recalls the names "hot" and "cold" printed on the bibcocks. Sensation precedes language.

Another key element of the aesthetic attitude Stolnitz emphasizes in his definition is "sympathetic" attention. He explains that the idea of sympathy

refers to the way in which we prepare ourselves to respond to the object. . . . [W]e must accept the object 'on its own terms.' We must make ourselves receptive to the object and 'set' ourselves to accept whatever it may offer to perception. We must therefore inhibit any responses which are 'un-sympathetic' to the object, which alienate us from it or are hostile to it. (36)

Stephen clearly exhibits this behavior as he contemplates, for instance, the kiss: "What did that mean, to kiss? You put your face up like that to say goodnight and then his mother put her face down. . . . His mother put her lips on his cheek; her lips were soft and they wetted his cheek; and they made a tiny little noise: kiss." (*P* 15). He does not allow the teasing he has endured from Wells to influence the way he views the kiss itself. As with the word "suck," Stephen displays intellectual curiosity with the goal of cognitive understanding. He attempts to realize that goal via a purely aesthetic view of the object in question. His understanding is entirely sensory. He thinks about how the act of kissing looks, about the moisture on his skin, about the sound, but he does not allow himself to

think about Wells and about the embarrassment he has recently suffered. When he asks himself, “Was it right to kiss his mother or wrong to kiss his mother? . . . Why did people do that with their two faces?” (*P* 14–15), he is not wondering how he should have replied to Wells’s inquiries; rather, he is contemplating the kiss itself. And he is doing so from an aesthetic perspective: he thinks about look and feel and sound, but not about emotion, human connection, or symbolic significance.

We especially see the dominance of this aesthetic mode of perception in Stephen’s application of color to his understanding of both physical objects and abstractions. This affects his understanding of people in his class (“White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colors to think of”), and success in his class, as the cards for first, second, and third place are “beautiful colors too: pink and cream and lavender” (*P* 12). Even more telling, he soon wonders how an object’s color affects its other properties: “The tablecloth was damp and limp. But he drank off the hot weak tea which the clumsy scullion, girt with a white apron, poured into his cup. He wondered whether the scullion’s apron was damp too or whether all white things were cold and damp” (*P* 12–13). We see here that Stephen has internalized his knowledge of water, hot, cold, and color—which for him is primarily visual, auditory, and sensory—and is applying it to other objects as he tries to learn about them. In effect, his entire understanding of the world around him is now rooted in those early visual, auditory, and tactile observations.

Color soon becomes Stephen’s mode of understanding politics as well, a fact which foreshadows his future aversion to political involvement. Rather than thinking about political issues, he thinks about aesthetic issues, a habit exemplified in the text by Dante Riordan’s colored brushes: “[Stephen] wondered which was right, to be for the

green or for the maroon, because Dante had ripped the green velvet back off the brush that was for Parnell. . . . That was called politics. There were two sides in it” (P 16). It is, of course, entirely natural that a young boy of about nine years old would not understand the details of a political debate, particularly one that involves accusations of sexual indiscretions. However, Stephen’s understanding of the situation is not merely a childish oversimplification of a complex political matter; his understanding of the situation avoids political matters entirely, replacing them with a visual code, green and maroon. Stephen doesn’t wonder if he should support Parnell or if he should support Michael Davitt; he wonders whether to align with green or with maroon. Just as the physical sensation of heartburn is replaced by a sound and an image, the political dispute which soon disrupts his family’s Christmas dinner is replaced by two colors. The political issue is displaced by a visual experience.

Stolnitz also specifies that the aesthetic attitude can be aimed at “any object of awareness” (35). This is an important point; the aesthetic attitude, whether defined by Stolnitz or any other aesthetic philosopher, typically involves the way people view works of art (in any medium) or perhaps scenes in nature. However, Stolnitz clarifies that it is not necessary for that to be the object of attention. A person could conceivably exhibit the aesthetic attitude when perceiving *any* object. In Stephen’s case, he exemplifies the aesthetic attitude when viewing *every* object. No matter what he perceives—an animal, an action, an abstract concept, a word, etc.—he does so aesthetically. Quite simply, that is how Stephen perceives the world around him and how he comprehends everything he perceives.



There is no reason to believe this is how Joyce himself viewed the world when he was that age, a fact which helps illuminate the importance of this perspective for Stephen's personal *Bildung*. The differences between Joyce's life and Stephen's life are what makes *A Portrait* a novel of development rather than an autobiography, and those differences are thus significant pieces of Stephen's story. In fact, even Ellmann's biography (which often relies on *A Portrait* and *Stephen Hero* for evidence about Joyce's youth) concedes that there are noticeable differences between Joyce's experiences and Stephen's experiences: "[James Joyce's] brother Stanislaus, who had already begun to worship him, remembers him as happy and well [at Clongowes], while *A Portrait* represents him as unhappy and unwell" (27). In all likelihood, Stephen's aesthetic attitude as a young boy is one of those differences. Joyce probably did not think of everything he observed in these aesthetic terms when he first arrived at Clongowes in 1888.<sup>34</sup> Rather, the mode of perception exhibited continually by Stephen in his early years mirrors Joyce's mode of perception in his late adolescence, as he was recording what he calls his epiphanies (and more importantly, as he was preparing to write the first version of *A Portrait of the Artist*). Scholes and Kain write that in the epiphanies, Joyce gives "shape to the shapeless and substance to the apparently insubstantial" (3), which is exactly what Stephen does throughout the first section of *A Portrait*. It is thus logical to think that Stephen's mode of perception at this early stage of his life reflects the artist he strives to become.

The Christmas dinner scene, though superficially about Irish politics, is really much more about Stephen's *Bildung* and about how his particular mode of viewing the world shapes his development and maturation process, which in turn gives direction to

the narrative of the last four and half chapters of *A Portrait*. Since this aesthetic attitude dictates the way Stephen perceives everything in the world around him, it must dictate the way he perceives the events of the Christmas dinner in 1891, especially since we've already seen with Dante's brushes that his aesthetic perception tends to overwhelm any actual political issues. As Mrs. Riordan argues with Simon Dedalus and Mr. Casey over the virtue of political activism from priests and bishops—as well as over whether Parnell is still deserving of their reverence—Stephen displays virtually no interest in the relative merits of each party's position. He asks himself who is correct, but he clearly does not understand (or even care about) the root cause of the disagreement. He wonders, “why was [Mr. Casey] against the priests? Because Dante must be right then. But he had heard his father say that she was a spoiled nun. . . . Who was right then?” (*P* 35). Stephen's goal, much as with his contemplation of the word “suck” or of the act of kissing, is cognitive understanding, and his approach is aesthetic. This approach is important because, as we shall see, the political issues being discussed at the table are largely ignored by Stephen (just as they are when Stephen thinks about Dante's brushes), but the aesthetic impressions of the dinner have a lasting effect on Stephen and on his path toward *Bildung*.

There are three primary participants in the argument: Dante Riordan, Mr. Casey, and Simon Dedalus. Stephen's aesthetic mode of perception dictates how he views each participant, and determines the impact of the scene as a whole on him. That lasting impact, in turn, shapes Stephen's *Bildungsprozess* throughout the rest of the novel. With regard to Mrs. Riordan, Stephen's aesthetic attitude leads him to distrust her, beginning with the first lengthy narrative interlude in which Stephen's thoughts interrupt the

argument. At that point, Mrs. Riordan had just questioned Mr. Casey's commitment to Catholicism, and had all but called him a Protestant. Mrs. Riordan's accusations of Protestantism lead Stephen's wandering mind to thoughts of his friend Eileen Vance, a Protestant, and to Dante's disapproval of his spending time with her because Protestants she had known as a child "used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin. *Tower of Ivory*, they used to say, *House of Gold!*" How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold?" (P 35). Stephen, however, posits a rational, literal explanation for the question of how a woman can be a tower of ivory: "Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing she had put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*" (P 36). There are two key points in this thought process. First, the political issues that underlie the Catholic/Protestant tensions are nowhere to be found. For Stephen, the difference between Catholics and Protestants is not source of conflict or a reason for insult; it is merely an obstacle—surmountable through simple logic—to his childish infatuation with Eileen. Stephen does not understand that to the adults at the table Catholicism is a primary component of their Irish identity, and calling one of them a Protestant amounts to serious slander. For Stephen, the difference merely seems a flawed reason for him not to spend time Eileen. Second, Stephen's infatuation with Eileen is entirely rooted in aesthetic experience. He thinks of her entirely in aesthetic terms, most of which we have already seen in his previous thoughts: she is cold, like the water in the basin at the Wicklow hotel; she is soft like a kiss; she is white like the scullion's apron and like the Rose of York. There is nothing sexual about his affection for Eileen. There is

nothing romantic, or even remotely emotional. His description is detached, or to use Jerome Stolnitz's term, disinterested.<sup>35</sup> For Stephen, her appeal is purely aesthetic.

The result is that Stephen finds it difficult to view Dante with the same detachment. She wishes to prevent him from spending time with Eileen, which would prevent him from experiencing the aesthetic pleasure he finds so appealing. He therefore dislikes Dante and views her opinions with skepticism, feelings which are induced by his aesthetic attitude. His distrust of Dante is compounded by a similar phenomenon motivated by his aesthetic attraction toward his father. Stephen's admiration for Simon Dedalus it is still intact at this early phase of the novel, and is largely rooted in his disinterested, sympathetic, aesthetic perception of him (described in more detail below). Simon provides an intellectual criticism of Mrs. Riordan: "[H]e had heard his father say that she was a spoiled nun and that she had come out of the convent in the Alleghanies when her brother had got the money from the savages for the trinkets and the chainies" (*P* 35). However, the apparent hypocrisy of Dante's inheritance, having made a show of piety at the convent until the façade of wanting to become a nun was exposed by her newfound wealth, is entirely beyond Stephen's comprehension at this point. Stephen simply does not understand the logical reason he should mistrust Dante's opinions on religious matters, or even that there is a logical reason not to trust her opinions. He fully understands, however, that his father distrusts Dante's opinion, and that Dante believes he should not spend time with Eileen Vance, a position he clearly wishes to thwart for immature emotional reasons. In effect, the aesthetic attitude which dominates his view of his father and his thoughts of Eileen lead him to dislike Dante, even though he displays no disapproval (or even any understanding) of her political views.

Stephen's views of Mr. Casey are even more directly the result of his aesthetic attitude. Mr. Casey exhibits the most dramatic reactions during the squabble, and his actions are noteworthy because Stephen is quite fond of him, even though he is not a member of the immediate family: "Stephen looked with affection at Mr Casey's face which stared across the table over his joined hands. He liked to sit near him at the fire, looking up at his dark fierce face. But his dark eyes were never fierce and his slow voice was good to listen to" (*P* 35). Stephen's view is shaped not by Mr. Casey's personality or his demeanor, but by his perception of the man as an aesthetic object. He initially observes Mr. Casey with disinterest, with psychical distance, and he finds pleasure in his dark face, in his eyes, and in the tenor of his "slow voice."

Immediately, this fact causes a potential conflict in Stephen. He wonders why Mr. Casey is "against the priests," according to Dante. Typically, Stephen would consider priests respectable figures, due in part to his Jesuit education at Clongowes, and it no doubt seems strange for anyone he admires to speak "against the priests." Intellectually, he understands that speaking against the priests is wrong; he has been taught not to behave that way and to condemn those who do. Therefore, he concludes that "Dante must be right." Yet his affection for Mr. Casey—affection rooted in aesthetic perception—interferes with his intellectual analysis of the situation, and the aesthetic analysis soon wins out. While it would no doubt be wrong for most people to take a position "against the priests," it seems unlikely to Stephen's young mind that someone as aesthetically admirable as Mr. Casey could take a morally sinful stance. Just as Eliseo Vivas suggests, viewing Mr. Casey as an aesthetic object excludes the possibility of viewing him as a

source of social criticism. Stephen's respect for the man is purely aesthetic; he has formed no judgment regarding Mr. Casey's opinion of the priests or of Parnell.

Mr. Casey's demeanor, and the way Stephen sees him, shifts substantially over the course of the dinner scene. As a result, Stephen undergoes a new and more powerful aesthetic experience, a feeling of terror. Avoiding the repetition of that terror becomes an important factor in Stephen's future development. The sequence of events leading to this sense of terror begins before the dinner is served, as Mr. Casey is sitting comfortably, smiling at Stephen, enjoying "a thimbleful" of whisky with Simon Dedalus while they share a laugh about their friend Christy (*P* 28). Mr. Casey's calm and comfortable disposition is the norm for him, and even after the political topic has been broached and he and Mrs. Riordan begin arguing quite intensely—Dante has already levied her charge of Protestantism against him—he maintains his composure and attempts to entertain his hosts, particularly Simon, with his story about "a very famous spit" (*P* 34), over which he and Simon again share a hearty laugh. As the argument intensifies, however, his disposition changes. He begins pounding his fist on the table, enumerating instances in which he feels bishops and priests betrayed the nationalist cause. He eventually shouts "no God for Ireland" at an incredulous Mrs. Riordan before he crumples to the table, his head in his hands, crying "Poor Parnell! . . . My dead king!" (*P* 39). Viewing the situation with an aesthetic attitude, as he views everything, Stephen is now confronted with an arresting image. The image is so powerful it produces in Stephen an affective response visible in his "terrorstricken face" (*P* 39). According to Ben Highmore, such affective responses are the focal point of aesthetics. He describes the primary concern of aesthetics as "the affective forces that are generated" as "the sensual world greets the sensate body"

(121). This affective response (specifically, terror) brought about by his aesthetic experience threatens Stephen's psychical distance. The affect forces him to become personally involved. However, he does not become personally involved in the subject matter of the conversation; there he maintains his disinterest, which we can confirm after the Christmas dinner episode, as the narration shifts back to Clongowes. At that time, Stephen appears to have formed no opinion about Parnell, whether his treatment was just, or whether priests should preach politics from the pulpit. Rather than becoming involved in the political argument, Stephen becomes personally involved in the aesthetic experience itself, in John Casey's tears, and he internalizes that image. While he has formed no opinion of the priests' behavior, the sight of his father's good friend, a man Stephen has looked on "with affection," reduced to sobbing and babbling into his own tear-stained palms has a profound impact on the young boy (*P* 35). This impact influences the course of Stephen's growth and development over the next decade of his life and beyond.

The third participant in this argument is Stephen's father, Simon Dedalus. Simon's reaction to the events of the Christmas dinner is in many ways similar to Mr. Casey's, but Simon's role is more important to Stephen because of the ineluctable father-son connection. At the beginning of this scene, Simon Dedalus is a grand and striking figure. As they wait for dinner to be served, "Mr Dedalus looked at himself in the pierglass above the mantelpiece, waxed out his moustache-ends and then, parting his coattails, stood with his back to the glowing fire" (*P* 27). With his finely groomed appearance and elegant suit, he is every bit the honorable and successful gentleman Stephen claims he is when interrogated by Nasty Roche at Clongowes.<sup>36</sup> Stephen even

sees him framed by the fireplace, illuminated from behind by a glowing light, as if by a halo.

As always, Stephen views the world with disinterested, aesthetic attention. His respect and admiration for his father at this moment is rooted in aesthetic perception. Stephen takes in the entire scene, observing the image before him with psychological distance and in a manner that truly exemplifies the Stolnitz's concept of sympathy.<sup>37</sup> Stephen here accepts what the scene offers to his eyes, not only the impressive figure of his father, but the equally impressive surroundings: the "great fire, banked high and red," "the ivytwined branches of the chandelier," "the big dishes" on the table "with their heavy metal covers," "the pierglass above the mantelpiece" (*P* 27). The impressive images which surround Mr. Dedalus makes his figure that much more imposing. This image, much like the later image of the despondent Mr. Casey, is arresting; it's affect-inducing. Again, as Highmore suggests, the aesthetic experience of "the sensual world greets the sensate body," generating affective response (121). But unlike the terror Stephen experiences at the conclusion of the Christmas dinner, here he experiences what Silvan Tomkins would call interest or excitement.<sup>38</sup> The aesthetically perceived image thus has the effect of causing Stephen to pay even closer attention to the impressive image of his father.

Much as with Mr. Casey, though, there is a dramatic change in his demeanor and in the aesthetic image which Stephen then perceives. Soon after food is distributed to everyone's plate, it is Simon who first broaches politics: "That was a good answer our friend made to the canon. . . . *I'll pay you your dues, father, when you cease turning the house of God into a pollingbooth*" (*P* 31 Joyce's emphasis). As the argument escalates,



he becomes quite vigorous in his denunciation of the way the church responded to the Kitty O'Shea scandal: "Sons of bitches! cried Mr Dedalus. When he was down they turned on him to betray him and rend him like rats in a sewer. Lowlived dogs! And they look it! By Christ, they look it!" (P 34). By the end of the ordeal, after Mrs. Riordan has stormed out of the room, Simon is not reduced to the animated sobbing of Mr. Casey, but "Stephen, raising his terrorstricken face, saw that his father's eyes were full of tears" (P 39). Considering the magnificent and distinguished aura that had surrounded Simon—at least in Stephen's eyes—prior to the meal, the sight of the man's eyes welling up represents a major deterioration from his formerly impressive mien, contributing to the affective terror Stephen exhibits. As a result of the dinner conversation, Stephen experiences a dramatic affective shift, from excitement to terror. According to Benedict Spinoza's definition of the affects, this shift in Stephen mirrors the definition of the affect of sadness: "a man's passage from a greater to a lesser perfection" (104 III.Def Aff III).<sup>39</sup> In effect, Stephen's aesthetic perception of the Christmas dinner leads directly to affective sadness, which is far more important for Stephen than the political debate itself. The political issues which prompt Simon's and Mr. Casey's tears are largely supplanted. Stephen has not formed an opinion of whether priests should preach from the pulpit, but he recognizes politics as the subject which makes grown men cry. He never forgets that, and it continually influences the direction of his personal growth over the course of the novel.

The lasting impact of the Christmas dinner upon Stephen, of his affective experiences during it, emphasizes the fact that the scene is about his *Bildung* and his personal development and maturation process. During the dinner, Dante makes an

explicit prediction about how the incident will affect Stephen: “[H]e’ll remember all this when he grows up, said Dante hotly—the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home” (*P* 33). This prediction turns out to be entirely false. Given Stephen’s later opinions on religion it may seem at first that Dante may be partly right, but she really misjudges the impact of this incident on Stephen. Plenty of evidence from later in his life confirms that the Christmas argument is not the seeds of his future aversion to Catholic theology and ritual. In fact, during Stephen’s adolescence, he seems at times to have forgotten this anti-priestly conversation entirely, and he forms in his mind a wholly positive picture of the priesthood:

Whatever he had heard or read of the craft of jesuits he had put aside frankly as not borne out by his own experience. His masters, even when they had not attracted him, had seemed to him always intelligent and serious priests, athletic and highspirited prefects. . . . [It] was they who had taught him christian doctrine and urged him to live a good life and, when he had fallen into grievous sin, it was they who had led him back to grace.  
(*P* 155–56)

This positive experience of Jesuits, coupled with the period of extraordinary piouness Stephen enters following the hell-sermon in chapter three, nearly leads Stephen to the priesthood. The reasons Stephen chooses not to follow this path are quite significant (and they have nothing to do with anti-clerical remarks from his father and Mr. Casey). Stephen is clearly tempted by the notion of joining the priesthood. When asked if he felt the calling, he nearly answers “yes” immediately and virtually instinctively, although he manages to restrain himself (*P* 157). His daydreaming following the priest’s description

of priestly authority emphasizes this temptation: “How often had he seen himself as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence! His soul had loved to muse in secret on this desire” (*P* 158). At this point in Stephen’s life, Dante’s prediction very obviously rings hollow. Stephen is not the least bit concerned about “language he [had] heard against God and religion and priests in his own home” years earlier.

As befitting his attitude, Stephen conceives of the priesthood in a predominantly aesthetic and visual fashion, as an image of himself. For a moment, it almost seems as though Stephen has lost the psychological distance which characterizes this attitude, but we soon see he does not. He maintains his disinterest and sympathy, accepting the image of the priesthood “on its own terms,” and in its entirety (Stolnitz 36). Stephen does not allow “the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence” to bias him, to destroy his disinterested aesthetic mode of perception. As he envisions the entirety of the priestly life, he realizes that

[t]he chill and order of the life repelled him. He saw himself rising in the cold of the morning and filing down with the others to early mass and trying vainly to struggle with his prayers against the fainting sickness of his stomach. He saw himself sitting at dinner with the community of a college. What, then, had become of that deeprooted shyness of his which had made him loth to eat or drink under a strange roof? What had come of the pride of his spirit which had always made him conceive himself as being apart in every order? (*P* 161)

The rhetorical questions which conclude this reverie are the key issues that prevent Stephen from feeling at home among the Jesuits or within the priesthood. He characterizes himself as having a “deeprooted shyness” and an irrepressible “pride of the spirit.” These traits will not change anytime soon and are incompatible with the priest’s calling. At no point in this thought process does Stephen recall the Christmas dinner scene or the language used against the priests in his home. Dante’s prediction, then, does not hold true, or at the very least has no impact on Stephen’s decision-making process at this crucial juncture in his life. However, the Christmas dinner has other discernible impacts on Stephen’s life and on his character which serve to shape the man he becomes.

The lasting impression of that incident is not “language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home,” but rather the arresting image of the beloved Mr. Casey breaking down sobbing, crying “Poor Parnell! . . . My dead king!” and his formerly strong and powerful father becoming subdued, his eyes “full of tears” (*P* 39). Stephen views this image, as all others, with aesthetic disinterest, and he internalizes it. He sees and remembers the effect that politics has on these men, virtual gods in his young and childish eyes—now fallen gods. The psychological distance of Stephen’s aesthetic attitude protects him from enduring anything like Mr. Casey’s dramatic downfall. When he sees the impact of the Parnell conversation upon his father and Mr. Casey, Stephen decides (not necessarily a conscious decision) that he does not wish to follow their example. In fact, Stephen never again sees his father as the grand, impressive, haloed figure. This incident begins a downward spiral in their relationship.<sup>40</sup> Stephen’s decision leads him to embrace the aesthetic attitude as his way of interacting with the world. The level of protection offered by the psychological distance inherent in the aesthetic attitude

allows Stephen to, “deny whatever he imagines affects him with sadness” (Spinoza 83 III.P25). The young Stephen may not yet know how to articulate this point, but the enduring image of the defeated Mr. Casey and the despondent Simon Dedalus shows him that becoming heavily involved in politics inhibits successful personal *Bildung*. Embracing the aesthetic attitude allows Stephen to direct his life in such a way as to avoid that obstacle.

Turning away from political involvement and from the public sphere leaves a void in Stephen’s life which he fills by turning inward, withdrawing into his own personal universe. He focuses his attentions and intellectual efforts on endeavors which require little or no interaction with other people: poetry, aesthetic theory, revisionist literary history.<sup>41</sup> Essentially, he chooses to live the aesthetic life. Embracing the aesthetic life seems natural for him as the aesthetic attitude is already how he perceives the world, and the psychological distance which characterizes that attitude serves to protect Stephen from the affective sadness he exhibits at the conclusion of the Christmas dinner. His introversion and his aesthetic attitude accomplishes that denial, and he therefore chooses to avoid politics and public life, and to embrace the aesthetic life instead.

There are a few crucial ways in which this lasting impact—Stephen’s turn away from political involvement and his withdrawal inward—manifests itself throughout the remainder of the text. First, political issues virtually disappear from the narrative. After the Christmas dinner scene, there are no more explicitly political moments until chapter five, and even those moments tend to emphasize Stephen’s aesthetic approach to the world and his particular mode of *Bildung* rather than emphasizing politics. The elision of politics has its direct roots in Stephen’s sadness and in the “terrorstricken face” which

signifies that affect. This facial expression is described using a key word, “terror,” which is significant because of its place in Stephen’s thoughts later in the novel. When speaking with Lynch in chapter five about Aristotle, tragedy and comedy, and pity and terror, Stephen defines pity and terror as follows: “Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the secret cause” (*P* 204). This notion is Joyce’s as well as Stephen’s; he delineates it in his Paris notebook (“Aesthetics” 143). At the Christmas dinner, Stephen’s face is “terrorstricken” rather than “pitystricken.” He is not united with the sufferers, his father and Mr. Casey; rather, he is united with the cause, and for Stephen, the cause of his terror and of the tears in his father’s eyes is not the angst of Parnell’s betrayal; it is the act of political involvement itself. That is what causes his sadness.

Both Joyce’s notebook and the aesthetic theories Stephen develops in chapter five of *A Portrait* indicate that Stephen wishes to avoid ever repeating this experience. Pity and terror are the emotions of tragedy. Joyce indicates that “comedy is superior to tragedy in that it makes for joy while tragedy makes for sorrow” (Ellmann 120). The lingering image of Mr. Casey’s breakdown and of his father’s tears solidify that fact in Stephen’s mind. Whether as a result of art or of real-life events, Stephen prefers not to experience this terror, and thus avoids future political entanglements. Stephen therefore deliberately attempts to separate himself from the political, to create a wall between his private life and the public world, and the narrative reflects that approach to life by likewise eschewing politics. However, he does so only because he is so powerfully

affected by the impact of the political upon the private as he sees it in others. Moreover, we'll see that this wall is largely illusory, and no matter how hard he tries, Stephen is unable to maintain the separation between public and private.

The decision contributes to Stephen's inability to harmoniously socialize into his surroundings and to his shift away from socially pragmatic *Bildung*. Such failure of socialization is, in Gregory Castle's reading, a hallmark of the modernist *Bildungsroman* which separates it from previous incarnations of the genre. For Stephen, this failure of socialization is virtually inseparable from his aversion to political involvement. For him to become socialized into his environment, only a few options are available to him. One of those options is to join the rising tide of nationalist fervor, much like his friend Davin. This option is unacceptable to Stephen. Embracing that nationalistic sentiment would mean making himself vulnerable to the distress he observes in his father and Mr. Casey. It would mean repeating the experience that prompts his "terrorstricken face." The aesthetic life, on the other hand, shields him from that potential pain.

Moreover, this fundamental element of Stephen's *Bildung*—the aversion to political involvement which leads to a failure of socialization—dictates Stephen's major life decisions in the future. Embracing the aesthetic life necessitates Stephen further distance himself the nationalist movement. This is not mere metaphorical distancing, but requires actually creating a physical distance. Joyce described Ireland as paralytic, and thereby incompatible with his artistic goals. For Stephen, that paralysis is rooted in the affective sadness he experiences at the Christmas dinner. As both Mrs. Riordan and Mr. Casey consider their political views a fundamental component of their Irish identity, Stephen sees Ireland as inextricably entangled in such political issues. If he wishes to

abandon political involvement, he must also abandon Ireland. He therefore speaks of flying by the nets of “nationality, language, religion,” the trappings of nationalism (*P* 203). He instead expresses his artistic goals, a product of his aesthetic attitude. He wishes to “discover the mode of life or of art whereby [his] spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom” (*P* 246). That is impossible for him in Ireland, and he decides he must leave: “Away then: it is time to go. A voice spoke softly to Stephen’s lonely heart, bidding him go and telling him that his friendship was coming to an end. Yes; he would go. He could not strive against another” (*P* 245). The “other” against whom Stephen chooses no longer to strive refers to his friend Cranly, with whom he is speaking at the time; to his mother, who insists that Stephen perform his Easter duty; and to Ireland, holding him back. What we see here is that Stephen’s effort to eschew political involvement not only prevents him from mirroring Davin’s nationalist sentiment, but also from accepting Ireland as his home.

The other option available to Stephen that would allow him to be at home in Ireland—and to smoothly integrate in to that society—would be accepting British rule. He could perhaps find a career in colonial administration, or he could simply accept Ireland’s subjugation to the crown and live an unrebelling life. This option is clearly not suitable for Stephen, either. Stephen’s aesthetic attitude prevents it, essentially requiring him to achieve *Bildung* of the aesthetico-spiritual form in order to achieve any sort of self-fulfillment.<sup>42</sup> Yet that form of *Bildung* is fundamentally incompatible with the life of an obedient colonial subject, due to Ireland’s subaltern position relative to imperial authority:



Catholic Ireland entered the twentieth century with few bourgeois liberal political institutions and no secular, humanist educational tradition; its legacy was largely one of political resistance to oppressive authority and painful self-questioning about the methods and aims of this resistance. . . . In such colonial situations, identity formation and the “viability” of the educated colonial subject are themselves unstable processes. (Castle 57–58).

In effect, Ireland’s colonial condition complicates the formative process for any Irish Catholic citizen. As I described in the introduction, this condition makes *Bildung* in the Victorian British tradition virtually impossible, as that socially pragmatic approach to attaining maturity within society would necessitate accepting one’s subject position relative to the empire, and the Irish Catholic education system was specifically designed to prevent its graduates from attaining the positions of power that would have been available to Protestant Englishmen. Stephen observes the far-reaching effects of this colonial condition: Parnell disgraced (and murdered, according to Simon Dedalus), Mr. Casey and Stephen’s father brought low. At the same time, Dante Riordan illustrates the opposite end of this spectrum, someone who feels at home in colonial Ireland but who has essentially ceded her personal independence to London and Rome, to crown and mitre. Stephen thus sees in the Christmas dinner scene the perils of accepting imperial rule as well as the perils of becoming politically engaged. His turn inward toward the aesthetic life must protect him from the dangers of the empire as well as the dangers of the colony. The possibility of accepting British rule is therefore not suitable to Stephen. Having thus exhausted the possible means of staying in Ireland and becoming

harmoniously socialized into colonial Irish society, Stephen is left only with the possibility of failing to so integrate. He therefore flees the island. In this way, Stephen's decision to lean away from all political involvement itself becomes a politically charged endeavor. His path toward *Bildung* is thus inseparable from the public sphere from which he tries so hard to remove himself.

Stephen's turn to the aesthetic life, motivated by his aesthetic approach to the world and by the experiences of the Christmas dinner scene, also influences his development insofar as it hinders mature, adult behavior.<sup>43</sup> It is impossible for Stephen not to notice a difference between his own mode of comprehending the world around him, the aesthetic mode, and the way in which his father and Mr. Casey comprehend the world around them. One key difference between those modes of comprehension involves age and maturity. Stephen's aesthetic attitude is, in a sense, fundamentally immature, infantile even. The disinterest which characterizes that frame of mind insulates Stephen from other people, from their views, from their needs. This outlook is selfish, allowing Stephen to exist in a childlike cocoon. For philosophers of aesthetics who promote the idea of an aesthetic attitude, it is intended primarily for observation of works of art or of natural phenomena; it is not supposed to be a constant mindset, as it is an inappropriate and unproductive mode of viewing much of the world, especially as it relies on a large degree of isolation. The complexities of adult life and mature social interactions would necessarily prohibit that isolation. As Simon Dedalus, John Casey, and Mrs. Riordan argue with each other, they exhibit adult behavior, fundamentally different from Stephen's infantile way of thinking.

Moreover, the Christmas dinner is a key moment for establishing this difference between the Stephen's infantile behavior and the others' adult behavior. This is Stephen's first year eating Christmas dinner with the adults, instead of waiting in the nursery "till the pudding came" along with the other children (*P* 30). His participation alongside the adults in this family event is intended as a symbol of his maturation; he is beginning to leave childhood behind and enter into adulthood. Instead though, he is repelled by the adult world he sees before him, and chooses instead to maintain his immature outlook, his self-centered, isolated aesthetic mode of perception and comprehension. In effect, the event which was supposed to herald Stephen's imminent adolescence instead forces him to recoil into a childish attitude, an attitude he holds not only until the end of *A Portrait*, but also through the conclusion of *Ulysses*. Stephen's aesthetic mode of perception is thus a direct cause of his frozen youth, and the shunning of political involvement which accompanies that attitude is an ongoing symptom of it.

The lasting impact of the Christmas dinner incident and of Stephen's devotion to his seemingly infantile aesthetic attitude help to shape Stephen's ideal of living "apart" from others. Again, Stephen cannot help but observe the difference between his own mode of viewing the world and the way in which his father and Mr. Casey see the world. His father and Mr. Casey represent the adult approach, essentially shared by virtually all post-adolescents that Stephen meets (even if they don't share his father's particular opinions). Having decided to remain in his infantile mindset characterized by aesthetic perception, Stephen separates himself from anyone who takes a more pragmatic approach to politics, to religion, to community, to nation, and to any form of social interaction. At the moment, the list of people who take that pragmatic approach includes Mr. Casey,

Simon Dedalus, and Mrs. Riordan, but it will come to include others: his mother, Davin, Cranly, MacCann, the Dean of Studies, Haines, Buck Mulligan, Mr. Deasy, Leopold Bloom, and more.

Moreover, as I have argued, the lingering impact of the dinner—the arresting image of the downtrodden Mr. Casey and the tearful Simon Dedalus—leads Stephen to reject the possibility of a life in the priesthood. The connection between this rejection and the Christmas dinner is important because this decision is the moment at which Stephen begins explicitly articulating his plan to remain apart from others, from churches and religious orders, from political parties and nationalist gatherings, from community and family. From the moment he asks, “What had come of the pride of his spirit which had always made him conceive himself as being apart in every order?” he deliberately sets himself “apart” from such groups and from other individuals, and he continues to do so through the end of *A Portrait*.

In the end, though, this path proves impossible. Esty explains that this novel, like many other colonial *Bildungsromane*, does “not narrate the passage into adulthood,” but rather is “designed precisely to avoid it” (3). The childish nature of Stephen’s aesthetic state-of-mind prevents him from entering into Irish society as a productive adult, and he finds that he cannot fully free himself from the political, racial, and cultural issues which he so desperately tries to avoid. He tells Davin in chapter five, “This race and this country and this life produced me. . . . I shall express myself as I am” (*P* 203). He finds himself inextricably entangled in the nets he claims he wishes to fly by. Yet he never stops trying to extricate himself, regardless of the long odds against him. That is truly the story of Stephen’s *Bildungsprozess*.

Stephen's difficulties in trying to avoid political involvement become more prominent in chapter five, as he is once again confronted with people who, unlike Stephen, choose to make politics an important part of their lives. The most prominent such person is Davin, whose appearances in the text and whose conversations with Stephen serve to emphasize Stephen's turn inward, away from politics and toward aesthetic endeavors, while also demonstrating the necessity of remaining "apart" from other parts of society.

From his first entrance into the narrative, Davin is set up as a foil to Stephen. Whereas Stephen eschews political involvement and envisions himself as apart from the society around him, Davin sees political objectives as an integral part of his character, and he views himself as inseparable from Ireland as a nation. Davin truly embodies the intersection of public and private; his nationalism is part of who he is. Without it he would be lost. Stephen, regardless of how adamantly he claims to be opposed to Davin's nationalism and his worldview, eventually finds that he and Davin share that crucial trait: politics and public involvement shape their growth and determine the identity of the young men they have become.

Davin appears three times in chapter five, first in Stephen's thoughts, second in person, and last in Stephen's diary entries. It is his first appearance which establishes the clear distinction between him and Stephen, as it provides valuable background information about Davin as a character. Davin is first described as a "peasant student," in contrast to Stephen's urban Dublin upbringing. Davin is described as an athlete who comes from a family of proud athletes. His uncle is Mat Davin, whose "deeds of prowess" rival the stories of Irish myth in shaping Davin's aspirations. Stephen, by

contrast, was a weak, unskilled footballer on the pitch at Clongowes, and apparently has not improved much in the following eleven years. Moreover, the young Davin had once “sat at the feet of Michael Cusack, the Gael” (P 180). Cusack is the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association and is a model for The Citizen of episode twelve of *Ulysses*; The prominence of Davin’s association with sports, particularly with the figure of Cusack, links him to the nationalist movement, as the GAA was closely associated with the rising tide of nationalist sentiment and the Gaelic cultural revival.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, when Davin was young, “[h]is nurse had taught him Irish and shaped his rude imagination by the broken lights of Irish myth” (P 180–81). Davin’s knowledge of and virtual obsession with Irish mythology is actually what leads Stephen to think about Davin in the first place. Stephen is looking at a statue of Thomas Moore near Trinity College, thinking that “it seemed humbly conscious of its indignity. It was Firbolg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian; and he thought of his friend Davin” (P 180). The close link between Davin and Irish myth identifies Davin as a child of the Irish Renaissance and the rapidly growing Irish nationalism movement.<sup>45</sup> Stephen quite obviously does not share Davin’s obsession with the heroes of Irish myth. He was reared on stories of the moocow rather than stories of Cúchulainn. Stephen rejects Davin’s breed of fervent nationalism, preferring to maintain his pattern of detachment, a difference between the two young men which becomes exceedingly important when Davin appears in the text in person rather than merely in Stephen’s mind.

One last significant element of Davin’s first appearance in this chapter is Stephen’s recollection of a story Davin once told him. This story—and Stephen’s memory of it—underscore the differences between Davin and Stephen, particularly with

regard to their views on Ireland and on what constitutes moral behavior. Davin recounts an incident which occurred as he was walking home from a hurling match (again re-emphasizing his interest in sports). As he walked through the empty countryside, he stopped at a small cottage to ask for a drink of water. A young woman answers the door with her breast and shoulders bare, offers Davin milk, tells him that her husband is away, and invites him to spend the night with her. Davin declines and continues walking (*P* 182–83). His decision demonstrates his adherence to Irish-Catholic values and morals. Moreover, the woman’s vitality, fertility (Davin believes she is pregnant), and connection to the land (as a peasant) mark her as a personification of Ireland, much like the Shan Van Vocht.<sup>46</sup> Davin could never do anything to desecrate that symbol. Stephen, on the other hand, rejects the Catholic piety and Irish nationalism which Davin holds so dear, and he would likely have no qualms about violating such a symbol or about violating the sanctity of another man’s marriage bed. Given his history with prostitutes and his continued sexual precociousness, it is highly likely that had Stephen been in Davin’s situation, he would have accepted the woman’s invitation. The incident thus serves to highlight the fundamental differences between the two young men.

When Davin appears in the text in person, rather than merely in Stephen’s thoughts, these differences quickly spark a miniature political debate, which serves to emphasize Stephen’s mode of *Bildung*. The political argument, such as it is, centers on Davin’s deeply-ingrained nationalism. Stephen, however, despite his rejection of Davin’s worldview, maintains the detachment he had displayed more than a decade earlier at Clongowes and at the Christmas dinner table, essentially avoiding direct political involvement. The political discussion begins as Stephen asks Davin if he has signed

MacCann's petition "*Per pax universalis*" (P 194). Stephen soon points out that this petition might contradict Davin's other beliefs: "Now that you have signed the petition for universal peace, said Stephen, I suppose you will burn that little copybook I saw in your room" (P 201). The copybook is presumably Fenian literature. There are a couple noteworthy points about this discussion. First, Stephen is not (at least not yet), criticizing Davin's political stance. Rather, he is mocking Davin's hypocrisy. He even refers to Davin as "one of the tame geese," suggesting he feels Davin's views are largely rhetorical and that Davin lacks the courage to truly stand behind them.<sup>47</sup> Second, in so mocking Davin, Stephen does not actually take a political stance. He neither supports Davin's nationalistic worldview nor supports union with the United Kingdom. Even though the topic of conversation seems to have turned to politics, Stephen persists in the pattern which has characterized his behavior since the Christmas dinner: attempting to avoid political engagement. Despite his criticism of Davin, Stephen's views are not anti-nationalist so much as anti-political.

Stephen does not truly engage in political commentary until prompted to do so by Davin, who criticizes Stephen for not sharing in his nationalistic sentiment. In response Stephen provides his thoughts on Ireland:

[W]hen the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets. . . .

— Too deep for me Stevie, [Davin] said. But a man's country comes first. Ireland first, Stevie. You can be a poet or mystic after.



— Do you know what Ireland is? asked Stephen with cold violence. Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow. (*P* 203)

Here is perhaps Stephen's most explicitly political statement in *A Portrait*. He reveals what he truly thinks about the nation of his birth, and the relationship between that nation and its citizens.<sup>48</sup> His remarks are, not surprisingly, entirely in line with the behavior and priorities that dominate his life since the Christmas dinner. His criticism of Ireland revolves around the impossibility of remaining detached from its political entanglements, the "nets" which he claims are cast over all Irishmen. In essence, he disapproves of Ireland because he feels the country will inevitably cause the affective sadness he had experienced (and which he had witnessed in his father and Mr. Casey) at the Christmas dinner. Stephen likely believes that Davin, as a result of his fervent nationalistic beliefs, will at some point suffer the same tear-filled fate as his father and Mr. Casey. If he realizes in chapter one that political involvement inhibits successful *Bildung*, he now suggests that Ireland likewise inhibits *Bildung*, a sentiment he later elaborates upon in one of his diary entries. He recounts meeting Davin, telling him that "the shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead" (*P* 250).<sup>49</sup> In other words, the idyllic seat of power of Irish tradition no longer exists on the Island; the only way to regain that former glory is to leave. This sentiment is truly the culmination of the process that began in chapter one, as Stephen attempts to avoid becoming involved in Irish politics, turns inward to aesthetic pursuits, and sets himself up as apart from every segment of society around him. He finds remaining apart impossible while in Ireland, so to maintain that goal he chooses to leave. Stephen thus illustrates the adamancy with which he will protect his vision of himself as

“apart” from all other aspects of Irish society and the importance of that vision to his *Bildung*.

However, while Stephen obviously places enormous importance on remaining apart, he also envisions himself as a pivotal part of Irish history and culture. In his April 26<sup>th</sup> diary entry, Stephen famously proclaims, “I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (*P* 253). Stephen implies that the Irish race, though it has existed for centuries, lacks an important, defining element of itself. He further implies that he and only he is capable of creating it, that even though he places himself apart from Irish society, he is also at its center. He is simultaneously apart from it and a part of it.

As the incident with Davin illustrates, despite Stephen’s best efforts, there is a limit to how successfully it’s possible for him to avoid politics in Ireland at this time. Joyce shows the inevitable failure of Stephen’s attempt to avoid political involvement and other all aspects of public life not only through the narrative arc of his *Bildung* plot, but also through the text’s rhythmic structure.<sup>50</sup> The particular rhythm of *A Portrait* represents a break with generic tradition, and it breaks with it in such a way as to facilitate the shift to a new, particularly Joycean, formulation of *Bildung* which illustrates Stephen’s inability to avoid political involvement. The best formal description of the way in which the rhythmic pattern of Stephen’s triumphs and setbacks work together in the narrative comes from Tobias Boes in “*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the ‘Individuating Rhythm’ of Modernity.” Boes analyzes *A Portrait*’s narrative rhythm by identifying two dominant tools Joyce uses to create the novel’s narrative structure, the

epiphany and the leitmotif. These two devices have diametrically opposite effects on the narrative, yet they operate in a harmonious alliance throughout the novel:

The epiphany is fundamentally disjunctive. . . . [It] necessarily destroys the flow of mundane reality and therefore also the continuity of sensation. . . . The leitmotif, on the other hand, is entirely conjunctive: it points out the prosaic underpinnings of lofty emotions and ties each stage in the development of both plot and protagonist back to the ones that preceded it. The endearingly frustrating nature of Joyce's text stems from the fact epiphany and leitmotif hardly can be separated from one another. (767)

These structural elements of *A Portrait* thus compel the novel to enact a Bakhtinian sense of historical progress as it chronicles Stephen's growth and development.<sup>51</sup> They play an important role in providing the text with its peculiar rhythm. Boes further argues that the unique rhythm created by the combination of epiphany and leitmotif disrupts what Martin Swales refers to as "the operative logic of the *Bildungsroman*": "Transformation of contiguity into continuity—of a synchronic 'beside-one-another' (*Nebeneinander*) of potential selves into the diachronic 'after-one-another' (*Nacheinander*) of realized actuality" (772).<sup>52</sup> *A Portrait of the Artist* defies this "operative logic" by discarding the *Nacheinander*, after-one-another rhythm. In other words, the novel's rhythm is performative; the narrative mirrors Stephen's withdrawal inward and his infantile tendencies via a failure of forward progress.

Moreover, this interplay between disjunction and conjunction mirrors the contemporaneous condition of Ireland as a not-yet-sovereign nation on the verge of independence. Boes suggests that

[l]ike Stephen Dedalus, Ireland during the early years of the twentieth century was tossed back and forth between two different ways of representing temporal experience, and different conceptions of historical development: on the one hand, that of the Irish Renaissance, for which real improvements in Ireland could be achieved only through the revival of the cultural values of a bygone era; and, on the other hand, that of progressivism, according to which the hope of the nation lay in a break with the past and a corresponding leap into modernity. (769)

The return to “the cultural values of a bygone era” of course represents a cyclical conception of time. It is a return to a faded past, a rebirth (hence, “Renaissance”) of a previous historical period. The progressivism, on the other hand, represents linear historical time, an ongoing teleological process. Stephen finds himself cast in the midst of this conflict of Irish cultural identity. More importantly, for Stephen both the ideologies of the Irish Renaissance and of nationalistic progressivism are fundamentally flawed. He cannot embrace either, as doing so would violate his goal of remaining “apart” from every order.

Of the two narrative tropes Boes discusses, the epiphany is much more often discussed, while many scholars ignore the leitmotif. Yet as Boes points out, the two are virtually inseparable, and the epiphany gains much of its power by virtue of its ties to *A Portrait's* leitmotifs. Those leitmotifs play a major role in illustrating Stephen's aesthetic attitude, his path toward *Bildung*, and his inability to fully separate public from private. In the early episodes of chapter one, as we see Stephen exhibiting the aesthetic attitude which will determine his response to the Christmas dinner incident and shape his

personal growth thereafter, Joyce introduces several key leitmotifs: moisture, dampness, and water (the faucet in the Wicklow Hotel, the kiss, the damp tablecloth, the squalid water in the square ditch); hot and cold; colors (the roses, the tablecloth and the scullion's apron, Dante's brushes). These objects, sensations, and ideas are repeated often throughout the text (a necessity for leitmotifs, by definition). Specifically, they return during the Christmas dinner scene. The scene opens with a great fire (reinjecting heat into the narrative), and several leitmotifs appear prominently as Stephen thinks about Eileen Vance—she is cold like water, white like the apron, and soft like a kiss. The visual and sensual nature of these leitmotifs emphasize Stephen's aesthetic attitude and its importance in determining his thought process as this crucial juncture in both his life and the novel.

Leitmotifs of course recur throughout the later chapters as well: the harlot's kiss at the close of chapter two, the heat of hellfire in chapter three, the birdgirl wading in the water in chapter four, to name just a few examples. As they reappear, and as they operate in conjunction with the epiphany, they allow the novel's structure to mirror Stephen's developmental process, particularly his self-perceived distinction from all those around him and the difficulty in turning that perception into reality. Stephen views himself as different from those around him, as separate, as "apart." This distinctiveness is characterized by narrative epiphanies, which, as Boes remarks, are fundamentally disjunctive. They not only separate one segment of the text from the next, but they also separate the protagonist from other characters. At the same time, the leitmotif, fundamentally conjunctive, keeps Stephen tied to others, to his family, his peers, his church, and his nation. Stephen, like Ireland, is simultaneously jumping forward and

being pulled back, making his attempt to remain “apart in every order” virtually impossible, and the narrative structure of *A Portrait* reflects that difficulty.

While Stephen desperately tries to avoid political engagement, Joyce makes political matters a vital element of his writing. Their respective levels of engagement with politics is an area in which Stephen Dedalus and James Joyce differ. Joyce is intimately engaged with politics, in *A Portrait* as well as his other texts. As Enda Duffy argues, Joyce’s writing is a record of his opinions on contemporary political developments. And James Fairhall posits that Joyce’s fiction provides a version of a historical testimony. Stephen, however, is largely ignorant of those efforts. To a large extent, his withdrawal from the political arena is presented ironically. Readers know, as Stephen himself will eventually discover, that it is virtually impossible to truly avoid the public sphere to the extent Stephen wishes. He is portrayed as overly idealistic, so much so that he is virtually divorced from reality. However, while Joyce presents Stephen ironically, Stephen himself is irony-impaired, and he presents himself as fully serious about his withdrawal from public life. And more importantly, he envisions himself as fully withdrawn from politics and public life. It’s not until *Ulysses* that reality begins to intrude on Stephen’s vision of himself as “apart in every order,” and even in *Ulysses*, Stephen still clings to his efforts to avoid political involvement and to avoid the affective sadness and terror which afflicts him during the Christmas dinner.

The particulars of Stephen’s *Bildung*, the path he takes toward achieving it, and the way it is written into the narrative of *A Portrait* have significant repercussions. Stephen puts a great deal of emphasis on maintaining his individuality and avoiding Ireland’s public sphere, yet he is invariably drawn into public discourse and even goes so

far as to envision himself as a central figure in Irish culture. In doing so, his personal life and the public entity that is Irish society become intertwined.<sup>53</sup> As such, Stephen's path toward adulthood and maturation has implications for Ireland's path toward national maturity. Stephens' *Bildungsprozess* acts as roadmap for Ireland. Simply submitting to colonial rule is not an option. Seven hundred years of history have proven that such an arrangement is disastrous for Ireland's people, language, culture, and economy. At the same time, diametric opposition to such rule risks reinforcing colonial dynamics by resorting to colonial style rhetoric and Manichean divisions. As Vincent Cheng remarks regarding the racial element to colonial discourse, in establishing a difference from the colonizer based on nostalgic or idealized representations of the past (as proponents of the Irish Renaissance attempt), "a 'nativist' position merely mirrors the hierarchical fantasies of the colonizer's culture" and therefore encourages marginalization rather than discourages it (54). In order for Ireland to successfully take its own place on the world stage, it must follow neither of those paths, but blaze a new trail that accepts neither, just as Stephen tries to do. These national implications of Stephen's *Bildung* act as a model later postcolonial writers appropriate in order to portray their respective national situations and their thoughts on national futures. In the following three chapters, I discuss the way three such writers have utilized this model for the *Bildungsroman*.

## CHAPTER 3

### INDIAN *BILDUNG* AFTER INDEPENDENCE: RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* AND *THE SATANIC VERSES*

Though James Joyce passed away in 1941, his paradigm for *Bildung* and use of the narrative of development as a medium of political commentary remain alive and well. In the second half of the twentieth century, those aspects of Joyce's texts emerge in novels by writers from newly-independent nations as a valuable means critiquing processes of political and cultural growth in the aftermath of independence. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, a novel of India's independence and infancy, provides one of the clearest examples of postcolonial appropriation of Joyce's *Bildungsroman*.

Rushdie and Joyce share some substantial biographical similarities, and Rushdie's thoughts on those similarities suggest parallel literary goals. Each writer willingly left the nation of his birth, living the vast majority of his adult life abroad. Yet each also continues to write about his homeland—a country either newly independent or on the verge of independence—often in ways perceived as critical of that country and its people. The Irish backlash against Joyce has largely subsided, replaced now by widespread praise. While Rushdie receives some praise from Indian audiences, it has certainly not reached Joycean levels, and his detractors are often quite zealous in their disapproval.<sup>54</sup> Rushdie looks at the shift in Joyce's reception as a foreshadowing of his own potential critical history. He suggests that he and Joyce see their respective homelands and the world at large through a similar lens: "I am close to [Joyce]. I feel a kinship, not so much between our types of authorship, but rather between his eye and ear, his mind and mine.



The way one looks at things” (Dijkgraaf). Rushdie adds to this comparison a remark about how Joyce treated Ireland in his writing, and how he was treated by the nation in return: “[*Ulysses*] is a grand homage to the country that has never understood him. . . . He was regarded there as a pornographer and blasphemer. Now he is viewed as Ireland’s national monument” (Dijkgraaf). Rushdie’s comments about national “homage,” about eye, ear, and mind, paint a portrait of a writer virtually obsessed with the way Joyce saw and portrayed Ireland, its relationship to England, and its place in the world; his obsession with such topics suggest an analogous effort on his part in *Midnight’s Children* and in other texts.

This effort of Rushdie’s is evocative of Frederic Jameson’s notion of third-world national allegory. Insofar as *Ulysses* is a “grand homage to the country that never understood [Joyce],” *Midnight’s Children* is a grand homage to India, the country that has a tense and ambivalent relationship with Rushdie. The country of his birth, its relationship to England, and its place in the world dominate much of the novel, sometimes explicitly and sometimes allegorically. The relevance of Jameson’s ideas put the novel’s portrayal of the relationship between public and private in the spotlight. This union is a vital component of the developmental process for Saleem Sinai, the novel’s main protagonist. He envisions himself as the center of Indian history, politics, and culture, yet he is always an outsider. This dynamic serves as the foundation for the novel’s allegorical elements.

Saleem Sinai bears a remarkable resemblance to Stephen Dedalus. He is a writer who deliberately separates himself from mainstream society; as he grows, he separates himself from his family (the identity of his family is already a complex situation, in

Saleem's case), and he suffers from an intensely ambivalent relationship to his homeland. Also like Stephen, Saleem is a fictive autobiographical construction. Just as Stephen shares many of his youthful experiences with Joyce, Saleem shares many of his youthful experiences with Rushdie. Even the name "Saleem" is meant to sound similar to "Salman," and Rushdie chose the name Sinai in honor of Ibn Sina, an eleventh-century Persian polymath, much like Joyce named his autobiographical protagonist after the artisan Daedalus (Rushdie *Joseph Anton* 54). More importantly, as I will show in this chapter, his particular mode of *Bildung*, of personal growth and cultivation, very closely mirrors that of Stephen Dedalus, and the way Rushdie narrates that *Bildungsprozess* bears the marks of unmistakable Joycean influence. Not only are Saleem and Stephen similar characters—awkward youths who become awkward adults, keenly and sometimes painfully aware of history and national identity, who view their own writing as crucially important for their own lives and for their respective countries—but Rushdie also interprets the concept of *Bildung* in a manner similar to Joyce, and incorporates that *Bildung* within the narrative using the same techniques and with comparable results. Just as the story of Stephen Dedalus's path toward *Bildung* both reflects and enacts Ireland's growth on the world stage, so Saleem's *Bildungsprozess* not only reflects the story of India's growing pains in the years after independence, but also propels the nation toward its own national maturity. In so doing, Rushdie provides pointed commentary on the political circumstances in India in the first three decades after independence, voicing concerns about corruption which temper a largely optimistic vision for the future of the nation.

Saleem Sinai, like Stephen Dedalus, has difficulty finding his place in the country where he was born. Struggling to find that place leads him, again like Stephen, to separate himself from mainstream culture, though he always retains a conviction that he personally represents India more so than any other Indian. For both Saleem and Stephen, affect is an important facet of developing a sense of individuality and distinctness and also an important part of how each develops a relationship to his fledgling nation's political culture. Both characters develop into someone who represents the union of public and private, despite their separation from the people and culture of their respective countries. That link between the individual and the state is crucial for Rushdie. He utilizes Joyce's model because Stephen Dedalus's personal connection to Ireland's public realm, its history and its contemporary politics, is a crucial connection for Saleem Sinai's *Bildung* plot as well. It is important for Saleem's individual development and for Rushdie's commentary on the state of India in its first three decades of independence. Moreover, Joyce was not only writing as Ireland was approaching political independence; his work also saw Ireland's elevation to world-power on the literary landscape. Rushdie's appropriation of Joyce's archetypes provides him with the opportunity to similarly elevate India's place on the global literary scene.

The mere fact that Rushdie has been influenced by Joyce is not surprising. After all, Rushdie has often called attention to his respect for Joyce and to some seemingly superficial similarities between them. In a 1981 interview given after the publication of *Midnight's Children*, he identifies Joyce—along with Miguel de Cervantes, Laurence Sterne, Nikolai Gogol, Günter Grass, Herman Melville, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Samuel Beckett, and Flann O'Brien—as part of the “literary family” he deliberately selected for

himself (GlennDinning 4). Twenty years later, in a 2001 interview, Rushdie identifies *Ulysses* as the book which most profoundly influenced him, and he claims, “Joyce is always in my mind, I carry him everywhere with me” (Dijkgraaf). He also likes to align his own literary efforts with Joyce’s. He is exceedingly pleased when W.L. Webb tells him, “The unifying idea of *Midnight’s Children* [is] one of the greatest ideas since Joyce’s ‘day in the life of’” (89).

Rushdie has also implied that his work and Joyce’s have comparable impacts on readers, perhaps by his own design. Later in the 2001 interview with Margot Dijkgraaf, Rushdie describes a few specific elements of *Ulysses* and Joyce’s other texts that strike him as particularly impressive or memorable, and his comments shed some light on his own writing. He says of his first experience reading *Ulysses*,

Everyone said that it was such a sealed book, hard to penetrate, but I did not think so at all. You never hear people say that there is so much humor in the book, that the characters are so lively or that the theme—Stephen Daedalus [sic] in search of his lost father and Bloom looking for his lost child—is so moving. People talk about the cleverness of *Ulysses* and about the literary innovation. To me it was moving, in the first place.

Rushdie’s comments here are quite telling, especially since many of his own novels, particularly *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, involve complex plots, convoluted narrative structures, and non-traditional syntax, and they are often criticized for being unnecessarily opaque. His works are often unfairly criticized due to those traits, much as *Ulysses* has been. Rushdie’s comments on *Ulysses*, more than merely defending against such charges, suggest that beneath the appearance of impenetrability, his novels

are about relationships and emotions, about the way characters are moved and affected, and perhaps about the way readers can be moved as well. Despite their seemingly elitist opacity, at their heart the books are “moving, in the first place.” They are deeply affective and genuinely human.

In other interviews, Rushdie has spoken about the impact of Joycean language on his novels. This influence is a major component not just of Rushdie’s writing, but of postcolonial literature in general. Feroza Jussawalla has claimed that in “February 1922, when James Joyce’s *Ulysses* was first published, what was to become the postcolonial novel received its greatest gift—the gift of the permission to experiment with the English language” (“Postcolonial” 100–101). Rushdie wholeheartedly agrees. When asked if “the British feel [he has] mutilated their language,” he responds: “They like their language mutilated. After all, compared to what Joyce did, I haven’t done much! But no, it is one of the gifts of the English language that you can do it to that language” (Tripathi 24). He also emphasizes the fact that such wordplay is an important aspect of literary expression, not just for him, but for anyone writing in English later than the 1950s: “[I]t looks as though Queen Victoria [is] finally dead. The fiction of the Victorian age, which was realist, has to my way of thinking been inadequate as a description of the world for some time now, and nobody has noticed the fact until quite recently” (Brooks 57). Rushdie thus states fairly explicitly that the Joyce-like language and wordplay of his novels constitute an important part of his fiction and of his portrayal of the postcolonial world.

Some critics, however, take issue with Rushdie’s use of Joycean style. Jussawalla, though an admirer of Joycean linguistic experimentation, harshly condemns Rushdie’s use of it, arguing that he uses it as a veil behind which he can safely hide to avoid

responsibility and critical censure. She claims Rushdie's Joycean language is not the tool of an artist, but the weapon of a bully: "[T]hrough style and technique he manages to belittle just about every audience. . . . [T]hrough stylistic word play . . . Rushdie attempts to escape the responsibilities of the monstrosities he perpetrates" ("Post-Joycean" 227–28). While I don't fully agree with Jussawalla's unforgiving condemnation of Rushdie's use of Joycean linguistic techniques, the passion and forcefulness of her argument show just how great an effect Joyce's influence has on Rushdie's texts and the way they are read.

Surprisingly, very little has been written about *Midnight's Children* as *Bildungsroman*. I say this fact is surprising because the *Bildungsroman* is a cornerstone of Salman Rushdie's oeuvre; it is found in *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, and in his short fiction. Furthermore, it seems like a logical approach to the text. Whatever else the novel may be, it is first and foremost the story of Saleem Sinai's life, from thirty-two years before his birth through an adulthood which sees him writing his memoirs. Those sections of the novel in which Saleem does not appear (i.e. Book One) tell the story of his recent ancestors, which becomes an indispensable prelude to his own story, establishing patterns and motifs, situating Saleem's birth and life in its historical context, and perhaps most importantly setting up the genealogical muddle of Saleem's origins.

Placing *Midnight's Children* into the larger context of the *Bildungsroman* tradition has an immediate impact on the way Saleem's story is read, and Saleem's resemblance to Stephen Dedalus becomes even more clear. In placing *Midnight's Children* within this generic history, Neil ten Kortenaar points out that the opening lines

of chapter one are “actually an echo of *David Copperfield*, the most prominent of Victorian *Bildungsroman*[e]” (72).<sup>55</sup> Right from the first page the novel indicates that it will entrench itself firmly within the *Bildungsroman* tradition. Ten Kortenaar also delineates a handful of *Bildungshelden* to whom Saleem bears similarities: Lucien de Rubempré, from Balzac’s *La Comédie Humaine*; Dostoevsky’s underground man; from other postcolonial novels, G from Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin* and Ralph Singh from Naipaul’s *Mimic Men*; and insofar as Saleem is “certain everything conspires to prove and reward his merit[, he] is related to Dickens’s Pip . . . and to Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus” (74). Saleem is thus the heir to many of the traits and habits of *Bildungshelden* from the 130 years preceding the publication of *Midnight’s Children*. Specifically, Saleem, Pip, Stephen, and company all “share a conviction of their uniqueness, a fear that their worth will not be recognized” (Ten Kortenaar 74). However, Ten Kortenaar does not address the fact that of all the other protagonists he mentions, Saleem is clearly most similar to Stephen Dedalus, and perhaps most different from Pip, an archetype for the British Victorian *Bildungsheld*. As Pip grows and matures, the tendency towards socialization comes to dominate his character, eventually conquering his delusion of uniqueness. Stephen, on the other hand, never displays the tendency toward socialization, even in *Ulysses* after his failed self-exiles to Paris. His potentially self-destructive decision to decline Bloom’s offer of shelter and possible future employment in the Ithaca episode is clearly rooted in an aversion toward such socialization. Rather, he embraces his conviction of his uniqueness both at the end of *A Portrait* and at the end of *Ulysses*. Saleem Sinai, though not fundamentally opposed to normality like Stephen, is never able to achieve any sense of successful integration as Pip is able to do at the conclusion of

*Great Expectations*. As a result, after numerous failed attempts at such socialization, Saleem has little choice but to embrace his tendency toward self-determination and individuality, traits which dominate the entirety of the memoir he narrates to Padma and which reach their natural conclusion through the novel's explosive finale: Saleem alone contains the diverse multitude that is India.

Saleem's obsession with his own uniqueness puts him, in his own mind, at the center of all of India's history. His mindset therefore blends his private life and the public life of the nation. This fusion of public and private is for Frederic Jameson the foundation of third-world national allegory, and in Saleem's story, this fusion is inseparable from his self-perceived uniqueness. Those aspects of his story dominate his *Bildungsprozess*, which in Saleem's case is truly a multigenerational affair beginning with the life of his grandfather Aadam Aziz. Book One of the novel, which takes place prior to Saleem's birth, is a vital part of Saleem's story because it sets the stage for the mixing of public and private throughout Saleem's life story and for his fervent belief that he holds a special place in Indian history.

In Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz, we see—much as we see in Stephen Dedalus—a paradoxical combination: Aziz maintains a sharp distinction between his private life and the public sphere, yet at the same time they are absolutely inseparable. He first reveals his deliberate separation of public and private with the incident on his prayer mat on the shore of Lake Dal, almost the first moment Aziz is introduced in the text. As Saleem records, “One Kashmiri morning in the early spring of 1915, my grandfather Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth while attempting to pray. . . . [A]t that moment, . . . he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man”



(MC 4). Kashmir is predominantly Muslim, and the religion has a considerable impact on public life. The importance of Islamic history and tradition in the region is perhaps best exemplified by the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar, a holy place best known for its relic, a hair from the Prophet Muhammad. The disappearance of the relic in 1963 resulted in mass protests in much of Kashmir until the hair was recovered.<sup>56</sup> Given the prominence of Islam in public life in Kashmir, Aziz's decision isolates him from those around him, metonymically represented by the aged and venerable boatman Tai. The ancient Tai—so old that “[n]obody could remember when Tai had been young” (MC 9)—symbolizes tradition, old culture, and an unchanging world. Of course, his idealistic, static world is in many ways illusory, and this illusion, like so many national and cultural myths, will eventually be exposed in the pages of *Midnight's Children*.

Like Tai, Ghani the landowner also acts as a foil to Aziz in the opening chapters. The differences between Ghani and Aziz emphasize Aziz's attempts to keep his private life to himself and to keep remain apart from the Kashmiri society he was born into. Ghani, by contrast, makes sure everyone knows how much he adheres to the traditional culture of the region. Unlike Tai, Ghani moves forward with the changing world, but he still clings to traditions Aadam Aziz would consider outdated. He takes pride, for instance, in his oil painting of Diana the Huntress, which he purchased for five hundred rupees “from an Englishman down on his luck” (MC 14). However, Ghani is blind; he cannot look upon the painting. His pride in the fact that it hangs in his home is purely symbolic in a cultural sense, rather than a matter of aesthetic taste. He likes the classical European myth it displays, the fact that he bought it from an Englishman, and that he can claim the money is so insignificant to him that he didn't even bother negotiating. The

painting shows Ghani embracing the influence of European culture and capitalism. At the same time, though, he refuses to allow Aziz, or any male from outside the family, to look upon his daughter Naseem except as is necessary for her medical treatment. In Ghani, we see a character who in many ways embraces European culture, but makes a concerted effort to conform to more traditional Muslim Kashmiri values and traditions, whereas Aziz makes a concerted effort to avoid such conformity. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this divergence in worldviews occurs in Aadam and Naseem's wedding bed on the second night of their marriage. Aadam asks Naseem to move "like a woman" (MC 31). Her incredulous reaction, essentially accusing Aadam of wanting a whore for a wife, shows that despite her father's taste for European culture, she is very much the woman who has been shielded from the eyes of men her whole life as a show of religious modesty, and she views sex as her wifely duty in order to procreate. Aadam Aziz, on the other hand, taking what he considers a more progressive view, believes sex should be enjoyed for pleasure as well as for progeny. Aziz, who has grown into a cultural hybrid, becomes isolated from those around him and from traditional cultures. The use of the plural of "cultures" is important in that statement; he is isolated from mainstream Indian culture, from Muslim Indian culture, and from Kashmiri culture.

Aziz soon reveals another characteristic which contributes to the distinction in his life between the private and the public. He is somewhat of a Europhile. Not like Ghani, whose Europhilia is superficial; Aziz truly embraces European culture. He has recently returned from medical studies in Germany (he proudly carries a medical bag with the word "Heidelberg" imprinted on the bottom), he thinks fondly of his German friends Ilse and Oskar Lubin and his former paramour Ingrid, and he feels out of place in Kashmir

even though it is his ancestral home and a place of great natural beauty. He even tries to persuade his wife to abandon her Islamic traditions in favor of a more culturally European lifestyle. After suggesting, to her shock and horror, that she come out of purdah, he tells her, “Forget about being a good Kashmiri girl. Start thinking about being a modern Indian woman” (*MC* 32). In doing so, he clearly reveals his personal priorities, and upholding traditional Indian values or engaging in traditional Muslim practices are not among them. In contrast, the traditional Tai disapproves not only of the stamp on the medical bag, but also its contents and even the material it’s made from—the leather is made from the skin of pigs, an unclean animal according to Muslim teachings. He also leads most of the population of the Lake Dal area to distrust Aziz, and circumstantial evidence suggests he is responsible for the death of Ilse Lubin. The knowledge and habits Aziz collects in Germany separate him from the accepted customs of Kashmir, customs personified by Tai, resulting in a split in Aziz between his private life and the public temperament of the region.

Moreover, this split is produced largely by Aziz’s hybrid nature.<sup>57</sup> He is a German educated Indian; he was born in, departed from, and returned to Kashmir; he is a non-believing Muslim; he is the product of myriad influences, all of which are reflected in his character but none of which dominate it. Those influences lead him to embrace active engagement in public life even while remaining a bit of an outsider. He demonstrates this side of his character on numerous occasions, perhaps most prominently in his decision to stay in Amritsar longer than expected before taking the train to Agra.<sup>58</sup> He senses impending civil unrest in the wake of Gandhi’s Hartal, and he knows his medical skills will be needed.<sup>59</sup> He stays not merely out of a sense of Hippocratic duty, but also because

he sympathizes with the protesters. He says unequivocally, “It was a mistake to pass the Rowlatt Act” (MC 31).<sup>60</sup> This entire series of events illustrates a paradox in Aziz. He embodies the union of public and private while simultaneously remaining apart from mainstream Indian society.

Aziz’s relationship to India—apart from it yet a part of it—is firmly established in this incident, and the pattern will continue throughout his life. This facet of Aziz’s life is a powerful echo of Stephen Dedalus’s relationship to Ireland; Stephen always tries to remain apart from it, yet also envisions himself as the center of it. Saleem Sinai, who is not even born until twenty-eight years after the Amritsar massacre, becomes the inheritor of Aziz’s paradoxical relationship between public and private as well as that Joycean echo. For Saleem, public and private are in some ways inseparable. He finds, literally from the first moment of his existence on Earth, that his private life is securely tied to public life. Looking back at his birth, Saleem claims he “became the chosen child of midnight . . . fathered, you understand, by history” (MC 130, 132); and he goes on to describe the publicity resulting from the timing of his entrance into the world: “on the day after I was born, my mother and I were visited in a saffron and green bedroom by two persons from the *Times of India* (Bombay edition).”<sup>61</sup> Saleem still has two mementos of the occasion, “one is a letter, a personal letter to [him], signed by the Prime Minister of India; but the other is a newspaper cutting. It has a headline: MIDNIGHT’S CHILD.” (MC 132, 133). Quite literally from the moment he was born, people in positions of authority began giving Saleem the impression that he is special, that he is different from other children. Having been bombarded by attention not only from family and neighbors, but from major newspapers and even the prime minister, Saleem comes to believe that he

is a central figure in all their lives, in fact in the lives of everyone in the newly established nation. Not only does he believe he is a central figure, but also that he is inherently linked to the nation. Nehru's letter to him even provides, in his own mind, confirmation of that fact: "We shall be watching your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own" (*MC* 139). Saleem thus believes his life and his actions are inseparable from India. He believes he is, by his very nature, a public entity.

At this point, it's worth noting an important stylistic difference between *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Midnight's Children*. While Rushdie undoubtedly owes Joyce a great debt of gratitude when it comes to literary style—what Jussawalla has referred to as "the gift of the permission to experiment with the English language" ("Postcolonial" 101)—there are also key differences which dictate how we read his novels, and this is one of those differences. In the opening pages of *A Portrait*, Stephen Dedalus relates the events of his early childhood through the eyes and ears of that child, whereas in *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai records the events of his childhood as he recalls them as an adult. *A Portrait* begins, "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . . His father told him that story. His father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face" (*P* 7). Stephen essentially relates his youth as it happens. He uses baby-talk, pseudo-language that parents typically use with small children. The parts of this opening that represent Stephen's thoughts (rather than his parents' words) are short, staccato sentences reflecting a child's rudimentary understanding of the images in front of him. *Midnight's Children*, on the other hand, begins with Saleem's account of his birth as he records it thirty-one years later:

I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time. No that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Dr. Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No it's important to be more . . . On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. (*MC* 3)

Unlike Stephen, Saleem uses adult language and adult thoughts expressed using complex syntax. He has the benefit of hindsight, not to mention three decades of life experience, as he chronicles his birth and pickles it for posterity. This fact is important because Saleem likely has no actual memory of the day of his birth, and all the ado surrounding it probably would have eventually extinguished if Saleem had not embraced it and essentially built his life around it. As such, it is logical that the instantaneous assumption of his boy-of-destiny status upon birth is actually an attitude that he grew into over the course of thirty-one years. Therefore, the inseparability of public and private is not truly inborn in Saleem; rather, he deliberately cultivates it and makes it an important part of his life.

As Saleem grows from newborn to young boy, old enough now to have actual memories of this stage in his life, his supposed importance as a newborn becomes something for him to cling to in order to feel valued. He therefore chooses to nurture a sense of his special place in the nation and in the world, thereby fostering the connection between his private life and India's public world. When he is eight years old, he claims:

I knew this much: everybody was waiting for me. Midnight and baby-snaps, prophets and prime ministers had created around me a glowing and inescapable mist of expectancy . . . in which my father pulled me into his squashy belly in the cool of the cocktail hour to say, “Great things! My son: what is not in store for you? Great deeds, a great life!” (*MC* 173)

This self-image leads him to the short-lived belief that he is a conduit for the archangel Gabriel, and later leads him to convene the Midnight Children’s Conference with the idea that it would play a momentous role in the future of the young nation. Ten Kortenaar points out that “unlike the infant’s sense of centrality [which exists instantaneously upon his birth], the boy’s conviction of latent greatness is something he has learned. . . . The voices he hears are in part a restoration of the powers associated with infancy” (64, 68). Having been prophesied from greatness before his birth and given national attention immediately following his birth, later remarks that he is destined for “a great life” resonate all the more powerfully, and his cultivation of his internal radio and his investigation into the gifts of other children born within the hour after him essentially return Saleem to the sense of centrality marked by his long-held letter and newspaper clipping.

As Saleem grows, he deliberately tries to turn his prophesied greatness into reality, and he does so in a way that reinforces his connection to the nation. This process, however, eventually reveals that Saleem is not truly connected to India any more than other Indian citizens. However, he never realizes the fallacy of his thinking, and his youth is spent trying to make his personal life an integral part of the Indian nation. The most prominent way he tries to make that goal a reality is the through Midnight Children’s

Conference, which becomes the culmination of his self-indulgent fantasy of personal centrality. The emphasis he places on the role of the MCC, not only in the lives of its members (especially him) but also for India, illustrates Saleem's inevitable union (in his own mind) of public and private. The MCC is Saleem's most tangible method of displaying his self-perceived place at the center of Indian history. This attitude engulfs the entire history of the MCC, beginning when Saleem first learns about the other children of midnight. As he tries (and fails) to provide some sort of reasonable explanation for the unusual natures of 1001 children born in the first hour of India's independence, he eventually gives up, saying simply, "It was as though . . . history, arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world had seen up to that time" (*MC* 224). Moreover, as he describes the various talents and traits of the children, he places them in a hierarchy, explaining that "the closer to midnight our birth-times were, the greater were our gifts" (*MC* 229). He concludes that he himself, having been born on the stroke of midnight, has the greatest gift. Here Saleem places the 581 children (420 of the 1001 had not survived 10 years) at the center of history, and he places himself at the top of the hierarchy of those at the center. It is noteworthy that in declaring that he himself was given "the greatest talent of all," Saleem actually violates his own logic. If the greatest of the gifts is in direct relation to the proximity of the child's birth to midnight, then Saleem should know that he and Shiva should be on equal footing. Yet Saleem ignores that logic, claiming the central role for himself. He, not Shiva, nor any of the other of midnight's children, is at the center of India's present and future. No one else, he believes, shares his special relationship to the nation.



The special relationship Saleem believes he has to India mirrors the intensely personal connection to Ireland Stephen Dedalus claims for himself. Though he deliberately avoids active involvement in public life and he tries to remain apart from Ireland and its institutions, he also declares near the end of the novel that he will “go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race” (*P* 252-53). The fact that the conscience of the Irish race is still uncreated after several centuries of culture and civilization indicates that Stephen feels he, and he alone, is capable of creating it. Despite his focus on personal individuality, he sees himself as the epitome of all that is Irish. Saleem, similarly, sees himself as the embodiment of all that is India.

Saleem maintains his claim on that central role throughout his life, especially when the MCC is meeting regularly. When he starts the Conference, Shiva attempts to wrest control of the group from him, or at the very least establish a sort of co-control, based on their coincidental moment of birth. Saleem, in attempting to maintain a sole leadership position, resorts to an argument filled with vague abstractions that really don't have meaning to anyone other than him: “But history,” he protests to Shiva, “and the Prime Minister wrote me a letter” (*MC* 253). Quite predictably, Shiva cares not a whit for the letter written in Nehru's name (although, in all likelihood, actually penned by a nameless, forgotten office worker on his staff), nor for Saleem's conception of history, which places Saleem and Saleem only at the center. It is only through the intervention of Parvati the Witch, who points out that Saleem enables the group to communicate with one another, that he is able to maintain his place as the “chief” of the MCC, to use Parvati's phrasing, or the “big brother” of the family, to use Saleem's (260). The

desperate attempt to maintain his leadership position shows how important it is for Saleem personally to hold onto the idea that he and he alone holds a special connection to India, just as Stephen and Stephen alone is capable of forging Ireland's conscience.

Of course, this special connection exists only in Saleem's head. The fact that no one else in the MCC shares Saleem's conception of history is a harbinger of what is to come for the Conference. In truth, the project is an abject failure. Saleem at one point articulates the way he conceives of himself as "handcuffed to history" (*MC* 3). He explains, in the text's most direct description of the gimmick of the novel,

I was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively, in what our (admirably modern) scientists might term "modes of connection" composed of "dualistically-combined configurations" of the two pairs of opposed adverbs give above. This is why hyphens are necessary: actively-literally, passively-metaphorically, actively-metaphorically, passively-literally, I was inextricably entwined with my world. (*MC* 272–73).

Saleem puts himself at the center of history, and states explicitly that his private life is inextricably connected to the public realm. He later tries to link his role at the center of history to his pet project, the MCC. But of course, it doesn't work out nearly as well as he would like. When he asks the other children, "We must think, . . . what we are for[,]" the group is confronted with an enormous variety of ideas and attitudes and is left with no clear direction, really with no direction at all (*MC* 261). The MCC never succeeds in becoming more than a large group of ten-year olds who meet in a telepathic clubhouse. Despite Saleem's explicit claim that he is "symbolically one with history[,]" his coalition

of midnight's children "never became what [he] most wanted it to be; [they] never operated in the first, most significant of the 'modes of connection.' The 'active-literal' passed [them] by" (*MC* 273). The failure of the MCC illustrates the clear difference between Saleem's view of himself and reality. In doing so, it underscores his obsession with his own place in India's history, an obsession that he never loses even as he grows into an adult who should know better.

In spite of Saleem's continual emphasis on his place at the center of history, as someone who is indelibly marked by history and who is and always has been personally connected to the life of the state, he also spends his entire life emphasizing his individuality, his distinctness and separation from all those around him. This distinctness is a crucial facet of *Bildung* for Saleem, just as it is for Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist*. Moreover, this sense of distinctness prevents Saleem from becoming part of Indian society, just as it prevents Stephen from feeling at home in Ireland. This failure of social integration is reminiscent of Aadam Aziz's outsider status in Kashmir, where he was scorned by Tai the boatman. This aspect of Saleem's story is a piece of his ancestry, part of the history to which Saleem is handcuffed. It is one of the reasons Saleem's story begins, quite significantly, two generations before his own birth. Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz forges the foundation of this relationship, and his parents Amina Sinai (nee Mumtaz Aziz) and Ahmed Sinai both epitomize the separation from the mainstream which Saleem also inherits. Amina does so by failing to conform to accepted standards of marital behavior; her first marriage is never consummated, even after two years of sharing a bed with her husband, and during her second marriage she cheats on her husband with her ex-husband. Ahmed Sinai, meanwhile, is an incorrigible alcoholic who

flouts both law and social standards to procure his supply of liquor. His ongoing disobedience of both accepted convention and written law takes other forms as well, which eventually lead to the simultaneous freezing of his assets and his testicles. Saleem's parents, as well as his grandfather, thus set the stage for his separation from mainstream Indian society.

Saleem's sense of individuality merges with his self-conceived place at the center of Indian history to create a paradoxical relationship between public and private similar to that of his grandfather. Of course, like everything else involving Saleem's relationship to his family, this situation becomes complicated due to the fact that Saleem is not the biological offspring of Amina and Ahmed Sinai. He has, in effect, multiple sets of parents. As Saleem explains, he is the "[c]hild of an unknown union, [and has] had more mothers than most mothers have children" (*MC* 278). Just as Saleem is the cultural inheritor to Aadam Aziz, Amina Sinai, and Ahmed Sinai, he is the biological inheritor to William Methwold, who is quite forthright in declaring that as of Independence, he no longer belongs in India, foreshadowing his biological son's constant failure of belonging. And, appropriately enough, Wee Willie Winkie, the clown who is the husband of Vanita (Saleem's biological mother), provides his own bequest. Saleem remarks that "even before [he] was born, the mold was set. Entertainers would orchestrate my life" (*MC* 112). Winkie is an outsider, closer in social standing to itinerant troupes in Renaissance England than to Bollywood stars in twentieth-century India; he is an emasculated cuckold who is not the father of his own son, just as Saleem would not be the father of his own son. He prefigures Saleem's life just as much as his accepted parents or his biological parents, thus exacerbating the muddle of Saleem's ancestry and the legacy he receives.

And all of Saleem's widely varied parental influences demonstrate a failure to fit cleanly into the society around them, a tradition Saleem can't help but inherit.

His inability to fit into the Indian society around him is therefore ingrained within Saleem and is inseparable from him. In order for him to successfully achieve *Bildung*, he must be able to live with and embrace his separation from society. His process of growth and development leads to that eventuality, beginning with events that are largely beyond Saleem's control. As a schoolboy, his physical imperfections and mutilations—his oversized nose, the stains on his face, the permanently lost hair pulled out by his teacher Mr. Zagallo, the clipped finger—subject him to taunts and ridicule from his peers. Meanwhile, the fact that he is not his parents' biological son subjects him to anger and cold distance from his family, particularly his father, until Mary Pereira reveals the truth of her crime and Naseem Aziz “legitimizes” him (*MC* 324). In fact, it is after Ahmed discovers that Saleem shares neither his nor Amina's blood type that Saleem is temporarily sent away from the family, marking what Saleem calls “the beginning of my first exile. (There will be a second, and a third.)” (*MC* 275). This repeated process of exile and return illustrates the difficulty Saleem has in being and remaining a part of the society around him.

Saleem's failure of socialization, however, is clearly exacerbated by his conscious decisions, particularly those he makes as a result of his self-perceived place at the center of history. That view of himself originates almost immediately after his birth, as he is being celebrated as the first child born into the newly independent India (a title he technically must share with Shiva). The day after his birth, his picture is on the front page of the *Times of India*, and he receives a letter from the Prime Minister, telling him “your

life . . . will be the mirror of our own” (*MC* 139). Saleem fully embraces the notion of destiny implied by Nehru’s words and by his picture in the paper. In his words, “at the end of 1947, life in Bombay was as teeming, as manifold, as multitudinously shapeless as ever . . . except that I had arrived; I was already beginning to take my place at the center of the universe; and by the time I had finished, I would give meaning to it all” (*MC* 143–44). It is noteworthy, though, that he doesn’t consider Shiva to hold a similar place “at the center of the universe.” When Shiva becomes central, he is central to Saleem’s life, not to India or to the world. He sums up this attitude later in the novel: “history, in my version, entered a new phase on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947” (223). This new phase of history, he believes, begins not because of the birth of a nation, but the birth of an individual. This attitude serves to prevent Saleem from ever attaining a sense of normalcy at any time in his life, whether he is in Bombay, in Pakistan, in Bengal as a member of the Pakistani army, or in the magician’s ghetto in Delhi. What we see, therefore, is that the insoluble link between public and private (his destiny as *Midnight’s* favored child) actually prevents him from harmoniously integrating into Indian society, rendering him an eternal outsider. His place in the Padma-frame of *Midnight’s Children’s* narrative truly epitomizes that fact. He is spending his adult life confined within a pickle-factory, entirely separated from the rest of society and separated from all other people except Padma and Mary Pereira.

This separation from the mainstream is clearly reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus’s failure to become a part of Irish society. Moreover, just as that failure facilitates successful *Bildung* for Stephen Dedalus, it does so for Saleem as well.<sup>62</sup> For Saleem, who considers himself the living representation of India, that successful individual

development must take the form of finding a way to depict the nation with which he shares a birth-moment; that is how he is able to maintain his view of himself as central to Indian history. He does so through his memoirs, dictated to Padma and preserved in pickle jars. The process of writing and preserving these stories culminates with Saleem's prophecy of his future, in which his body, which he believes has been visibly cracking as he was dictating his stories, finally crumbles and splits into roughly 600 million pieces (approximately the population of India at the time). This final split of Saleem's body symbolizes the idea that he contains the entire multitude of India within him.

In order for Saleem to reach this point, however, he must emulate one of Stephen Dedalus's qualities, one that dictates much of Stephen's process of development. He must act like an infant. Just as Stephen's infantile mode of viewing the world plays a substantial role in his path toward *Bildung*, Saleem reaches the novel's symbolic endpoint while remaining apart from mainstream Indian society by returning to his childhood. In order for him to successfully complete his story, to achieve *Bildung* and live up to his potential as the incarnation of India, he must first regress to a child-like state. This infantile condition is not only metaphorical; it is literal in that he returns to Bombay and is even being cared for by his ayah Mary Pereira, the same woman who acted as a surrogate mother to him until he was eleven, and whose midnight crime put him in the Sinai family to begin with. If it were not for her, Saleem would have been the impoverished son of a clown-father and a deceased, unfaithful mother. In effect, the conviction of uniqueness which began at his birth never truly progresses beyond his infancy, and by regaining his infancy he regains his sense of place.

This sense of uniqueness and distinction paradoxically leads to the symbolic conclusion to the novel in which Saleem represents all of India. Like Stephen Dedalus before him, he is both on the periphery and at the center of his culture. Just as Stephen's response to the Christmas dinner incident and his desire to live apart from the rest of Ireland is largely rooted in affective response, so is Saleem's tendency to place himself at the center of Indian culture while never quite fitting into it. Saleem, from his earliest memories (at least as they are recalled while he chronicles them), is largely unhappy with his life. He considers himself a physical freak, originally due to his oversized nose, his bowed legs, and his spotty face. This self-perception worsens with each subsequent mutilation: Mr. Zagallo tearing out his hair and then the loss of his fingertip. As a corollary, Saleem spends much of his youth feeling rejected by women. His younger sister gets more parental attention than him as a result of misbehaving; his advances are spurned in turn by Evie Burns, by Masha Miovic, and by his Aunt Pia. Saleem is forever the outsider, struggling to look attractive and struggling for romantic and social acceptance.

In the midst of this struggle, the newspaper clipping from the morning after his birth and the letter from Prime Minister Nehru offer Saleem a sense of acceptance and a sense of place in an otherwise hostile world. For Saleem, that sense of place represents affective joy: the "passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (Spinoza 104 III.Def Aff II). And if, as Spinoza claims, a person will "strive to affirm" that which affects him with joy, Saleem's lifelong obsession with the destiny of his birth is perfectly logical.<sup>63</sup> Most aspects of Saleem's life produces the affect of sadness: "a man's passage from a greater to a lesser perfection" (104 III.Def Aff III). His physical deformities and mutilations, the



knowledge that he is not his parents' son, his failures with young women, his family's financial troubles during the freeze, the death of his entire family, virtually everything he knows or experiences pushes him toward that abstract state of "lesser perfection," toward the affect of sadness. However, being told by the Prime Minister that he is special represents a push toward "greater perfection," toward joy. Saleem's parents and other key figures from his youth (most notably his Ayah Mary Pereira) further encourage Saleem's feeling that he holds a special place, for the world at large as well as for the family. Saleem's sense of his own centrality in the order of things thus provides him with an oasis of affective joy amidst a life otherwise full of affective sadness.

Saleem and Stephen Dedalus therefore share a trait that is tremendously important to their respective *Bildungsprozesse*: the relationship of each protagonist to the his nation's culture and political situation is highly affect-driven and each character develops into someone who represents the union of public and private, despite his separation from the people and mainstream culture of his home country. The fact that both Stephen and Saleem cannot separate public and private points to another important parallel between Joyce and Rushdie: their treatment of history, both in terms of actual historical events and the notion of History (capital "H") in the abstract sense, i.e. the source of Stephen Dedalus's unending nightmare.<sup>64</sup>

The notion of history is also significant in that *Midnight's Children* is treated primarily as a historical novel rather than a *Bildungsroman*. Indeed, such an approach is entirely appropriate. As Dubravka Juraga points out, the novel is set up from the beginning to call attention to Indian history.<sup>65</sup> Saleem even announces he had been "handcuffed to history" (*MC* 3).<sup>66</sup> However, focusing solely on this facet of the novel

while ignoring generic traditions and narrative devices is a mistake, as it ignores the underlying literary foundation upon which historical, postcolonial, and other readings must necessarily rely. And in fact, for *Midnight's Children* in particular, the generic tradition of the *Bildungsroman* facilitates the text's representation of political, historical, and cultural issues.

The connection between Joyce and Rushdie with regard to the historical novel is worth emphasizing because that is how most critics treat *Midnight's Children* (often at the expense of examining it as a *Bildungsroman*), focusing on the portrayal of India as a young nation, on the lingering effects of colonialism, on ongoing religious and political conflicts both within India and against other countries, and related social, cultural, and theoretical topics. Christie Daniels, for instance, views the novel as Rushdie's attempt to expose and call into question the myths which surround the idea of India as a nation, as they inevitably surround any national construct.<sup>67</sup> She focuses specifically on the six categories of national myths described by Anthony Smith in *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (temporal myth, location myth, ancestral myth, myth of the heroic age, myth of decline, and myth of regeneration). Daniels points out that they all play a vital role in creating a sense of national consciousness for a diverse people that had never before existed as a single political entity, let alone a nation-state. In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie explodes each of these myths, revealing them as stories rather than historical fact. He calls into question the importance of India's birth (myth of temporal origin), undermines the importance of geographic location in the lives of the novel's characters (location myth), shows that ancestry is a matter of perception (ancestral myth), and reveals the imaginary nature of "the triumvirate of heroic age, decline, and regeneration

myths” (Daniels 9). These are the same nationalistic myths that Stephen Dedalus rejects in *A Portrait of the Artist*. A nationalist like his friend Davin, on the other hand, puts full faith in these myths. He believes in the golden age of Irish myth and a decline brought about by British imperialism, and he firmly believes that simply because he is born in Ireland to Irish parents that he is obligated to help bring about a political and cultural regeneration. For Stephen, though, that attitude is the cause of his father’s and Mr. Casey’s downfalls, and he wants no part of it.

In the context of *Midnight’s Children*, the most important myth Rushdie exposes is the myth of ancestry. In fact, with regard to temporal origin, it is accurate to say Rushdie exposes mythological foundations. With regard to ancestry, however, “expose” simply is not an accurate descriptor. *Midnight’s Children* demolishes this myth, leaving it in more pieces than Saleem Sinai’s shattered body at the end of the novel. This process begins in the novel’s first chapter. Aadam Aziz falls in love with Naseem Ghani piecemeal, as he is only able to view her one body part at a time over a period of three years and eventually puts together a mental image of the sectioned whole. Daniels explains one important implication of this episode: Aziz’s comically unconventional manner of falling in love “is aimed clearly at the notion of India as one people. Moreover, [Rushdie] is blatantly making reference to the Partition as the one thing that makes this notion laughable” (8). Aziz’s views of Naseem’s component parts thus mimics the literal fracturing of the subcontinent into separate national territories in 1947, and neither Aadam Aziz nor the citizens of the new India and Pakistan fully understood the state of affairs into which they were entering. Moreover, this allusion to Partition evokes the historical migrations that accompanied Partition, as millions of Muslims moved to

Pakistani territory, and millions of Hindus left it. Rushdie thus uses this allusion to show that neither newfound nation can legitimately claim a national ancestral heritage.

Rushdie's attack on the myth of ancestry does not stop there. He further dismantles it through Saleem's confused parentage. Saleem Sinai is not the biological progeny of the two individuals whom he knows as his parents, Ahmed and Amina Sinai. Saleem's biological mother is actually Vanita, whose husband Wee Willie Winkie never impregnated her. Rather, she was impregnated by the Englishman William Methwold, the former owner (literally, as a landowner) of the estate in Bombay where the Sinai family lives and (figuratively, as a wealthy, British descendent of the East India Company officer who envisioned a British Bombay) of India as a colony. However, due to Mary Pereira's switching of the newborns on the morning of August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947, Wee Willie Winkie (blissfully unaware of his wife's infidelity) believes his son to be Shiva, while Shiva's biological parents think their son is the baby Saleem. Despite this confused and biologically-nonlinear ancestry, Saleem is wholeheartedly accepted by his family, perhaps even more so after his parents are made aware that he is not the product of their own genetics. When Mary Pereira reveals her crime in 1958, she tells them, "after eleven years he is your son" (*MC* 321). Naseem Aziz later endorses this perspective on the matter, and the rest of the family immediately follows suit. Saleem, the genetic combination of the unfaithful wife of a clown and an obsolete colonial who quite literally rides off into the sunset never to be seen or heard from again, thus becomes the legitimate son of Ahmed and Amina Sinai.

This convoluted parentage is not only indicative of the muddle of ancestral backgrounds and genetic origins; it is also a trenchant criticism of the significance many

people attach to such origins, or worse, to their inaccurate perceptions of such origins. Even Prime Minister Nehru, in his independence speech, refers to “our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries and who unhappily cannot share at present in the freedom that has come. They are of us and will remain of us whatever may happen” (49). Many of these “brothers and sisters” are likely not citizens of the newly independent India, but rather are people of Indian descent who—either by choice or necessity—reside beyond India’s new borders. Nehru thus actively engages in this myth of ancestry. Rushdie, however, critiques that perspective by including the following elements in Saleem’s background: his socially accepted parents are not his biological parents; he has multiple father figures: Ahmed, Winkie, Methwold, Nadir Khan, and others; he “invents” new parents for himself; and later, his son is not his biological son. The disparities between the biological family tree and the social family tree underscore the fact that ancestry is not always a firm and indisputable fact, that it is rather a fluid matter of perception and agreed conventions. The multiple father figures and potential for creating one’s own parents emphasize the fact that perceptions of ancestry are often more a matter of desire and will than a matter of genetics. Saleem wants his parents to be Ahmed and Amina Sinai rather than William Methwold and Vanita Winkie, and Naseem Aziz wants her grandson to be Saleem, not Shiva. As a result, the family simply agrees on the matter, and the agreement stands. Anyone who suggests otherwise is mistaken.

Rushdie thus shows that the use of ancestral origins as a means of establishing national identity is logically fallacious, and indeed mythic. In doing so, he maintains the Joycean tradition of trying to awaken from the nightmare of history. For both Stephen

Dedalus and Saleem Sinai, exposing this myth of origin (as well as other nationalistic myths) signifies that their relationships to their respective nations are matters of choice, rather than birth. Neither is bound to his country nor bound by his country. Yet each chooses to represent his country, Stephen by forging the Irish conscience, Saleem by placing himself at the center of Indian history.

*Midnight's Children* is therefore a text that epitomizes much, though not all, of Jameson's assessment "third-world literature." It exemplifies the union of public and public, and in doing so presents itself as representative of a nation. However, contrary to Jameson's claims, this attribute is clearly not unique to literature from this part of the world—in fact, it has clear roots in James Joyce's depiction of Ireland from nearly a century earlier, and Joyce's influence is clear in the nature of the *Bildungsheld* and his relationship to his country.

This fact raises one important question: why does Rushdie choose to use Joyce's model in presenting his national allegory of India? Quite simply, these attributes of Stephen Dedalus's *Bildung* plot become a vital part of Rushdie's narrative of development. They are important for Saleem Sinai as an individual, and even more important—insofar as the text acts as a national allegory—for the fledgling nation into which Saleem was born. What started in Joyce as a process of individual development with inklings of parallels on a macrocosmic national level becomes in Rushdie a concurrent process of development of individual and nation.

In *A Portrait*, Stephen's failure to socialize in Irish society is necessary because the other options—becoming an ardent nationalist like Davin or acquiescing to imperial rule—are incongruous with successful personal *Bildung*. Saleem bears this burden as

well. Insofar as Saleem's story is a national allegory, the failure of socialization is similarly necessary. On a national scale, the other option in a post-1947 world, would be for the Indian government to join forces with neocolonial collaborators, reducing its autonomy to pre-independence levels. Quite clearly, this result is incompatible with national *Bildung*, and Saleem, as a representative of India in his own mind, must enact that failure of socialization in his own life. For both Stephen and Saleem, this failure of harmonious socialization into one's surroundings leads to a sense of individuality (both real and imagined). This individuality is a vital component of personal and national *Bildung* for Stephen and Saleem, Ireland and India; it is the manner in which they carve out a unique place within the broader world. Stephen distinguishes himself from overzealous nationalists, from imperial collaborators, and from virtually everyone else in Ireland and England—he symbolically and literally enacts this split by physically leaving the isles for the continent; Saleem distinguishes himself from his parents' generation, from the overzealous religious and linguistic fanatics in Delhi and Bombay, from the corrupt government which rose to power in the decades after independence, and from his symbolic twin Shiva. Ireland and India separate themselves from the empire of the past and from the perils of neocolonial oppression in the future by defining themselves as unique and individual nations not reliant on crown or commonwealth.

One of the reasons Joyce informs Rushdie's portrayal of this development for Saleem and for India is that as Ireland was actively working toward freeing itself from the empire and putting itself on the map as an independent nation, Joyce was concurrently putting Ireland on the global literary map. According to Pascale Casanova, the period of roughly 1890-1930 in Irish literature represents "a compact history of the

revolt against the literary order” (304). In other words, this period saw Ireland improve its standing in the global community not only politically, by gaining independence, but also culturally, by improving the international reputation and esteem of its literature and art. Rushdie, who was born in 1947 just a few months before India’s independence, essentially grew up alongside his nation of birth, and participated in a reenactment of the “revolt against the literary order” as a way of carving out a place for India within what Casanova would call global literary space. In doing so, it’s natural for him to latch onto Joyce’s model, as “[t]he rupture provoked by James Joyce was the final step in the constitution of Irish literary space” (Casanova 315). Using Joyce’s model is a means of trying to constitute Indian literary space.

Of course, this process of national definition (both political and cultural) is, almost by necessity, not a smooth one. The colonial condition is fundamentally a condition of dependence, a national infancy. Instantaneously jumping from dependence to independence, from national infancy to national maturity, skips an important phase of growth. Without the opportunity for a national adolescence, the state of maturity will be necessarily incomplete, stunted, in much the same way that the colonial *Bildungshelden*, Stephen Dedalus among them, display an incomplete growth process. This national situation applies to Ireland, just as it applies to Stephen Dedalus, and Ireland’s national growing pains are visible even a full ninety years after independence from the empire. The story of Saleem’s difficult growth, and the allegory of national growth as India comes of age with him, displays similar growing pains. They appear in the form of the Bombay language riots, the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, and perhaps most prominently, the Emergency Period in India (1975–1977).



Saleem, handcuffed as he believes he is to India's history, is involved in each of these events. He often plays a role in what he would call an "active-literal" capacity, helping to shape the events; or at least, he believes he shapes them. He gives the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti marchers their chant during the Bombay language conflict; he plays a vital role in the Pakistani army during the Bangladesh war, and he claims the entire Emergency is aimed at defeating him and the other members of the Midnight Children's Conference. Each of these incidents are bumps in the road for both Saleem and for India, metaphorically linked in their developmental troubles. The Emergency, for instance, which takes from Saleem the possibility of having children, is presented as a threat to the future of India. The developmental process is not only difficult, it is uneven and incomplete. The national process of emergence (metaphorically linked to personal development by Saleem's association with the nation) is therefore likewise incomplete and must be ongoing. In other words, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947 is not the teleological conclusion of an anti-colonial developmental movement, but merely a turning point in a much longer historical process which continues still.

Lastly, it is vitally important for this *Bildungsroman* to link the public and the private. Rushdie states this goal outright as he recalls his plans for *Midnight's Children*:

[T]he great point of history, which was to understand how individual lives, communities, nations, and social classes were shaped by great forces, yet retained, at times, the ability to change the direction of those forces, must also be the point of [my] fiction. . . . [I] had found an intersection between the private and the public and would build [my] book on that crossroads.  
(*Joseph Anton* 56–57)

The novel shows the connection—a very intimate connection, in Rushdie’s eyes—between the individual and the nation. Each necessarily has an impact upon and is influenced by the other. Therefore, without the story of individual development, national development is incomplete. Joyce engages with this difficulty as well. In *Ulysses*, Stephen hears one of his compatriots claim that “Our National Epic has yet to be written” (*U* 9.309). This remark is, on one level, a statement about literary accomplishment; it suggests that, as Casanova later argues, Irish literature was still in the process of gaining respect on the global stage. On another level, the statement is a metaphor for Ireland’s colonial condition. The country has yet to gain independence, yet to come into its own, yet to mature and fully develop as a nation. At the same time, Joyce, in his typically self-aggrandizing manner, is suggesting that *Ulysses* may fill that literary void. Rushdie attempts to fill a similar void with *Midnight’s Children*, and both texts serve as markers of national development, merging public and private.

According to Jameson, in third-world literature, the merging of public and private that produces national allegories suggests that “psychology . . . is to be read in primarily political and social terms” (72). While Ireland isn’t what Jameson has in mind when he speaks of the third-world, the combination of public and private is certainly present. His argument suggests that, in essence, the inner workings of Stephen’s mind—his desire for both union with and separation from Ireland, his desire to distinguish himself from his father, his desire to create an identity for himself as he reaches adulthood—must necessarily be a reflection of Ireland, its colonial condition, and its impending emergence into national maturity. And as Pascale Casanova illustrates, Joyce performed this function effectively enough that Ireland did, in fact, come into its own within the

global literary community. It is this aspect of Joyce's *Bildungsroman* that Rushdie appropriates. As the story of Dedalus's path toward *Bildung* both reflects and enacts Ireland's growth on the world stage, so Saleem's *Bildungsprozess* not only reflects the story of India's difficult early years as an Independent nation, but also serves to push the nation toward a more complete national maturity.

Rushdie's utilization of the Joycean model of *Bildung* is not limited to *Midnight's Children*. *The Satanic Verses*, published seven years after *Midnight's Children*, emphasizes the value and utility this paradigm to Rushdie's aesthetics. This novel is an interesting case in that it is not a *Bildungsroman*, per se, but the concept of *Bildung*—of growth, development, and personal becoming—is a vital component of the novel. In fact, it contains within it a miniature *Bildungsroman* in the story of the youth and development of Saladin Chamcha.<sup>68</sup> Saladin's story of development perpetuates the modernist *Bildungsroman* tradition, characterized by the failure of the *Bildungsheld* to harmoniously socialize into the culture around him (a trait exemplified by Stephen Dedalus and later by Saleem Sinai). It also embodies the merging of public and private, an important trait of both *A Portrait* and *Midnight's Children*.

Like Saleem, Saladin is largely autobiographical. He was born in Bombay, moved to England early in adolescence to attend boarding school, remained in England for his university studies, and made his home there after taking his degree, eventually finding success in an artistic career. Chamcha's father, Changez Chamchawala, is largely based on Rushdie's father, and much of the relationship between Chamcha and Chamchawala—including their troubled relationship during Saladin's youth and their reconciliation as Chamchawala's cancer slowly kills him—is taken from Rushdie's own experiences with

his father. Moreover, Saladin's *Bildungsprozess* follows the Joycean model much as Saleem Sinai's does in *Midnight's Children*. He, like Saleem and Stephen before him, fails to become harmoniously socialized with the culture around him. For Saladin, this failure is two-fold, as it occurs both in India and in England. When he is a young boy in Bombay, he feels "desperate to leave, to escape" (SV 37). There are several reasons for his discomfort in Bombay. He wishes to get away from his father. He feels an affinity for England, a sort of orientalist exoticism operating east-to-west rather than west-to-east. He even cheers for the England cricket team to defeat the Indian team: "[H]e prayed for an England victory, for the game's creators to defeat the local upstarts, for the proper order of things to be maintained" (SV 37–38). Most significantly, though, he simply has trouble stomaching Bombay, calling it the city of "dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumoured singing whores of Grant Road" (SV 37). Chamcha dislikes the atmosphere, the authority figures, the popular culture, the corruption, and he has no wish to make his home in such a place.

As it turns out, though, his fantasy of a better life in London—a city he believes represents sophisticated civilization as opposed to the wilds of Bombay—turns out to be just that, a fantasy. He is unable to assimilate smoothly into this society as well. At his boarding school, "his classmates giggled at his voice and excluded him from their secrets," and his difficulty fitting in is soon symbolized by the incident with the breakfast kipper. After trying, without much success, to eat his kipper, he finally finishes after ninety minutes, all while his classmates watch without offering any advice or guidance. Chamcha concludes that "he had been taught an important lesson. England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him

how to eat it” (SV 44). He finds he is on his own, because of his voice, his skin-tone, and his origin five thousand miles away. It is important to note, however, that Chamcha’s failure of belonging in England, and England’s failure to accept Chamcha as one of its own, is not limited to the boarding school politics of Chamcha’s youth, which could be dismissed as the antics of adolescent boys. Rather, the incident of the kipper prefigures Chamcha’s adult relationship with native-born white English citizens. His wife Pamela Lovelace (whose name is a combination of characters from Samuel Richardson novels and who can therefore be viewed as the inheritor of a long-established British literary tradition) has an affair, an obvious form of rejection. Worse, her lover is Jumpy Joshi, another Anglicized Indian, suggesting that for Lovelace, and by extension, for all of England, exotic outsiders like Chamcha are all more or less interchangeable.

Just as it does with Stephen Dedalus in Ireland, Chamcha’s separation from mainstream English society dramatically affects the direction of his personal growth and eventually his relationship to the nation he calls his home. That relationship is characterized both by Chamcha’s career path and by his treatment by native-born Englishmen. He makes his living as a voice-over actor. He is extremely skilled and well-renowned for his talent, able to “convince an audience that he [is] Russian, Chinese, Sicilian, the President of the United States. Once, in a radio play for thirty-seven voices, he interpreted every single part under a variety of pseudonyms and nobody ever worked it out” (SV 60–61). He is the most established voice actor in England, and of course, it is not an accident that he finds his success in this particular niche of the entertainment industry. By providing voiceovers for advertisements and performing in radio plays, Saladin Chamcha is able to thrive as an actor without ever having his white English

audience see his face. In effect, his skills are widely recognized within the industry, but he still only finds work as long as viewers and listeners are ignorant of his racial and national background.

The incident which most thoroughly demonstrates Chamcha's troubled relationship to his adopted country occurs in the police van after he is mistakenly arrested as an illegal immigrant. Immigration officers Stein, Novak, and Bruno take advantage of the van's windowless structure, cruelly tormenting and humiliating Chamcha. Officer Stein pulls off Chamcha's pants "with a merry cry of, 'Opening time, Packy; let's see what you're made of!'" (SV 162), and they force him to eat excrement while telling him, "You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilized standards" (SV 164). The most significant aspect of this incident is that Chamcha is in the midst of a transformation into a goat-like devil-figure, complete with horns and cloven hooves. Even though the immigration officers notice this unusual metamorphosis, their insults and other disparaging comments are clearly aimed at Chamcha's racial identity. Stein calls him "Packy," or rather, "Paki;" Bruno calls him an "animal." And his comment, "you're all the same," is an interesting generalization. Given the unlikelihood that he is referring, generally speaking, to people who are turning into goat-like devil-creatures, the remark about "animals" is clearly meant to refer to subcontinental immigrants. To these officers, who are literally representatives of British law and order, Chamcha's perceived status as a "Paki" is much more worthy of their attention than his illogical and supernatural transformation into a demon.

Chamcha's treatment at the hands of the officers highlights the novel's potential political implications. *The Satanic Verses* does not contain frequent overt references to

contemporary politics (like the Emergency) as *Midnight's Children* does. Rushdie claims he saw it as much less political than his previous two novels, that he saw it “as a much more personal, interior exploration” (*Joseph Anton* 74). Even so, the public and political elements of the text are undeniable. Chamcha’s difficulty in the police van—and even his initial arrest as an illegal immigrant—shows the racist, xenophobic attitudes simmering beneath the surface in Thatcher’s England. The wrongful arrest of Uhuru Simba and his subsequent death while in police custody emphasize that theme. The political issues in *The Satanic Verses* deal largely with England rather than with India. This novel presents a picture of migrant politics, rather than Indian/Pakistani politics. Rushdie’s “personal, interior exploration” in *The Satanic Verses* is therefore just as public-minded as *Midnight's Children*, and the merging of public and private seems inescapable.

There are two reasons this fact is important. First, in the context of Rushdie’s oeuvre, the portrayal of Indian life, culture, and history is not limited to India, Pakistan, and the surrounding region. It must also include England. Rather, England acts as a metonym; the portrayal of Indian culture and history must include the migrants’ role in that history. Even Nehru, in his address to the new Indian nation printed in newspapers on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947, turns his thoughts to “our brothers and sisters who have been cut off from us by political boundaries” (49). The story of Saladin Chamcha, the Indian exile (self-imposed exile, like Joyce and like Stephen Dedalus) making his way in the world in London, five thousand miles from Bombay, is the logical and necessary complement to the story of the story of Saleem Sinai, and the story of India as a young and developing nation is contained within them both and is incomplete without them both.

Additionally, Rushdie's continued use of the Joycean model for the *Bildungsroman* shows how valuable it is for him in presenting his portrayal of Indian life and history. Even though the novel as whole is not a *Bildungsroman*, Rushdie still incorporates this model of *Bildung* as a prominent part of the text in order to accomplish his literary goals and provide an image of India's progression and development. *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* together show Rushdie's application of Joyce's paradigm for *Bildung*, the emphasis on individuality which paradoxically links the protagonist's developmental process to national concerns. This connection between individual and state proves a valuable method of critiquing difficulties in the national growth process and suggesting a direction for the nation's future, tasks which are important not only for Rushdie, but for authors from virtually every former colony.



## CHAPTER 4

### TAYEB SALIH'S CRITIQUE OF SUDAN: *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH* AND "THE MIDDLE WAY"

Much as Salman Rushdie uses Joyce's paradigm to depict India in the early years of the nation's modern independence, Tayeb Salih utilizes a Joycean narrative of development as he depicts a transitional phase of Sudan's modern history. The concept of individual *Bildung* plays a central role in Salih's seminal novel, *Season of Migration to the North*. Salih uses the story of Mustafa Sa'eed's youth, education, and development into an adult as a tool that facilitates an honest and candid assessment of Sudan's political circumstances in the middle of the twentieth century. Sudan (as well as many of Salih's characters) finds itself in a liminal stage, caught in the midst of conflicting paths. It may cling to antiquated traditions that seem obsolete in an increasingly globalized, modern world; or embrace an influx of European influence and the perils of neocolonialism that accompany it. Both paths are fraught with problems for the country and its people. In *Season*, Salih attempts to navigate between those paths in a way that would allow Sudan to engage the modern world on its own terms.

Much criticism of *Season of Migration to the North* deals with the novel's intertextual relationships to previous works of literature, with an emphasis on the way *Season* either was influenced by or responds to particular texts. Most often, *Season* is discussed in terms of Shakespeare, Homer, and Joseph Conrad. I wish to add Joyce to this elaborate web of intertextuality. Salih appropriates Joyce's model of *Bildung* in the portion of the novel that reveals Mustafa Sa'eed's youth and formative process, as well as

the portions of the novel which depict the way both Sa'eed and the unnamed narrator adapt—or fail to adapt—to Sudanese society in their small village in the 1950s. These crucial parts of the text bear the fundamental marks of a *Bildungsroman*, and there are several facets of both Sa'eed and the narrator which mirror the developmental process of Stephen Dedalus: failure of socialization, personal growth in the absence of a successful male role model, and a troubled relationship to imperial and ecclesiastical power. These aspects of each character's development leads to an emphasis on individuality and an eventual, decisive choice to strike out on his own. Moreover, all these elements of the *Bildungsprozess* are presented with an absence of overt political content, though political issues are virtually always implicitly present. These elements of the novel lay the foundations for Salih's portrayal of Sudan's political and social circumstances in the first decade after its independence in 1956. *Season of Migration* is not allegorical in the same sense that *Midnight's Children* is, but it provides serious political commentary via fictional narrative, and Salih uses the lives of private individual to express public concerns, particularly with regard to neocolonialism. His depiction of Sudan in its transitional phase is a critical yet optimistically hopeful portrayal of a country no longer burdened by the yoke of colonialism though not yet fully sovereign.

Recently, *Season of Migration to the North* has played a substantial role in scholarly attempts to re-envision the modernist canon and the concept of modernism, most prominently in articles by Susan Stanford Friedman.<sup>69</sup> Her assessment draws attention to the significance of the novel's historical context. *Season* was published in 1966, a decade after Sudanese independence, and it takes place during the transition from colonial rule to self-government. In the spirit of revising the core idea of what constitutes

modernism, Friedman presents *Season* as a modernist novel because it “thematizes the enmeshing of both European and African modernities with colonialism and the seeming ruptures brought about by the demise of European imperialism and the rise of new African nation-states like the Sudan” (“Periodizing Modernism” 435). According to Friedman’s definition, *Season* qualifies as modernist specifically because it engages with the disruptive impact associated with this period in Sudanese history. The country is leaving European colonial rule behind, but not necessarily European colonial influence, while also making an effort to embrace aspects of a traditional, pre-colonial culture. The point at which those influences meet is also the central point in the processes of growth and development for Sa‘eed and the narrator. Salih uses their processes of becoming, and the endpoint of those processes when they are adults, to portray the nation’s difficulties in this transitional period.

Friedman emphasizes the idea that *Season* is a modernist novel through a comparison between Salih and Joseph Conrad. She writes that *Season* is “a novel that echoes reverses, and affiliates with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*” and that “[a]s an echo to *Heart of Darkness*, *Season of Migration to the North* reverses the journey of Kurtz from Europe to Africa” (“Periodizing Modernism” 435). In keeping with Friedman’s emphasis on spacialization (as opposed to periodization) as a means of literary categorization, this conception of the relationship between *Season* and *Heart of Darkness* accentuates geography; it focuses on the physical journeys of the books’ characters. I would add that other forms of the characters’ journeys—their intellectual, psychological, and moral development—also act as a primary mover in the novel. The cultural and colonial issues arise in the aftermath of those journeys.

This comparison between Salih and Conrad is significant because many interpretations of this aspect of *Season* point to the importance of Joycean *Bildung* in the text. Edward Said claims that Salih's project in *Season* is to write back against the empire, to begin the process of reclaiming what was lost to Great Britain's imperial enterprise. However, Byron Caminero-Santangelo disagrees with Edward Said's reading, arguing that Said "fails to recognize that the real objects of scrutiny in *Season of Migration* are the Sudanese themselves, who have inculcated the colonial mindset and ignored their own particular manifestations of it" (69). Salih's use of Conrad is primarily a way to "expose and attack the contradictions of late twentieth-century neocolonialism in Sudan" (70). Unlike Said, he does not view the novel as "oppositional," or as an attempt to reclaim territory both on the map and in the world of fiction; rather, Caminero-Santangelo views the novel as a means of national introspection, executed through the use of Conradian elements. I argue that the Joycean elements of the *Bildung* which permeate the novel provide Salih a means through which to accomplish this introspection and through which to critique the way the nation responds to neocolonial influences.

One of the clearest indications of Joyce's influence is the fact that Mustafa Sa'eed is, much like Salman Rushdie's Saleem Sinai, a Stephen Dedalus-like figure, particularly with regard to his intellectual and personal development. He is an intellectual who separates himself from his family and from the society around him, who leaves his homeland and returns to a land that can never quite be his home. The similarity between Stephen and Sa'eed truly begins to emerge in the text as Sa'eed describes "the first decision [he] had taken of [his] own free will" (*SMN* 21): the decision to attend school as a nine year old boy. Just as the young Stephen Dedalus distinguishes himself

academically, as the leader of the Yorkists at Clongowes and, the “virtual [head] of the school” at Belvedere, Sa‘eed also excels in his youthful education (*P* 76). Sa‘eed tells *Season*’s unnamed narrator,

I discovered in my brain a wonderful ability to learn by heart, to grasp and comprehend. On reading a book it would lodge itself solidly in my brain. No sooner had I set my mind to a problem in arithmetic than its intricacies opened up to me, melted away in my hands as though they were a piece of salt I had placed in water. . . . My mind was like a sharp knife, cutting with cold effectiveness. (*SMN* 22)

Within a mere three years, Sa‘eed earns such high praise from his instructors in all subjects, particularly in learning to speak English, that he is sent out of the country to continue his education, first going to Cairo at the tender age of twelve, then to London at age fifteen. Stephen, of course, likewise leaves the nation of his birth, though not for the purposes of formal education.

It is worth noting that in Mustafa Sa‘eed’s Sudan, such educational opportunities are a rarity. It is true that colonial officials traveled the countryside looking to enroll youths they encountered, but very few are able to advance to higher education like Sa‘eed. In the entire novel, only the text’s unnamed narrator matches Sa‘eed’s education. The narrator’s friend Mahjoub provides an excellent counterpoint. The narrator and Mahjoub grew up together, and the narrator recalls the following:

When we had finished our elementary education Mahjoub had said, ‘This amount of education will do me – reading, writing, and arithmetic. We’re farming folk like our fathers and grandfathers. All the education a farmer

wants is to be able to write letters, to read the newspapers and to know the prescribed rules for prayers' . . . . I went my own way and Mahjoub turned into a real power in the village. (*SMN* 98)

Their divergent paths reveal two different mindsets, different priorities. Mahjoub is pragmatic and provincial. He knows his little corner of the world and he wishes to improve it. The narrator, on the other hand, is idealistic. He chooses to continue his education, and eventually leaves for England in order to do so. Mahjoub's experience is more typical for people in this village than the experience of the narrator or of Mustafa Sa'eed. As a result, Sa'eed's education serves to distinguish him from the vast majority of his Sudanese countrymen. In much the same way, Stephen Dedalus's decision to attend the university distinguishes him from his father, his uncle Charles, and just about everyone else he knows in his youth except for the other university students.

From there, the similarities between Stephen Dedalus and Mustafa Sa'eed only grow. Both young men become sex-obsessed, though Sa'eed has quite a bit more success courting women than Stephen. And more importantly, both men leave the lands of their birth only to return carrying with them a feeling of alienation. Stephen is largely unable to participate in regular daily life in Dublin, and in his resistance, he abdicates his home, loses almost all of his money, and actively severs his ties with friends and family. Sa'eed chooses to live in a small village where nobody knows anything of his past. Once there, he gives his best effort to become part of the community; he marries a local woman; he plays an active role on the Agricultural Project Committee; he is even offered the position of committee chair as a result of the success of his ideas to make or save money for the village. However, he also maintains a locked room in his home which no one is allowed

to enter. This inner sanctum is a replica of his room in London, and it contains his collection of books, notebooks, journals, and photographs from his European education and from his life abroad. While he tries to become part of the community of his adopted village, he still retains, in secret, a complete record of his previous life, suggesting he is not willing to give up that part of his personal history. Though he tries to make himself fully Sudanese, a part of him will always be European, even though he tries to keep this part of himself a secret from the rest of the village. Before long, the psychological strain of maintaining that façade becomes too much for him, leading to his apparent suicide.

Another important similarity between Stephen and Sa'eed involves the lack of a successful male role model. The absence of such a figure creates a situation in which individuality and self-reliance are of paramount importance, and both Sa'eed and Stephen cling to their individuality as they develop into grown men. In *A Portrait*, Simon Dedalus is a terrible father-figure. He even tells Stephen at one point, "I don't believe in playing the stern father. . . . No, I treat you as your grandfather treated me when I was a young chap. We were more like brothers than father and son" (*P* 91). Of course, he fails at trying to be a brother or friend to Stephen as well as a father, scornfully denigrating him in Cork to everyone they meet, "the sellers in the market, . . . the barmen and barmaids, . . . the beggars who importuned him for a lob" (*P* 93). And more importantly, Simon very obviously disapproves of Stephen's decision to attend the university, and withdraws any lingering shreds of emotional support. In Stephen's April 3<sup>rd</sup> diary entry, he relates an encounter with Davin, during which his father approaches. The entry implies Simon would prefer to have a son who behaves like Davin, the good Irish boy who carries a hurleystick, who supports universal peace, just as long as it does not interfere with the

activities of the Fenians, and who considers himself “an Irish Nationalist, first and foremost” (*P* 202).<sup>70</sup> In other words, Simon would prefer a son who upholds Irish traditions and pride in a way Stephen deliberately opposes.

Mustafa Sa‘eed’s situation is, to some extent, much more straightforward. He never met his father, who died several months before his birth. The only paternal influence he recounts from his boyhood takes the form of a colonial official sent “to scour the villages and tribal communities [to find children to send to schools] while the people would hide their sons – they thought of schools as being a great evil that had come to them with the armies of occupation” (*SMN* 20). In a conversation which demonstrates the foreign and novel nature of these British modeled schools in colonial Sudan, the official is forced to describe “school,” both as a physical structure and as a social concept, to the nine-year old Mustafa, who has apparently never heard of it. Without much persuasion from the official, Mustafa decides to attend school. As such, it is this colonial official who gives the young Mustafa the first and most significant piece of advice he ever receives which has a direct effect on his education and his career. In a sense, this colonial official performs a function which likely would have otherwise fallen upon his deceased father. The empire thus serves as Mustapha Sa‘eed’s surrogate father. Later, during his education in London, he is nicknamed “The Black Englishman” as a result of his proficiency with the English language (*SMN* 53). The nickname re-emphasizes the idea that he is a child of empire.

Stephen Dedalus, in his youth, has a similar surrogate father-figure: the Catholic Church. While Simon is a failure as a father, the church succeeds in providing Stephen with an education, disciplining him for perceived wrongdoing, and offering him a career



opportunity. As Gregory Castle notes, “The figures of Father Dolan and the Rector are the masculine embodiments of Church authority” (165). There is no similar authority for Stephen from Simon or anyone else from his home. If Mustafa Sa‘eed is a child of empire, Stephen Dedalus is a child of the church. Moreover, both characters eventually spurn their institutional father-figures. They maintain their independence and individualism, whereas embracing the imperial or ecclesiastical authority would necessarily impinge on that independence and would inhibit *Bildung*.

It is worth noting that Sa‘eed’s backstory is not revealed to the narrator (or to readers) all at once, in chronological order. Rather, small pieces are scattered throughout the text, and both the narrator and readers must put the pieces together as they receive new information. According to Muhammad Khalafalla ‘Abdalla, “the bit-by-bit unfolding of [Mustafa Sa‘eed’s] character is the most salient feature of the plot” (44). This portion of the text, spread throughout the novel virtually from beginning to end, constitutes a *Bildungsroman* which presents Sa‘eed’s process of becoming. This use of this genre is not surprising for a novel with a major international and cross-cultural component written in the immediate aftermath of Sudanese independence. According to Feroza Jussawalla, “the ‘postcolonial Bildungsroman’ [is] a favored form of the postcolonial writer” (“Postcolonial” 98). She claims that typically, in a postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, the author’s

attitude towards his or her country and its culture, an attitude of distinctness and difference from that of the European colonizer . . . is reflected in the hero or heroine’s developing affirmation of his or her native culture and history. In such novels, the process of the

*Bildungsheld*'s personal growth and development almost always reflects his or her growing sense of belonging. (98)

Quite obviously, Mustafa Sa'eed fails to achieve this sense of belonging, much like Stephen Dedalus in Ireland and as Saleem Sinai and Saladin Chamcha in India. Even *Season*'s narrator, who at the end of the novel makes a point of differentiating himself from Sa'eed, has trouble remaining part of the community in his small village at the bend of Nile. However, the other key element of Jussawalla's assessment of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*—the attitude of distinctness and difference from the culture of the colonizer—is an important theme in the novel. In *Season of Migration*, the main characters' difficulty in becoming part of their community is a fundamental component of the way the theme of distinctness from the colonizer is presented to readers.

The narrator and Sa'eed's failures of belonging are clearly evocative of Gregory Castle's sketch of the modernist *Bildungsroman*: the *Bildungsheld*'s inability to achieve harmonious socialization into his or her culture precipitates true *Bildung*. Moreover, just as Castle argues is the case for Irish colonial *Bildungshelden*, the political and social circumstances in Sudan are the root cause of this failure. Castle says of the situation in early twentieth-century Ireland:

Ireland entered the twentieth century with few bourgeois liberal political institutions and no secular, humanist educational tradition; its legacy was largely one of political resistance to oppressive authority and painful self-questioning about the methods and aims of this resistance. . . . In such colonial situations, identity formation and the "viability" of the educated colonial subject are themselves unstable processes. (57–58)

The situation in mid-century Sudan is not identical, but Sudan has its own internal divisions. Muhammed Khalafalla ‘Abdalla focuses on the distinction between Sudan’s tribal population and what he calls “detrribalized elements” (48), predominantly urban city-dwellers. He argues that the detribalized portion of the population was “the quickest to deal with the educational system introduced by the British, while the rest of the people would hide their children” from colonial officials who tried to enroll youths in schools (48). (One such official, of course, succeeds in finding Mustafa Sa‘eed and encouraging him to enroll.) This British education did not, according to ‘Abdalla, lead to favorable treatment from the British, but did allow them to fill “badly needed jobs required by the new state machinery” (49). In other words, the vast majority of Sudanese students in this school system were put in a position to become complicit with either colonial rule or neocolonial principles. Those Sudanese who were not so educated had more difficulty finding work and were thus economically disadvantaged. Many Sudanese are therefore confronted with the choice of actively feeding colonial or neocolonial machinery, or simply accepting the subaltern status that comes to them as a result of that machinery. And in fact, this choice is built into the educational system. Just as Castle says about Ireland, in Sudan “identity formation and the ‘viability’ of the educated colonial subject are themselves unstable processes.”

Mustafa Sa‘eed’s failure to achieve a sense of belonging, both in Sudan and in England, is therefore due in large part to the disjointed nature of his educational development as a colonial subject. Earlier, I mentioned the incident in which the colonial official finds the nine-year old Mustafa and asks him if he’d like to attend school. A key part of this conversation occurs after the official describes the school. Mustafa looks at

the officer's head and asks, "[W]ill I wear a turban like that?" (*SMN* 20). Of course, it is not actually a turban; it is a pith helmet, with its strong symbolic ties to imperialism.<sup>71</sup> In response to the question, the colonial official playfully places the helmet on Mustafa's head and tells the young boy, "When you grow up . . . and leave school and become an official in the government, you'll wear a hat like this" (*SMN* 20). That alone is enough to convince Mustafa Sa'eed to attend school. The incident shows that Sa'eed's education is not motivated by an attempt to grow and develop as an individual, nor an attempt to improve conditions in his home country. Rather, it is primarily inspired by a desire to emulate the colonial conqueror, a fact which illustrates the problematic nature of the relationship between education and identity formation in colonial Sudan.

Throughout the early years of his education, Sa'eed makes progress towards his goal of emulating the British colonists, which eventually brings him to London, to the capital of the Empire. After completing his education, he finds that it is not only impossible for him to integrate himself seamlessly into British culture; it is in many ways actually advantageous for him to deliberately distinguish himself from the white Englishmen who surround him. Both professionally and socially, he is able to make the most of British colonial and racial guilt. At one point in the text, an Englishman in Khartoum describes Sa'eed's reputation to the narrator: "[H]e was a show-piece exhibited by members of the aristocracy who in the twenties and early thirties were affecting liberalism. . . . It was as though they wanted to say: Look how tolerant and liberal we are! This African is just like one of us!" (*SMN* 58–59). Sa'eed's background, his education, and the effects of colonialism both on him and on the English therefore

make harmonious socialization in to British society both impossible and potentially undesirable.

Mustafa Sa'eed put forth the most effort in emphasizing his differences in his sexual exploits. In ignoring the emotional aspects of relationships with women in favor of an idealized vision of what women represent, Sa'eed mirrors Stephen Dedalus. Stephen has a habit of treating women as ideals rather than as persons: Eileen Vance, E.C., the birdgirl.<sup>72</sup> For Stephen, they're all aesthetic objects, motivations which drive his artistic endeavors. For Mustapha Sa'eed, as well, interactions with women ignore their human properties. For him, women represent an opportunity to take something back from the colonizer. In his mind, they are idealized subjects of conquest, more like land than people, and he puts a great deal of effort into being successful in that conquest. As part of this crusade, by his own admission, Sa'eed "would do everything possible to entice a woman to [his] bed" (*SMN* 30). One of his techniques of seduction is to deliberately make himself seem exotic and otherworldly. He describes the contents of his home in London as the

den of lethal lies that [he] had . . . built up, lie upon lie: the sandalwood and incense; the ostrich feathers and ivory and ebony figurines; the paintings and drawings of forests of palm trees along the shores of the Nile, boats with sails like doves' wings, suns setting over the mountains of the Red Sea, camel caravans wending their way along sand dunes on the borders of the Yemen, boabab trees in Kordofan, naked girls from the tribes of the Zandi, the Nuer and the Shuluk, fields of banana and coffee on the Equator, old temples in the district of Nubia; Arabic books with

decorated covers written in ornate Kufic script [and] Persian carpets.

(*SMN* 146)

Clearly, Sa'eed's entire home is designed to identify him as an outsider. It is noteworthy that Sa'eed's decorations do not necessarily have anything to do with his homeland, or with Sudan. Anything that seems exotic or oriental will suffice. His bric-a-brac spans the entire Arab-African world, harkening to jungle regions, desert regions, the Arabian Peninsula, Persian culture, and various crops and animals that receive no mention at all during any part of the text which actually takes place in Sudan. Sa'eed consciously sets himself apart as an outsider, and in doing so he acts contrary to his original goal, becoming like the colonizer.

Mustafa Sa'eed is also not able to achieve harmonious socialization into the society when he returns to Sudan. His British education and experiences set him apart, even though he hides that part of his past from almost everyone in the village. Yet the differences between Sa'eed and the prevailing attitudes in the village are impossible to ignore. The most obvious difference involves Sa'eed's attitude toward his wife and women in general. His behavior has changed substantially since he left England and since he murdered Jean Morris. However, he retains the lack of emotional connection which characterizes his youthful indiscretions. His Sudanese wife serves a purpose for him; she is part of his plan to become part of the village community, a plan which eventually fails. In keeping with this plan, he is a faithful husband, who expresses no desire to leave his wife for a younger woman. He is a direct contrast to the lecherous Wad Rayyes, who seems like he is always looking for a new wife, even though he's now in his seventies and has great-grandchildren (*SMN* 77). Most of the other members of the village,

including women, share Wad Rayyes's view of what constitutes normal and acceptable behavior.

We also see Sa'eed's difficulty in achieving a sense of belonging through the experiences of *Season's* narrator, who suffers from a similar problem of belonging. His experiences are relevant and shed light on Mustafa Sa'eed because he is, to a large degree, a doppelganger of Sa'eed. This point is emphasized near the end of the novel, once the narrator finally enters Sa'eed's inner sanctum. He sees what he believes to be a full-size painting of Mustafa Sa'eed, but upon closer inspection, he realizes it is a mirror. The narrator, after spending several years earning his doctorate in Europe, returns to Sudan with a highly idealized vision of his home village. He talks of "the familiar bed" in his home ("familiar" even though he's been gone for seven years), the "merry whispering" of the wind, and says that when he looks "through the window at the palm tree standing in the courtyard of [his family's] house[, he] knew that all was still well with life" (*SMN* 1–2). Later, however, he harshly criticizes various aspects of the village's culture, especially those that oppose social values he learned while in Europe. The most notable example again involves the role of women in society. He criticizes the village's patriarchal traditions, an issue which arises as the narrator and Mahjoub discuss whether Sa'eed's widow should get remarried. Mahjoub reminds the narrator of the village's customs:

'[I]f the woman's father and brothers are agreeable no one can do anything about it.'

'But what if she doesn't want to marry?' [the narrator asks] him.

‘You know how life is run here,’ [Mahjoub says]. ‘Women belong to men . . . .’

‘But the world’s changed’ . . . . ‘These are things that no longer fit in with our life in this age.’

[Mahjoub replies] ‘The world hasn’t changed as much as you think.’

(SMN 99–100)

As the narrator eventually realizes his idealization of his village may be misguided, he is “so shocked by the sexism of the patriarchal community and its distortions of Islamic teachings that ‘his world [is] suddenly turned upside down’” (Hammond 80). Much like Sa‘eed, he will always be out-of-place in the village as a result of his experiences and education abroad.

These facets of Mustafa Sa‘eed’s life story and the narrator’s place in his home village utilize Joycean model of the *Bildungsroman* in order to provide a salient critique of early postcolonial politics and culture in Sudan. As is the case with *A Portrait*, political issues rarely appear prominently within the narrative (although there are, on occasion, subtle references to them). Also like *A Portrait*, the absence of overt political content is a significant omission insofar as the timeframe of the novel sees Sudan rocked by overwhelming political change. Mustafa Sa‘eed is born in 1898, between the “battles of Atbara and Omdurman (June and September of that year, respectively), in which Kitchener’s army crushed the Mahdi’s forces and completed the conquest of Sudan” (Hassan 91).<sup>73</sup> In 1953, the Anglo-Egypt accord is signed, beginning a three-year transition period from Anglo-Egyptian rule over Sudan to independence. That same year, the narrator returns to his village after earning his doctorate in England and Mustafa



Sa'eed disappears under mysterious circumstances. Three years later, in 1956, the timeframe of *Season of Migration to the North* ends; this is the same year that Sudan officially becomes independent. Therefore, the two timeframes of the novel—the present tense in the village and the past tense of Sa'eed's earlier life—literally encompass the whole of Sudan's twentieth-century colonial history. Moreover, the present tense of the novel (i.e. the narrator's experiences after returning to his home village) spans the transition period from 1953 to independence in 1956. Yet these changes in Sudan's colonial circumstances receive very little explicit attention in the narration.

There is one instance in which the narrator makes a specific reference to this recent history. Remembering the story Mustafa Sa'eed had told him about how he felt in the London courtroom, he recalls Sa'eed saying,

When Mahmoud Wad Ahmed was brought in shackles to Kitchener after his defeat at the Battle of Atbara, Kitchener said to him, 'Why have you come to my country to lay waste and plunder?' It was the intruder who said this to the person whose land it was, and the owner of the land bowed his head and said nothing. (*SMN* 94)

Sa'eed compares himself to Kitchener, an intruder abroad who lays claim to something that does not belong to him. There are other, brief references as well: a passing remark about Kitchener's army from the retired Mamur the narrator meets on a train, for instance (*SMN* 54). The interesting fact about these references, though, is that they have virtually nothing to do with life in the narrator's home village. The remarks come from outsiders and deal with situations beyond the scope of the villagers' concerns.

Most other specific references to colonialism, even fairly oblique references, follow this same pattern: they come from people outside the village and do not touch on village life in any way. When Sa‘eed describes his youth, for instance, the only colonial administrator he mentions is the soldier who persuades him to attend school. He is simply described as an “official” from the “government,” with no mention of which government sent him, or what nation he was likely born in. The only negative remark about him or about his assignment is that many people in Sudan “thought of schools as being a great evil that had come to them with the armies of occupation” (*SMN* 20). Otherwise, Sudan’s status as a colony is not explicitly referenced very often. However, subtleties in the text reveal the impact of Sudan’s colonial condition on Sa‘eed’s life. When the education system in Sudan becomes insufficient for his intellectual abilities, he pursues further education first in Cairo, then in London—in the capital cities of the two countries controlling the fate of Sudan. They are portrayed as superior to Sudanese cities like Khartoum, more advanced intellectually and culturally. This portrayal is a consequence of the military and political control Egypt and England exerted over Sudan, and the path of Sa‘eed’s educational career thus alludes to Sudan’s colonial status.

There are other such subtle references to Sudan’s political situation. In 1955, the year before formal Sudanese independence and approximately two years after Mustafa Sa‘eed’s death, colonial politics intrude briefly on the narrator’s thoughts:

The fact that they came to our land, I know not why, does that mean that we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country, just as many people throughout history left many countries. The railways, ships, hospitals, factories, and schools will be

ours and we'll speak their language without either a sense of guilt or a sense of gratitude. Once again we shall be as we were – ordinary people.

(*SMN* 49–50)

The narrator's thoughts here reveal that he believes his country should embrace the benefits of British influence, benefits which primarily take the form of infrastructural improvements, and make them part of normal, everyday life after independence. Sudan can, he believes, take advantage of such benefits without sacrificing its traditional culture or its unique identity. To discard the "railways, ships, [and] hospitals" would be to do the country a disservice and would allow independent Sudan to remain under the control of the shadow of its colonial history. However, that's all he says on the matter. He doesn't say who "they" are or which language they speak; he doesn't say when they came to the country; he doesn't say make any reference to any negative effects of their coming; he doesn't say anything about when they will leave—only that they will some day—even though he probably knows exactly when they plan to depart, and that they'll leave within a year. And yet, these four sentences are the most explicit references the narrator makes to the presence of a foreign power controlling Sudan.

There are a few reasons for the dearth of explicit references to politics and colonialism in the novel. One important reason is that much of the novel takes place in a small village. The few direct reference to Sudan's colonial status come from outsiders who are not concerned with the village. The narrative's lack of overt political content reflects the distance—social as well as geographic—of this village from the centers of power in Khartoum, Cairo, and London.

This distance (in both senses) is made explicit as the narrator returns to the village after seven months in Khartoum, where he works full time. He asks about a new building, partially-constructed, and is told by his uncle Abdul Mannan that it is “[a] hospital. They’ve been at it for a whole year and can’t finish it. It’s a hopeless government. . . . All they’re any good at is coming to us every two or three years with their hordes of people, their lorries and their posters: Long live so-and-so.”<sup>74</sup> The narrator’s own thoughts, in response, are just as noteworthy: “Are these the people who are called *peasants* in books? Had I told my grandfather that revolutions are made in his name, that governments are set up and brought down for his sake, he would have laughed” (*SMN* 64). Both the narrator and his uncle reveal the deep social chasm between life in the village and government of Sudan, or rather, the governments—plural—of Sudan. As Abdul Mannan casually indicates, power seems to change hands quite frequently. Like most members of the village, he cares little for who is in power or who might rise to power in Khartoum. He also does not seem to care much about the new hospital—his frustration is over the half-finished building and the government incompetence. He never indicates they need the hospital, or that they had asked for it, and in all likelihood he will be pleased when it is completed; he is upset because it has been started and is not complete. He feels ignored by the government, just as he ignores the government. Sudan’s political situation is simply not important to Abdul Mannan or to most other villagers.

The metaphorical distance between the village and the capital becomes even more explicit as the narrator and his friend Mahjoub discuss their respective career paths. Mahjoub is content with his elementary education because he and his family (as well as most of the village) are farmers, and he felt that level of education is sufficient. The

narrator, on the other hand, continues his education and earns his doctorate in literature in England. In the present-tense frame of the novel, they discuss where they each end up.

Mahjoub tells the narrator,

‘But look where you are now and where I am. You’ve become a senior civil servant [in Khartoum] and I’m a farmer in this god-forsaken village.’

‘It’s you who’ve succeeded, not I’ [the narrator] would say to him with genuine admiration, ‘because you influence actual life in the country. We civil servants, though, are of no consequence. People like you are the legal heirs of authority.’ (SMN 99)

The narrator has advanced standing in society; his doctorate opens doors that give him a respectable job in the capital. Yet he feels useless, as though his duties are merely bureaucrat. His praise of Mahjoub reveals a disconnect between the activities of the government and the lives of people in the village. Mahjoub, in his less respected position, enacts actual change that has a tangible effect on the lives of people he knows and sees on a regular basis. The narrator, on the other hand, works for a government that cannot build a hospital in seven months, leaving half-finished shells of buildings no one can use. This conversation is, in many ways, an extension of their earlier conversation regarding their educational paths. Mahjoub is concerned only with what he needs to know for traditional life in the village, whereas the narrator is interested in a more worldly perspective.

Despite Mahjoub’s praise of the narrator’s personal accomplishments and his rise through the ranks of the civil service, he is clearly frustrated by Sudan’s new government. His delineates his frustration most clearly in a conversation he has with the narrator

immediately after the narrator returns to the village following the tragic deaths of Wad Rayyes and Hosna Bint Mahmoud. The narrator tells Mahjoub he had been involved in a conference in Khartoum with representatives from twenty African nations “to discuss ways of unifying education methods throughout the whole continent. Mahjoub’s response is quite telling: “Let them build the schools first. . . . They waste time in conferences and poppycock and here are our children having to travel several miles to school. Aren’t we human beings? Don’t we pay taxes. Haven’t we any rights in this country?” (SMN 117–18). Mahjoub wants tangible results, buildings he can see and in which children can be taught. In his mind, the central government in Khartoum is only concerned with abstractions, while in the real world hospitals stand half-finished and children have difficulty getting to distant schoolhouses.<sup>75</sup>

This disconnect between the capital and the village illustrates one of the primary benefits of Salih’s use of Joyce’s paradigm of *Bildung* in a postcolonial context. It creates a link between the main characters and their country much like the connection Stephen Dedalus experiences in Ireland. The disconnect is symptomatic of the other major reason for the scarcity of explicit reference to politics and colonialism: *Season of Migration to the North*, much like *Midnight’s Children* would do fifteen years later, depicts not only the *Bildungsprozess* of a character, but also of a fledgling, recently-independent nation. The struggles of both Mustafa Sa’eed and the narrator to find a place where they feel at home in mid-century Sudan mirrors the difficulties of the nation of Sudan as it struggles to find its independent identity and a place for itself in the modern world. The process of personal development, of becoming, for both Mustafa Sa’eed and for the narrator acts as a national allegory in the Jamesonian model as the text conflates public and private. The

references to Sudan's evolving political situation appear prominently in the text only on rare occasions; however, those rarities, combined with more subtle references interspersed frequently in the text, cast a long shadow on *Season*'s main characters and on the village they call home. The growth and development of both Mustafa Sa'eed and the narrator come to signify the goals and the difficulties of newly-independent Sudan.

One such difficulty that permeates the implicit political content of the text is the challenge of dealing with the continuing influence of colonial history even after independence. Wail Hassan argues, "Salih's project in *Season* parallels Achebe's [in *Things Fall Apart*]." He wishes to "[rehabilitate] the image of Africa, [but] he does not idealize it" (87). In refusing to idealize the young country, Salih confronts its flaws, laying them bare in his fiction. One of those flaws, according to Byron Caminero-Santangelo, is the specter of neocolonialism. Neocolonialism in mid-century Sudan is, on the one hand, a specific issue connected to particular policies in the government and traceable actions on the part of authority figures. But neocolonialism is also part of a broader issue—it is the tangible result of the ongoing conflict between fading traditions and modernizing change. This theme is introduced in the novel's opening pages. The narrator, recently returned to the village from England, visits a tree by the banks of the Nile and recalls days from his childhood spent by the tree: "From my position under the tree I saw the village slowly undergo a change: the water-wheels disappeared to be replaced on the bank of the Nile by pumps, each one doing the work of a hundred water-wheels" (*SMN* 4). The pumps represent the modernization of the village's infrastructure, a positive side-effect of colonial administration.<sup>76</sup> The improved technology is a benefit of changing times. The narrator, though, reflects on this benefit while reminiscing about

an idealized past and thinks about how helpful the water-wheels are in supporting the village's traditional agrarian lifestyle. Past and future collide in a surprisingly peaceful coexistence.

However, such collisions are not always so peaceful, and often the violent nature of the collision is hidden at first, only to be revealed when it's too late to be prevented, which is what we see in the novel's portrayal of obstinate traditionalists living in a country dominated by the specter of its colonial past, the difficulties of its neocolonial present, and its uncertain future. The issue of neocolonialism is brought into sharp focus as Mustafa Sa'eed tells the narrator about his youth, particularly the day he decides he wishes to attend school. Sa'eed's goal, as a young man, of utilizing education to help become like the colonizer foreshadows Sudan's neocolonial tendencies early in its history as an independent nation. Sa'eed's life—and later, the narrator's life—acts as a microcosm for the national difficulties associated with neocolonialism.

A key moment in this process occurs during the aforementioned scene in which Sa'eed tells the narrator about his decision to attend school, which he describes as “the first decision [he] had taken of his [own] free will” (*SMN* 21). This remark is quite significant: Mustafa Sa'eed is usually quite astute and self-aware, displaying a keen understanding both of the world around him and of his own psyche. However, in this instance, he clearly lacks self-awareness. This is not truly a decision he took of his own free will. He is a young, impressionable, nine-year old boy in the presence of an awe-inspiring sight. The colonial official is astride a horse, making him literally larger than any ordinary man, and he wears an authoritative uniform. Sa'eed's first response, when asked if he wants to go to school is an honest and naïve, “What's school?” The official



then tells him that a school is a “nice stone building in the middle of a large garden on the banks of the Nile” (*SMN* 20). The description is clearly biased, idyllic and overly positive. Afterward, the official essentially bribes the young Mustafa with the promise of a future job in colonial administration, a promise he makes not only with the metonymic pith helmet, but also by literally telling him that he “will become an official in the government” (*SMN* 20). Only then does Mustafa finally agree to go to school. It’s not a decision he makes of his own free will; he is coerced into it. The colonial official’s technique in persuading Mustafa to attend school is remarkably similar to the approach the director at Belvedere College uses in *A Portrait* to convince Stephen to join the priesthood. He tells Stephen the calling “is the greatest honour that the Almighty God can bestow upon a man. No king or emperor on this earth has the power of the priest of God. No angel or archangel in heaven, no saint, not even the Blessed Virgin herself has the power of a priest of god” (*P* 158). Stephen, however, is virtually a grown man when this conversation occurs, and he has more self-awareness than the nine-year old Mustafa. He understands that joining the priesthood would be a failure for him, that it would prevent him from maintaining the individuality he holds so dear. The young Mustafa, however, is not yet at the stage of his life where is able to make that judgment, and it is not until years later that he realizes he is being made into a pawn of the empire.

The particular nature of this coercion is significant. Sa‘eed is promised that if he acts as a good citizen of the colony, then he will have a place in its future. Whereas if he chooses not to become a good citizen of the colony, he will be left on his own. As ‘Abdalla explains, these two options represent the difference between education for the detribalized urban citizenry and non-education for the tribal population. This exchange

between the young Mustafa and the colonial official shows the colonizer trying to shape the minds and actions of citizens of the colony through a system of implicit rewards and punishments, a process which continues in a neocolonial situation. Sa'eed's decision to attend school thus provides a prelude to the political circumstances in Sudan in the 1950s, during the present-tense frame of the novel.

Within this frame of *Season's* narrative, the cultural influence of Europe on Sudan appears most prominently through the narrator's conflict with Mahjoub—and to some extent, with his entire village—over the role of women in society. The narrator's views are clearly influenced by the seven years he spent in England. He has adopted a progressive, if not quite egalitarian, outlook. In stark contrast to Mahjoub, Wad Rayyes, and many other villagers, the narrator does not support polygamy, nor does he support capricious divorce, nor divorce enacted solely so that the husband may immediately remarry a younger woman. It is village tradition for marriage and divorce to be used as tools for the subjugation of women, and women have no voice in either matter. As Mahjoub says, "Women belong to men," and he rejects the narrator's suggestion that such traditions are no longer relevant because "the world's changed" (*SMN* 99).

Mahjoub's attitude characterizes an inability to accept change, a trait shared by most of the village, particularly Wad Rayyes and the other members of a fading generation who participate in the bawdy discussion at the narrator's grandfather's house. The conversation includes Bint Majzoub comparing her husbands' sexual prowess, the aesthetic (but not medical) effects of female circumcision, and Wad Rayyes boasting about kidnapping and raping a young girl who had just reached puberty. This conversation takes place at the very center of the novel, structurally speaking, and it

proves to be a pivot point on which the traditional and the progressive cannot quite balance. It is significant that both men and women take part in and enjoy the raunchy conversation, showing that the village's traditional attitude toward gender roles is perpetuated by women as well as men. It's also significant that every member of the conversation is elderly, and that the only young person present (the narrator) literally interrupts one of Wad Rayyes's stories, though the conversation continues afterward. This interruption is prophetic. It symbolizes a shift in prevailing attitudes, though not yet a shift in custom.

In *Season of Migration*, this inability to accept change is not merely symbolic; it has a tangible impact on real-life. People die. The deaths of Hosna Bint Mahmoud and Wad Rayyes are preventable. Not only are they preventable, the process of events leading to their deaths could have been disrupted at several points. Wad Rayyes could have been less insistent on marrying again. He could have been, as the narrator suggests to him, more flexible in choosing a new wife, rather than fixating on Mustafa Sa'eed's widow. Other members of the village could have accepted Hosna's decision not to remarry. The narrator could have married Hosna, as per her wishes (so that she would not be married to Wad Rayyes). Her father and family could have refused to compel her to marry Wad Rayyes. Any one of those disruptions to the process would likely have prevented the murder-suicide. All the stars needed to align for this tragedy to occur.

However, the tragedy does occur. None of those possible disruptions becomes a reality. Wad Rayyes insists on marrying again, in part, because Bint Majzoub and others tease him for his aging and ailing manhood (*SMN 77*). He fixates on Hosna because, having set his sights on her, he does not wish to be pushed around or told what to do by a

woman (*SMN* 97–98). Hosna has no voice in the matter of her remarriage—it is decided by her father and brothers (*SMN* 97–98). When she expresses a desire to marry the narrator, the very idea that a woman might choose her own husband proves alarming; the narrator’s mother even calls her an “impudent hussy” (*SMN* 123). And Hosna’s father forces her to marry Wad Rayyes, even beating her until she agrees (*SMN* 122). These varied instances represent multiple failings with a common cause: as a woman in this village (or rather, as a woman in Sudan in 1956), Hosna Bint Mahmoud has virtually no voice, and no control over her own life. As Wad Rayyes says, “In this village the men are guardians of the women” (*SMN* 98). The narrator considers that attitude antiquated, but after Mustafa Sa‘eed’s death there are no other men in the village who agree with him, and that prevailing attitude kills two members of the village.

The difficulty of changing traditional attitudes has less direct, but no less tangible, impacts on other members of the village. In fact, it is the difficulty of the village in accepting modern attitudes (even though the villagers accept modern technology like the water-pumps) that leads to Mustafa Sa‘eed’s death. During his trial in England, Sa‘eed on two occasions refers to himself as “a lie,” suggesting that the Mustafa Sa‘eed people in London thought they knew and understood is not truly a reflection of who he is. It’s not surprising, then, that in his life in the narrator’s small village at the bend of the Nile, Sa‘eed is likewise living a lie. The most obvious evidence of the lie is his inner sanctum, the “rectangular room of red brick with green windows” and the unusual, triangular roof (*SMN* 11). Among Sa‘eed’s notebooks, newspapers, photographs, and books, there’s not a single book written in Arabic. The room is an homage to the lie Sa‘eed lived in London, which he is now perpetuating behind closed doors. It shows Sa‘eed’s failure in his

attempt to leave his troubled, vengeful, and violent life behind him when he leaves Europe.

There are other indicators of the lie as well, indicators based on Sa'eed's behavior and the way he lives his life in the village. He refused to embrace his full potential as a civic leader in the village. He was active on the Agricultural Project Committee, and introduced ideas that helped the Committee, improved the overall economic conditions in the village, and enriched the quality of life in the village. Sa'eed's leadership and innovation was so successful that Mahjoub, who is concerned much more with local matters than national politics, "asked him more than once to take over the Chairmanship [of the APC], but he always used to refuse, saying that [Mahjoub] was better suited" (SMN 101). Despite his obvious intelligence and the success of his ideas, Sa'eed refuses to take a formal leadership role on the Committee. In his European life, he had been a bureaucrat, as an economist and an employee in Britain's Foreign Office. He seems quite good at it, but in the village he rejects that fact as a way of rejecting his European life—of course, his secret room shows he fails at rejecting that part of his past, so his refusal to accept a formal leadership role on the APC is ineffective. By refusing to embrace his legitimate talents and to leave his troubles on another continent, Mustafa Sa'eed remains, as he says, "a lie."

This lie kills him. Or rather, it causes his departure from the village—the text is ambiguous as to whether Sa'eed commits suicide by drowning or fakes his own death and disappears to an undisclosed location. However, regardless of his ultimate fate, his actions are clearly premeditated. His wife reports, "It was as though he felt his end drawing near," and Sa'eed's letter to the narrator indicates he planned on leaving

(*SMN* 92, 65–67). He refers in the letter to “the germ of this infection . . . the wanderlust” as a justification for leaving (*SMN* 67). However, a more accurate characterization of the infection would be his Anglophilic tendencies. He, a Sudanese-born citizen of a soon-to-be fully independent Sudan, has become so infected by colonial culture and British education that he is unable to function as an ordinary citizen in the small village at the bend of the Nile that faithfully clings to its time-honored traditions even in the face of evidence that those traditions are destructive. Sa‘eed therefore chooses not to live that life. The tragedy that befalls Sa‘eed, as well as the subsequent tragedy that befalls Hosna Bint Mahmoud, is symptomatic of the inability to accept change, both for Sa‘eed personally and for the village as a community. Sa‘eed cannot leave behind the destructive elements of his personality that landed him in prison in England; and the community cannot leave behind destructive customs which literally have a deadly effect on the villagers. On a macrocosmic level, similar challenges confront the nation of Sudan upon independence. The new nation must decide to what extent it must leave behind destructive traditions of its past, while also deciding how much outside influence it can accept without sacrificing its own identity or allowing itself to become the victim of neocolonial oppression.

Salih uses the completion of the narrator’s story of development to present an optimistic view of how Sudan will handle those challenges. The narrator is in many ways similar to Sa‘eed, but his story deviates from Sa‘eed’s in one decisive factor: he chooses to remain rather than to leave, electing to live when on the verge on drowning in the footsteps of Mustafa Sa‘eed. The similarities between the two men run deep; the narrator is presented as a doppelganger figure for Mustafa Sa‘eed, a piece of the narrative which

culminates with the mirror scene in Sa‘eed’s secret room. They have similar backgrounds, both having traveled to England for their educations, eventually (or immediately, in the narrator’s case) returning to Sudan. The influence of their time in Britain appears most prominently in their progressive views on the role of women in society. Notably, Mustafa Sa‘eed appears to share the narrator’s views on this matter. He does not state his opinion explicitly, but his lifestyle suggests he does not share the opinions of Wad Rayyes. Moreover, when in London, he saw firsthand the destructive power of treating women as playthings rather than as people.

The narrator, however, chooses a different path than Sa‘eed. Sa‘eed chooses either to drown or to leave, but the narrator, in his final decisive act in the text, chooses to live and not to give up on the village or the future of the Sudanese nation. Sa‘eed provides a few key insights into his inability to navigate the neocolonial minefield that is mid-century Sudan. The notebook he leaves in his secret room contains the dedication: “To those who see with one eye, speak with one tongue and see things as either black or white, either Eastern or Western” (*SMN* 150–51). He indicates that his experiences may provide valuable political and cultural lessons for anyone whose perspective is limited by race, geography, or other biases—essentially, those anyone whose perception of the world is tainted by the nightmare of history, to use Stephen Dedalus’s words. The narrator, too, thinks about the notion of perception-bias: “How strange! . . . Just because a man has been created on the Equator some mad people regard him as a slave, others as a god. Where lies the mean? Where lies the middle way?” (*SMN* 108). This dichotomy mirrors the Manichean perspectives shared by virtually everyone in the novel except the narrator and Sa‘eed: Many Europeans (according to the narrator) view Africans as either

slaves or gods; Sa‘eed’s dedication in his notebook suggests most people he has met fixate on a single idea or perspective; Mahjoub, Wad Rayyes, and just about everyone else in the village is unable to fathom the notion of incorporating European cultural mores into their own traditions. They feel it is necessary to choose one or the other; no mixture is possible, no compromise, and no “middle way.” Mustafa Sa‘eed gives up on the possibility of finding a middle way; the narrator chooses to continue seeking it, perhaps to find a balance between the abstract policy-making of his office in Khartoum (essentially a neocolonial enterprise) and the tangible impact Mahjoub has on his community. This middle-path, in the narrator’s eyes, leads to an improved future for Sudan.

This depiction of Sudan in its transitional phase utilizes the Joycean model of the *Bildungsroman* as a fundamental mode of development for both the narrator and Mustafa Sa‘eed. Salih uses individual stories of development and maturation to convey public and political concerns in the manner Jameson claims is characteristic of novels from developing nations. *Season of Migration* is not allegorical in the sense that *Midnight’s Children* is, but it provides serious political commentary via fictional narrative. The elements of the main characters which make them Stephen Dedalus-like figures—the inability to become part of the mainstream culture in their village, the difficult relationship with imperial power, the decision to strike out on their own, and the novel’s presentation of these pieces of their paths toward *Bildung* with a dearth of overt political content—lay the foundations for Salih’s portrayal of Sudan’s political and social circumstances in the first decade after independence. Salih’s use of Joycean *Bildung* to



present a political critique of his home country is so successful that writers from other parts of Africa follow in his footsteps.

## CHAPTER 5

### DUAL BURDENS, RACE AND GENDER: FEMALE *BILDUNG* IN TSITSI

#### DANGAREMBGA'S *NERVOUS CONDITIONS*

Tsitsi Dangarembga's 1988 novel *Nervous Conditions* provides another case-study of the use of the Joycean model of the *Bildungsroman*. The story of the youth and development of Tambudzai Sigauke, a Shona girl in Rhodesia before the region became Zimbabwe, brings Joycean *Bildung* into a southern African context. *Nervous Conditions* has much in common with the novels discussed in previous chapters. The *Bildungsheld* must navigate between two seemingly contradictory worlds (a situation created by colonial rule) and the *Bildungsheld*'s departure from those worlds acts as a springboard toward *Bildung*. This process leads to difficulty integrating into the country's society and an emphasis on individuality and self-reliance. Overt references to contemporary politics are rare even though the region was experiencing massive political upheaval during the novel's timeframe, a stark difference from Dangarembga's other novel. Political commentary is instead provided via a link between the private life of the protagonist and the public body. The novel also utilizes the narrative rhythm of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as a means of presenting Tambu's *Bildungsprozess*. *Nervous Conditions*, however, also introduces new phenomenon we've not yet encountered in this study, expanding the application of Joyce's modernist *Bildung* paradigm. In *Nervous Conditions*, the *Bildungsheld* is female. This fact has an impact upon many important elements of the *Bildungsroman* tradition, including the protagonist's relationship to her father or to surrogate father figures, romantic relationships, and the social and cultural

expectations associated with success. However, Tambu's story differs from traditional female *Bildungsromane*, in which *Bildung* is almost entirely personal. For Tambu, however, *Bildung* has social and political implications. For her, successful *Bildung* requires redefining her relationship to society so as to purge herself of limitations others try to place upon her because of her gender. This process is further complicated by the fact that *Nervous Conditions* is an African *Bildungsroman*, a relatively new incarnation of the genre. The racial discourse and neocolonialism which plague Southern Africa during this transitional phase of its history provide Tambu with additional obstacles to overcome on her journey toward personal independence and self-reliance. These varied elements of Tambu's story are sewn together using the Joycean model of *Bildung* in a way that creates a national allegory in the sense described by Frederic Jameson, in which public and private are inherently linked and virtually inseparable. The story of Tambudzai growth and personal development thus has implications for the growth and future of the young Zimbabwe.

There has been, to this point, a remarkable dearth of criticism involving any possible connection between Dangarembga and James Joyce.<sup>77</sup> One likely reason for this lapse in the critical history of the authors is that Dangarembga is not as stylistically daring as Joyce or as many authors influenced by him (such as Rushdie). At times, such highly visible comparisons dominate discussions of authorial influence, particularly when the discussion involves someone, like Joyce, known for unusual or groundbreaking narrative style. I assert here a different form of influence, one that involves narrative structure rather than style and which dictates the manner in which the Dangarembga utilizes her fiction to comment upon the real world. Joyce and Dangarembga share socio-

political circumstances which make Joyce an ideal literary model. Both Joyce and Dangarembga were born in British colonies. In both colonies, authoritarian figures utilized racial discourse to portray the native population as inherently inferior to the Anglo-Saxon population. And perhaps most importantly, *Nervous Conditions* takes place during a transitional phase in Zimbabwe's history, during the period leading up to formal independence and the birth of a modern nation-state, much as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* takes place as Ireland's path toward independence from the British Empire was gaining momentum.

One circumstance which distinguishes Dangarembga from Joyce, however, is gender. Tsitsi Dangarembga is a female author and *Nervous Conditions* features a female protagonist. Early *Bildungsromane* generally had male protagonists, and early scholarship on the genre ignored the possibility of a female *Bildungsheld*.<sup>78</sup> In time, however, the genre expanded to include portrayals of women. Much scholarship on this aspect of the genre focuses on differences between the portrayal of female *Bildung* and male *Bildung*. The fact that a gender difference exists within the genre seems accepted as *a priori* fact in most scholarship, either because of biological differences (women, on average, reach puberty at an earlier age than men), or because of cultural mores and the gender-based expectations that come with them.

Tambu's story differs from the traditional portrayal of female *Bildung* in that her development is heavily influenced by her relationship to society, and even more importantly by her proactive efforts to alter that relationship. Traditionally, female *Bildung* involves an inward-looking form of personal development. Susan J. Rosowski illustrates this characteristic gender difference by referring to the female *Bildungsroman*

as a “novel of awakening” rather than the more pragmatic “novel of apprenticeship” which often focuses on the education and social development of male *Bildungshelden* (49). Marianne Hirsch elaborates upon this idea, arguing that the traditional role of women in virtually all literature is one of passivity, of waiting (often for a more active male hero), and that this tradition lays the foundation for portrayals of female *Bildung*. Female development in literature often involves a woman’s “progressive withdrawal into the symbolic landscapes of the innermost self” (23). This manner of *Bildung* is purely personal, and virtually ignores social or cultural circumstances. According to Hirsch, the archetype for this portrayal comes from the a section of the archetype of the genre as a whole, as Hirsch looks to the “Confessions of a Beautiful Soul” section of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as the standard model of female *Bildung*. She argues “The Beautiful Soul represents one pole of human development—the purely subjective, psychological, emotional, spiritual” (29).<sup>79</sup> This paradigm ignores facets of male development that are crucial to male *Bildung*, particularly the relationship between the protagonist and society.

This different goal also requires a different process. Unlike the gradual process of development Goethe builds for Wilhelm Meister, the Beautiful Soul develops via sudden, “violent transformations” (Hirsch 29). The violence of these transformative moments, aimed at purely spiritual, inward development, culminates in death, “whether symbolically in the form of marriage and conformity . . . or literally” (28). *Nervous Conditions* adheres to this tradition by utilizing sudden, violent moments of transformation, and through serious, inward-looking introspection on the part of Tambu. However, Tambu flouts the most substantive facet of this female *Bildung* tradition. Her

development is not solely inward looking. She constantly renegotiates her own relationship to her community and to her nation.

Other studies reveal the difficulties faced by female *Bildungshelden* that their male counterparts often never have to deal with, and which provide historical explanations for the obstacles Tambu must face in her developmental process. Idette Noomé, for example, takes a different approach to the genre than Hirsch and Rosowski. In “Shaping the self: A *Bildungsroman* for girls?” Noomé discusses the conception of *Bildung* in female novels of development written between 1860 and 1960.<sup>80</sup> She concludes that such novels often have a didactic tone and are designed to teach young women their social responsibilities. Specifically, in the novels Noomé discusses, social duty, for young women, “consists of a greater or lesser sacrifice of the protagonist’s own desires to meet the needs of her family of those who depend on her” (144). This is a fairly stark difference from the experience of a typical male *Bildungsheld*, who tends “to attain insight into the self and embrace their ambitions . . . as part of that selfhood. Female protagonists are expected to recognise a higher self in giving up their ambitions or in shifting their aspirations to meeting the needs of others” (144–45). Noomé does not remark upon this fact, but what she observes here is that in these female *Bildungsromane*, the missing element of the protagonists’ development is *Bildung*, in the classical sense of the term. It is replaced by a purely social form of development in which female subservience to fathers and husbands is accepted and expected. I would argue that Noomé’s observations reveal that the objects of her study are not truly novels of development; they do not qualify as *Bildungsromane* (though they are clearly novels of youth). This distinction is key. It exposes the difficulties inherent in successful spiritual

and intellectual development for women. Tambu spends virtually her entire youth struggling against those difficulties in order to become an independent adult who is not confined to traditional female subservience.

The fact that *Nervous Conditions* is a female *Bildungsroman* is further complicated by the fact that it is also a African *Bildungsroman*.<sup>81</sup> Those two factors are inseparable from Tambu's *Bildung*. The African *Bildungsroman* is often portrayed as a relatively new and emerging form of the genre which—like the British Victorian *Bildungsroman* or the modernist *Bildungsroman* before it—adapts the generic traditions to new social, geographic, and political circumstances. Despite the origins of the genre in Weimar Germany, it is actually quite natural, as Walter P. Collins, III points out, for African writers to utilize this form of the novel in exploring personal and communal growth. It is the organic and logical consequence of the historical interactions between these two regions: “colonialism traces its roots to the height of nineteenth-century European growth and expansion. The connection between the German genre and the African novels of development lies ultimately in the fact that African colonial history is inextricably linked to European history” (34). The African *Bildungsroman*, then, is a genre that is inherently connected to colonialism. Not only does it have its roots in colonial contact, but also in colonial conditions, independence movements, and the postcolonial moment.<sup>82</sup> The transition from a colony to a modern nation-state involves difficulties not only for the country, as a collective community, but for individual citizens as well. They must learn to exist in a new set of political realities. Children need to grow and develop differently than the previous generation of citizens, and many adults need to grow and develop again. All must grapple with the question of what it means to be, for

instance, a Zimbabwean citizen living under the government of Robert Mugabe (or a Nigerian citizen under Azikiwe, or a Kenyan under Kenyatta). The *Bildungsroman*, when adapted to such circumstances, is the ideal genre for exploring such personal growth.

One of those difficulties which is particularly pointed in *Nervous Conditions* is the fact that, in a newly-independent country, the previous colonizing power is often still a source of immense power, influence, and potential wealth. In the first half of the novel, Tambudzai idolizes her uncle Babamukuru specifically because he was educated by whites, earned his master's degree in England, and dresses and acts as wealthy and influential white people do. Babamukuru is part of an Anglicized upper-class, whereas Tambu's parents are part of a still oppressed lower-class. As a result of the British source of this division, the specter of neocolonialism looms large, and

the official goal of the majority of nineteenth-century European colonial efforts, that of bringing 'civilization' and 'knowledge' to 'backward and savage heathens,' resurrects itself. The possibility of such inauthentic transformations lurks subtly in most every post-colonial novel of development. (Collins 124)

In effect, the language and attitudes of colonial oppression persist in the postcolonial society. This racial discourse influences the way the young Tambu thinks. She admires Babamukuru in part because she believes he has the power to usher her into what she perceives as a world of privilege. In time, however, Tambu realizes such a future would amount to "inauthentic" development, and she chooses a different path. For Tambu, reaching that realization and achieving a level of independence that enables her to overcome neocolonial oppression defines successful *Bildung*.



The division in Rhodesian society between the Anglicized world of privilege and the oppressed lower-class reflects a fundamental concern in *Nervous Conditions* which parallels Ireland's colonial situation. Tambu's *Bildung* story is centered simultaneously around two distinct nodes, the homestead and the mission. These nodes function on several interconnected levels: they are geographic locations; they are separate households with separate nuclear families (although they share an extended family); they represent distinct classes, the wealth and privilege of the mission contrasted with the poverty and stagnant quagmire of the homestead; and perhaps most importantly, they represent two competing discourses of development, the traditional (some might say antiquated) values of the homestead as opposed to the progressive (though some might say neocolonial) culture of the mission. Stephen Dedalus is confronted with similar competing discourses in *A Portrait of the Artist*: the Renaissance attitude, rooted firmly in Ireland's past, and colonial complicity which would likely lead to a troubled future. Such competing influences are characteristic of many African *Bildungsromane*. Wangari Wa Nyatetu-Waigwa argues that African *Bildungsromane* depict *Bildungshelden* who have "to negotiate a journey towards adulthood at the place where two cultures intersect" (9). In *Nervous Conditions*, those two cultures are the nodes around which Tambu's story is centered: the culture of the homestead and the culture of the mission. However, negotiating this intersection is insufficient for Tambu. Attempting to combine elements of both these cultures to the best of her ability will result in a compounding of burdens, not in their alleviation. Tambu is therefore forced to navigate a new path, leading away from both the homestead and the mission. She makes clear that for her successful development

must lead to self-reliance and individuality, which she cannot achieve either at the homestead or at the mission.

There are two moments early in the text which characterize the discourse and values of the homestead and what successful development (socially speaking) would mean for a young girl like Tambudzai were she to embrace those values. The first such moment is a rant from Tambu's father Jeremiah about the worthlessness of education for girls: "Can you cook [schoolbooks]" he asks, "and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean" (NC 15). In Jeremiah's eyes, this is what is important for a good young girl to learn so that she may become a good woman, which in this traditional setting means getting married, having many children, and then cooking, cleaning, and otherwise taking care of the household for her husband and children. This perspective is soon supplemented by Tambu's mother, who tells Tambu what being a woman in this culture has meant to her:

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden. . . . How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength. (NC 16)

For Tambu's mother, womanhood is characterized by sacrifice. The situation is exacerbated because she is a black African in a country politically dominated by a white, racist government. Her options in life are limited by the twin burdens of race and gender. Her assessment of a woman's role in this society carries a negative tone that Tambu cannot possibly miss. These two perspectives, one from Tambu's father and one from her mother, provide the young Tambu with a complete picture of the social expectations thrust upon young women in the traditional culture of the homestead. She decides early in her life that this is not the future she wants, and she therefore puts extraordinary effort into her education in an effort to provide herself with other options, and to escape the burdens and sacrifices her mother so ardently laments.

The novel's other node provides an alternative discourse which Tambu finds quite appealing, at least at first. Tambu believes the homestead will enable her to overcome the burdens her mother describes, particularly the difficulties associated with race. She resists her mother's message about the role of women because "Tambu's generation is at the same time witnessing the success of blacks, men and women, in education and professional fields. What her mother tells her is contradicted by examples of such success in her own family" (Begum 23). The success of Babamukuru and Maiguru offer an alternative to the sacrifices and burdens of the traditions of the homestead, and even at a young age—long before Tambu leaves the homestead to live at the mission—she understands that life at the mission and the education available at the mission school offer an escape from the difficult life her mother warns her about. She claims at one point, "[T]he more I saw of the worlds beyond the homestead the more I was convinced that the

further we left the old ways behind the closer we came to progress” (NC 150). It’s at the mission where she expects to be schooled in the ways of such progress.

Tambu’s initial reactions upon arriving at the mission, an awe-filled first impression, are a natural extension of this desire for escape from the homestead. As she sees her uncle’s home and the grounds, she thinks,

In the circles I had moved in until my transfer to the mission, our house on the homestead had been obviously, definitely, a fine, refined home. With that house as my standard it was not easy to grasp that the mansion standing at the top of the drive marked ’14, HEADMASTER’S HOUSE’ was truly my uncle’s very own. . . . I was looking forward to living in such a distinguished home. (NC 62)

This initial impression is biased and not fully accurate; the mature, developed Tambu, writing her own story with the benefit of hindsight, confesses that “[she] can now refer to her uncle’s house as no more than that – a house” (NC 62). A large part of Tambu’s grandiose initial reaction is lies in the differences between the homestead and the mission—differences in size, cleanliness, aesthetics, and comfort. However, another important part of her reaction lies in the associations of the mission. It represents escape from the burdens of the homestead; it represents education and opportunity; and it represents power and authority of the ruling, colonial class. As Jeanette Treiber points out, “Tambu’s perception of the . . . colonial looking space as desirable and superior reflect an internalization of the colonizer’s manichean aesthetic. In the colonial context clean houses and hygienic conditions represent desirable whiteness” (87). In effect,

Tambu is awestruck because of the racial discourse prevalent in Rhodesia at the time as much as she is because of the inherent greatness of the house and grounds.

Such racial discourse thus plays a significant role in this node of Tambu's development, and Tambu's description of the way she thinks about race is quite telling. Her first interaction with white people occurs in Umtali, when Mr. Matimba takes her to the city to sell her maize for school fees. The elderly white woman Doris at first scolds Mr. Matimba, but eventually makes a generous donation to Tambu's school fund. When at the mission, Tambu recalls her "repulsion towards white people that had started with the papery-skinned Doris and her sallow, brown-spotted husband," and she remembers that "[she] used to feel very guilty about feeling that way. [She] used to feel guilty and unnatural for not being able to love the Whites as [she] ought" (NC 106). Her feelings here indicate the extent to which colonial and racial discourse has become entrenched in Rhodesian culture and in her young mind. Tambu is under the impression that she should respect and admire Doris simply because of her skin color; she is under the impression that white people are naturally superior to dark-skinned Rhodesians. And when she finds white people at the mission whom she respects for reasons other than skin color, their race magnifies her admiration so much that she thinks of them "like minor deities" (NC 105). This misguided racial discourse is a major component of life at the mission, and it is one of the reasons that the mission, much like the homestead, eventually proves an unacceptable setting for successful *Bildung*. The mission may be significantly more comfortable, but the racial oppression of neocolonialism would inhibit her progress toward becoming a self-reliant individual.

There are a few major reasons neither of those two cultures is acceptable for Tambu—or rather, why both those cultures represent obstacles to *Bildung*—and one of them is the fact that she is female. Her mother’s words of warning apply specifically to the traditional culture of the homestead, but they carry with them an implicit augury about the future for any Rhodesian woman. Even in the educated world of the mission, Tambu’s gender will act as a burden she must overcome. Babamukuru tells her explicitly, on her first evening at the mission, that her gender affects his vision of what it will mean for her to have a successful future. He tells her that “[she] is an intelligent girl but [she] had also to develop into a good woman” (NC 89). Tambu understands that by “good woman,” he means an obedient and caring wife and mother. Ironically, escaping this vision of her future is exactly why she wished to leave the homestead for the mission in the first place. Tambu’s personal goals are not oriented toward this traditional ideal, but rather toward intellectual improvement and economic advancement, or in her words, “mental and eventually . . . material emancipation” (NC 89). It is toward that end that Tambu grows the extra maize to sell for her school fees, that she works as studiously as possible while attending the school at Rutivi (near the homestead), and continues to dedicate herself to her schoolwork and gains a place at the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart. As Susan Andrade points out, “[b]y illustrating the values of thrift and hard work, [Tambu’s] story charts a course comparable to that of the masculine *Bildungsroman*” (28). In other words, in Tambu’s ideal vision for society, there is little difference (intellectually and professionally speaking) between men and women, and she thus “resists being gendered as her own development takes place” (Willey 65). Her aspirations for her own future are that her gender should cease to dictate what she must

do with her life, as it does for her mother and for Maiguru. She will become independent and self-sufficient regardless of her race or gender.

The shadow which hangs over the novel's portrayal of gender differences is the death of Tambu's brother Nhamo. The novel begins with an ardent and seemingly heartless declaration from Tambu: "I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness" (*NC* 1). This opening line is shocking; it requires explanation. And in fact, Tambu (as narrator) provides a fairly in-depth explanation. The first major events of the story—representing the first three chapters of the novel—are all dedicated to explaining why Tambu exhibits such a lack of feeling upon the death of her elder sibling. The answer, on one level, is jealousy; Nhamo has what Tambu wants, the opportunity for an education which may lead to financial independence and an escape from the homestead. This jealousy is exacerbated because Nhamo flaunts his advantage over his sister, and even goes so far as to try to prevent her from obtaining an education of her own by stealing the maize she wishes to sell to earn school fees. He mocks her ambition at one point, telling her she cannot go to school "because [she] is a girl" (*NC* 21).

Therein lies the heart of the matter. Nhamo is given the opportunity for a high-quality education instead of Tambu primarily because he is male. Long-standing local traditions dictate that, as Tambu's mother tries to warn her, women should remain in the home. Their role is to be a wife and mother. Professional pursuits are for men. In traditional Shona culture, "Men within the community are more favourably positioned than women, and they consider themselves as having a prior and natural access to the means of social mobility and progress" (Osei-Nyame 237). Tambu finds that custom

distasteful and, obviously, contrary to her own goals for her future. Therefore, she is disgusted not only by Nhamo's behavior, but also by the history and customs which put him a position to behave that way. Protesting Nhamo's male privilege is the first step toward claiming that privilege for herself, toward equaling the gendered playing field in Rhodesian culture in a way that may lead her toward a fulfilling life as an individual, not merely as a reincarnation of her mother.

There is one other gender-related issue that typically appears in a *Bildungsroman*: romance. Tambu never makes courtship a priority. Rather, she is focused on escaping the homestead and on furthering her education. As is natural, a few young men catch her eye, most notably her cousin Chido, but “[n]one of these potential objects of desire ever seriously engages her attention . . . and her libido is represented as diffuse and unformed” (Andrade 32). This behavior is a stark contrast to that of Nyasha, who is hyperaware of her body and her burgeoning sexuality. She frequently wears skirts that Tambu thinks are too short, and her fight with her father is prompted by his disapproval of her flirtatious (though not by any means promiscuous or lecherous) behavior.

There are two reasons this aspect of the novel is an important element of its portrayal of *Bildung*. For Tambu, it emphasizes the degendered nature of her maturation. Her *Bildungsprozess* largely mirrors that of a traditional male *Bildungsheld*, yet romance is absent. If she were to pursue courtship in a way that would lead to marriage, she would be forced to adhere to traditional gender roles in her marriage, which runs contrary to successful *Bildung*.

Furthermore, the stark contrast between Tambu's rejection of all romance and sexuality and Nyasha's welcoming of it emphasizes the fact that several other women



play a prominent role in Tambu's *Bildung* plot. In addition to Tambu, there are four other relatively major female characters—her mother, her aunt Lucia, Nyasha, and Maiguru—and Tambu's retelling of their experiences clarifies her own choices and her own direction in life. Their experiences lead Tambu to fixate on individuality and self-reliance. The pessimistic advice Tambu's mother gives her early in the novel emphasizes that Tambu will need to overcome the dual burdens of being black in a country ruled by a racist government and being female in a society controlled largely by men. In order to combat Rhodesia's patriarchal traditions, *Nervous Conditions* "introduces the undercutting discourse of feminism by slowly revealing through the situations of the other female characters . . . the 'real' effects of patriarchal benevolence on individual women's lives" (Begum 22). In doing so, Dangarembga reveals the inadequacies of the paths available to Tambu via established means (i.e. maintaining the lifestyle of the homestead, or being educated on the mission).

Tambu clearly does not wish to follow in her mother's footsteps. The decision to avoid that fate leads her to focus on her education as a means of escape. Her aunt Lucia provides an alternative image of a woman in the traditional setting of the homestead. Whereas Tambu's mother is characterized by a sense of resignation, Lucia is strong-willed. She compels Takesure to bend to her will, at times by force, other times by charm. She refuses to allow herself to be penned in like her sister. However, her resistance to patriarchal domination is largely superficial. She has power over Takesure because he is intellectually weak and physically lazy. Lucia still makes an effort to obey Babamukuru, or at least try to hide it from him when she does not, and she ends up essentially groveling at his feet, begging for a job. Babamukuru's apparent benevolence in securing

employment at the mission for her reasserts his claim as authority figure and reinforces the patriarchal structure of the family and the mission. Following in her footsteps would thus represent a failure of *Bildung* for Tambu, a resignation to dependence.

There is a time, particularly in her early days at the mission, when Tambu looks to Maiguru as a model female citizen to be emulated. This ideal image falters, however, when Tambu finds out that Maiguru has a master's degree just like her husband, but is unable to take advantage of her education because, as a woman, she is expected to take care of Babamukuru and her children. The education that Tambu receives at the mission may open doors not available to her siblings and to many Rhodesians at this time, but her gender may still act as an obstacle to living an independent life. What Tambu finds out is that "the discourse of black nationalism, which opens the doors of opportunity to blacks [like Babamukuru], does not include black women in its agenda" (Begum 25). If she truly wishes to make the most of her intellectual capabilities and her education in order to escape the burdens her mother warns her about, following the path that is expected of her, even with a respectable education, is insufficient.

The other exemplar of the burdens of being female in Rhodesia at this time is Nyasha. Nyasha goes with her parents to England at age five, and has difficulty readjusting to life in Rhodesia when she returns five years later. She confides in Tambu that she thinks she and her brother Chido should not have accompanied their parents abroad: "The parents ought to have packed us off home. They should have, you know. Lots of people did that. Maybe that would have been best. For them at least, because now they're stuck with hybrids for children. And they don't like it. They don't like it at all" (NC 79). At times, Nyasha's accusation clearly holds true—her parents dislike the result

of the dual cultural influences that affect her behavior. Among other instances, her choice of clothing (European inspired) and her flirtatious behavior prompt the moment of physical violence between Nyasha and Babamukuru. However, Nyasha fails to mention here that she herself also dislikes her hybrid upbringing. Most of the time, she acts like she wants to embrace British culture. At the same time, though, she does not wish to openly violate the local standards and mores regarding how a girl her age should behave. The burden of attempting to maintain both codes of behavior causes her “nervous condition,” so to speak, which manifests itself as an eating disorder. Tambu is thus given a close-up look at the perils of this manner of hybridity. Her own path must consist of more than simply trying to embrace two conflicting cultural influences.

The stories of the other women in *Nervous Conditions* thus merge with Tambu’s own story in providing guidance for her *Bildung* path. According to Begum, “[b]y making the subject of her story her own escape and the situations of other women she has known, Tambu decenters traditional plot and spotlights the stories of women” (23). In doing so, she reveals a broad spectrum of roles women play in the family structure and in the community: the resigned mother with no life of her own; the faithful servant of a successful husband; the fiery, pseudo-outcast who has no husband or family of her own but still relies on patriarchal benevolence; and the hybrid misfit, clinging to imperial culture in a colonial land. All of these examples of female types present obstacles for Tambu in her *Bildungsprozess*, leaving her only option striking out on her own path, finding a way to leave both the culture of the homestead and of the mission behind her.

That ideal of personal independence and self-reliance becomes Tambu’s goal even when she is too young to articulate it in those terms. However, the terms in which

she does articulate her life goals shed a great deal of light on what she truly wants—to be free of everything that makes her parents’ life difficult. She wants to be free of Jeremiah’s poverty, of his dependence on his brother Babamukuru, of his antiquated opinions of social roles. She wants to avoid becoming her mother, who teaches her early on that being a woman in a traditional Shona household is matter of accepting burdens and sacrifices. Her mother’s words are confirmed by a handful of events in which her brother Nhamo is given preference over her because he is male: when there is only enough money to send one of them to school, he goes. Nhamo has the privilege of accompanying their father to the airport to pick up Babamukuru and his family when they return from England. Tambu recalls, “these events coalesced formlessly in my mind to an incipient understanding of the burdens my mother had talked of. . . . I did not want my life to be predicted by such improper relations. I decided I would just have to make up my mind not to let it happen” (NC 38). Here Tambu delineates what is important to her: becoming an independent individual rather than someone who is expected to sacrifice for others in any and all circumstances. She wishes to develop into someone who is in control of her own life.

When she goes to the mission to live with Babamukuru and attend school there, a major turning point in her life, Tambu’s excitement is rooted in her belief that this new home and new school will provide her with the opportunity to develop into that autonomous person. The first lesson she learns as a result of her new educational opportunity is not a classroom lesson, but a life lesson, a lesson in achieving *Bildung*: “circumstances were not immutable, no burden [was] so binding that it could not be dropped” (NC 58). Tambu realizes that she is not destined to become like her mother,

condemned to a life of poverty and servitude for a lazy ungrateful husband. At this point, she identifies education as the key to avoiding her mother's fate, of escaping the womanly burdens her mother had described as an inevitable part of her life. Here, though, education is a means to an end, not an end in itself. She recognizes formal education as a pathway toward *Bildung*. In fact, as she rides with Babamukuru to the mission, she is excited because she "was going to be developed" and because at the mission, she would "be encouraged to consider questions that had to do with survival of the spirit, the creation of consciousness, rather than mere sustenance of the body" (NC 59). The emphasis on spirit and consciousness reveal that she desires *Bildung* in the original Germanic sense of the word, complete personal development and cultivation, and not merely a purely pedagogical education.

This theme of classical *Bildung* is actually introduced much earlier, in the novel's opening pages. When Tambu describes her brother Nhamo and the changes she observes in him after he is sent to the mission school, she recalls, "I think my uncle had begun to worry about the way in which my brother was developing. Certainly, all of us at home who were old enough to worry . . . had begun to worry about Nhamo's development" (NC 6). The word "develop" is important here, evoking the Germanic roots of the genre, and the importance of the "formation, cultivation, education, [and] shaping" of a character (Tennyson 136). Perhaps most importantly, this concern about Nhamo serves to clarify that for Dangarembga, *Bildung* and development are about more than just education. Nhamo is being educated well at the mission; Tambu and Babamukuru both know that to be true. Yet they are concerned about the person he is developing into, the adult he is to become if he proceeds on his current path. Within the context of the novel,

education is clearly an important facet of *Bildung*, but is not, by itself, sufficient for a successful *Bildungsprozess*.

Tambu's desire for education is clearly a driving force behind her development. Education provides Tambu's story with several moments of forceful transformation: Tambu's fistfight with her brother, her uprooting from the homestead, and her further uprooting from her uncle's mission. Such moments are, according to Hirsch, characteristic of female *Bildungsromane*, but the way in which these transformative moments are incorporated into Tambu's story is reminiscent of narrative rhythm of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Much like Stephen Dedalus's narrative of development, Tambu's story progresses in two ways simultaneously: in a linear manner, and through seemingly circular recursion.<sup>83</sup> The transformative moments in Tambu's *Bildung* story are disjunctive; they represent a break from the past and the possibility of a new future for Tambu. Yet at the same time, events in Tambu's life return her to her past and force her to bring that part of her life with her into her new future. This transformative succession of events, disjunctive rupture combined with conjunctive bond to the past, characterizes Tambu's ongoing educational process.

The dominant linear, teleological element of *Nervous Conditions* comes from Tambu's education and the necessary steps through which she progresses in order to obtain it. It drives her toward what she envisions as the complete development and maturation. Her educational process involves four major disjunctive steps, each of which represents a clear rupture from her previous position in life. The first of these steps occurs as Tambu's education is threatened, and may in fact come to a screeching halt before it ever truly begins. When her family's financial situation is worse than usual—and it's

usually pretty bad—and there is not enough money to cover the school fees for both Tambu and her older brother Nhamo, Nhamo is given the opportunity to go to school, partly because he is the eldest, but also because he is male. Tambu's unsympathetic father tries to assuage her concern over the situation and discourage her interest in continuing her schooling: "Can you cook [schoolbooks]" he asks "and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean" (NC 15). Tambu is about seven years old at this time. Her father's perspective on the matter really shows what was expected of a young Shona girl according to his traditions, and the obstacles Tambu faces.

The important part of this incident, the part that essentially acts as an epiphany and provides the disjunction which propels Tambu forward in life, is that she ignores her father's advice, and in a show of strength and psychological fortitude that is quite remarkable for someone her age, she defiantly tells her parents, "I shall go to school again" (NC 17). Of course, that statement alone cannot resolve the family's financial problem. Tambu cannot grow money on trees. However, she can grow maize; and she does, on an unused plot of the family's homestead, with the intention of selling her crop in order to earn the school fees. The ambition and ingenuity Tambu shows in this instance produces a clear division in phases of her youth. She ceases to be destined for the future her father foresees, in which she is solely a wife and mother, useful only for cooking and cleaning. She becomes instead someone who is capable of studying and learning, someone who may eventually become capable of earning income independently and of living independently.

A follow-up step in Tambu's development occurs as she is in the process of selling her mealies to procure funds for her schooling. On the advice of Mr. Matimba (a teacher at the local), Tambu accompanies him to Umtali to sell her produce, since she can charge a much higher price in the city than in her tiny village. The drive to Umtali is the first time Tambu has ever left her village, and it provides another key moment in her development: it is the first time she is able to truly learn on her own by actively thinking, rather than being the passive recipient of information. Most of her education, both before this drive and afterwards, consists of memorizing information to be regurgitated for the pleasure of her teachers. Here, though, with minimal guidance from Mr. Matimba, she is able to learn on her own through observation. She learns, for instance, elementary physics: bumps in the road seem more severe in a fast moving car than in a slow moving ox-cart. She learns practical matters: vehicles travel on one side of the road so that vehicles moving in the opposite direction can use the other side. Certainly this is not especially complex or abstract information that she is learning, but for a seven year old who has never before ridden in a car and has never before seen a paved road, Tambu proves quite astute. Perhaps even more important is the fact that, given the opportunity, she demonstrates enthusiasm for the learning process and for making sense of the world around her. Her thought process is not unlike Stephen Dedalus's early attempts to make sense of his observations in chapter one of *A Portrait*, as he figures out hot and cold, maroon and green, "tower of ivory," "house of gold," and whether it is right to kiss his mother. Essentially, what Tambu figures out during this drive to Umtali is that, in Stephen's words, "By thinking of things, you could understand them" (P 43).



There are two more significant steps forward for Tambu in the novel, both of which involve her moving to a new school. The first is the opportunity to attend school at her uncle Babamukuru's mission. The mission school provides a much higher quality education than the school in Tambu's sleepy little village, education that may actually lead to other opportunities in the future, and education that will be intellectually challenging. Tambu is thrilled because at the mission school, she will "be encouraged to consider questions that had to do with the survival of the spirit, the creation of consciousness, rather than mere sustenance of the body" (NC 59). Tambu's description here shows just how serious this moment is in her young life. There is a desire that has clearly been brewing in the back of her mind for quite a while—the desire to be more than an unsuccessful subsistence farmer like her father; more than an underappreciated cook and walking womb, like her mother; essentially, the desire to be better than her parents, to get more out of life—and now that she is clearly on the path toward that goal, she actually voices that desire for the first time.

Unlike previous disjunctive moments in Tambu's life, this one coincides with a physical relocation, which serves to emphasize, both for readers and for Tambu herself, a break with the past. As she contemplates her new existence, thinking about "the survival of the spirit" and "the creation of consciousness," she also thinks about leaving the family homestead:

I could not pretend to be sorry to be leaving the water-drums whose weight compressed your neck into your spine, were heavy on the head even after you had grown used to them and were constantly in need of refilling. I was not sorry to be leaving the tedious task of coaxing

Nyamarira's little tributary in and out of the vegetable beds. . . . The point was this: I was going to be developed. (NC 59)

The various physical tasks Tambu leaves behind emphasize that on the homestead, her priorities had to be on the practical matters of daily survival, whereas in her new setting at the mission she is able to focus on intellectual and personal cultivation. Of course, her use of the word “develop” here again evokes the purpose of the *Bildungsroman*, and shows just how important this moment is within Tambu's *Bildungsprozess*.

About three years later, Tambu once again changes schools, this time moving to the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart, which is “a prestigious private school that manufactured guaranteed young ladies” (NC 181). In Tambu's Rhodesia, this educational opportunity is a rarity for anyone with African ancestry. The Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart is purportedly a mixed-race institution. However, after Tambu takes the entrance exam, she discovers that only two African girls from anywhere in the country will be granted admission that year. When she arrives there, she finds that across all grade-levels, there are only six African students. Attending this school thus sets her apart from most Rhodesians, particularly her father and her mother, and the expectation that this education will lead her to a white-collar city job in the newly-independent Rhodesia propels her further away from the family homestead and from the life she knew as a young child.<sup>84</sup>

Each of these junctures in Tambu's life drives her development, pushing her teleologically toward her growth into an independent, mature adult. But this process is continually punctuated by moments which pull her back toward a dependent, child-like state—the fate she is striving so hard to escape. Such moments are often indicated

through leitmotif, which, much like Tobias Boes describes for *A Portrait*, provides Tambu's development with a cyclical element to complement the linear teleology of her education and maturation. After Tambu first leaves her village to go to Babamukuru's mission, the most common such leitmotif involves her periodic return to the family homestead, literal moments of return to her fatherland and to her past.

These moments of return serve as a reminder to Tambu of the troubled relationship she has with both her parents. Tambu's father Jeremiah is essentially her version of Simon Dedalus. The best description of Simon, of course, comes from chapter five of *A Portrait*, when Cranly asks Stephen "what was [your father]?" Stephen replies,

A medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a taxgatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past. (*P* 241)

If Tambu were asked the same question about Jeremiah, the reply would have a similar ring to it: A small land-owner, a small farmer, a drinker, a storyteller, a beggar, an aspiring philanderer, a loafer, a freeloading parasite, a bankrupt, and at present a praiser of his older brother. Jeremiah really can't be a praiser of his own past—his past wasn't much better than his present; and he's only a praiser of Babamukuru because such praise allows him to be a freeloader. He is a paternal, professional, and financial failure. For Tambu, his failures represent an antiquated way of life from which she desperately wishes to escape. It's worth noting that despite her parents' acquiescence in allowing Tambu to attend Babamukuru's mission school, they both clearly want her to return to the village and to their traditional way of life. The only reason Jeremiah allows her to go

to the mission school is because he wants her to be able to earn money for the family before he finds another family for her to marry into. Essentially, he wants Tambu to be educated so he can continue his parasitic habits, living off the hard work of other people. As she grows, Tambu comes to disapprove of his worldview, and she rejects his traditions, his way of life, and any paternal influence he may have.

Nonetheless, on the trips back to the homestead, Tambu is, briefly, pulled back into her father's world. These moments act temporarily as resistance to Tambu's growth and development towards independent maturity. At times, this resistance takes the form of direct attempts at parental influence. For instance, after it is decided that Tambu will attend Sacred Heart, her mother voices her disapproval: "Tell me, my daughter" she says, trying to underscore her maternal role, "what will I, your mother say to you when you come home a stranger full of white ways and white ideas?" (NC 187). The rest of this speech emphasizes the fact that she, Tambu's biological progenitor, does not want to lose her maternal influence to surrogate parental figures, and does not want Tambu to continue the path she is on.

Also at times, this resistance to Tambu's development takes the form of regression to previous habits and patterns of behavior. Her first trip back to the homestead is for Christmas holiday. Much of her extended family is there, forcing Tambu into exactly the type of situation she wishes not to endure in adult life:

There were twenty-four people altogether on the homestead, which was twenty-four stomachs to fill three times a day. Twenty-four bodies for which water had to be fetched from Nyamirira daily. Twenty-four people's laundry to wash as often as possible, and Tete's youngest was

still in napkins. Now, this kind of work was women's work, and of the . . . women there, my mother and Lucia were incapacitated a little . . . by pregnancy. Tete, having patriarchal status, was not expected to do much, and four of us were only ten years old or younger. So Maiguru, Nyasha, . . . and myself were on our feet all day. (NC 135-36)

The return to the homestead thus forcibly compels Tambu to revert to her parents' traditions and way of life, even as she is dedicating herself to her schoolwork for the purpose of escaping having those traditions imposed upon her.

Tambu, like Stephen Dedalus, develops polyrhythmically. She constantly struggles to push herself forward, battling the forces which pull her back to her father and mother, to the homestead and the village, and to a situation that would waste her hard-earned education. This difficult struggle leads her at first to the mission, although she eventually finds development at the mission school equally fraught with difficulty. Eventually acknowledging the perils associated with the mission as well as those associated with the homestead leads Tambu toward her personal path to *Bildung*, which she eventually learns must necessarily involve shifting her personal direction away from both her ancestral homestead and the neocolonial condition instilled by the culture at the mission. This difficulty is similar to Stephen Dedalus's difficulty in colonial Ireland; he cannot maintain his individuality should he support imperial administration (which would essentially label him a colonial collaborator in the eyes of the nationalists), nor can he participate in what he views as a misguided form of nationalism like his friend Davin. The result is that Stephen is unable to integrate smoothly into Dublin society, forcing him to become an eternal outsider. Tambu likewise is unable to become socialized into

Rhodesian society; by rejecting both the agrarian subsistence farming of her immediate family and the colonial influence of her uncle at the mission, she forces herself to remain an outsider and forge a new path.

This lack of socialization is particularly striking in Tambu's case because her entire educational process, the collective moments which drive her forward through increasing prestigious schools, seem to push her toward an adulthood in which she will be a productive citizen of the new Rhodesia. And because of that education she has the opportunity to pursue just such a future. Babamukuru, acting as a surrogate father figure, sets the stage for it by bringing her to the mission school and then sending her to Sacred Heart, a background which would meet with approval from Rhodesia's primarily white halls of power. But going down this path would essentially turn her into a female version of her uncle, and just as much of her youth is spent trying to avoid becoming like her father, she realizes becoming like her surrogate father is equally untenable. Tambu thus rejects Babamukuru's attempts at paternal influence, and she rejects the future that had been lain out for her, choosing instead to do all she can to become truly independent in adulthood, despite the inevitable difficulties that lay in store.

The key to this process for Tambu involves the recognition that Babamukuru is not infallible and that the life he has planned for her is not what she wants for herself. She understands from a young age that she does not want to be like her parents, and that she must escape the homestead and become educated to avoid that fate. She says, regarding this change in her life, that "coming to the mission, continuing [her] education and doing well at it, these had been the things that mattered" (NC 166). And they mattered to her because they would allow her to succeed in her goal of not turning into her mother. She

also declares clearly, “I was not ready to accept that . . . advantage and disadvantage were predetermined” (*NC* 162), claiming that her future is in her own hands and not decided by her birth to a failure like Jeremiah. She recognizes that through hard work, she has control (at least to some extent) over her own fate.

While she knows from early in her youth that she must escape the homestead, it takes much more time before the true nature of her relationship to the mission comes into focus for her. At first, she embraces the mission and the culture that surrounds it, mostly because it is the source of the education she so desperately needs in order to escape the homestead. Similarly, she looks to Babamukuru as a benevolent god-like being for bringing her to the mission for her education. Eventually, both those views begin to change, most noticeably with Tambu’s attitude toward Babamukuru’s plan for her parents to get married. She disapproves of the plan and refuses to attend. Later, when she questions that decision, she finds comfort as she reminds herself, “the decision at least was mine” (*NC* 171). This is a crucial moment for Tambu. It represents the first time she recognizes that her own independence and individuality must take precedence over Babamukuru’s plans for her. She needs the education he helps to provide, but submitting to his plans for her future is just as bad as submitting to her parents’ plans for her future. She underscores that fact when Babamukuru begins looking ahead to the day when Tambu herself will be married:

Marriage[, Tambu thinks.] I had nothing against it in principle. In an abstract way I thought it was a very good idea. But it was irritating the way it always cropped up in one form or another, stretching its tentacles

back to bind me before I had even begun to think about it seriously,  
threatening to disrupt my life before I could even call it my own. (NC 183)

Her thoughts serve to show that in order for her to achieve a sense of successful *Bildung*, she must accomplish it on her own, as an individual. Becoming absorbed into the homestead culture or the mission culture is unacceptable, as would feeling forced to abandon her individuality in order to support a husband, whether emotionally, financially, or both. That is one reason her matriculation into Sacred Heart becomes so important for her. Even though she will still be financially dependent upon Babamukuru until her graduation, at that point she will more likely be able to fend for herself. She remarks that by going to Sacred Heart, she “was to take another step upward in the direction of [her] freedom. Another step away from the flies, the smells, the fields and the rags; from stomachs which were seldom full, from dirt and disease, from my father’s abject obeisance to Babamukuru” (NC 186). It is significant that she places Babamukuru along with the homestead and her parents as forces she wishes to escape. She mentions specifically her father’s “obeisance” to Babamukuru, and implies her own as well. By going to another school, away from the mission and physically away from her uncle’s imposing presence, she gains a step toward the independence she so desperately seeks.

Babamukuru, in effect, acts as an agent of neocolonialism in Tambu’s life, and the constant presence of a neocolonial influence in her narrative of development acts as a reminder that when the *Nervous Conditions* takes place Rhodesia had recently been part of the British Empire, and its status as an independent country was not recognized by the international community. The region was in a dramatic state of flux which receives surprising little attention in the narrative. There is very little direct political commentary.



This fact is one of the most striking parallels between *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Nervous Conditions*. Overt political content is subjugated beneath the story of the *Bildungsheld*'s development, and the *Bildung* plot in turn provides the text with implicit political content. The lack of overt political content is noteworthy because—much as with *A Portrait* and Ireland, *Midnight's Children* and India, and *Season of Migration to the North* and Sudan—the timeframe of *Nervous Conditions* coincides with seismic changes in the region leading toward the creation of Zimbabwe as an independent nation. Moreover, Susan Andrade notes that the absence of direct political engagement distinguishes Dangarembga from other Zimbabwean novelists of her generation, who tend to “represent and engage the Zimbabwean struggle for national liberation in a direct manner. In contrast, *Nervous Conditions* appears to efface the story of Zimbabwean nationalism entirely, emphasizing instead the personal travails” of Tambu and Nyasha (25–26). However, this removal of the Zimbabwean nationalism in no way results in a novel that does not address national circumstances. Dangarembga accomplishes that task indirectly, rather than directly, by making personal development reflect political struggles.

The novel begins *in medias res* in 1968, when Tambu is thirteen years old. Early chapters provide some key dates: she was born in April, 1955. Babamukuru and his family leave for England in 1960. They return from England in 1965, when Tambu is about ten. The novel concludes roughly three years after Nhamo's death, in 1971. This period saw a massive shift in the region's political environment as it attempted formally to break ties with the British Empire and establish itself as a modern nation, a process it did not complete until the creation of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe's government in

1980. In 1964, Northern Rhodesia separated itself from the Empire, changing its name to Zambia and leaving Southern Rhodesia to call itself simply, “Rhodesia.” Then on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1965 (the same year Babamukuru, Maiguru, Nyasha, and Chido return from England), Ian Smith and eleven of his compatriots signed the Universal Declaration of Independence, breaking away from the Empire and creating a state that had no international recognition because it was ruled by, in the words of the UN Security Council, “a racist minority régime” (*United Nations Security Council Resolution 216*). The state declared the Republic of Rhodesia, reforming its government, in 1970. Meanwhile, the *Chimurenga* raged from 1964 to 1979.<sup>85</sup> Yet remarkably, these significant historical moments receive only scant attention in the novel.

There are two noteworthy instances in which politics intrude on the Tambu’s narrative of development. One comes from Nyasha, and it briefly puts Rhodesia’s situation into a comprehensive, global context. The other comes from Tambu and represents a more local perspective. The worldly Nyasha, who unlike most of her peers at the mission school has been to England, often attempts to display wisdom beyond her years. At times, it is an arrogant, childish exercise, but at other times she exhibits serious interest in trying to understand the world around her. Toward that end, she reads historical books and asks her mother about politics topics: “She wanted to know many things: whether the Jews’ claim to Palestine was valid, whether monarchy was a just form of government, the nature of life and relations before colonisation, exactly why UDI was declared and what it meant” (*NC 95*). This is the novel’s only overt reference to the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Nyasha tries to understand what the abstract idea of separation from the empire means for her and other Rhodesians on a practical level.

This topic is particularly interesting to Nyasha as she spent many of her formative years (ages five to ten) in England. For her personally, the relationship between England and her homeland has provided a major influence in shaping who she is—in her own words, “a hybrid.” Any changes in the status of that relationship will likewise influence who she becomes.

The other instance comes from Tambu. In the midst of a conversation with Maiguru about Maiguru’s lack of financial opportunities despite her advanced education, Tambu explains that “[she] was beginning to understand that our government was not a good one” (NC 103). Coming most likely in late 1968 or early 1969, this remark refers to Ian Smith’s UDI government. This is the greatest extent of criticism of the racist government that ruled Rhodesia for almost fifteen years, and though the comment is clearly critical, the criticism lacks depth and detail. The remark is not so much a censure of the government from Dangarembga as it is an illustration of Tambu gaining a sense of the world beyond her immediate surroundings. It shows her developing from a girl who knows little of the world beyond the homestead into a young adult with more worldly knowledge.

The absence of overt political content becomes even more emphatic when *Nervous Conditions* is compared to its sequel, the 2006 novel *The Book of Not*. *The Book of Not* moves the ongoing political and paramilitary conflict to the forefront of the narrative. It calls attention to that fact from the very first page, offering a graphic glimpse of the *Chimurenga* and its effect on the characters of Dangarembga’s novels. The first chapter opens in mid-scene, after Tambu’s younger sister Netsai has stepped on a landmine:

Up, up, up, the leg spun. A piece of person, up there in the sky. Earth and acrid vapours coated my tongue. Silence surged out to die away at the ragged shriek of a cricket in the bushes at the edge of the village clearing.

You could not see her anymore, the figure who, a few moments ago, had padded out of the *musasa* shrub after a man in combat canvas, rippled green like a Chinese jungle. (BN 3)

The rest of the chapter paints a fuller picture of the event. Babamukuru has been forced by guerilla soldiers to submit to a beating because, as a result of sending Tambu to the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart and for other similar actions, he is considered “one whose soul hankered to be at one with the occupying Rhodesian forces. *Mutengesi* [betrayed]” (BN 6). The incident itself emphasizes the stark division in the country between Ian Smith’s Rhodesian government and the guerillas who consider themselves an army of liberation. The details of the scene further emphasize the violence and bloodshed that the *Chimurenga* brings to everyday life in Rhodesia: Babamukuru’s beating, Netsai’s leg flying through the air, the backstory of Netsai’s collaboration with the guerillas which forces her to relocate temporarily to Mozambique to avoid arrest, and casual references to soldiers in combat fatigues and the way they handle their AK-47s. The rest of the novel keeps the conflict in focus. At school, Tambu can hear the distant sounds of mortars and small artillery, a constant reminder that war is raging just beyond the hills. Unlike *Nervous Conditions*, the *Book of Not* involves living life in a literal warzone and growing up against the backdrop of this war. The fact that the war is at the forefront of *The Book of Not* serves to underscore its notable omission from *Nervous Conditions*.

Though the novel involves very few direct references to contemporary politics, it does include one substantial reminder that Tambu begins her life when Rhodesia is a British colony. This reminder takes the form of a theme that is present, though less overt, in the other novels I've discussed: the failure of return. Nyasha's difficulties upon returning to Rhodesia from England—as well as Tambu's discomfort regarding the ways in which Nyasha has changed—emphasize the distinctness between the dominant imperial culture and the subaltern colonial culture and imply the virtual impossibility of a seamless and successful homecoming for a colonial *Bildungsheld* after time abroad. On the occasion of Babamukuru's return with his family from England, Tambu realizes she does not approve of her Nyasha and Chido, and she wonders, “Had I approved of my cousins before they went to England? Most definitely I had; I had loved them. When they visited the homestead we had played long, exciting games. Why did I no longer like them?” (NC 38). At first, Tambu also wonders whether this change in attitude is due to changes in her cousins or changes in herself, but she soon finds the answer. As a result of her failed attempts to engage Nyasha in play, in dialogue, or even in housework, Tambu realizes she “missed the bold, ebullient companion [she] had had who had gone to England but not returned from there” (NC 52). In Tambu's eyes, England has sucked the life out of her cousin, her former friend.

Stephen Dedalus, of course, also leaves his homeland and returns, and the tale of his re-entry to Dublin appears in *Ulysses*. Notably, the final section of *Ulysses*, episodes sixteen through eighteen, is commonly called “Nostos,” Greek for return or homecoming. The term carries with it Homeric associations: Odysseus's long-awaited return to Ithaca and eventually his triumph over Penelope's suitors. The correspondence in *Ulysses* is

Leopold Bloom's return to seven Eccles street and to his marriage bed. However, the idea of homecoming applies to Stephen as well. He has returned from Paris (for the second time) and readers now see exactly how well he reinstates himself in Dublin life.

Of course, Stephen does not reinstate himself very smoothly, perhaps not at all. At the beginning of *Ulysses*, when readers encounter for the first time since the end of *A Portrait*, they find first of all that he has essentially abandoned his family. He's moved out of the family home, and after being divested of his key to the Martello tower by Buck Mulligan, he says clearly he cannot return to his father's house (*U* 1.740). Instead, he's living at the beginning of the novel in the tower with an acquaintance he does not particularly like and a demeaning Englishman, a living, breathing reminder of Ireland's colonial status. As result, giving up the key and essentially being kicked out of the tower is not especially objectionable. Stephen's job at Deasy's school is equally unpleasant; Deasy predicts that Stephen will quit soon, and Stephen fulfills that prophecy before the novel's end (*U* 2.401-402, 16.157-59). And when Bloom offers Stephen a place to stay for the night, and possible future employment as a tutor, Stephen declines (*U* 17.929-55). At the end of the day, Stephen has no place to sleep, no job, almost no money, no family support, and no reliable friends. Returning to Dublin after having gone to Paris leaves Stephen alone, an outcast in his home city. Saladin Chamcha, Gibreel Farishta, Mustafa Sa'eed, and the narrator of *Season of Migration to the North* all experience similar difficulties upon returning to the homelands after visiting England.<sup>86</sup> The virtual impossibility of a successful return is indicative of the troubles inherent in attempting to integrate the dominant culture into the subaltern society, and accounts for the failure of colonial and postcolonial *Bildungshelden* to embrace neocolonial influence.

The difficulties Tambu faces as she seeks to escape both the antiquated culture of her father's homestead and the neocolonial servitude of her uncle's mission are reminiscent not only of Stephen Dedalus's challenges in *A Portrait*, but also of those confronted by the unnamed narrator of *Season of Migration to the North*. The narrator speaks of finding "the middle way," navigating a path between neocolonial oppression and antiquated cultural and economic practices that would prevent Sudan from achieving a place on the world stage (*SMN* 108). Tambu is confronted with similar difficulties, the antiquated homestead and the neocolonial environment of the mission. In Tambu's situation, however, her solution is not a matter of striking the proper balance between the two opposing forces. Rather, she needs to move away from both. It is tempting to say she needs to move away from both entirely, but that's not quite accurate. Rather, she takes small elements from each with her: the work ethic she learned from her grandmother, other practical knowledge from the homestead, academic knowledge and information about the world outside Rhodesia from her education at the mission. But while embracing those parts of her upbringing, she decides she must not allow either of those environments to dominate her future, as submission to those influences would impinge upon her burgeoning independence and would run counter to *Bildung*.

Tambu's approach to *Bildung* and the way that path is written into the narrative of *Nervous Conditions* have tremendous implications for the young Zimbabwean nation. The novel's emphasis on the individual and the de-emphasis of the ongoing guerilla war belie the fact that the text is about Zimbabwe as a burgeoning modern nation as well as about Tambu as a single person. As Ann Elizabeth Willey points out, Tambu's "story is shaped by the imperative of development, both her own and that of her community" (62).

This novel, perhaps more so than any other I've examined in this study, exemplifies Frederic Jameson's conception of the third-world national allegory in which public and private are inextricably connected. The story of Tambu's growth, maturation, and development is the story not only a girl trying to find her direction in life, but of a nation finding itself in unfamiliar territory trying to define itself and find its place on the world stage.

It's worth noting that the novel was written and published roughly two decades after it takes place. During that interval, a lot had changed in the region, but it was still politically and militarily volatile. Roughly ten years after Tambu begins her education at the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart, the *Chimurenga* ends, the British Empire officially ends its claim to colonial control of the region, and in 1980 Robert Mugabe is elected president of the newly named and newly recognized nation of Zimbabwe. Dangarembga published *Nervous Conditions* in 1988. Between the recognition of Zimbabwe and that publication, ethnic clashes and political mistrust resulted in the Entumbane uprising and the Matabeleland Massacres; thousands of Zimbabwean citizens died before the violence ended with an agreement that created the ZANU-PF. While this agreement ended the violence that marred Zimbabwe's early history, it also created a single-party government that ruled virtually unchallenged until 2008.

That is the historical and political context in which *Nervous Conditions* was created. Appropriately enough, the conflicts plaguing first Rhodesia and then Zimbabwe from the 1960s to 1988 have their roots in the same sources as Tambu's personal difficulties. Just as the repressive neocolonial environment of the mission emerged from colonial and missionary enterprises in the region, so did Ian Smith's oppressive, racist



government. And the ethnic clashes that killed thousands of Zimbabweans in the 1980s have their origins in antiquated cultural attitudes, just as the attitudes and traditions of the homestead would necessarily inhibit *Bildung* for Tambu. Tambu's story thus acts as a microcosm of Zimbabwe's national struggles, presenting readers with a national allegory. The novel's assessment of Zimbabwe's present and its future mirrors Tambu's direction. For her, both the culture of the homestead and of the mission prove misguided, prompting her to motivate herself to strike out on her own as an individual. Likewise, Zimbabwe must free itself of the constraints both of its tribal past and its more recent colonial past, embracing only those elements of those periods that are beneficial to its future while abandoning those elements which hold it back; in doing so, it must determine a new and independent identity as a modern nation.

This assessment of Zimbabwe's difficulties and the approach to resolving those difficulties is presented almost entirely through Tambudzai's *Bildung* plot. She recognizes early in her life the perils of remaining trapped in the traditions of the homestead. It takes her a little longer to realize that the mission is equally perilous—when she first arrives there, she quite literally sees the world in terms of black and white. But she eventually realizes her goal for is to procure for herself a modern life, facilitated by education, in which she is not condemned to neocolonial servitude like her uncle. She eventually concludes that an intelligent, educated black woman is capable of (and should be permitted to, socially and politically speaking) living a modern, professional life without simply emulating whites and encouraging colonial oppression and religious conversion. She seeks an independent future to make that a reality for herself.

This portrayal of Tambu's *Bildungsprozess*, with its national implications, is tremendously facilitated by Dangarembga's use of Joycean paradigms for the *Bildungsroman*. Her inability to fit in to her surroundings, both at the homestead and at the mission, force her to reevaluate her direction in life and drive her toward her independent future. Her progression toward this realization is enacted via a distinctly Joycean narrative rhythm. Moreover, the narrative subordination of the political to the *Bildung* plot has the effect of calling extra attention to the conspicuous absence of overt political material and reinforces the idea that Tambu's personal story serves to depict the story of Zimbabwe as well.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The novels I examine in chapters two through four illustrate the accessibility and applicability of the Joycean model of the *Bildungsroman* to novels of the postcolonial world. Though it has its origins in early twentieth-century Ireland, its utility extends far beyond that point in time and space. Yet *Season of Migration to the North*, *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, and *Nervous Conditions* are all very much representative of a particular period in history, characterized by the decay of Britain's imperial influence and by the emergence of numerous new modern nation-states. As the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first, this unique historical moment faded.

In the years since the publication of the most recent novel I discuss in "James Joyce and Post-Imperial *Bildung*" (1988), the world has experienced seismic changes: the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, followed shortly by the collapse of the Soviet Union; popular revolutions changed the state of political affairs in Ethiopia, the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and several other countries; India and Pakistan became nuclear powers; and in 2001, terrorist attacks against targets in the United States ushered in a new era of warfare. Furthermore, these alterations to the fabric of the world's geopolitical landscape occurred during the dawn of the information age. Communication has become faster than ever before in human history, and the beginning of a new millennium ushered in a new historical moment, one characterized by global interconnectedness.

As the world shifts from one chapter of history to another and as political and cultural conditions change, the nature of growth and development changes as well—both

for individuals and for nations. By way of conclusion, I would like to look briefly at two novels published in 1989 or later: Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. Each explores the possible portrayals of *Bildung* as the postcolonial concerns of the mid-to-late twentieth century give way to the international issues of a globalized society in the new millennium.

*The Remains of the Day* (1989) offers a glimpse of a different phase of growth and development than the traditional *Bildungsroman*. Ishiguro's protagonist Stevens is the butler of a traditional English great house. The novel is set in two frames; the primary action takes place over the course of a week in 1956, but much of the novel involves Stevens's recollections of events that occurred in the 1930s. In 1956, Stevens is nearing retirement age, unlike a traditional *Bildungsheld* who is typically just beginning his or her career. However, the novel chronicles his process of self-discovery, which involves finding his place in society, defining himself as a person rather than as a profession, and cultivating a sense of individuality. In Stevens's case, this process remains stalled until epiphanic end of the novel, but he finally achieves *Bildung* even though *The Remains of the Day* is a novel of maturity rather than a novel of youth.

A major theme in the novel involves the slow but certain death of an antiquated culture and the lifestyle that accompanied it. In the interbellum frame, Stevens gradually reveals to readers a shift in prevailing attitudes in Britain, and to some extent in the rest of Europe and in the US. Lord Darlington, Stevens's employer, embodies the aristocratic ideal of *noblesse oblige*, and he wishes to conduct himself with honor and integrity at all times. Moreover, he feels strongly that his nation must act according to the same values and must therefore permit its former enemies to maintain their own honor. This attitude

motivates Lord Darlington to oppose harsh penalties for Germany in the aftermath of the Great War. His position leads him to support policies of appeasement, and Stevens eventually reveals that after World War II his (now former) employer had been condemned as a Nazi sympathizer. The underlying message is that despite Darlington's best intentions, his approach to twentieth-century international politics is misguided, an obsolete remnant of previous centuries when European aristocracies controlled governments and diplomacy.

Stevens, for his part, supports Lord Darlington wholeheartedly during the lead up to the war. He views his role as butler as significant only insofar as he assists his employer. This outlook illustrates the fact that Stevens embraces the values of a previous generation in which a social hierarchy was more rigidly defined. Stevens shows how highly he regards this value-system through his praise of his father, an actual member of that previous generation. He sees his father as the epitome of the quality of dignity exhibited by great butlers. He defines this dignity as a "butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits" (42). More generally, he believes that one must identify and accept one's social role and perform the duties of that role properly under all circumstances. Onlookers should naturally recognize the greatness and dignity of one's performance, and effectively maintaining that role is the path to personal and professional success.

Stevens's unreserved adoption of his father's professional and social values reveals a failure to adjust to generational changes. That failure, in turn, causes him to miss opportunities throughout much of his life. He loses the prospect of a happy and fulfilling love life, and he misses the chance to influence international diplomacy. In

effect, Stevens is stuck in the past, stuck in his father's generation, and he does not fully comprehend the problems that causes until late in his life.

With regard to the other novels I have discussed, the relevance of *The Remains of the Day* comes in the form of the national implications of the story of Stevens and Lord Darlington. Stevens, without saying so explicitly, constructs an analogy between his nation and his profession. After looking at a pleasant landscape, he claims,

when I stood on that high ledge this morning and viewed the land before me, I distinctly felt that rare, yet unmistakable feeling – the feeling that one is in the presence of greatness. We call this land of ours *Great Britain*, and . . . I would venture that the landscape of our country alone would justify the use of this lofty adjective. (28)

He further claims that the greatness of the landscape lies in its “*lack of obvious drama or spectacle. What is pertinent is the calmness of that beauty, its sense of restraint*” (28–29, Ishiguro’s italics). His assessment of this natural scene leads him to his description of the dignity of his office. The tranquility of the sight is characterized by “restraint.” The landscape does not call attention to its greatness; it is simply expected that onlookers will recognize it, much as Stevens expects the eminence of a house-servant will be self-evident and that calling attention to oneself is detrimental to such greatness.

The parallel between Stevens’s life and his nation instills the novel with a poignant critique of England’s recent history. Both Stevens and Lord Darlington suffer from a tragic flaw, an inability to move forward along with historical progress. They choose to remain in the past, stuck in a culture that no longer applies outside the walls of Darlington Hall. Their troubles reflect the need for their nation to move forward as well.

Stevens's father, quite significantly, was in his prime in the 1890s, when Victoria still wore the crown. The symbolic differences between this timeframe and when the novel is set are enormous. Stevens lives and works in a new century with a different monarch and a more powerful prime minister, when England faces new enemies and wields less global power. The failure to adjust to those changes will result in misguided instincts, like Lord Darlington's policy of appeasement, and missed opportunities, like Stevens's non-existent love life. Stevens, however, at the end of his week-long road trip in 1956, realizes the mistakes of his past and pledges to improve himself, both as a butler and as a person, in the time he has remaining. Lord Darlington, on the other hand, never took advantage of that opportunity late in his life.

*The Remains of the Day* thus shows the value of *Bildung*, of development and cultivation, in the twilight of one's life in addition to the early phases. Stevens illustrates a successful *Bildungsprozess* which spans middle-age to retirement instead of birth to young adulthood. In his old age, he still learns and grows. He recognizes in the novel's closing pages that it is not too late to begin correcting his errors so as to become a better and more complete person. The novel's national allegory suggests that Britain must follow his lead. Between 1956, when the novel's primary frame is set, and 1989, when it was published, England's character and culture changed perhaps even more than it did during the first half of the century. London became, as Zadie Smith emphasizes in *White Teeth*, much more diverse, and empire's last colonies broke away. Remaining stuck in the past like Lord Darlington will lead to disaster; the nation must embrace its new reality to continue to grow and develop in new conditions like Stevens.

Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) is a logical follow-up novels like *Midnight's Children*, *Season of Migration*, and *Nervous Conditions*. Smith's personal biography represents the next phase in the history of Britain's colonial project. Salih, Rushdie, and Dangarembga were all born in colonies which soon gained independence. They each traveled to England, to the heart of the empire, for their educations and for subsequent work. Smith comes from the next generation—she was born in London to an Anglo-British father and a Jamaican immigrant mother. Her very background illustrates the fact that London had become home to people from all over the globe as a result of its former position as capital of the world's most expansive empire.

*White Teeth* depicts *Bildung* for a protagonist at the center of this newly diversified London. Irie Jones, Zadie Smith's semi-autobiographical *Bildungsheld*, engages in the difficult process of finding herself in this world. She is joined by Magid and Millat Iqbal, the twin sons of Samad Iqbal, a Bengali immigrant whose best friend is Irie's father, Archie Jones. The novel approaches issues of *Bildung* by emphasizing generational differences toward the end of the twentieth century. Archie Jones and Samad first met when they served together in World War II. This seemingly minor detail underscores the fact that Irie, Magid, and Millat grow up in a distinctly post-war environment. The world around them is rapidly changing, and they must learn to change with it as they find their voices and identities.

A crucial incident in *White Teeth* illustrates the changing world and shifting attitudes from one generation to the next. In January, 1989, Millat (who is fourteen years old at the time) takes the train from London to Bradford to participate in a *Satanic Verses* protest and book-burning. When pressed by one of his compatriots in their juvenile gang,



Millat admits that he has never actually read the book. He knows nothing about it, but he justifies his actions because

he knew other things. He knew that he, Millat, was a Paki no matter where he came from; that he smelled of curry; had no sexual identity; took other people's jobs; or had no job and bummed off the state; or gave all the jobs to his relatives; that he could be a dentist or a shop-owner or a curry-shifter, but not a footballer or a film-maker; that he should go back to his own country; or stay here and earn his bloody keep; that he worshiped elephants and wore turbans. . . . In short, he knew he had no face in this country, no voice in the country. (194)

Millat's thoughts reveal the intensity of the latent racial tension in Thatcher's England. However, those thoughts do not constitute the force of the novel's statement regarding racial identity. Rather, this incident serves as a turning point. It occurs at the structural center of the novel, and though Millat tries to act tough in this scene, like he is independent and striking out on his own, he is actually echoing the thoughts of his father's generation. In fact, his actual father Samad, who also has not read Rushdie's book, supports the book-burning. Samad is concerned with the loss of his family's Muslim-Bengali identity, so much so that he sends Magid to Chittagong for a traditional upbringing. However, Smith presents Samad's mindset as foolish and outdated. Following Millat's participation in the Rushdie protest, the second half of the novel follows Irie and Millat (and Magid, once he returns from Bangladesh) over the ensuing years as they explore alternative methods of finding their faces and voices in multicultural London.

As Irie and her peers come of age, they lean away from the genetic model of identity determination. Smith uses the Chalfen family to emphasize that aspect of the novel. Joshua Chalfen is a classmate of Irie and Millat, and his father Marcus is a geneticist. In his experiments, he uses modified genes to introduce cancers into mice at specifically determined times, eliminating random factors. Thematically speaking, his work suggests that results traditionally associated with genetics can be matters of choice. The members of the younger generation all confirm that idea as they grow toward adulthood. Magid's Bengali upbringing actually leads him away from Islam and from his father's notion of Bengali culture, suggesting that both ancestry and geography are small factors in identity determination compared to individual development. Later, Irie becomes pregnant after engaging in sexual relations with both twins in a short time, and cannot positively identify the father. The implication is that it does not really matter which is the father. It is only a source of genes, whereas the culture, voice, and personal identity of the child can be chosen and cultivated.

Early in twentieth century, Joyce showed the relevance of *Bildung* in a colonial context and demonstrated that its use in literary fiction can have serious national and political implications. Rushdie, Salih, and Dangarembga then illustrated its import in the post-imperial moment, when many new states, independent for the first time in recent memory, struggled to find meaning and identity in their newfound sovereignty. *The Remains of the Day* and *White Teeth* illustrate the continued significance of *Bildung* toward the very end of the twentieth century, in geopolitical conditions unlike those of the previous decades. The twentieth century has shown the value of *Bildung*, both for individuals and for nations, in a wide range of circumstances. The Joycean paradigm of

the *Bildungsroman* proved to be particularly appropriate in the midst of the rapid emergence of new nation-states in the aftermath of empire, but as the world continues to evolve, the *Bildungsroman* will undoubtedly grow with it and maintain its relevance.

## APPENDIX 1: ABBREVIATIONS

The following works are cited parenthetically in the body of the text using the abbreviations listed below:

- P* Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Text, Criticism, and Notes*. Ed. Chester G. Anderson. New York: Penguin, 1977. Print.
- U* Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe, & Claus Melchior. New York: Vintage, 1986. Print  
(Cited by episode and line number.)
- MC* Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. New York: Random House, 2006. Print.
- SV* Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. New York: Picador, 1988. Print.
- SMN* Salih, Tayeb. *Season of Migration to the North*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1970. Print.
- NC* Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. Banbury, UK: Ayebia, 1988. Print.
- BN* Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *The Book of Not*. Banbury, UK: Ayebia, 2006. Print.

## APPENDIX 2: NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The term “*Bildungsheld*” refers to the protagonist of a *Bildungsroman*.

“*Bildungshelden*” is the plural.

<sup>2</sup> Esty dedicates the last chapter of *Unseasonable Youth* to later twentieth century texts which continue to illustrate his argument, but this chapter is essentially a postscript. It is a brief look forward rather than an in-depth analysis like his previous chapters.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Walter P. Collins, *Tracing Personal Expansion*, and Mary Donnelly, “One Way into the Cul-de-sac: The *Bildungsroman* in the Colonies.”

<sup>4</sup> Despite the long-held belief that Wilhelm Dilthey coined this term—he first uses it in 1870 in *Das Leben Schleiermachers*, and perhaps most prominently in his *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*—Fritz Martini has traced the term to two lectures by Karl von Morgenstern in 1819 and 1820. See Martini, “*Bildungsroman*—Term and Theory,” 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Later in the twentieth century, Rushdie, Salih, and Dangarembga take Joyce’s model one step further, moving the protagonist into a postcolonial society.

<sup>6</sup> Tennyson’s five points are actually a concise summary of ideas from Wilhelm Dilthey’s *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung: Lessing, Goethe, Novalis, Hölderlin*.

<sup>7</sup> Both Buckley and Tennyson use male pronouns, implicitly rejecting the possibility of a female *Bildungsheld*.

<sup>8</sup> Castle refers to this interpretation of *Bildung* as “aesthetico-spiritual” *Bildung*. He distinguishes it from the “socially pragmatic” *Bildung* of British Victorians.

<sup>9</sup> For Humboldt, successful *Bildung* is the product of social and political conditions as much as an individual’s will. However, he does not believe *Bildung* is a social concept; it is highly individualized, but could (and should) be encouraged by the proper political

environment and an effective educational system. He writes that *Bildung* is concerned not with “how we improve the outside world, ‘but only about the improvement of our inner selves’” (Bruford 17). In *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, Gregory Castle notes that Humboldt describes himself using terms which foreshadow Nietzsche’s description of strong character in *The Gay Science*. Specifically, he is a person who has “complete control of [his] self-directive will” and is “thoroughly inward-oriented” (Humboldt, *Humanist* 399). This self-description serves as a model for the goals of *Bildung*, and Castle explains that it is “this Nietzschean aspect—one that undermines any simplistic notion that personal Bildung must entail harmonious dialectical integration with society—that differentiates Humboldt’s thinking from others of his time” (39–40). Specifically, it differentiates him from Goethe, for whom such “harmonious dialectical integration with society” is a key component of *Bildung*. Another key difference between the two men is that, while Goethe was a writer of fiction, poetry, and drama, Humboldt was primarily a political philosopher and pedagogical theorist. His goal is to figure out “the most favorable position which man can occupy as member of a political community” (Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action* 130). His notion of this ideal position is rooted in his studies of ancient Greek culture and the notion of a cultivated person. People who are so cultivated possess knowledge and insight that uncultivated people lack, and it is the responsibility of the cultivated to educate and enlighten the uncultivated. The key point is that such cultivation, such *Bildung*, can be modeled and taught. His conception of the goal of the state vis-à-vis the individual led to political theories favoring liberal arts and humanistic education, broad civil liberties, and the free exchange of ideas. In 1810 he established the University of Berlin (later renamed Humboldt University of Berlin) with

the goal of fostering *Bildung* in its students, of creating cultivated individuals capable of free and independent thought who are capable of becoming successful and responsible political and social leaders and who will likely respond to their duty to cultivate other members of society. It is important to recognize, however, that responding to such duties is not requisite for *Bildung*; rather, *Bildung* provides an individual with the capability to fulfill such a duty. *Bildung* itself is an individual notion.

<sup>10</sup> This particular interpretation of *Bildung*—which is common in the Victorian period, though by no means universal—is exemplified in *Bildungsromane* like *Great Expectations*. The shift in the conception of *Bildung* which led to this generic revision is essentially an outgrowth of Humboldt’s idea that successfully achieving individual *Bildung* has positive social consequences, but was modified so that those social consequences primarily benefit the *Bildungsheld*; it is no longer important that society benefit as well. The notion of *Bildung* became less focused on complete development as an individual and become more focused on development of an individual *within society*. This socially pragmatic *Bildung* involves harmonious socialization which, in most instances, provides the potential for upward social mobility. For more, See Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman*, 47–62.

<sup>11</sup> Esty briefly touches on this later period in the conclusion to *Unseasonable Youth*. Perhaps most notably, he observes that in the post-war period (the rise of postcolonial and postmodern novels), the *Bildungsroman* remains in common usage and essentially retains the fundamental components and conventions (as described, for instance, by Jerome Buckley and G. B. Tennyson—see pages 5–7 of this introduction) which date back to Goethe: “[D]espite the modernist vogue for wayward story lines and extended

adolescence, and despite the modernist-era critique of the historicist logic underpinning the bildungsroman, both the coming-of-age novel *and* its developmental imperatives persist alongside of, and after, any modernist revolution of form” (196). It is reasonable, then, to conclude that this critique of the “logic underpinning the bildungsroman” does not represent a flaw in the logic of the genre, but rather demonstrates the way in which the genre proved useful and valuable for that generation of authors. As it has since the late eighteenth century, *Bildungsromane* serve as a window into the values and concerns of the societies which produce them.

<sup>12</sup> In “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’” (1987), Ahmad takes Jameson to task for a variety of problems with his argument, ranging from Jameson’s incomplete knowledge of the literatures in question (Ahmad points out, for instance, that Jameson addresses only English-language literature) to internal inconsistencies (Ahmad claims Jameson violates his own Marxist theoretical foundations) and difficulties with terminology (how does one define the third world?). However, Ahmad’s most important criticism of Jameson comes not from his extensively articulated counterpoints, but rather from what he describes as his initial response to Jameson’s assertion that all third world texts must be national allegories:

“‘All?...necessarily?’ It felt odd” (4). Ahmad has obviously identified a substantial flaw in Jameson’s logic: his argument is too broad, too sweeping, too general. Even if one were to accept Jameson’s other premises without question, it would, in Ahmad’s words, feel odd if no one could identify a single counterexample to this assertion. On the other hand, surely Jameson would be correct in recognizing some texts as national allegories.



He gives a number of fair examples, and others unquestionably fall into that category (*Midnight's Children* is perhaps the most famous and most explicitly allegorical).

<sup>13</sup> I use the phrase “third world” here to reflect Jameson’s terminology. It is undoubtedly a problematic term, and as Aijaz Ahmad points out repeatedly, it is one of the most glaring weaknesses in Jameson’s argument. In all fairness, alternative terminology would likely be equally fraught with problems. Jameson clarifies at times that he is primarily referring to Asia, Africa, and South America (and sometimes the Caribbean), and he is doing so due to the status of nations from these regions as former colonies of European powers. He could, perhaps, use the word postcolonial, but that word has often been criticized as unfairly and inaccurately defining a people’s history by its colonial period, despite centuries if not millennia of previous history that has influenced their modern cultures. The term “postcolonial” also has the disadvantage of being associated with a school of criticism and theory that may not be substantively relevant to the discussion at hand. Other sometimes used terms (“minor literature,” “minority literature,” “non-Western literature,” “Commonwealth literature”) each have their own drawbacks. Any historically descriptive term that tries to avoid similar pitfalls (perhaps “literature from an author born in a formerly colonized region,” or LABFCR) tends to be prohibitively unwieldy. These difficulties are not likely to be resolved any time soon, and arguments over appropriate terminology will likely persist as long as scholars continue to analyze literature and culture from a country like India alongside its colonial history.

<sup>14</sup> Bakhtin’s reference to “typology” in his title implies an allusion typological interpretation of the Bible, reading the Hebrew scriptures as a prefiguring of the Christian new testament. Typological interpretation is often used in conjunction with the fourfold

method of interpretation (reading biblical passages as simultaneously literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical). Bakhtin's four categories of the novel could therefore represent four overlapping modes of interpretation rather than four distinct categories.

<sup>15</sup> Note on terminology: Bakhtin always uses the word "hero" when referring to a protagonist. He is consistent with this term regardless of that character's gender, of his or her likeability, or of the nature of his or her experiences in the text. Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Rousseau's *Emile*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, and Dickens's *David Copperfield*, for example, are all described by this term. When referring to Bakhtin's formulations, I use his terminology to remain consistent.

<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin provides the following descriptions of his first three categories of the novel:

The travel novel lacks any conception of historical time. The world which the hero inhabits never changes significantly. Change is noted only through a succession of "various contrasting conditions: success/failure, happiness/unhappiness, victory/defeat, and so on" (11). Moreover, the hero of the travel novel is entirely static; he is merely "a point moving in space. He has no distinguishing characteristics, and he himself is not at the center of the novelist's artistic attention. . . . The novel does not recognize human emergence and development." Therefore, even if the status of the hero changes (for instance, he becomes rich, marries his true love, or relocates to a new country), "he himself is unchanged" (Bakhtin 10–11).

The novel of ordeal involves only slightly more realism in its portrayal of time. It utilizes what Bakhtin calls "adventure time," which "is characterized precisely by a violation of normal temporal categories: for example, the work of several years is done in one night or, conversely, a year passes in one moment" (15). This conception of time fits

the narrative structure of the novel of ordeal: “The novel of ordeal always begins where a deviation from the normal social and biographical course of life begins, and ends where life resumes its normal course” (14). Since such deviations, by their very definition, do not occur with regularity, the particular emphasis of the novel of ordeal necessitates the use of adventure time, which allows ordinary biographical events to be glossed over and allows for extraordinary attention to extraordinary events. The hero of a novel of ordeal, much like the hero of the travel novel, is quite static. The emphasis of a novel of ordeal involves the hero undergoing (and usually passing) a test or series of tests. The world may present these tests, but neither the world nor the tests affect the hero, nor does he affect the world or its social order.

Time in the biographical novel acts exactly opposite the way in acts in the novel of ordeal. Bakhtin states that “[t]he essential feature of the biographical novel is the appearance of biographical time. As distinct from adventure . . . time, biographical time is quite realistic. All of its moments are included in the total life process, and they describe this process as limited, unrepeatable, and irreversible. Each event is localized in the whole of this life process” (17–18). In the biographical novel, individual moments and events lose their significance in the shadow of the continual progression of time. Much like in the novel of ordeal, the hero of a biographical novel does not undergo any major change during the course of the narrative: “[A]lthough the hero’s life course is indeed depicted, his image in a purely biographical novel lacks any true process of becoming or development. The hero’s life and fate change, they assume structure and evolve, but the hero himself remains essentially unchanged” (17).

<sup>17</sup> The following is a partial list of texts which demonstrate this paradigm shift in Joyce studies: James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (1993); Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses* (1994); Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses* (1994); Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (1995); Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (1995); Mark Wolleager, Victor Luftig, Robert Spoo (eds.), *Joyce and the Subject of History* (1996); Trevor L. Williams, *Reading Joyce Politically* (1997); and Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (eds.), *Semicolonial Joyce* (2000); Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx* (2001).

<sup>18</sup> Cheng takes the initial quotation from Mason and Ellmann's introduction to Joyce's *Critical Writings*.

<sup>19</sup> This idea embodies what Homi Bhabha calls "the Third Space of enunciation." He explains that the third space evolved from colonial or postcolonial origins, and that it "may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (56).

<sup>20</sup> Joyce was living in Trieste in 1914, moved to Zurich to escape the war, returned to Trieste after its conclusion and then moved to Paris in 1920. His personal geography during the composition process is immortalized in the final lines of *Ulysses*: "Trieste-Zurich-Paris / 1914-1921" (*U* 18.1610–11).

<sup>21</sup> See Corfe, *The Phoenix Park Murders*; Brown, *The Politics of Irish Literature*; and Tynan, *The Irish National Invincibles and Their Times*.

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Tynan was one of the Invincibles, not involved in carrying out the Phoenix Park murders but likely involved in the planning. He escaped prosecution by fleeing to the United States, whence he wrote his account of the Invincibles.

<sup>23</sup> The notion of “Joyce’s *Bildungsroman*” could include *Ulysses* as well as *Portrait*, as Stephen’s *Bildungsprozess* spans both texts. I focus on *Portrait* because it contains the roots of the narrative paradigm I discuss throughout this chapter, though that paradigm persists in *Ulysses* as well. *Finnegans Wake* also contains elements of a *Bildung* plot, most conspicuously in I.7 with the story of Shem the Penman. However, the treatment of *Bildung* in *FW* is beyond the scope of this dissertation, though it will surely make for a fascinating future study.

<sup>24</sup> The same word—“apart”—associates this attitude of Stephen’s with that of a young adult Joyce. In 1901, after Joyce had published “The Day of the Rabblement,” a response in *St. Stephen’s* (the relatively new college paper for which Joyce had originally written “Rabblement” but which refused to publish it) attacked Joyce’s stance:

If Mr. Joyce thinks that the artist must stand *apart* from the multitude, and means he must also sever himself from the moral and religious teachings which have, under Divine guidance, moulded its spiritual character, we join issue with him, and we prophesy but ill-success for any school which offers the Irish public art based upon such a principle. (qtd. in Ellmann 90; emphasis added)

It seems that members of what Joyce called “the rabblement” enjoyed keeping Joyce apart just as much as he reveled in remaining apart.

<sup>25</sup> Although notably, as Esty points out, this leap represents uneven development, rather than a smooth process toward maturation. This uneven, unstable process contributes to Stephen's inability to mature fully, leaving him in a stunted adolescence.

<sup>26</sup> Socially pragmatic *Bildung* (Castle's terminology) essentially involves climbing the social ladder, improving one's financial standing and social position relative to a generally understood hierarchy. This form of *Bildung* is largely in opposition to what he calls aesthetico-spiritual *Bildung*, or classical *Bildung*: complete, inner, personal development and maturation, which may or may not have financial or social benefits. For more, see Castle 256, note 13.

<sup>27</sup> This condition persists at the end of *Ulysses* as well, showing how firmly entrenched it is in Stephen's character.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, this influence on Stephen persists throughout *Ulysses*, determining the nature of his character at the conclusion of that novel as well.

<sup>29</sup> The notion of the aesthetic attitude is by no means universally accepted within the ranks of aesthetic philosophers. There are many, such as George Dickie, who believe it is an inaccurate and misleading approach to aesthetics. However, it has more than its fair share of adherents and was particularly prominent in the field during the first half of the twentieth century, during Joyce's lifetime. That fact is especially noteworthy as the idea of the aesthetic attitude largely evolved from the theories of nineteenth-century thinkers whom Joyce would have read, such as Schopenhauer.

<sup>30</sup> Being disinterested (i.e. impartial) should not be confused with being uninterested (i.e. apathetic or bored). One who exhibits the aesthetic attitude will remain disinterested while often being quite interested in the other sense of the word.

<sup>31</sup> Stolnitz provides the following footnote regarding his use of the word “percipient:”

“This is a clumsy and largely outmoded word, but it is more convenient for our purposes that words of more limited meaning such as ‘spectator,’ ‘observer,’ ‘listener,’ and is accordingly used here and elsewhere in the text” (Stolnitz 35.n6). While Stolnitz is correct that the word “percipient” seems outmoded, his reluctance to use it is misguided. With its root word (“perception”) and its literal meaning of one who perceives, it is the perfect word to describe a person who exhibits the aesthetic attitude, and for that reason I have borrowed it from him where appropriate.

<sup>32</sup> The notion of disinterest as an element of the aesthetic experience has its roots in a long tradition dating back at least to the seventeenth century with the theories of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, and later the aesthetic writings of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. The idea received a significant boost in its popularity thanks to more fully fleshed out articulation of the idea from Edward Bullough. (For more information on this history, see Dickie, chapters 2 and 3.) Bullough demonstrates his idea using the example of a sailor on a ship surrounded by thick fog. The sailor would typically, as a matter of habit and practical self-preservation, view the fog as a source of danger, and would respond accordingly so as to maintain his safety, as well as the safety of his ship and his fellow sailors. However, he may also detach himself from the danger and view the fog solely as an object of aesthetic appreciation. That detachment constitutes what Bullough calls “psychical distance.” He explains that “transformation by Distance is produced . . . by putting the phenomenon , so to speak, out of gear with our practical, actual self, by allowing it to stand outside the context of our personal needs and ends—in short, by looking at it ‘objectively’” (235).

<sup>33</sup> See Vivas, “A Definition of the Esthetic Experience.”

<sup>34</sup> This is three years before Stephen first attends Clongowes. The historical Joyce had already left Clongowes before the fictional Stephen would have arrived in 1891.

<sup>35</sup> According to Stolnitz, “disinterested” attention “means that we do not look at the object out of concern for any ulterior purpose which it may serve. We are not trying to use or manipulate the object. There is no purpose governing the experience other than the purpose of having the experience. Our interest comes to rest upon the object alone” (Stolnitz 35).

<sup>36</sup> This incident from the early part of chapter one also shows Stephen’s youthful admiration for the man whose name he bears:

[Nasty Roche] had asked:

— What is your name?

Stephen had answered:

— Stephen Dedalus.

Then Nasty Roche had said:

— What kind of name is that?

And when Stephen had not been able to answer Nasty Roche had asked:

— What is your father?

Stephen had answered:

— A gentleman. (*P* 8–9).

Stephen’s defense of his father here provides a striking contrast to his rejection of him later in the novel.



<sup>37</sup> “Sympathy,” according to Stolnitz’s definition, requires that “[w]hen we apprehend an object aesthetically, we do so in order to relish its individual quality, whether the object be charming, stirring, vivid, or all of these. . . . [W]e must accept the object ‘on its own terms.’ We must make ourselves receptive to the object and ‘set’ ourselves to accept whatever it may offer to perception” (36).

<sup>38</sup> See Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*.

<sup>39</sup> The Spinozan approach to affect is especially relevant for an analysis of Joyce’s texts, for several reasons: There is ample evidence that Joyce had read Spinoza; Joyce mentions Spinoza briefly in *Ulysses* (12.1804); and according to John Millington Synge, Joyce has “a mind like Spinoza’s” (Ellmann 124).

<sup>40</sup> This downward spiral is exacerbated in chapter two during the trip to Cork and eventually leads to Simon Dedalus looking at his son as a “lazy bitch,” while Stephen looks at his father as little more than “a praiser of his own past” (*P* 175, 241).

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Stephen’s villanelle for E.C. (*P* 217–224), his discussion with Lynch regarding the nature of beauty (*P* 204–10), and his discussion of Shakespeare’s life and works (*U* episode 9).

<sup>42</sup> Castle’s terminology. See Note 8.

<sup>43</sup> This facet of Stephen’s development reflects Jed Esty’s notion of frozen youth, described in *Unseasonable Youth*. See my introduction, pages 2-3.

<sup>44</sup> The co-founder of the GAA, along with Michael Cusack, was Maurice Davin, who served as the organization’s first president. He is still a highly respected figure in GAA history, as evidenced in 2006, when the southern stands at Croke Park (the GAA’s primary stadium and the location of the organization’s headquarters) were renamed the

Davin stands in Maurice's honor. The eastern side of the stadium is called the Cusack stands, so Maurice Davin is in lofty company. Though the character of Davin in *Portrait* is based on Joyce's acquaintance George Clancy, the fictional surname is likely not an accident, and Davin's uncle "Mat Davin, the athlete," may be a reference to Maurice.

<sup>45</sup> Ciaran O'Neill points out that for Patrick Pearse and many other nationalistic schoolteachers, education in Irish myth was a method of instilling in Irish youths a sense of national pride. The mythical character most often presented "as emblematic of a young Gaelic role model was that of the mythical Cúchulainn, rehabilitated by Gaelic revival writers in the 1880s. . . . [Cúchulainn] could rival a Tom Brown or Jack Harkaway in the battle to capture boys' imaginations" (151–52). Davin appears to have been reared on such stories, which have had the desired effect and engendered in him an unwavering sense of Irish nationalism.

<sup>46</sup> The Shan Van Vocht ("Sean-Bhean bhocht" in Irish) translates as "poor old woman" and is a traditional personification of Ireland. It is perhaps best known as the title of a rebel song of 1798 in which the old woman speaks of French aid for the revolution and of a brighter, non-colonial future for Ireland. The title character of Yeats's *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* and the milk woman in the first episode of *Ulysses* are both incarnations of the Shan Van Vocht.

<sup>47</sup> As opposed to a "wild goose," a term which by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century referred to expatriate Irishmen who prefer living abroad to living in an Ireland ruled by Britain.

<sup>48</sup> "Nation" here is a bit of a slippery concept, since Ireland was still under British rule at the time and had not yet achieved the status of an independent, modern nation-state.

However, based on the comments of Stephen, of Davin, and of countless historical

figures of the time, Ireland in 1902 (or in 1914, when Joyce finished writing *Portrait*) certainly qualifies as a nation culturally speaking, even if not yet as a political entity.

<sup>49</sup> Holyhead is the closest major port on Great Britain to Ireland, and is connected to Dublin by a frequently travelled ferry route. It thus acts as a metonym for leaving the country.

<sup>50</sup> Joyce's non-fictional writings verify that he believes rhythm is an important component of beauty and art, and it is thus not surprising that it plays a substantial role in shaping *A Portrait of the Artist*. In his Paris notebook, Joyce writes, "Rhythm seems to be the first or formal relation of part to part in any whole or of a whole to its part or parts, or of any part to the whole of which it is a part . . . . Parts constitute a whole as far as they have a common end" ("Aesthetics" 145). He penned this idea March 25, 1903, roughly a year before beginning the composition of *Portrait*, and this definition is particularly applicable to *Portrait* because the novel is episodic; it is composed of a number of distinct parts. According to Joyce's theory, the parts constitute a whole insofar as they maintain unity (to use Stephen's beloved Aristotelian terminology) of purpose. In chapter five of *Portrait*, as Stephen Dedalus discusses beauty with Lynch, he gives a definition of rhythm similar to the one found in Joyce's notebook: "Rhythm, said Stephen, is the first formal esthetic relation of part to part in any esthetic whole or of an esthetic whole to its part or parts or of any part to the esthetic whole of which it is a part" (*P* 206).

<sup>51</sup> For more on Bakhtin and historical time in the novel, see Introduction, page 14-15.

Also see Bakhtin, "The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism."

<sup>52</sup> Swales's terms (*Nebeneinander* and *Nacheinander*) of course find a prominent place in Stephen's thoughts near the beginning of episode three of *Ulysses*, showing that even

after *Portrait's* chronological conclusion, the dialectical interchange between these two concepts is still very much with Stephen, affecting his thoughts and actions throughout June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1904.

<sup>53</sup> This situation is akin to Jameson's assessment of third-world literature, but it occurs in a western European country.

<sup>54</sup> Even as recently as January 2012, Rushdie had been forced to abandon plans to appear at the Jaipur Literary Festival due to credible threats of an assassination attempt, and subsequent plans to allow him to address the festival crowd by videolink had to be scrapped because of potential violent riots. See Jason Burke and William Dalrymple.

<sup>55</sup> Compare the opening paragraphs of the two novels. *Midnight's Children* begins:

I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more . . . On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clockhands joined in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. (*MC* 3)

*David Copperfield* opens with the following pronouncement from its protagonist:

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was

remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry,  
simultaneously. (Dickens *David Copperfield* 1)

<sup>56</sup> Rushdie wrote a short story, “The Prophet’s Hair,” which gives a fictional account of the missing relic incident. The story is included in his collection *East, West*.

<sup>57</sup> Neil ten Kortenaar emphasizes the significance of hybridity in *Midnight’s Children*, arguing that the novel highlights two interconnected modes of hybridity. It involves cultural hybridity, dealing with the intermingling of England and India, East and West, Muslim and Hindu, etc.; and textual hybridity, dealing with the novel’s narrative structure. The textual hybridity often takes the form of magical realism, which emphasizes the novel’s “juxtaposition of two normally incompatible frameworks” (Ten Kortenaar 17). Moreover, Ten Kortenaar claims that magical realism “is the literary expression of cultural hybridity” (17). Just as the magical and the historical are blended within the novel to the point where it is virtually impossible to distinguish one from the other, elements from cultural binary oppositions are likewise mixed.

<sup>58</sup> Amritsar itself is symbolic of the multi-faceted and hybrid nature of India. It is the spiritual center of Sikhism in India (the nation’s fourth largest religious group), and the site of the Harmandir Sahib (known colloquially as The Golden Temple).

<sup>59</sup> A Hartal is literally a day of mourning. The words was used as a symbolic name for a general strike, which closed virtually all shops, avenues of transportation, and essentially brought India to a standstill as a form of non-violent protest. However, as the Amritsar incident illustrates, a large number of angry protesters with no employment to occupy their time for the day can sometimes turn into unexpected violence, and sometimes government or military responses are even more violent. Gandhi organized several

Hartals during his career. The one alluded to in chapter two of *Midnight's Children* actually took place on April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1919, not April 7<sup>th</sup> as recorded by Saleem. This incident is one of Saleem's numerous factual errors.

<sup>60</sup> The Rowlatt Act (1919) extended emergency measures that had been in place in British India during WWI. Aadam Aziz, echoing the concerns of many actual historical persons, believes the British will use the law as a means of inhibiting political agitation.

<sup>61</sup> Saffron and green are two of the three colors (along with white) of the broad horizontal stripes on the national flag on India. The basic tricolor design was first proposed in 1931, but the final version of the flag—which contains the Ashok Chakra in the middle of the white stripe—was not approved until July, 1947.

<sup>62</sup> Gregory Castle argues that the failure of smooth socialization is a hallmark of the modernist *Bildungsroman*, and it leads to successful *Bildung* in the classical Germanic sense, successful inner, personal cultivation and development.

<sup>63</sup> One of Spinoza's fundamental postulates reads: "We strive to affirm, concerning ourselves and what we love, whatever we imagine to affect with joy ourselves or what we love. On the other hand, we strive to deny whatever we imagine affects with sadness ourselves or what we love" (83 III.P25).

<sup>64</sup> See *Ulysses* 2.377.

<sup>65</sup> The tendency to approach *Midnight's Children* from this historical perspective may also be the result of the novel's initial reception. When *Midnight's Children* was first published in 1981, it received an unusually large amount of attention from readers and critics in the UK, the rest of Europe, and the US. It was just the third novel by a so-called "commonwealth writer" to earn the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, and Rushdie held a

much larger popular audience than the other two, V.S. Naipaul and Nadine Gordimer. (Rushdie despises the term “commonwealth writer,” but it is often used in this setting because the Booker prize is open to citizens of the Commonwealth of Nations. For more information on Rushdie’s views, see “‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does not Exist,” *Imaginary Homelands*.) Rushdie’s popularity has also been more enduring than Naipaul’s or Gordimer’s, earning him the 1993 Booker of Bookers Prize, and the 2008 Best of the Booker. (Gordimer was shortlisted for the latter.) This lasting popularity is perhaps partly due to his extra-literary fame following the fatwa, but is surely rooted in the popular and scholarly acclaim for his books, *Midnight’s Children* foremost among them.

<sup>66</sup> Saleem’s remark bears an unmistakable echo of Stephen Dedalus’s comment to Mr. Deasy, “History . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (*U* 2.377).

<sup>67</sup> Daniels’s study is rooted in the theories of Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*), Etienne Balibar (“The Nation Form: History and Ideology”), and Anthony Smith (*Myths and Memories of the Nation*). Smith’s theories are particularly important for Daniels.

<sup>68</sup> Actually, the novel contains a second miniature *Bildungsroman* in the story of Gibreel Farishta’s youth, but Saladin’s story is more relevant to my discussion.

<sup>69</sup> In “Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Space,” Friedman argues that the traditional understanding of modernism—“a loose affiliation of aesthetic movements that unfolded in the first half of the twentieth century” (426)—is an insufficient model. It is problematic firstly from a humanistic perspective, insofar as it is highly Euro-centric and places literature from the global south in a subordinate position. It is also problematic from a scholarly perspective, as this

understanding of modernism is limiting; it fails to account for the modernities from other parts of the world, which often occurred in the decades following World War II.

(Friedman argues that the notion of an entrance into modernity represented by a single, marked rupture with the past near the end of the nineteenth century should be replaced by a multiplicity of modernities, each representing such a rupture for a particular culture or region.) This shortcoming results in flawed understanding of the world of modernity/modernities, and creates a critical isolation contrary to the “[p]ervasive border crossings—geopolitical, psychological, spiritual, sexual, moral, and aesthetic—[which] underlie the cultural imaginary of modernism” (Friedman, “Cultural Parataxis” 36). Such border-crossings create a cosmopolitan spirit of globalization that permeates much of modernist art and literature, and a purely Euro-centric view of modernism is therefore contrary to the essence of modernism.

<sup>70</sup> For more on Stephen and Davin, see chapter 1, pages 69-74.

<sup>71</sup> There are two articles of clothing typically associated with colonialism: the pith helmet, and khaki shorts. The symbolic resonances of both items appear frequently in postcolonial texts. See, for instance, the solar topee in Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (100–103), or Major Plunkett’s khaki shorts in Derek Walcott’s *Omeros* (24–25).

<sup>72</sup> In *Ulysses*, Stephen’s mother becomes another idealized woman who loses her human properties in Stephen’s mind.

<sup>73</sup> This war did not formally end until 1899, when Khalifa Abdullah was killed at the battle at Umm Diwaykarat, and it was 1899 that the UK and Egypt formally established the Anglo-Egyptian condominium to rule Sudan. However, the battle at Omdurman so



devastated Abdullah's forces that it was, from a military standpoint, the culmination of the conflict.

<sup>74</sup> The narrator points out that Abdul Mannan exaggerates his description of the government incompetence. The narrator had been gone only seven months, and construction on the building had not yet begun when he was last there. Abdul Mannan's statement that they'd been working on it for a year is clearly hyperbolic.

<sup>75</sup> Mahjoub's frustration also provides a subtle indication of the way priorities have changed in Sudan over the previous fifty years. This conversation takes place in 1956, and Mahjoub is extremely concerned with the ability of children all over the country to attend school. In 1907, on the other hand, many Sudanese "thought of schools as a great that had come to them with the armies of occupation" (*SMN* 20).

<sup>76</sup> The narrator refrains from mentioning the colonial government while thinking about the pumps replacing the water-wheels. Any such specific reference to colonial government is rare in the text.

<sup>77</sup> As of January 2013, a search of the James Joyce Checklist yielded zero results for the search terms "Dangarembga" and "Nervous Conditions." The Checklist, hosted online by the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas, contains a running bibliography (updated quarterly) which includes secondary works about Joyce, new editions of his works, translations, adaptations, etc.

<sup>78</sup> G. B. Tennyson and Jerome Buckley exclusively use male pronouns when describing the *Bildungsroman*, and they implicitly reject the possibility of a female *Bildungsheld*.

<sup>79</sup> Of the three examples of female *Bildungshelden* Hirsch uses to illustrate this argument, the first is Maggie Tulliver from *The Mill on the Floss*. Maggie, like the Beautiful Soul

develops only by turning inward, by focusing on inward development. Perhaps most importantly, “Maggie’s return home constitutes a circular development. . . : the landscapes she has explored and in which she has become lost have found no actualization in her work or in the love of Stephen. Their *only* outward analogue is home” (Hirsch 36). And for Maggie, this return home results in a literal death, drowning in the Floss. Hirsch’s use of George Eliot’s novel is noteworthy because of the way this reading of it interacts with Jed Esty’s interpretation of the novel in *Unseasonable Youth*. Esty presents *The Mill on the Floss* as a prelude to the *Bildungsromane* of the colonized margins of the British Empire which constitute the focus of his study. In particular, he focuses on the novel’s treatment of history, and the relationship between that treatment and *Bildung*. He argues that “*The Mill on the Floss* offers new perspectives about the recuperative work done by nationalism during England’s industrial period and new insights about the way that novels of education have always been entangled with the eschatologies of national myth” (53–54). In other words, *The Mill on the Floss* is as much about changes in England as it is about changes in Maggie or other characters. Maggie’s return home and drowning anticipates the decline of Empire. Hirsch’s treatment of *Mill* in terms of female *Bildung* and Esty’s treatment of it in terms of the “parallel narratives” of protagonist and nation imply a connection between the difficulties of female development and the struggles of national dominion and national autonomy. A *Bildungsroman* with a female protagonist is therefore an appropriate form for a national allegory.

<sup>80</sup> Noomé’s study examines the South African *Soekie* series by Ela Spence, the *Anne of Green Gables* Series by L. M. Montgomery, the *Pucki* series by Magda Trott, and Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* and *Good Wives*.

<sup>81</sup> The phrase “African *Bildungsroman*” raises questions of terminology. This phrase, as used by Walter Collins, Apollo Amoko, and several others, typically does not include writers from the entire continent of Africa. Rather, usage of the term is largely limited to sub-Saharan Africa. There are some advantages to this distinction; using different terminology for Mediterranean African, for the primarily Arab region in the northeast of the continent, and for other regions allows for greater specificity. However, the use of the phrase “African *Bildungsroman*” to refer solely to sub-Saharan writers also has significant drawbacks. In particular, it contains the implicit suggestion that peoples from the northern part of the continent do not fully qualify as “African,” that they should be referred to as something else. For the sake of consistency, when discussing ideas of other critics I will use their terminology.

<sup>82</sup> Apollo Amoko elaborates on historical origins of the African *Bildungsroman*:

Like its European forebear, the emergence of the African *Bildungsroman* coincided with a period of radical transformation and social upheaval when, in the wake of colonialism, the traditional ways of being were seriously undermined, if not forever transformed. Like its European counterpart, the African *Bildungsroman* focuses on the formation of young protagonists in an uncertain world. (200)

<sup>83</sup> Tobias Boes identifies, in *Portrait*, the epiphany as the primary narrative device which propels the story in a linear manner through disjunctive breaks with the past, and the leitmotif as the method of recursion which links the present and future to previous events. See Chapter 1, pp. 74-77.

<sup>84</sup> Historical note: Tambu starts at Sacred Heart at age 15, in January 1971. This is the year after the declaration of the Republic of Rhodesia, the unrecognized state considered “a racist minority régime” by the UN. Given the state of affairs in the country at the time, attending a predominantly white school could have enormous professional advantages for someone like Tambu.

<sup>85</sup> The *Chimurenga* is the guerilla war, led by Robert Mugabe’s ZANU and Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU, against the government led by Ian Smith, the aforementioned “racist minority regime.” The word “*Chimurenga*” is Shona and roughly translates as “revolutionary struggle.”

<sup>86</sup> Saleem Sinai could be included in this list, although his departure from India takes him only as far as Pakistan, and then to East Pakistan/Bangladesh. He never travels to England or continental Europe.

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