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Conception and articulation of the artist's self in J. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* & J. Hawkes's *Travesty*.

Salwa Karoui- Elounelli*

Résumé :

La question que nous nous proposons dans cet article porte sur l'écriture du Soi, mais aussi sur ce qu'elle implique comme complicité esthétique entre la fiction Moderne et la fiction Postmoderne à même leurs différences incommensurables. En travaillant sur deux romans – *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* et *Travesty* - qui représentent tour à tour le mouvement moderniste et le mouvement postmoderniste, notre dessein principal consiste à articuler ce que cette écriture du Soi véhicule comme affinités réelles et aspects de continuité qui font ancrer l'expérimentation Postmoderne dans les innovations techniques et thématiques des Modernistes, mais tout étant attentif à ce que cette écriture recèle comme points de clivage entre les deux mouvements, notamment en ce qui concerne leurs conceptions du Soi et les manières dont il s'articule au langage.

1. Introduction

If Modernist and Post-Modernist fictions are said to incarnate a new sensibility to the image and 'self' of the artist, it is mainly because those major movements in literature have been noted for their deep and constant revisions of the terms in which art, language, and reality are conceptualized.

The new sensibility to the human condition that the artists of the beginning of the twentieth century started to discover in themselves, lies at the basis of the notion of Modernism.¹ The new, Modernist conceptions of art and artistic self as being autonomous, but also capable of creating order and meaning in a chaotic world, are the major manifestations of that new sensibility. With the advent of Post-Modernism, the relations between self and

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¹. For more details about the philosophical and scientific basis (Nietzsche, Freud, Einstein) of the new conception of the human nature that Modernism adopts, see Margaret Davies, "La Notion De Modernité," *Cahiers du 20ème Siècle* 5, (1975): pp.9-30.

world and between art and world have been more deeply revised as language and discourse have been insistently brought to the issue.

In this paper, some of the significant changes brought about by the Post-Modern conceptualization of the artist's self and subjectivity are noted within a comparative reading of a Modern and a Post-Modern text: J. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and in J. Hawkes's *Travesty*. In this reading, the focus will be on the conception and rendering of the artist's self in each novel, in order to point to some significant distinctions between the Modernist and Post-Modernist assumptions, especially in their views of the self in relation to art and language.

2. Articulation of the artist's self in *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Travesty*

In both novels the structural and thematic focus is on the figure of the artist; it is the author's own artistic self which is implicated in Joyce's *Portrait* and Hawkes's *Travesty*, the first being a semi- autobiography and the second encompasses Hawkes's own conception of the artist and his theory of fiction. A major difference in technique between the two works lies in the fact that Joyce's method and narrative structure dramatize the stages of development through which the artist goes *before* the full assumption of his artistic vocation. Hawkes's narrative, on the other hand, delineates a character who is not only already conscious of his identity as artist, but who is also- already- in the process of realizing his artistic self and design by driving his car (with his daughter and friend aboard) into a planned crash. The process depicted in *Travesty* is not that of a development (as in Joyce's narrative); it is rather presented in terms of a linear movement in which the moving car and the on-going narrative discourse form a single unity. The structure in Hawkes's novel is based on a spatial movement in which the textual space stands as an ironic double (or substitute) for the concrete road that Papa is supposed to be travelling.

In *A Portrait of the Artist*,² Stephen's artistic self is articulated as a consciousness and coherent subjectivity emanating from the stages of development through which Stephen the boy goes. The development is determined within the boy's (and young man's) relations to family, church, and country. The movement towards disillusionment and detachment (as far as the

². (New York: The Viking Press, 1964). Further references will be to this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

artist's connection with those institutions is concerned) is not simple; it involves fluctuations and hesitations within which Stephen experiences illusionary versions of the self (as a saint, a hero from the early times of the church, and as a social reformer³).

In fact, the assertion of the artist's self comes first in negative terms (that is, in terms of what Stephen is not) and is followed by a positive assertion in the moment Stephen faces the prophetic affinity between himself and his namesake, Daedalus:

Now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a prophecy (...) Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves (...) a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being? (168-9)

Thus, Stephen discovers his vocation for art in the fabulous echoes of his name; that is, his discovery is made possible within his habit of reflection about language. Indeed, Stephen's fascination with language, with the relations between its sounds and meanings, is emphasized as an essential phase in his development. The artist's self is already (before we reach chapter five) suggested to incarnate a particular, honed sensibility to the verbal realm of experience, to the ambiguous nature of language and to the question of its relation to reality. Even in learning to write, we 'see' Stephen struggling with the letters he tries to transcribe, in the concrete situation of the classroom:

But the lines of the letters were like fine invisible thread and it was only by closing his right eye tight tight and staring out of the left eye that he could make out the full curves of the capital. (p.46)

Hence, in *Portrait*, the artist's self evolves out of its immediate social, religious and educational context, and it evolves through its desire to comprehend language (the nature of words, the relations between words and

³. See *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* p.147: "Every morning he hallowed himself anew in the presence of some holy image (...) His day began with an heroic offering of its every moment of thought or action for the intention of the sovereign..." pp.96-98: Stephen attempts to play the role of the social reformer and 'leader' by helping his family solve their financial problems, but in vain: "all his novel enterprises fell to pieces (...) How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life [p.98]."

sounds, etc.) as well as through the senses (Stephen's perception is quite dependent on his sensory experiences at the early stages of his boyhood). As one of Joyce's critics suggests, the child's desire to know and discover (the meaning relations: between senses and words, between himself and the universe, etc.), does not only attest the artist's self, "but also that self in definitive confrontation with its material challenge."⁴

In *Travesty*, the privileged man (or Papa) presents his aesthetic theory of the imagination as the frame within which his artistic self is perceived and defined ("aesthete of death at high speed [p.18]"). The artist's self is also limned through the occasional glimpses, in the narrator's uninterrupted monologue, of his family and love relationships (with Honorine, Chantal, with Monique his mistress), as well as his negative attitude towards the state of culture ("ours is a landscape of indifferent hunters and vanished lovers [p.62]"). Like Joyce's narrator- to a certain extent- Papa's rambling discourse invites us to a glimpse at the artist's self partly through its sense of and attitudes towards the social and the cultural.

Like Stephen, Papa also displays his artistic sensibility by drawing attention to language, to words and names ("Chantal and Honorine- what a pair of names [p.13].") The very narrative structure, being a single monologue presented by Papa as a dialogue (he implies that there is a conversation going on between him and Henri, but we have access only to Papa's discourse), thematizes the issue of the nature of narrative fiction in its relation to language and discourse. What Hawkes's narrator mostly draws our attention to is the unsolved paradox inherent in language and that traps the artist in its web and problematizes the Modernist sense of self as a coherent subjective entity. The privileged man dramatizes this entrapment in his own interpretative strategies. At one moment, for instance, he blames Henri (his friend the poet) and all poets for their tendency to distort in their lives (in situations of extreme fear, according to Papa) the meanings they articulate in their poetry:

That is precisely the trouble with you poets. In your pessimism you ape the articulation you achieve in written words. You are able to recite your poems (...) You consider yourselves quite exempt from all the rules of behavior that constrict us less- privileged men (...) Yet in the last extremity you cry moral wolf. (13-14)

⁴. Augustine Martin, "The Artist and the labyrinth," *James Joyce. The Artist and the Labyrinth* Augustine Martin. Ed. (London: Ryan Pub. Co., 1990) p.22.

From papa's point of view, Henri's choice of the word "murder" (a word full of the echoes of conventional moral judgement) to refer to the 'artist's' design betrays the poet's entrapment in a process of an absurd, distorting imitation of his own claimed privilege as 'creator' of words and meanings. But ironically, this is Papa's own situation; the imitation of his theory of "this utter harmony between design and debris [p.17]," that Papa is pursuing through the driving and the narrative discourse itself, is inevitably a distortion of the artist's conceptualized image. Through the destructive and murderous design of his artist, Hawkes draws a poignant picture of the view that creation is distortion (even a violent one). In Hawkes's fiction, the distortion of the conventional relation between art and reality, and of novelistic conventions, can be discerned in the mode of parody pervading the writer's works.⁵ The artist's self is already trapped and determined within the irony of the paradox that creation is imitation which can only be distortion and even destruction. If Papa is capable of appreciating and even devoting himself to one aspect of the paradoxes involved in artistic creation (the paradox of design in debris), he, nevertheless, remains incapable of controlling the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in art and in language. Papa is trapped also in the paradox that informs Post-Modernist art as John Barth has described it; it is the paradoxical situation of the artist in this age of "felt ultimacies", who "transcends what had appeared to be his refutation" only by turning "the felt ultimacies of our time into material and means for his work."⁶

The awareness of the doubleness, indeterminacy and contradictions of language is not only experienced by the artist as an emblem of his artistic self and sensibility (as in Joyce's *Portrait*). Rather, in *Travesty*, the aesthetic theory and the artistic self *per se* are articulated within the sliding of meaning and the contradictions of language. In enumerating the connotations of the word

⁵. The significance of the mode of parody in Hawkes's fiction has occasionally but pertinently been touched upon by critics such as Patrick O'Donnell (*Passionate Doubts*. Iowa: Iowa University Press, 1986) and Donald G. Greiner (*Comic Terror. The Novels of John Hawkes*. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1974). The parody of detective fiction in Hawkes's *The Lime Twig* has been dealt with in K. L. Boutrous's "Parody in Hawkes' *The Lime Twig*." *Critique* xv, 2 (1975): pp.49-56. D.W. Madden's "Versions of the Things. The Extended Parody in the Contemporary American Novel" (Diss., University of California, Davis, 1980) discusses also Hawkes's parody of the Western novel in *The Beetle Leg* and the parody of the detective in *The Lime Twig*. I tried to discuss Hawkes's parody of the novel genre and of narrative discourse in "The Practice of Parody in the Fiction of John Hawkes." (Diss. University of Tunis I, 1998).

⁶. John Barth, "The literature of Exhaustion." M. Bradbury. Ed. *The Novel Today* (London: Fontana, 1977) p78.

“murder” that he rejects (because it does not produce the idea of the “aesthetic death” that he has in mind), Papa lists some of the connotations that are included in *his* conceptualized design. The “blood” and “broken glass,” among the listed connotations that are rejected, are associated later with *his* aesthetic theory of design and debris.⁷ Despite his ability to encompass paradox (design in debris is “the truest paradox” according to Papa), the artist can not totally master the discourse in which his theory is verbalized. Papa is aware of the failure of language to fully realize the artistic self, this is why he pursues this realization in the silence of death (“the explosion that will inaugurate our silence [p.25]” or what he also calls “our private apocalypse”). This is the apocalyptic imagination that Ihab Hassan identifies to be central in what he calls “the literature of silence,”⁸ referring to the Post-Modern literature.

If we consider the contexts - in Joyce’s *Portrait* and Hawkes’s *Travesty*- within which the artist discovers and develops his aesthetic theory, we can see that both artists (Stephen and Papa) experience the genesis of their artistic selves within their acute sensibility to language. For Stephen the word (the name Deedalus) is only a medium through which he reaches the inherent qualities of his namesake and of his art (his ability to transmute the “sluggish matter of earth” into a sense of artistic self that is “imperishable”). Papa’s artistic self- on the other hand- is discovered after an ‘incident’ (or accident?) in his past life when he *might* have hit with his car a girl who was crossing the road with an old poet. He refers to this hypothetical incident as “the formative event of my early manhood [p.125]” that “convinced me of the validity of the fiction of living,” but it is also “something of a travesty [p.47].” Thus, that decisive event was only a mocking imitation, but determining, as well, of “the nature of the man I had just become [p.47].” The discovered self is only a ‘hypothesis,’ a ‘travesty’ that “disguises the hollowness within”⁹; it hides the non-existence of an origin, as Patrick O’Donnell describes it.¹⁰ The verbal design which is the narrative before us, and in which the self and the aesthetic

⁷. See *Travesty*, (New York: New Directions, 1976) p.14, and p.58.

⁸. Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn. Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Ohio: Ohio State U.P., 1987). Trying to account for the “apocalyptic metaphors” in the Postmodern literature which- according to him- establishes silence as a central metaphor for itself, Hassan posits that “Implied in them is something close to a total rejection of Western history and civilization. They also imply a rejection of human identity, the image of man as the measure of all things [p.5].”

⁹. Patrick O’Donnell, *Passionate Doubts. Designs of Interpretations in Contemporary Fiction*, p. 24.

¹⁰. O’Donnell, pp.24-25.

theory are “stitched” patterns -to use O'Donnell's expression-¹¹ becomes the ‘authentic’ version of the incident/ accident itself. A reversal of the hierarchical relation between discourse and reality and between the imagination and reality is again emphasized, challenging- thus- the very notion of self. But the reversibility is not final; the irony that frames the whole narrative means that the question itself about those relations (as well as the tension it involves) is thematically highlighted.

In Joyce's and Hawkes's novels also, the artist's self is articulated within its contrast or affinity, or even identity, with other versions of the self. In *Portrait*, Stephen's assertion of his artistic self comes in the terms that disavow the religious vocation; the view of the self as priest is rejected because it is fictitious. The possibility of priesthood is embraced in the discourse about the artistic vocation, only to be overcome by giving the religious register a new content:

This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar. (169)

Stephen identifies art as his vocation by associating it with self-expression, while self-expression itself is conceived as an aim to be reached by refusing to serve family, country, and church (: “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art...[pp.246-7]”). In practice, however, and as he writes his first verses, Stephen faces the entrapment of his artistic discourse in the religious register of the Catholic church (“In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh [p.217]”). He even faces - not without shock- the possibility that the artist's imagination produces an image of the self as “A Monk!” and can even create unity in the artist's thoughts around “ the radiant image of the eucharist [p.221].” But this is suggested to be a necessary- and probably painful- step in the development of the artist whose consciousness is still haunted by the image of the illusionary ‘self’ as priest (“a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life [221].” In *Portrait*, the superimposition of the ‘real’ (artist) and the ‘fictional’ (priest) self seems to be

¹¹ . See O'Donnell's account of Hawkes's articulation of the artist's self in *Travesty* in relation to the notion of disguise implied in the concept of travesty. In Hawkes's novel, O'Donnell insists, it is disguise that hides emptiness through “ a verbal stitching of the self into the cloth of narrative [p.24].”

unproblematically located at the level of style (imagery). The issue with Stephen, the yet immature artist, seems to be about *how* to express the artistic self rather than *what* is that self.

In *Travesty*, Papa confronts the other version of the artist (the murderer), not as a kind of 'ghost' haunting the creative imagination; it is rather as 'true' version of the artist's self as Papa's, and it keeps resonating in our minds during the reading process. Hawkes's narrator accepts that his 'self' be articulated in the tension between 'artist' and 'murderer':

But perhaps you are right. Perhaps 'murder' is the proper word (...) Mine is not a fixed and predictable personality, and you may be right. (p.46)

The tension is already assumed by the artist who is conscious not only of the indeterminacy of meaning, but also of the inevitable fact that the conception of the self cannot escape that indeterminacy. In *Travesty*, the tension is what the reader- not the artist- experiences (even when listening to Hawkes himself defining writing, as he does, as a criminal act¹²) because his complacent acceptance of the conventional articulation of the concepts of identity and art in exclusive terms is shaken.

In *Portrait*, the fact that the young artist's conception of his art and self is determined by the religious register, dramatizes the influence of culture and the little training (the only elevated style that Stephen can so far imitate is that of the religious discourse). The haunting image of the priest does not challenge the unity of the heretic artist's self, nor does it challenge the idea that this self exists beyond its discursive articulation. Hawkes's artist, on the other hand, foregrounds the assumption that his 'self' exists *within* the tensions of discourse, the sliding of meanings and oppositions that are the stock-in-trade of language. The privileged man does not only accept that the artist's self be equated with the word "murderer," but he also believes that the word itself does not have any definitive, fixed meaning, and that a new semantic scope can be associated with it ("I ask you only that you then find new and more pertinent connotations of that ugly word [p.47]"). But to try to sense the artist's self by creating new connotations for the word "murderer" (as he invites us to do), is to contribute in anchoring that self in the discursive realm.

¹². See "John Hawkes. Interviewed by Robert Scholes," *The New Fiction. Interviews with Innovative American Writers*, Joe D. Bellamy. Ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974) p.108.

3. The Modernist and Post-Modernist conceptions of the artist's self

The discussion of the articulation of the artist's self in Joyce's *Portrait* and Hawkes's *Travesty*, may allow us to consider some of the distinctions between the Modernist and post-Modernist conceptions of self that the two books respectively imply, mainly in relation to discourse, and to the notions of authorship and authority.

3.1. Conception of the self in relation to discourse

Modernism, as it has often been stressed, promulgates the autonomy of art and the inherently subjective nature of creation and artistic vision. However, and while emphasizing the subjective, Modernist art does not undermine the unity and centredness of the self.¹³ The artist's self maintains its unity and harmony because it does not seem to be subjected to the indeterminacies of language.

In *Portrait*, Stephen experiences puzzlement over words and the sounds of language only as part (and symptom) of his developing artistic sensibility. The wholeness and unity of his 'self' are not impeded by the reality of language. As Stephen, the Modernist artist, implies, it is the subjective creativity that makes meaning and order possible through the idiosyncratic style and vision. Stephen alludes to the re-creation of life (by imposing on it the order and harmony of art) as the major vocation of the artist. The aesthetic conception and discourse (or theory) are not only emblematic of an artistic self-expression, but they are also the artist's means to create order and beauty in a chaotic world:

To try slowly and humbly and constantly to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison gates of our soul, an image of the beauty we have come to understand- that is art. (207)

In *Travesty*, on the other hand, we sense a different Post-Modern conception of the artist's self in its relation to discourse. As a Post-Modernist

¹³. See for instance Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992) p.254. See also Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent. Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981) p.107: through the analysis of character portrayal in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, he implies that with the early Modernists, the notion of character's essence and self still holds ("Character has not been dissolved, nor has the self been lost."

text, *Travesty* depicts a decentred and fragmentary self shaped and determined within the fragmentation of language itself. The dispersal of the self is rendered at the levels of narrative discourse and narrative structure,¹⁴ as the privileged man keeps shifting from one topic or story to another in his uninterrupted monologue. In other words, the depiction of a self defined through the same fragmentation that inheres in language implies that the artist's self does not stand outside language.

The post-Modernist artist, as Hawkes's narrator demonstrates, is not conceptualized as a coherent, autonomous self, but he is rather conceptualized within the terms of inter-subjectivity. Within the rambling discourse of the privileged man, the self becomes a process of auto-expression bereft of telos. Such self, without unity, without telos, can only achieve expressivity by assuming its inter-subjective nature. Papa's artistic self can be recognized only with regard to the multiple versions of his subjectivity (as poet, aesthete of death, and murderer), and in relation to the subjectivity of the listener (Henri) or the reader whom the narrator addresses as "you." The artist does not only emphasize his Post-Modern stance by acknowledging and incorporating the receiver in his enunciation (as Linda Hutcheon¹⁵ would say), but also by asserting the textual position of the subject (the 'you' is an empty indication that can be filled only at the moment of the reading by the particular receiver), he problematizes the Modernist notion of subjectivity and challenges it. Papa begins the narrative with the assertion of the self as opposed to the other (Henri, Chantal, the reader), but in the course of the narrative he displays the fact that the articulation of his artistic self depends on the textual and inter-subjective relations between him and reader. The inherent emptiness of the "you" created in the fabric of the narrative discourse ironically points to the same emptiness of the celebrated "I"; the whole narrative discourse enacts a defiance of our sense of subjectivity and foregrounds the problematic of

¹⁴. Critics of Post-Modern literature seem to disagree about the degree and the level(s) at which the dispersal of the self is rendered. McHale for instance posits that: "fragmentation and dispersal of the self occurs in postmodernist fiction at the levels of language, narrative structure (...) rather than at the level of the fictional world[p.254]," while Wilde suggests that the rendering of a 'lost' or 'dissolved' self in late Modernism and Post- Modernism destabilizes our sense of character's unity (see especially p. 155, his analysis of E. M. Forster's later works p.78, p.88, and of Post-Modernism p.129, p.131-32). Unlike MacHale, I would rather argue that the fragmentation and dispersal rendered in Post-Modern narrative does not leave 'safe' the fictional world; as the fictional world itself is often suggested to be a *verbal* construct, it cannot be the refuge for the self (or the level at which the self is re-captured) from the fragmentation made inevitable by language and narrative structure.

¹⁵. See Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988) pp. 76-85.

defining the self.

Indeed, even Hawkes's critical (parodic) handling of the convention of characterization enhances that aim. The autonomy of the artist's self is dispersed (before being captured !) in the suggestions that the narrator and Henri are versions of the same character: both are artists, Leos, and Henri, like the privileged man, has the face of a criminal. The two lines of verse that appear at the end of the narrative establish an explicit correlation between the subversion of the notion of self and the destabilization of the notion of writing (with its related notions of creativity, authority, etc). Those two lines are said to be in Papa's handwriting, and Papa *might* have written them (p.127) but they are Henri's. The act of writing through which the artist's self in Joyce's novel substantiates its potential, becomes with the post-Modernist artist an act of re-writing. In some instances in *Portrait*, writing is also suggested to be partly re-writing.¹⁶ However, this conception, shared with the Post-Modernist text, does not undermine the wholeness and unity of the artist's self (even though it already implies the tension of a paradox: recognizing the dependence of the writer on previous texts and asserting the autonomy of his 'self'). In *Travesty*, the artist's discourse is not any longer the realm of the celebration of a unified and autonomous subjectivity, as the notions of self and self-expression through writing are thrust into the 'floating' realm of hypothesis, bringing- thus- the concept of authorship to the novel's 'tapestry' of shaky patterns.

3. 2. *Conception of the self in relation to authorship and authority*

Within the much- repeated discourse about the "death of the author", the Modernist fiction attempts to eclipse the presence of the writer's self and authority for the purpose of showing and dramatizing. Henry James insists that the unity of art should emanate from the unity of the subjective consciousness which is the center from which all the plot unfolds. According to James, the unity that can be brought about through the author's personality is that of "tone and execution."¹⁷ The Modernists have tried to suggest the disappearance of the author's self and the autonomy of the work of art through their narrative methods (the stream of consciousness technique, the first- person narrative). Joyce's *Portrait* is one of the early Modernist texts that show, however, the problematical nature of this creed. Being an autobiography, the novel inscribes the author's self at the same time as it purports a distance (between Joyce and

¹⁶. See *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* p.70, 78.

¹⁷. Henry James, *Theory of Fiction*. James E. Miller, Jr. Ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972) p.157.

Stephen) that allows Joyce to fictionalize the self of the artist (his 'self').

In fact, in practice, and in their insistence on the human consciousness and subjectivity being the pivot of any perceived and rendered reality, the Modernists rehabilitated the subjectivity of the author himself. What is propagated through the Modernist's assertion of the power of art and the conscious mind in bringing order and meaning to the chaotic world, may be what Le Vot describes as the "charismatic" image of the author himself.¹⁸

In Joyce's narrative, Stephen's assertion of the artist's self is partly articulated in the process of differentiation that marks off the self from the others (family, friends, church, etc.). His predilection for the personal, subjective reality (as opposed to the shared reality) that language can reflect, announces the charisma of subjective author and authority the Modernist creed implies. However, the irony with which Joyce treats his artist (when he speaks of his creativity and free imagination but has his aesthetic theory based on Aristotle and Aquinas) already announces the ambivalent stance towards the authority of authorship (the desire to eclipse but also to celebrate the artist's self) which is fully assumed and explicitly foregrounded in the Post-Modernist text.

As David Lodge¹⁹ posits, post-Modernism begins with the recognition of the impossibility of excluding or pretending to ignore the presence of authorship (of the writer's 'self'). Therefore, the artist's self is conceptualized and articulated as part of the fictional fabric; not merely expressed in language but created in language. The fictionalizing of the writer's authority and authorship in *Travesty* (through the thematization of Hawkes's own poetics) overcomes the tension by weaving the sense of authorship within the fictional texture itself.

In Joyce's *Portrait* also the notion of authorship is fictionalized within the autobiographical narrative, but the aim is to assert its authority as creative subjectivity. The ironic allusions to the limits of this authority (because of its subjective nature, and because of the paucity of language's store on which it relies to express itself) do not undermine it, although they imply the writer's uneasiness in dealing with his own authorship. In fact, the irony in *Portrait*

¹⁸. André Le Vot, "Disjunctive and Conjunctive Modes in Contemporary American Fiction," *Trema* I (1976): p.35.

¹⁹. David Lodge, *After Bakhtin. Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990) p.41.

prepares for the Post-Modernist stance which stipulates that the questions of authorship and authority are part of the fictional world itself; they are incorporated within the thematic grid of the novel as questions.

In *Travesty*, authority and authorship are foregrounded as controversial notions of which the author is concerned. In creating a character who incarnates the author's own theory of the creative imagination, Hawkes dares to expose the limits of his theory, but also to acknowledge and assume an 'extreme' and fictional version of his own artistic 'self'; he assumes his 'death' as author but also foregrounds his effort to re-create that artistic self within the "subject position" of the narrator; that is within the limits of the textual boundaries. Linda Hutcheon, in her argument that the Post-Modernist text articulates its meaning in terms of the interaction and 'subject positions' shared by producer and receiver, insists that replacing the word 'author' with 'producer' implies a rejection of the idea of a 'real' or even 'implied' person. The producer "is rather one *inferred* by the reader from his/her positioning as enunciating entity."²⁰ In *Travesty*, the enunciating entity is not the reader, but the narrator who positions the reader in the place of the receiver ("you"). But the narrator himself leads the reader towards inference by assuming a purely fictional and ironical identity (as a privileged man we can take him only ironically) without denying himself authority (in his other name Papa, he appropriates the authority of the father). Thus, the inference to which Hawkes's narrator invites us, can only lead to the accentuation of the issue of author (because the absence of any proper name encourages us to think about Hawkes himself) and authority, which becomes part of the thematic focus of the novel.

In this respect, the Post-Modernist text, *Travesty*, can be viewed as elaborating a more extended and more focused version of the issue of authorship that is already raised in *Portrait*. It is significant that both artists, Stephen and Papa, imagine their own death. When Joyce's artist, still a young boy, tries to define his existence to himself by situating that self vis-à-vis others (place and people) he can only grasp names. It is in his dream, when he sees himself dead and totally merged with the universe, that Stephen reaches a sense of his identity, even though this sense is limited to the appearance of the boy's body ("It was strange to see his small body appear again for a moment: a little boy in a grey belted suit [p.93]"). In another instance, Stephen's emotional reaction to the priest's lengthy speech about hell leads the boy to the

²⁰. Hutcheon, p.81.

imagination of his own death²¹. In both instances, the imagination of one's death seems to be a necessary stage in the development of the artist's peculiar consciousness of his 'self.'

With Hawkes's protagonist the consciousness of the artist's self and experimentation with the artist's potential are also pursued through the imagination of one's death. Certainly, in *Travesty*, the artist's imagination of his own death is much more than a stage in the development of his honed consciousness of his self; Papa's imagination of all the details of the suicidal accident is a celebration of the freedom of all artistic imagination (its freedom from conventions, moral and aesthetic) at the same time as it is an experimentation with its limits. In *Portrait*, Stephen's imagination of his death is a stage he goes through *before* acquiring a consciousness of his artistic vocation, while in *Travesty*, the imagination of the artist's death lies at the center of the celebrated artistic design and artistic creation:

My theory tells us that ours is the power to invent the very world we are quitting. Yes, the power to invent the world we are quitting. (57)

The irony created in both books by the paradox of the assertion of the artist's self through its virtual destruction and negation is thus more prominent and more radical in the Post- Modernist text. Indeed, it is in *Travesty* that we sense the assumption that artistic creation and the artist's self can only be celebrated through their ironic denial.²² The irony in *Portrait* has often a different implication as shall be discussed in the next section.

4. The implications of the irony in Modernist and Post-Modernist conceptions of the artist's self.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as well as *Travesty*, there is significant irony related to the portrayal of the artist. The irony can be first noticed in the way Hawkes and Joyce introduce and dramatize the notion of detachment. In Joyce's narrative, detachment vis-à-vis the protagonist is what the author tries to demonstrate when he treats him ironically. The irony in *A Portrait of the Artist* implies the author's detachment from his fictionalized, re-

²¹. See *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pp.92-3 "The memory of his childhood suddenly grew dim. He tried to call forth some of its vivid moments but could not. He recalled only names (...) watched the firelight (...) and dreamed of being dead, of mass being said for him..." See Also p. 125.

²². Cf. Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn*, p.5: "Revulsion against the self serves as link between the destructive and visionary impulses of modern apocalypse; it prepares for rebirth."

created self, without fully incorporating the implications of the critical detachment (the doubleness of the criticizing self and the parodied/ satirized one). The irony in Joyce's book signals artistic self-consciousness and self-criticism, but the concept of self *per se* remains beyond questioning. In Hawkes's work, on the other hand, the notion of detachment is dramatized in the writer's attitude towards his protagonist (the irony Papa is a victim of) but it is also thematized. It is the artist-surrogate's sense of detachment (the privileged man- like Hawkes himself- speaks of his "cruel detachment") which is ironically presented, but the reader is also aware of a more extended irony that structures the whole narrative: Hawkes cannot be ironical about the claims of his artist without being ironical about his own aesthetic principles that are seriously applied in his works before and after *Travesty*.

Indeed, in *Travesty*, the irony serves the major aim of self-parody through which the writer undertakes a deep revision and questioning of the aesthetic aspects on the basis of which all his previous fictions were structured. Through the ironic relativization of the principles that he is most serious about (artistic detachment and control, the creative imagination that functions through the logic of paradox), Hawkes avoids committing what one of his critics calls "a final irrevocable act."²³ He seems to suggest that the aim of self-expression (which Stephen Dedalus is determined to pursue) has to be transformed into an endless 'game' of expressivity and re-creation of the self that exploits and exposes the indeterminacy and sliding of meaning without ever confining the 'self' within any expression.

The irony created by Joyce's book and Hawkes's *Travesty* does emanate also from the fact that in both novels the realization of the artist's potential remains beyond the narrative itself. Stephen the artist who would explore and practice his own theory does not subsist in *Portrait*. Similarly, the achievement of the artistic design that the privileged man theoretically exposes to us is not part of the Hawkesian narrative. The planned crash does not occur. The effect produced by the two writers is similar but the implications are different.

Indeed, Joyce's exclusion of the mature artist from his book may be related to the difficulty of portraying the creative self at the same time as that self is being creative. In the period of early Modernism, art has not yet

²³. See John Unsworth, "Practicing Post-Modernism. The Example of John Hawkes," *Contemporary Literature* 32, 1 (Spring 1991): p.46.

completed its turning to self-examination and self-reflexivity.²⁴ As Joyce's critics have noted, the Modernist writer went through a painful experience of 'creating' *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* out of the less successful *Stephen Hero* in which Joyce attempted a more complex focus on the artist and his environment.²⁵ In *Portrait*, therefore, the author chose to portray the evolution towards the discovery of the artistic self. The very focus in Joyce's book on particular moments/ scenes in the evolution of the artist (the 'flow' of plot of the classical autobiographical narrative is absent) attests to the impossibility of writing capturing the self in its wholeness. This impossibility is thematized in *Portrait*, when Stephen attempts to write a poem about Parnell, the character whose real identity remains a total mystery, but discovers that "the verses told only of the night and the balmy breeze and the maiden luster of the moon [p.70]." Nevertheless, this does not undermine the potentialities in art for self-expression and aesthetic order and harmony as Stephen asserts.

In fact, irony in *Portrait* as conceived in this work may have some affinities with Alan Wilde's view of what he calls "absolute irony"²⁶ in Joyce's novel and in Modernist works in general, and which has to do with the perception of disjunctions (between self and world) and the attempt to control them by imposing the order and harmony of form on them. Commenting on the *Portrait*'s thematic openness (which according to him, lies in the fact that we cannot tell whether Stephen is meant to be a "creator" or "forger"²⁷), Wilde attributes it to the "openness of absolute irony [which] is a space within the work of art, the gap between desire and its realization."²⁸ Indeed, the ironic gap between the desire to capture the wholeness of self and the achievement of a fragmentary, incomplete picture which is limned in *Portrait* is the emblem of the Modernist "aesthetics of crisis" handed over to Post-Modernist literature.

In *Travesty*, the absence of achievement is an aspect of the novel that is rooted in the Post-Modernist poetics. Hawkes dramatizes the view of literature and writing as an endless game that not only gives up the Modernist project of

²⁴ . John Barth perceives in the diary form at the end of *Portrait* a metafictional comment (it is a fictional device that "turns the artist's mode or form into a metaphor for his concerns [p.78]." In my deduction above, on the other hand, I do not mean to negate such metafictional, self-reflexive dimension, but I am only arguing that it is not prominent nor sustained.

²⁵ . See for instance Augustine Martin, "The Artist and the Labyrinth."

²⁶ . Alan Wilde, p.10, p.28-29.

²⁷ . Wilde, p.39.

²⁸ . Wilde, p.41.

establishing an aesthetic order on the chaotic world and the fragmentary self, but accepts and even celebrates the chaotic and the fragmentary. The impossibility of this game capturing the wholeness or essence of the self is not only occasionally suggested as in *Portrait*, it is rather a central thematic pivot on the basis of which the notions of self and art are conceptualized. The vision of contingency, chaos and absurdity is not only more radical in *Travesty*, the Post-Modernist text, but it is also emblematic of “suspensive irony”²⁹ associated in Wilde’s view with Post- Modernism. In Hawkes’s *Travesty*, as in many of his other works, not only ‘suspends’ our familiar notions of self, subjectivity, order, etc., but it does so within the framework of self- parody, which allows the novelist to foreground the endless openness of his themes. Indeed, the irony in the sustained contrast between Papa’s extremely self-confident discourse about the eminence of the realization of his design and the exclusion of this design from the narrative, substantiates Hawkes’s self-parodying stance. The self- parody thematizes the necessity for the artist to revise and question the very aesthetic principles on which his art depends. One may find the echo of the tendency of antilanguage and antiliterature that Hassan identifies in Post-Modern literature³⁰ in Hawkes’s self- parody which, in its infinite attempts to create, to destroy, to fictionalize the artist’s self, can only present its finding “bracketed”; for “the true self is unknowable and, perhaps, like Beckett’s antihero, unnamable.”³¹ Therefore, Papa, who admits towards the end of the novel being “deadlocked on a lonely road [102]”, asserts that “silence is what we are after, you and I. Silence. I long for it also”; as if in the absence of the knowledge of self and motives the artist tries to usurp the silence of his reader and seek in it his ‘privilege’.

²⁹. Wilde, p. 44: “Postmodern irony, by contrast is suspensive: an indecision about the meanings or relations of things, is matched by a willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen as random and multiple, even, at times, absurd.”

³⁰. Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn*, p.8.

³¹. Hassan, p.8.

5. Conclusion

Within Joyce's and Hawkes's particular conceptions and methods of articulating the artist's self, we can see some of the major differences between the Modernist and the Post-Modernist views of self in relation to language and discourse and to the notion of authorship. However those difference do imply a continuity, rather than a rupture, between Modernism and Post-Modernism. Foregrounding the metafictional issue of the relation between reality and language as Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist* does, is a necessary transition that the Modernist text has to explore in order to lead to the Post-Modernist emphasis and thematization of the question of the relation between self and language. It is also the Modernists' discovery of the chaos that governs the world (as Stephen experiences it) and of the indeterminacy of language, which inevitably led to the Post-Modernist question of whether we can still speak confidently about subjectivity and 'self' as unproblematical concepts.

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