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Style and Communication in *the Mountain and the Valley*

The first page of *The Mountain and the Valley* offers this delightful collocation of vocables:

The afternoon stillness simmered soundlessly in the kitchen. The soft flutter of flame in the stove, the heat-tick of the stove itself, and the gentle rocking of the tea kettle with its own steam, were quieter than silence. (13)¹

Any reader sensitive to prose style will probably think of putting the book down at this point. Flaubert used to spend whole days trying to *remove* an assonance from a page²; what tortures would “stillness simmered soundlessly” have caused him! Besides his over-use of assonance and alliteration, Buckler uses paradox in too precious a way; to say that a flutter, a tick and a gentle rocking are quieter than silence is perhaps one way of emphasizing the point, but it is not really true that the afternoon is soundless. Here is a writer who is trying too hard to secure his effects, whose style calls too much attention to itself.

In his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of the novel, however, Claude Bissell provides a qualified defense for the style. The psychological complexity of the novel and Buckler's search for “the precise and inevitable word” partially explain it; another reason for it is suggested by the mention of some Americans with whom Buckler has affinities:

He is the only Canadian novelist who writes in what might be described as the high metaphysical style—a style of which there have been many examples in American fiction. One thinks of Melville, of Faulkner, of Wolfe, of Bellow. It is not enough simply to catch one precise meaning; the writer must be constantly in search of a whole cluster of meanings. (x)

Faulkner offers a suggestive parallel. Clifton Fadiman has amusingly catalogued his stylistic excesses in *Party of One: the Non-Stop or Life*

Sentence, the Far Fetch or Hypertrophe, the Anti-Narrative, "a set of complex devices used to keep the story from being told", and so on.³ But evidently Faulkner was trying to do what Bissell says he was—trying to crowd into one statement a sense of the complexity of experience, of all the pressures coming from time and heredity and environment and social interaction, instead of composing sentences which were steps in a logical sequence. As Bissell points out, Buckler's central character is aware of such ramifications:

"One sentence accomplished," David speculates, "didn't leave that much less to be told. The idea fronded suddenly like a million-capillaried chart of the bloodstream. He felt the panic of having to encompass every bit of it." It is this "fronding," the reaching out of the mind and sensitivities in many directions in order to encompass the full impact of an idea or a situation, that gives to Buckler's prose its complexity, and often, its vexatious obscurity. (xi)

David has such speculations in his mind because he is an artist or would-be artist, one whose *métier* is capturing experience in words. *The Mountain and the Valley* therefore invites comparison with Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Though the story is framed within a prologue and an epilogue narrated from the perspective of the mature man, Buckler is following one central consciousness for the most part and giving an account of its development. Is this still another excuse for the overwriting? Perhaps the recondite vocabulary and the love of alliteration are there (as in Joyce) because they belong to the imagined character, who lives very much in his own mental world and has not had his mode of thought and composition normalized by contact with people who can correct his excesses. Once his sister Anna has gone away, David knows no one who speaks his language; in fact, his whole life is a search for someone who *can* speak it.

In the *Portrait*, there are two styles, as Harry Levin points out:

Mr. Eliot has made the plausible suggestion that Joyce's two masters in prose were Newman and Pater. Their alternating influence would account for the oscillations of style in the *Portrait of the Artist*. The sustaining tone, which it adopts toward the outside world, is that of precise and mordant description. Interpolated, at strategic points in Stephen's development, are a number of purple passages that have faded considerably.⁴

The use and significance of these two styles has become a matter of great dispute. Was Joyce mocking and ironical in his lyrical passages, or was he deeply moved by them himself and did he expect his reader to be

deeply moved? In Marvin Magalaner's opinion, Stephen's sense of joy in his dedication to art at the end of Chapter 4, with its accompanying vision of a girl who seemed "like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful sea-bird," is rendered "in prose of rhythmic and euphonic loveliness, as rare and fragile as the incident it describes."⁵ Levin, however, considers that Stephen has dipped self-consciously into his word-hoard at this point, and Melvin Friedman is equally disparaging:

When the full rhythm of the chapters devoted to adolescence reaches a kind of crescendo in the opulent writing of the final pages of the fourth chapter, the technique seems a trifle forced. This "epiphany" scene, in which the pure fleshly beauty of the bathing girl arouses Stephen's sensuality, is marred by a kind of fin de siècle rhetoric, which seems far removed from the stream of consciousness writing of the opening chapter . . . The Joyce of *Ulysses* could have intended this passage only as pastiche.

This one specific passage, therefore, apparently provides grounds for enthusiastic empathy with Stephen on the one hand and fairly scornful detachment on the other. What response does the writer want us to take? Is the lush and ornate vocabulary matter for mockery or not? The answer is by no means clear. There are similar difficulties in *The Mountain and the Valley*.

When we look at David Canaan's boyhood, we do not begin as in the *Portrait* with stories about moocows, but we do have a caucus of hens. When David opens his eyes, the prose becomes lyrical and romantic:

April air plucked at the curtains like breath behind a veil. It held a hint of real warmth to come, but the linen chill of the night still sharpened it. Clean limb shadows palpitated with precision and immaculacy on the breathing ground outside. The whole morning glistened fresh as the flesh of an alder sapling when the bark was first peeled from it to make a whistle. (19)

The last image is clearly one within the boy's comprehension; the others are not. Yet the passage evidently says something about the quality of his perceptions—his sensitivity, his responsiveness, his eagerness for experience. When he speaks to his brother, however, his clumsy and ungrammatical language obviously conceals this sensitivity; he makes a deliberate attempt to come down to the level of other people:

"I dreamed," David said, "you and Dad and me was on the log road, only it was funny"—he laughed—"all the trees was trimmed up like Christmas

trees. And then it was like there was two of me. I was walkin with you, and still I was walkin by myself on this other road that didn't have any trees on it . . ." (21).

David's two sides, and even two selves, are thus revealed to us early in the novel. His natural self, the interior one, is imaginative, sensitive, continually constructing its own romantic fable of existence. The self that other people see is a modified self, something which he puts on; when he is with other people he is playing a role. This comes out clearly in his first conversation with Effie; it is just after her father has died, and he expects her to break down and cry, but instead she smiles at him:

He was tongue-tied. You planned how it would be with someone, seeing ahead how their part must go as certainly as your own. Then when the time came, they started off with an altogether different speech or mood, and your part became useless and wooden. (45)

When he is with other males, he plays the role of jester; the scene in which he tells Chris about his dream ends with a bawdy joke about a bull and a cow, and there are many similar episodes in the novel—the last one being his final conversation with Steve as he is on the way to the mountain in the Epilogue, which leaves Steve thinking, "Comical duck. Make a dog laugh. Queer bugger." David has to conceal what he really is.

Are there two styles in the book then, one for David's thoughts and one for the thoughts of others? We might expect such a clear-cut distinction, but it is not consistently maintained. At the end of Chapter II, when Joseph, David and Chris stop to have their lunch on the way to the mountain, the chief uses of the two styles are made clear. "Whenever he looked at the mountain and made the sun-shiver in his mind into a conscious thought," we read, "he knew this was the best time he'd ever had." We hardly need to be told we are looking into David's mind here. In contrast, the description of his father's movements emphasizes their matter-of-fact quality:

Joseph lit his pipe. He tightened the shoulder straps on his pack where they tied around the mouth of the meal bag and the potato pocketed in each bottom corner. They rinsed the tins in the brook and put them back inside the pack. (29).

Similarly in Chapter XVIII, when Joseph and Martha are picking potatoes, the style is simple and many of the sentences begin with subject and verb:

She felt chilly. She got the sweater she'd thrown across the fence. She began to scabble up the potatoes, without stopping to dust them clean. She glanced up the row . . . (127)

When Joseph stops to talk to the doctor, however, some complexity enters into the situation, and the style reflects it. Martha feels "the wind of exile. It sprang up from nowhere, and she was helpless, once she had felt it, not to feed it." The images take on the metaphysical quality to which Bissell refers. Joseph is unable to deal with Martha's mood; he has to wait "until some little thing . . . flushed through her silence like a drop of dye." When he forces himself to speak, she answers, "Anna?", and "As the sound broke from Martha's lips the silence unclasped as if a tourniquet had been cut."

On the whole, however, the thoughts of Joseph and Martha travel in small circles, never far from the matter of the moment, whereas the soaring imaginative quality of David's and Anna's thoughts is stressed not once but many times. The difference between David and the rest is most acutely brought out when he and his father move the huge boulder in the second chapter of Part Four. Buckler shows us David's mind on this day, when his thoughts "smouldered like green wood with all the drafts closed," and then gives us his most extensive look at the nature of Joseph's thoughts. His feelings are not really word-shaped, but they are best conveyed, Buckler makes it obvious, through simple, factual, unelaborate sentences.

Like the father in Wordsworth's *Michael*, Joseph has a notion of a work which father and son can do together, which is a symbol of the joint interest in the land which one generation passes on to another: "That rock there is one my father rolled out, and my sons will look at these rocks I am rolling out today. Someone of my own name will always live in my house." The prose is unadorned, and the images are simple: "My life tastes like fresh bread. The days roll down the week like a wheel." But his father's satisfaction with the work they are doing grinds against David's feelings like sandpaper. What is to his father a source of satisfaction is to him a revelation of his helplessness. When they start to saw a beech log, "It seemed as if he and his father and the log were bound together in an inescapable circuit." He is bound to the life on the farm, and his imaginative life will never find fulfilment.

The decisive phase begins when David gets exasperated with his father and flares out at him in his own language: "We exhaust ourselves and then when we're halfway through you decide the goddam block's too short! If you could ever decide anything in advance . . ." The scene in-

volves an ironic reversal of a common situation, the parent shocked by the language of the child. Here Joseph is shocked into a sudden realization of his son's difference from him, not because of his son's profanity, but because of his uncolloquial diction:

He felt struck, sick. Not by David's anger, but by the words he'd used. He'd known that David possessed words like that; but he'd thought they were Sunday things, like the gold watch fob of his own that lay in the drawer. He thought now: They really belong to him. He's using them against me, he's not just tired, or quick. This place is no kin to him at all, the way it is to me. (165).

Joseph is not entirely right, however. In Joyce's *Portrait*, the central character is set apart by his thoughts and his love of words; he is proud of his isolation, determined to fly from the nets set by his family, his religion, and his country and become a free and independent spirit. David Canaan, however, can neither stay nor leave, and instead of despising the people around him he seeks an understanding with them. The effects of the dramatic performances in the *Portrait* and *The Mountain and the Valley* are strikingly different. The play in the *Portrait* takes on a life of its own: "It surprised him to see that the play which he had known at rehearsals for a disjointed lifeless thing had suddenly assumed a life of its own. It seemed now to play itself, he and his fellow actors aiding it with their parts."⁷ It is an artistic object which stands apart from normal human concerns; it does not impel Stephen towards a sense of community, but it segregates him, so that when it ends he brushes past the crowd in the hall and his own family waiting on the steps and begins to walk at breakneck speed down the hill: "He hardly knew where he was walking. Pride and hope and desire like crushed herbs in his heart sent up vapours of maddening incense before the eyes of his mind." Similarly at the end of his play David rushes away from everybody, but for a very different reason. When the play begins to cohere, it is because he suddenly puts it all together in his mind, and with this sense of pattern comes an awareness of how he fits into his community. The play brings an end to his isolation:

He commanded the silence now, surely, masterfully.
Now they all listened as if to someone who had come home from glory in a far place—not in envy, but endowed with some of the glory themselves, because that one's knowledge of his own wonder before them had no pride in it.

He thought, proudly, but with gratitude toward them:
oh, I'm glad I'm not like the others now. . .

Oh, it was perfect now.

He was creating something out of nothing. He was creating exactly the person the words in the play were meant for. He had the whole world of makebelieve to go to. They had only the actual, the one that *came* to them.

How much better this was than saying the words to himself had been!
(80)

He has found a way to reconcile his own world of make-believe with the common life of others. And he has finally found a means of communicating with others, while still expressing something of his own real nature. No sooner is the way found, however, than it is lost: he oversteps the bounds by kissing Effie (which is not called for in the script) and Jud Spinney lets out a derisive yell: "That's it, Dave. Slap em *to* her!" David rushes off the stage, full of shame and anger—not really at Jud, but at "that goddam treacherous play" and "the foolish treacherous part of himself that listened to books." (83)

If the way to understanding with the community has been ruined, can he find understanding with an outsider? The obvious device for the novelist is to introduce such a person. The first letter David receives from Toby, however, baffles him because it reveals so little about the writer's personality. It is a childlike letter: "I saw your name. I wonder what it's like to live on a farm. Can I come see you sometime? I am fifteen years old." His own reply also contains a number of *I*'s, but it loftily describes the farm life as "quite somnolent" sometimes. When Toby comes to visit, he shows little respect for David's language studies (he has been doing Greek with the minister, Mr. Kendall), and the two of them have to communicate at first through Anna. Eventually David finds that he has to deal with Toby in much the same way as he does with other boys his own age: "He could level his seriousness all at once, with a foolery slanted just right for whomever he might be with; so that, remembering his seriousness other times, their feeling for him was intensified by a gentle incredulity. Toby's eyes flicked into alignment with his." (136) Again, the communication is chiefly on the level of the bawdy joke.

The outsiders with whom he *can* communicate naturally are the two people from Halifax who give him a ride to Newbridge just after his quarrel with his father. His educated speech arouses their interest, and after they have questioned him about his schooling the man talks about giving him a job in his office and the woman compares him to her son Ted. He falls into speech with them easily:

Now they weren't feeding on him with desultory questions, without stirring outside themselves. They were *communicating* with him. They were

all talking together as if they were all alike. He talked to them their way. . . . It was like the knack of a fluid dance that came to him without practice. (169)

Surely here was his heaven-sent opportunity to get outside the narrow limits of his valley and develop his potential abilities. (Ironically, it is Anna who has had the chance to go away by this time, though she has said he ought to take it instead—"You're so far ahead of me.") But as he talks to the strangers, his heart does not leap with newly envisioned possibilities but is afflicted by "a bright chording soreness." Worse than his father's striking him, he reflects, was the language which he used against his father: "He thought of having used words like 'shall' against his father, who had none of his own to match them or to defend himself with." So he refuses the offer of a drive all the way to Halifax, gets out of the car, and begins the long walk home—the walk which ends with his leaning on the rail of the bridge near his father's house and sobbing, sobbing "because he could neither leave nor stay. He sobbed because he was neither one thing nor the other." (171)

He can neither go nor stay—but he *does* stay. The incident is decisive. His environment is much more restrictive than Stephen Dedalus's, but he cannot fly away from it as Stephen does; he cannot even go from Entremont to Halifax. He is in the paradoxical situation of being unable to communicate with the people around him, and unable to live among people with whom he can communicate. Therefore his language is going to remain a private language. He may feel almost as strongly as Stephen Dedalus that language is the key to a rich life for him, but he has made his fateful choice; he is never going to resolve, as Stephen does, that for language the claims of family and home must be sacrificed. Consequently after this point all his attempts to use language in a potentially fruitful way are bound to fail; in each case, in fact, David is unable to ignore the real or imagined responses of those around him.

The best example occurs when he is convalescing: trying to be like his father and Chris, who do so many things naturally and easily, he climbs along the rafters of the barn to free a rope caught on a spike, and suffers a disastrous fall. Ironically, the accident gives him a real opportunity to overcome his essential isolation through language: forced to forget about physical activity for the time being, he can embark on something more true to his own nature. When he begins reading a book lent him by Dr. Engles, it gives him "the flooding shtck of hearing things stated exactly for the first time." He has the sudden impulse to do the same thing with his own experience: "There was only one way to possess anything: to *say* it exactly. Then it would be outside you, captured and con-

quered."⁸ When he begins to describe his accident, however, he has written only a few lines when he hears his mother and Chris talking about the approach of Rachel Gorman, and he hides his scribbler under his pillow: in this environment, writing has to be a completely private activity, since it would be labelled "queer". Listening at the top of the attic stairs, he hears part of the possible audience for the story he would have written, Rachel, begin her tale of uncompromising woe and accusation—the accusation that Chris has got her daughter in the family way. Finally he can stand it no longer, and he expresses himself in language which his community can understand: "Oh, you stinkin' old bitch!"

Earlier, he had thought, "And all that time the key to freedom had been lying in these lines, this book." The idea now has an ironic implication. Faced with the insult to his family and with Chris's misery, he cannot look on books or words as a means of escape. The words he has written have no power to alleviate his pain or remedy his condition:

He took the scribbler from under the pillow and reread the lines he'd written. They had the same stupid fixity as the lines of cracked plaster in the ceiling. There was nothing in them, to come alive as often as they were seen. They were as empty as his name and address scribbled across the white spaces of the catalogue cover in a moment of boredom. He took his pencil and blocked them out completely, obliterating even the loops of the letters. (199).

Another attempt at writing, years later, shows David again grasping a chance for self-fulfilment and failing completely. It occurs when Toby gets leave from the Navy and he and Anna visit Entremont. As always, Toby and David find speech difficult when they first meet each other. While the three of them are doing a jigsaw puzzle, however, with a curious childlike gaiety and none of "the awkwardness of having to fit speech together or to match each other's moods," they begin to develop a sense of harmony. On the following afternoon, when David and Toby go hunting in the old orchard, David feels that for the first time he has found a friend. The best day of all is the one on which they go to town for beer; wondering just what had happened to make it special, David realizes that he has joined Toby in simply accepting the moment and not *thinking* about things. After this, however, he is glad of the chance to stay home alone one day while Toby and Anna go off on the bus; his life has a new pattern in it, and he does not fear isolation, because he can be along in a *good* way, "cosily, protectedly, with the thought of the others coming back at night."

This time, therefore, he wills his own physical passivity; he is satisfied to be a watcher and an interpreter instead of a doer. The impulse to write is suddenly very strong in him: "Something formless was swarming in his mind. He must be delivered of it—by seeing its shape projected onto the scribbler page." (259-60) Once again, the sense of his own pain, deprivation and sickness is present in his mind, but he is able to objectify them and to write about them without self-pity. Also, in spite of the fronding of the idea "like a million-capillaried chart of the bloodstream," in spite of the great flurry of thoughts blizzarding in his head, he is able to select one single thing to say, and he says it. For the first time, therefore, he seems to have found himself. Whether or not his story would have been successful, he has at least made a beginning; having done so, he feels a new kind of confidence on which he may hope to build:

He has never felt as fluent as today. He felt complex, manifold, *furnished*. It was just the opposite to what he felt when others were there: so much simpler and less intricate than they. (262) He tore the pages out of the scribbler and read them over. He sat there, with the luxurious feeling of being spent with accomplished expression. (263)

He keeps at his work so long and with such concentration that he forgets the passing of time. Without his knowing it, the bus returns; suddenly Toby and Anna are in the doorway, and he feels an "instant denuding". He scrambles to collect his pages, but one of them flutters to the floor, and Toby picks it up and begins reading it aloud. Everything is spoiled. David grabs the sheet from Toby's hand, opens the stove, and thrusts all he has written into the flames. This is the most poignant example of David's inability to dissociate himself from the standards of his community, to place a high enough value on the written word that he is willing to risk embarrassment for it. The play ruined everything; he still fears being laughed at.

The bitter sequel to this experience comes when Toby is recalled from leave and David, standing in a field, sees the train going by and waves, expecting Toby to wave back. But "Toby didn't glance once, not once, toward the house or the field. The train went by." The scene is symbolic: it illustrates how David feels about his life as compared to the lives of others: "*It was always someone else* that things happened to, that was the panic of it. . . ." He has a sudden moment of illumination:

This was the toppling moment of clarity which comes once to everyone, when he sees that face of his whole life in every detail. He saw then that the unquestioned premise all his calculations had been built on was false. He

realized for the first time that his feet must go on in their present path, because all the crossroad junctions had been left irretrievably far behind. (174).

All his wild longings and imaginings lead nowhere. Again, there is no solace in the book he has been reading, the "damned, airless, tricking book". Standing immobile in the field, he sees his whole life as a series of negatives. When he moves, it is to lurch into violent action, going the length of a whole row of parsnips, and slashing at them with his hack as he goes.

In the Epilogue, nevertheless, David climbs to the top of the mountain and seemingly makes the necessary voyage of self-discovery, only to succumb, ironically, to a heart attack just when he has seen how he can bring all the aspects of his life into a coherent whole. If we look carefully at the language used in this section, however, we may see how we are to interpret the end of the story. The discriminating intelligence and the sensitivity are still very much in evidence:

Shape and colour reached out to him like voices. The black-green sweep of the spruces' lower limbs like an inhalation sustained immobile in the chest of the tree . . . the yellow-green of the hemlock branches, twig-laced in a snow crystal pattern, like a breath outward. . . . (286)

What is new, what is added to this sensitivity, is a fresh perspective on the whole of life. Climbing above the valley, taking a superior position to it, David is like the novelist who takes an omniscient point of view to his subject matter; he is able to let his eye roam at will over his fictional landscape, and to bring in past as well as present. Buckler, slipping away from David's consciousness to speak to us directly, describes the experience as like a transfiguration:

It is not returning: you are there for the first time, immediately. No one has been away, nothing has changed—the time or the place or the faces. The years between have been shed. There is an original glow on the faces like on the objects of home. It is like a flash of immortality: nothing behind you is sealed, you can live it again. You can begin again . . . (289)

The voices in David's head, very different from the voices which call Stephen Dedalus over the sea, call him to go out into the things around him, to "be a tree and a stone and a shadow", to bring them into realization, to convey their single core of meaning. I will *tell* it," he thinks. 'I will put it down and they will see that I know.' He has brought his whole life into a coherent pattern, and he sees what he must do to put

it all down in writing. The question is whether this new determination is entirely free from illusion.

First of all, this illumination occurs in an Epilogue, in which no real change may be expected to take place. David is taking the one route open to him, not to Halifax but to the top of the mountain, the point from which he can take an entirely new view of his life and his surroundings. But the scar on his face reminds us that he cannot really escape time and begin again. Moreover, when he thinks that he is formulating his decision in a mature way he is using the very language of his childhood. He casts a glow of illusion over everything: "Everyone seemed suddenly radiate with a neglected warmth, which waited only for his overture, to be released and glow." The people of Entremont are "the best people in the whole world." Most important of all, just as in his boyhood he had thought that he would be the greatest general in the world, and the greatest actor, and the best skater, and the best mathematician, he believes now that the writing of the story which is his to tell "would make him the greatest writer in the whole world." Buckler can only have been ironic in conveying this moment of epiphany in the language of boyhood.

The novel, in fact, abounds in ironies. In a sense Ellen is right to call David "Child", for his strong sense of family implies a desire to preserve or recapture the secure relationships he has known in childhood—he holds onto family so strongly that, as one dies and the other departs, he is left with no close relationships except that with his senile grandmother. He wants to defy the passing of time, yet he bears its scar on his cheek. He wants to become the voice of his inarticulate community, yet he is never able to develop the right degree of detachment from the involvement with it—he becomes known, in fact, as the village eccentric, a "queer bugger" as Steve Sproul calls him. One of the greatest ironies, however, lies in the fact that he develops a sophisticated and subtle style—a manner of conveying, with the utmost precision, the impression which natural objects (in particular) make upon an extremely sensitive observer—and puts this style to no use in communication. He does not speak to anyone in it, he does not write prose in it (not even letters) for anyone to read. As I have suggested, the occurrences in the Epilogue should be read with this pattern of irony in mind. In the Epilogue, theme, style, setting, and character seem to come together in a Joycean epiphany—the character suddenly sees how he is going to use his style to describe his community, and in so doing he is going to fulfill his own potentialities. But it is surely not without irony that the moment of

epiphany is in fact the moment of death: never in this life was he going to solve his problems. For if David lived by the word, he still could not trust the word; this was his dilemma.

NOTES

1. Page references are to the New Canadian Library edition of *The Mountain and the Valley* (Toronto, 1961).
2. See *The George Sand—Gustave Flaubert Letters*, translated by Airnee L. McKenzie with an introduction by Stuart P. Sherman (New York, 1921). XX, p. 17, and CCCV, p. 363.
3. Clifton Fadiman, *Party of One* (Cleveland, 1955), pp. 113 ff.
4. Harry Levin on Joyce's *Portrait*, in William E. Morris and Clifford A. Nault, Jr., *Portraits of an Artist* (New York, 1962), p. 36.
5. Marvin Magalaner and R.M. Kain, *Joyce: The Man, the Work, the Reputation*, Collier Books (New York, 1962), p. 130.
6. Melvin Friedman on Stream of Consciousness in the *Portrait*, Morris and Nault, p. 231.
7. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Modern Library edition (New York, 1928), p. 95.
8. The same process of objectification or detachment is described in the *Portrait*. For example, in Chapter II, when Heron strikes Stephen lightly on the leg with his cane and says, "Admit!" Stephen goes back in memory to an incident which occurred in his first term at Belvedere College, when a group of boys tried to force him to admit that Byron was no good as a poet. He remembers exactly what happened, but he bears no malice to his torturers: "He had not forgotten a whit of their cowardice and cruelty but the memory of it called forth no anger from him. . . Even that night as he stumbled homewards along Jones' Road he had felt that some power was divesting him of that sudden woven anger as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel."