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The Grotesque Gigantic

Stephen Hero, *Maximalism*, and *Bakhtin*

JEREMY COLANGELO

The failure of *Stephen Hero* haunts all of Joyce's later work.¹ Often considered by scholars to be merely a first draft of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*,² *Stephen Hero* was, in fact, an entirely different kind of undertaking—both in terms of scale (its manuscript reaching almost 1,000 pages) and structure (Slocum and Cahoon 8–9). *Stephen Hero*, I argue, is an early manifestation of what I will here refer to as Joyce's *maximalism*, an artistic mode that he would employ more fully in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Although *Ulysses* and *Stephen Hero* are very different novels, there is still a clear continuity between the precise detail in which Joyce first attempted to record his artistic development, on one hand, and his later boast that an obliterated Dublin could be rebuilt from the details in *Ulysses*,³ on the other. Both the impossible goal of a complete record of the “fluid succession of presents” (qtd. in *JJ* 145) leading up to Joyce's artistic awakening *and* the exaggerated boast suggest, at least on their surface, an obsession with completion that we also see in the *Wake*.

Though later in this essay I will be giving the term a more precise definition, I would like to define “maximalism” provisionally as a literary mode characterized by the use of an opened-up, polyphonous narrative structure to produce the overwhelming experience of taking into consideration the myriad of tiny details in one's environment, while also responding to the limitations of a physical book that prevent the author from representing this minutia *in totum*. We see evidence of this mode in *Stephen Hero*, and we can see the source of the novel's failure in the difficulties that Joyce—or any author—faces when confronting the structural demands of maximalism. Challenging John Barth's estimation that Joyce was “a maximalist except in his early works,”⁴ I argue that traces of

Joyce's maximalism can be found all the way back to his earliest extant works, and that *Stephen Hero* represents a *failed* maximalism. This failure echoes through Joyce's later works, and *Ulysses*, in particular, sidesteps *Stephen Hero*'s weaknesses and contradictions to execute its maximalism more successfully. My discussion of the limitations of *Stephen Hero*, and Joyce's response to it, draws centrally on the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, especially his concepts of "polyphony" and "the grotesque," both of which are vital for understanding how maximalism functions in a literary work. In my analysis of Joyce's fiction, I will pay special attention to his changing relationship to Stephen Dedalus, and the character's diminished importance between *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* (and his absence from the *Wake*). In part, I will show how Stephen, constructed initially as an autobiographical representation of his author, was unsustainable as the sole focal point of a maximalist novel, not only because of the necessarily polyphonic nature of a maximalist narrative, but also because the character, as presented in *Stephen Hero*, was held too far above the carnivalizing that comes hand-in-hand with the maximalist mode. Comparing the Stephen of *Stephen Hero* to the Stephen of *Ulysses* illustrates a sharp contrast in Joyce's attitude toward his character. This distinction is particularly clear in the debate scenes, which are far more frequent in the *Stephen Hero* fragment than in *Ulysses*. In the earlier work, these scenes demonstrate Joyce's consistent deference toward Stephen, which is absent from the later works. The grotesque, and by extension the carnivalesque, are inextricable features of maximalist writing, and so Joyce's refusal to carnivalize Stephen in *Stephen Hero* infects the novel with a structural *aporia*.

My intention is to reorient *Stephen Hero*'s position in Joyce's *oeuvre*, viewing it not simply as a precursor to *A Portrait* but instead as a first attempt at the kind of expansive narrative Joyce would undertake in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. What I wish to narrate is not primarily the story of *Stephen Hero*'s failure, but instead the story of how Joyce finally managed, with *Ulysses*, to create a maximalist work that is free of the earlier contradictions that would have torn the project to pieces. This developmental process leading to *Ulysses* is not teleological, but cyclical: Joyce made his first attempt at a book-length narrative into a maximalist autobiographical novel, but eventually grew unsatisfied with the work and reformed it into the more restrained *A Portrait*. With *Ulysses*, Joyce did not so much return to maximalism (for he had never entirely left it), but changed as a writer so that the mode no longer became a catalyst for the kinds of confusions that afflicted *Stephen Hero*.

PART I: A THEORY OF THE VERY BIG

The term “maximalism” is not my own, but, unlike its cousin “minimalism,” its usage in relation to art and literature has been very diffuse. Therefore, it will be valuable to sketch a (necessarily incomplete) history of this term in academic writing before theorizing its relation to Joyce. The most notable essay on maximalism is Barth’s “It’s a Long Story,” which offers *Finnegans Wake* as a case-study for the reader’s probable “rejection, or at least indifference” to a maximalist text. Barth characterizes the difference between minimalism and maximalism, respectively, in terms of “the *via negativa* of the monk’s cell and the hermit’s cave, and the *via affirmativa* of immersion in human affairs,” a distinction I will draw upon later.⁵ Although the term maximalism has been used regularly for several decades, there has never been a sustained critical tradition of maximalism, as such.⁶ Thus, I decided to characterize the problems inherent in the prevailing discourse through an analysis of three academic articles. The first actually to use the term is Stephen G. Kellman’s 1989 article “Telling It All: Pandictic Art,” and the latest is Stephano Ercolino’s 2012 piece “The Maximalist Novel.” Ercolino does not cite Kellman, but instead draws on an article published in 1976 by Edward Mendelson titled “Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon” in discussing the “encyclopedic” nature of the maximalist texts that both critics consider. These include *Gravity’s Rainbow*, *Ulysses*, *The Cantos*, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, *The Divine Comedy*, and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, among others. The four decades between these articles and the numerous terms that have been applied to what is essentially the same strain of writing (“maximalist,” “pandictic,” “encyclopedic”) demonstrate how diffuse the discussion has been. Rather than building steadily on one another, the articles tend to re-tread or re-derive many of the points that their predecessors had already discussed. All three, for example, refer (in different ways) to the “complete” nature of these texts, and base their definitions of maximalist form on the assumption that the deliberate pursuit of completeness is a necessary component. Kellman puts this characterization in perhaps the most explicit terms when he says that maximalism and minimalism “are rejections of the notion of art as finite and balanced. . . . like anorexia and bulimia, they are not so much antithetical to each other as different manifestations of the same absolutist impulse,” and later bemoans the fact that “even the most impartial encyclopedia is . . . doomed to being incomplete.”⁷ Ironically, if read in relation to Bakhtin’s theories, Kellman’s use of “anorexia and bulimia” as ways of characterizing maximalism touches on the importance that the *unfinished* body holds in Bakhtin’s

conception of the grotesque. The importance of the grotesque to maximalism will become apparent later, but it is worth pointing out that, in light of Bakhtin, Kellman's use of an embodying metaphor makes his theory implicitly self-refuting. Both disorders are dangerous because the body needs to consume food, and this need exists because (among other reasons) the body needs resources to replace old and dying cells—that is, food becomes necessary because the body, like the character in a novel, is always in a state of becoming and growth. This means that completeness is always unachievable. Mendelson emphasizes the “encyclopedic” text's close connection to the ancient (and nation-defining) role of the epic,⁸ while Ercolino stresses the “ambition” of the maximalist novel to “realize synthetic-totalizing representations of the world.”⁹ I see, in all three of these works, an underlying presumption that maximalism is always *in battle* with the limitations imposed by the physical form of the novel, an object that is “unsatisfactorily limited . . . [by] that which is respectfully called ‘binding.’”¹⁰ Because no text can *literally* be about everything, because an author only has so much time to write, only so many pages to write on, and can only know so much about the world, the goal of writing a novel about “everything” is an impossible one. Maximalism, in this sense, inevitably becomes a mode defined principally by compromise and failure.

Kellman's use of “anorexia and bulimia” as a metaphor in defining maximalism illustrates the inherent problem with these approaches to the concept. Putting aside the unsettlingly casual use of a pair of eating disorders to help define a literary genre does nothing to resolve the inherent logical flaw in this comparison. Both disorders, involving the systematic rejection of food, proceed inexorably toward a point of termination: Someone with anorexia or bulimia, if not stopped, will eventually die. But an analogous situation arises for neither the maximalist nor the minimalist text. Just as it is impossible for a text to represent everything, so too is it impossible for a text to represent nothing. In both minimalism and maximalism, then, the point of destruction is unreachable: The book of everything would require an infinite number of pages, and the book of nothing could not be a book at all. Unlike a person with an eating disorder, who is seriously imperiled by the condition, a maximalist text is, in fact, *created* through its engagement with the limits built into its physical form of the printed volume. Maximalism has no end point; it does not seek to attain the kind of totality that terms like “encyclopedic” or “pan-dictic” would imply, but, rather, emerges in a novel as a result of its engagement with the grotesque.

It should be no surprise that the most important novels that Bakhtin analyzes—*Gargantua and Pantagruel* and *The Brothers Karamazov*—are themselves also examples of the maximalist mode. I argue that the “novel” as Bakhtin described it is essentially maximalist, and the traits that distinguish the novel from the epic are what lead to the emergence of the maximalist mode. But what also divides the maximalist novel from novels in general is its return to the portrayal of a culture *per se* that Bakhtin identified as a key aspect of the epic, though accomplished in a maximalist novel while avoiding the “absolute epic distance [that] separates the epic world from contemporary reality.”¹¹ One trait that separates *The Odyssey* from *Ulysses* is the latter’s specificity, its “relentless accumulation of small, significant details”:¹² We know far more about the streets that Bloom walked over the span of a day than about the ships that Odysseus commanded over a span of years. This difference in specificity, of not only geography but also time (*who knows* what day of the week it was that Odysseus escaped from Circe?), puts some unique restraints on what Joyce is able to say and how.

One possible example of this restriction can be found in an article by Richard Brown, who analyzes a likely allusion to a Sherlock Holmes story in a scene in “Sirens.” In that scene Bloom, writing a letter to Martha Clifford, makes sure to cover up the blotting paper he used so that it would not display an impression of what he had written. He calls the act “something detective” and then immediately thinks about short stories: “payment at the rate of one guinea per col” (*U* II.901–3). As Brown points out, Bloom does not actually refer to Holmes by name in the passage, but instead simply refers to his precautions more vaguely as “detective.” However, because Bloom has a collection of Sherlock Holmes stories on his bookshelf, and because Holmes uses an impression on a sheet of blotting paper as a clue in “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter,” Brown concludes that this passage is probably an allusion to the story.¹³ But why didn’t Joyce have Bloom mention the source of his idea by name? Likely because, as Brown says, “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter” did not appear in periodical form until *August* of 1904, a fact that prompts Brown to opine that Joyce “deliberately left Bloom’s reference to the story somewhat vague and generic precisely to avoid the charge of anachronism . . .” (68). This small allusion to one Sherlock Holmes story may seem trifling in the face of the large edifice that *Ulysses*, like all maximalist novels, brings looming before us, but the meticulous way in which Joyce had to insert this allusion illustrates the peculiar

demands that maximalism makes of an author. “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter” is *not* part of the world that Bloom inhabits, meaning that Joyce cannot include that story in his novel without also including a logical contradiction. Joyce can only evade this problem by *reducing* the detail of the allusion, refusing to mention any story by name, leaving open the possibility that Bloom was thinking of something else. I do not, of course, mean to say that *Ulysses* is free of anachronism, for it is not, but rather that this particular scene, if Brown is correct, constitutes an instance of a particularity of description being generated by the conflict between the novel’s specificity of detail, on the one hand, and its strict chronological limitations, on the other. An author in the epic tradition would not *need* to make such compromises, the time and place in which the story is set being too distant from both author and audience for anyone to be able to cry foul at an anachronism. Although epics can often provide a great amount of detail—see, for example, the long description of Achilles’s shield in episode XVIII of *The Iliad*—these details, unlike those in *Ulysses*, are un-falsifiable, meaning that an analysis like Brown’s would be impossible to undertake.

In order to develop a theoretical understanding of not only what maximalism *is* but also how it *functions*, it is useful to trace similar ideas in theoretical works that arrive at the concept from different directions. To this end, consider Martin Heidegger’s theory of “the gigantic.” The gigantic, as Heidegger defines it in “The Age of the World Picture,” arises when man is the subject of a deluge of information, where the quantity of detail and sensory experience overrides the subject’s ability to parse through and arrange it. The gigantic functions as a result of the “world picture,” what Heidegger defines as “the creature of man’s producing which represents and sets before,” and through which “man contends for the position in which he can be that particular being who gives the measure and draws up the guidelines for everything that is.”¹⁴ It should already be clear how the “world picture” can be thwarted by the gigantic—that property “through which the quantitative becomes a special quality . . .”—as enlarging the scope of engagement necessarily diminishes the potential totality of the constructed world picture (Heidegger 135). Furthermore, “the gigantic,” like maximalism, is dependent on the growth of both scope and detail, “evidenc[ing] itself simultaneously in the tendency toward the increasingly small. We have only to think of numbers in atomic physics . . . [and] the annihilation of great distances by the airplane . . .” (Heidegger 135). According to Heidegger, this process

of enlargement, of there being simply *too much* to process, eviscerates the perceived wholeness of the world picture, and denies the subject the sense of place that a world picture free of the gigantic supplies. We can begin to apply this concept to a literary text through Heidegger's use of "atomic physics" as a metaphor. The increasing detail provided by our growing knowledge of the sub-atomic has invested the world around us with a feeling of the gigantic. To record even the smallest of actions in as much detail as these developments allow would produce an immense amount of information, so that even a description of the seconds I have spent typing this line of text would fill several volumes once the various electric and chemical reactions that propelled the muscles in my arms and hands were taken account of to the furthest extent that science has allowed.

However, chemical reactions were just as real a thousand years ago, long before anyone knew what an electron was, as they are now. The difference between someone writing in the year 1013 and someone writing in 2013 is that today we are *aware* of these reactions, and it is precisely this awareness that afflicts us with the feeling of the gigantic. This need for awareness remains in effect when discussing literature: the difference between Joyce describing Dublin in detail down to the streets and pubs, and another author simply saying "this story takes place in Dublin" and leaving it at that, lies in the requirement that one be *aware* of the fractal-like intricacies of the setting. Indeed, it is precisely *because* it is impossible to describe Dublin in complete and perfect detail that the specificity of *Ulysses* brings upon a confrontation with the gigantic. Joyce's boast that Dublin could be rebuilt from his novel is an *exaggeration*: There are too many blank spots on his map for a complete rebuilding to be possible. Instead, the detail of the part of Dublin that we see acts as a metonym for the whole that we do not—meaning that *Ulysses*, in a very important sense, is functionally a book-length synecdoche. Thus, Joyce affects Dublin's gigantism not by the description itself, but in the contrast between the large quantities of the description that he does give in comparison to the dwarfing enormity of what goes unsaid. This process returns us to Heidegger's argument in "The Origin of the Work of Art," that an artwork is "not the reproduction of some particular entity . . . [but is] on the contrary, the reproduction of the thing's general essence."¹⁵ But, as "the gigantic" is a result of our inability to process detail, "its essence" is represented as a function of the absence of the thing itself. Dublin, the real-life city, is gigantic in the Heideggerian sense, but the fictionalized Dublin of *Ulysses* is not, bound as it is between the book's two covers.

Thus, while the gigantism of the real Dublin exists in the world in all of its intricacy, the gigantism of the Dublin of *Ulysses* is implied. While representing the “essence” of an abstract idea in a work of art does usually imply the absence of the thing itself, the representation of the gigantic is unique in this sense because its essence is represented *by* that absence.

It is here that we can see why the received definition of “maximalism” is inadequate. The analyses of maximalist writing provided by Mendelson, Kellman, and Ercolino all depend on the assumption that a text becomes maximalist by pursuing the totality assumed by the ancient epic. As I have shown, this assumption is mistaken. First, a maximalist novel’s focus on specificity—often *verifiable* specificity—demarcates it from the ancient epic, as this specificity denies the novelist the distance afforded to the epic poet that allowed the latter to create an impression of completeness. The detail, in putting the text in direct confrontation with the world it represents in all its complexity, invests the text with that world’s overwhelming gigantism, which necessarily means that the representation of that world will be incomplete.¹⁶ However, this incompleteness is not a failure, but the mechanism by which the text’s maximalism comes to exist. The gigantic *depends* on the existence of an outside, on the drawing of a limit.

Looking back to the sublimated allusion that Joyce makes to “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter,” we can see this reciprocal relationship in effect. The story, having been published after the events of the novel, is not properly speaking the “outside” that we experience in the gigantic because it is not part of the world of June 16, 1904 that *Ulysses* represents. It is not like other events that occurred on that day that were not described but which *could have* been. Rather, the Sherlock Holmes story is epistemologically alien to the novel’s world—outside of its outside. The story is, however, part of the world into which the novel was *published*, having been almost two decades old when *Ulysses* appeared in 1922. Thus, the story falls into a sort of forbidden zone of things that are potentially known to a reader, but which cannot be included in the novel, not just because of the normal restraints of time and length, but also because it would violate the novel’s own self-imposed and inviolate rule: that the novel, with a particular kind of Aristotelian unity, take place over the course of a single day and in a single place. It is notable that the most strictly adhered-to rule in the structure of *Ulysses* was an unambiguous limitation of scope. Even the well-known Homeric parallels become less determinate as the novel goes on. But when Bloom and Molly fall asleep, the novel is over, without the slightest suggestion of what will happen

next beyond the characters' own speculations. Likewise, Joyce strictly follows the prohibition against leaving Dublin: The only journeys we take beyond the city come through the characters' memories. If anything, the strict imposition of the single day and single place should indicate how important limitation, and thus the deliberate invocation of an "outside," is to the structure of *Ulysses*. Thus, in this not-quite-allusion, we see an example of the novel's limited scope influencing its content. Any theory of maximalism must take account of this reciprocity, this dialectical relationship between inside and outside, of how the text's inability to engulf its subject matter completely allows it to affect a Heideggerian gigantism. It is through Bakhtin that we can see how this relationship functions within the confines of the novel, and, by extension, how the relationship helps to guide the maximalist strain that runs through Joyce's work.

For the purposes of theorizing maximalism, the most important of Bakhtin's concepts is that of the grotesque, particularly as it relates to Bakhtin's concept of the carnival (or "carnivalization"). As Dominick Lacapra explains, the grotesque and the carnival are related "in contrast to the classical aesthetic . . . [which] fashions perfectly rounded-off forms in which the apertures are sealed and the protuberances flattened," whereas the grotesque "emphasises orifices and bulges in larger-than-life forms that make them ecstatic."¹⁷ As Bakhtin argues in "Discourse in the Novel," the novel's abandonment of the "unity" that emerges from a work in the classical epic tradition does not merely amount to a decision to do away with a certain literary style, but is the origin of those traits that set the novel apart as a distinct literary form and is responsible for the importance of *heteroglossia*.¹⁸ The epic, unlike the novel, is often unbendingly monologic (to borrow another Bakhtinian term), so that the king Odysseus, the goddess Athena, and the humble swineherd all speak on the same register and without the differentiating nuances of dialect and idiom that one would expect from three people with such different lives.¹⁹ It is through the grotesque that the epic's distance and perceived wholeness are pulled away, allowing the novel to delve into the kinds of specificities of lived experience that would be previously unthinkable. "The essential principal of grotesque realism," writes Bakhtin, "is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level . . ."²⁰ The applications of this principal to Joyce's writing are many, with one of the more obvious examples being to Bloom's curiosity as to whether the statues of the Greek goddesses at the National Museum have been carved with the anuses included

(*U* 8.930–2). The statues are invested with the aura of sanctity that prevents others in the museum from following Bloom's lead: "Mortal! Put you in your proper place," Bloom thinks to himself" (*U* 8.924–5). By conceiving of the statues as goddesses, the other patrons are incapable of experiencing Bakhtin's "degradation." However, for Bloom, the statues merely *represent* the goddesses, and thus are *not* the goddesses themselves. In Bakhtinian terms, the statues have been "carnivalized" through the "degradation" supplied by the grotesque body.

By effacing the social order's perceived completeness and perfection—an act perpetrated through the grotesque—the carnival brings about a "temporary suspension" of the usual hierarchies and power relationships that normally structure and govern un-carnivalized society (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 15). It is thus through this disclosure of "the potentiality of an endlessly different world . . . [which] leads men out of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable" that the carnival allows for the possibility of a polyphonous representation of the world (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 48). As suggested by the example of the swineherd in *The Odyssey*, the classical mode resembled a monologue—containing within it only *one* way of speaking, only *one* possible social order. It was, to reverse one of Bakhtin's analogies, a world with the "footlights" firmly in place, a "theatrical performance" that builds up a "distinction between actors and spectators" (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 7). The idea of the carnival-without-footlights might suggest that a maximalist novel (which depends on and emerges out of the carnival and the grotesque) would strive for the kind of all-encompassing totality that has normally been assigned to it. It is, however, by breaking down a formal barrier and freeing the text from the self-completeness needed to create the epic's illusion of totality that the maximalist text acquires its fragmentary state—that is, its state of *being* a fragment, a small piece of a much larger world.²¹ Monologue and polyphony then are, with respect to maximalism, two versions of the same system: that being the creation of content by the limitations placed on it. Both an epic and a novel have *endings*—even the circular *Finnegans Wake* (though not falling cleanly into either category) has, like any book, a back cover—and thus both forms have to contend with their limits in some way. In creating an imaginary completeness, the epic form must tightly circumscribe the nature and variety of the discourse that it represents, while the maximalist novel, in embracing heteroglossia, abandons the comforting illusion of completeness in exchange for an impression of the unfathomable gigantism of the world.²² Returning to the earlier analogy,

employed by Heidegger, between the development of atomic physics and the realization of the gigantic, we see more clearly that the epic form is not literally more “complete,” but instead merely *affects* completeness by judicially circumscribing its discourse and frame of reference. The development of the polyphonous novel, then, is analogous to the development of atomic physics in that both polyphony and the various sub-atomic particles existed long before they were discovered and described. But while they were unknown (or un-represented) they lacked the ability to create the subjective experience of the gigantic.

Without engaging with polyphony, says Bakhtin, an idea becomes “extracted from [its] interrelationship of consciousness in the event” and so “inevitably loses its uniqueness and is transformed into a poor philosophical assertion.”²³ It is polyphony that makes something expressed in a narrative different from mere argument, that brings it closer to the “essence” of its subject (to look back to Heidegger), rather than the plain statement of the idea in itself. The interrelationship of ideas, and the acceptance of contradiction that this necessitates, as communicated through an “‘objective’ authorial position,” provides the various characters and their speech, with a “fullness and independence” that they would not otherwise exhibit (Bakhtin, *Problems* 67). For Bakhtin, the novels of Dostoevsky provided the greatest examples of polyphonous writing in action, and his book *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* lays out the concept of polyphony most fully. Here, Bakhtin defines the polyphonous novel not only by noting the literal way in which Dostoyevsky presents multiple voices in a side-by-side, non-hierarchical manner, but also by stressing how these voices permit the possibility of numerous contradictory world systems existing next to each other. This allows their incompatibility to be expressed without that expression amounting to the dominance of one system over all the others. Referring specifically to Dostoevsky, Bakhtin argues that “the possibility of simultaneous coexistence . . . [is] almost a criterion for distinguishing the essential from the nonessential. Only such things as can conceivably be linked together at a single point in time are . . . incorporated into Dostoevsky’s world” (*Problems* 29). The principle this passage establishes—the mutual coexistence and the development of relationships over time—is especially important in the comparison of the “epic” and “novelistic” protagonists, particularly if we are going to center our understanding of maximalism on the Bakhtinian grotesque and its ability to open up multiple possibilities.

For Bakhtin, one key way that the polyphonous, novelistic, protagonist is different from the “hero” of the monologic epic tradition is in terms of the latter’s inability to change over time. He touches on this issue in his study of Dostoevsky when he describes how “in a monologic design, the hero is closed and his semantic boundaries strictly defined . . . [and he] cannot cease to be himself, that is, he cannot exceed the limits of his own character . . .” (52). In a novel, however, characters are never fully defined, but always in the process of being made, their selves reconstructed with each appearance. This inability to change will be important later in my discussion of Joyce’s differing treatments of Stephen Dedalus, particularly in view of Joyce’s oft-quoted remark that Stephen had “a shape that can’t be changed” (qtd. in Budgen 107). For now, though, I want to focus on Bakhtin’s concept of the “chronotope,” which he develops in the essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel.” The chronotope, as Bakhtin defines it, is the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature,”²⁴ and the concept’s applications to Joyce’s work should already be clear. As I noted earlier, the limitations that structure *Ulysses* are based quite heavily on the circumscription of place and time. This linkage creates an important relationship between the city and its inhabitants, a relationship that is delimited in terms of the chronotope and its relationship to what Bakhtin calls “adventure-time,” a chronotope that he associates with the epic. Over the course of time spanned by an epic, he says, “nothing changes: the world remains as it was, the biological life of the heroes does not change, their feelings do not change, people do not even age” (Bakhtin, “Forms of Time” 91). We can see this pattern at work in *The Odyssey*, particularly in terms of the archery competition in Book XXI, where Odysseus wins back Penelope by stringing his bow and using it to fire an arrow through a row of axes. As the description of the scene makes clear, to notch the string on the bow is itself a feat of impressive strength, and drawing the bow all the way back and holding it steady enough to fire accurately is an almost super-human feat. It is perhaps believable that someone like Odysseus would be able to perform such a shot, while Penelope’s suitors, having spent their days eating and lounging around, would be unable to, but this episode fails to take into account the decades that have passed since Odysseus was last in Ithaca, when presumably he had last been able to perform this feat. If Odysseus was in his physical prime at the time he left Ithaca, he certainly would not be by the time he

returned. The only conceivable way he could shoot the arrow after returning home was if he had not aged during the interval—that is, if he had spent the duration of his story in “adventure-time.”

That Bakhtin identifies the capacity for character to change over time with polyphony and with the novel’s abandonment of the adventure-time chronotope reflects the degree to which both of these departures from the epic are products and necessary components of carnivalization and the grotesque body. By degrading the sacred to the level of the physical, the grotesque makes possible the inclusion of alternate world systems that are a prerequisite for polyphony. Similarly, it is by removing the possibility for a single world system to dominate the text through a monologue that polyphony allows for the multiplicity brought forward by the grotesque to be affected. Thus, we encounter a continuum in which the “sacred” institutions are, through laughter and mockery, stripped of their imaginary wholeness to the point where they become interchangeable with others. This change brings to the fore the possibility of difference *as such*, and along with it the possibility of change. This shift, as I have already shown, occurs through the accumulation of intimate detail—the bringing forward of the body in all of its facets (up to and including the anus of a goddess), and the amassing of such specificity that neither the people nor the place nor the time may be pushed to such a distance that they can coalesce into an illusionary hermeticism. This project, like the project of maximalism, is always defined in conversation with its own limitations—for, as Bakhtin argues, the grotesque is always “in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is constantly built, created, and builds and creates another body” (*Rabelais* 317). Unlike the staid monologue of the epic, a novel that incorporates the grotesque is not only a site of constant change, but is itself built *by* that change, as it is itself defined as a body of constant variation (one that “swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world”) and thus can never appear in itself (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 317). Likewise does the maximalist writer—perhaps “‘drunk’ with hyperbole”—at once pursue the encapsulation of the gigantic, the complete carnivalization of their society, and the amassing of perfect and atomized detail, while also determining the contents of the text (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 307). It is through this dialectic between the multitude of (often conflicting) goals, brought out by the marriage of the grotesque and the gigantic, that a novel goes from being simply very long to being maximalist.

Faced with the gigantic, and refusing to resolve its irreducibility by pushing the subject matter into the distance and rounding off difference, the novel must instead bring the grotesque to the fore, removing the sacredness of the society it represents and so allowing for the possibility of difference and disunity. All the other traits of a maximalist novel, as I have described it, stem from this basic structural acceptance of disunity, this desire to make low what was once high, to make clear that what *exists* is not *what must be*. Thus, in *Ulysses*, it is the strict adherence to the limit of the single day that brings us face-to-face with the gigantic, and so makes the novel maximalist. When Stephen walks off into the night in “Ithaca,” we may speculate as to what his future may be—we may perhaps, as many readers have, assume that he goes off to pen *Dubliners* or *A Portrait* and so puts himself on a track toward the immense literary success that we know Joyce eventually received. But these are only speculations—we know *nothing* about what happens afterward because Stephen Dedalus is not James Joyce.²⁵ He could write *A Portrait*, or he could write something else entirely, or he could write nothing at all, and it is by refusing to provide closure in this regard that Joyce makes apparent the enormity of the looming June 17. Thus, contrary to what has been argued before, it is by embracing incompleteness that *Ulysses* becomes maximalist, its external limitations giving birth to an internal expanse far greater than the limiting hermeticism of the epic could ever hope to provide.

PART II: NO HERO TO HIS AUTHOR

Ulysses and *Finnegans Wake* are maximalist texts that embody gigantism through their size and detail, and their structures are such that almost no subject that draws their gaze is spared carnivalization. *Stephen Hero*, the black sheep of the Joyce canon, also shows some of these tendencies at play, but its failure as a maximalist novel results from structural aporias that required, and were resolved by, its conversion into *A Portrait*. Based on the available fragment and published descriptions of the rest of the novel, *Stephen Hero* amounted to an attempt to create a maximalist novel *without* polyphony. By refusing to carnivalize its subject, and thus by rejecting the grotesque, *Stephen Hero* forced a monologic structure onto a story that, through its detail, lacked the distance that afforded the epic form its ability to round off the story’s edges and create the illusion of coherence. *Stephen Hero* lacks the sense of irony and humor present in *A*

Portrait and *Ulysses*. Its clear inability *not* to take its protagonist seriously thus forced *Stephen Hero* to foreclose on its scope, limiting its subject to a step-by-step description of what happens to Stephen, while also lacking either the brevity and time-compression of *A Portrait* or the willingness to stray from its subject found in *Ulysses* (see, for example, the shifting of the “Wandering Rocks” episode, or the drifting language of “Eumaeus”).²⁶ The Stephen of *Stephen Hero* thus becomes like the protagonist of a *Bildungsroman*—“that immobile and fixed point around which all movement in the novel takes place”²⁷—while also existing in a text that, being proto-maximalist, wishes to abandon the teleology of the standard *Bildungsroman* in exchange for heteroglossia. It is Stephen’s birth in this imperfect maximalism, still tied too closely to the epic, that, I argue, helps to explain his shifting position within Joyce’s work: from the absolute center of *Stephen Hero* to a vanishing act in *Finnegans Wake*.

In framing my analysis of Joyce’s fiction, I would like to consider his essay “Ireland at the Bar”²⁸ to show how vital polyphony and maximalism are to the kind of nationalist politics Joyce presents in his work, and how this view was present in his writing even before he began *Ulysses*. The essay, written in Italian, was first published in 1907 in the Triestine newspaper *Il Piccolo della Sera*, and narrates the true story of a man named Myles Joyce (no relation), who had been put on trial for murder. Myles was a native Gaelic speaker, and knew no English, so when he was brought up to the bar to testify he did so through an interpreter. As Joyce describes it, when Myles was asked if he had seen the murder victim on the day of the crime,

The old man broke out into intricate explanations, gesticulating, appealing to the other accused, to heaven. Then, exhausted by the effort, he fell silent; the interpreter, turning to the magistrate, said:

“He says no, your worship.” (CW 198)

This scene would sound like something out of a bad comedy if it had not ended in the old man’s execution. Joyce goes on to connect the interpreter’s deliberate mis-translation with the larger issue of the monologue through which the broader world receives news of the goings-on in Ireland, one in which “the public skims through the dispatches received from London,” hearing news of Ireland only “when some trouble breaks out” (CW 199). These concerns would later become closely linked to the development of polyphony in *Ulysses*. We hear them echoing in the trial

scene in “Circe” where Bloom’s testimony is introduced with the declaration that “the accused will now make a bogus statement” (*U* 15.896–7). The same concerns emerge in *Finnegans Wake*, where much of HCE’s troubles derive from the spreading of rumors and the degree to which his guilt or innocence is determined by the misapprehension of those who discuss him (for example, at the end of “Anna Livia Plurabelle”). Thus, one of the great impediments to Ireland taking its place on the global stage is the sublimation of its polyphony, the suppression of detail, the *distance* at which it is kept from the world at large. The epic of the Irish nation is thus one near constant trouble; it is not permitted to show the “vast fabric, in which the most diverse elements are mingled” that Joyce sees as a fundamental fact of its civilization (*CW* 118), and so remains victimized by its colonizer.

The relationship between the systematic removal of polyphony from the narrative that Ireland is allowed to present to the world and the continued oppression of Ireland by England was an important enough topic for Joyce that he considered releasing a book of his *Il Piccolo* articles with “Ireland at the Bar” as the title essay (*JJ* 332n). As the short passage just quoted from “The Day of the Rabblement” shows, Joyce was aware of the essentially polyphonous nature of Irish society from an early stage in his life. It is, in part, because of this cultural understanding—which, though its presentation may change, exists in all of Joyce’s major work—that I do not see maximalism as a mode entering Joyce’s work only during the composition of *Ulysses*, but instead as something that existed, perhaps in an undeveloped form, from Joyce’s earliest extant writings. I also detect, in Joyce’s narrativized account of the trial, a hint of carnivalization that anticipates Brian Friel’s play *Translations*, where the Anglocentrism of the English officials blinds them to the intelligence of the multi-lingual hedge school students. In both cases the English language, normally a vehicle of power and symbol of cultural hegemony, leads to a moment of incomprehension when it comes into contact with the oppressed group, and is thus “brought down” from its lofty place, if only slightly. However, in both “Ireland at the Bar” and *Translations*, the carnivalization is incomplete—Myles is still executed, and the Anglicization of the Irish countryside pushes on. But both cases demonstrate that the dominance of the English language over Ireland is not so great as to become all-consuming: In their attempts to create a hermetically dominant culture, the English have created regions in the cultural landscape of their colony

in which they will constantly face incomprehension. This incomprehension, for Joyce, extends beyond the simple fact of the magistrate not understanding Gaelic. Thus, we can see that, from a remarkably early stage in his career, Joyce had exhibited in his attitudes toward language, nationhood, and the construction of the self (that is, many of the themes that would define his fiction to the end)—a set of sensibilities corresponding to the building blocks of the maximalist mode.²⁹

It is not surprising that *Stephen Hero*, Joyce's first attempt at putting his maximalism to work, did not manage to fuse the components properly, especially in light of the complexity of *Ulysses*. The failure of this first attempt may be why some, like R. B. Kershner, see little of Bakhtinian carnivalization in Joyce's work prior to *Ulysses*.³⁰ Actually, this element is present from the start, but is much more subdued. The carnivalization of "Ireland at the Bar" is undercut by Myles's unhappy end and the understandable seriousness with which Joyce takes the subject. Likewise is the grotesquerie of a story like "The Sisters," where the emotional paralysis suffered by Father Flynn after he broke the chalice (*D* 10) is the result of a *failure* of degradation. Father Flynn suffers under the burden of the "sacredness" of his duties, which imbue the chalice with far more signification than its status as a mere container would warrant, and it is this burden that comes crashing down on his shoulders the moment the chalice is broken. Joyce's early portraits of Dublin life are presided over, not by the carnival, but by the result of the carnival's failure to appear. Just as viewing the dominant social order with a sense of sanctity eliminates the potential for a new, better way of life, so too the characters of *Dubliners* are "paralysed" because their society trains them to close off the possibility for change. Because this approach to the carnivalesque is so different from the one that Bakhtin saw in Rabelais, it is understandable that Kershner and others would miss it. However, its existence is important not only because it shows the congruity between Joyce's late and early writing, but also because it remains present throughout Joyce's late work.

As Greg Winston points out, Joyce's boast about how Dublin could be rebuilt from *Ulysses* belies "the threat of systematic annihilation" spurred by the pressures of war, meaning that the "remark might have emanated not only from genuine pride . . . but also legitimate fears of widespread ruin."³¹ This anxiety hangs over the content of Joyce's work as well. One need only look at the scene in "Circe" where Bloom, having become (among other things) the "Lord Mayor of Dublin" (*U* 15.1378) proceeds

to undertake various public works projects. However, when Bloom finally attains the power to bring his schemes to fruition, he begins his project with an act of widespread destruction (*U* 15.1546–55). What construction there is becomes entirely self-centered—the workers build, not a tram line or other piece of municipal improvement, but a “Bloomusalem” with a “crystal roof” (a possible allusion to Queen Victoria’s Crystal Palace from the 1851 Exhibition, linking the construction in this scene with the display of colonial power). Even the hovels that the displaced Dubliners are left with after the demolition are marked with Bloom’s initials. The seemingly indiscriminate razing that ensues once Bloom is invested with the power and sense of “sacredness” conferred by his copious titles is also connected, I suggest, to the monologic enforcement of colonial power we see in “Ireland at the Bar.”

My contention that *Stephen Hero* is basically a maximalist novel like *Ulysses*—but one that simply never quite understands what it is trying to do—derives in part from the genealogy that I have traced between Joyce’s early work and his first successful maximalist text. Joyce, after some self-reflection, seemed to have understood the monologic limitations of *Stephen Hero*, or at least *A Portrait* would suggest so. As Sheldon Brivic argues, Stephen, in *A Portrait*, pursues the “incommensurability of discourses” as a matter of aesthetic, but “he rarely is aware until late in the book that incommensurability is what he seeks: he keeps trying to put words together into a system and failing.”³² The novel in which he seeks this “incommensurability” seems also to have gotten ahead of him. If we look simply at the first page of *A Portrait*, where the text quickly flashes through Stephen’s fragmented experience of early childhood, we can detect (by my count) no less than eight different kinds of discourses being employed over the course of one page (*P* 3).

In *Stephen Hero*, this polyphony is less apparent. The incomplete fragment that we have does not cover enough of the full manuscript to make sweeping statements about its stylistic features. However, the reports that we do have regarding the content of the missing text indicate that, while the full version was more stylistically diverse than the piece we have, it did not approach the virtuosity displayed in *A Portrait* and after. According to C. P. Curran, as reported by Ellmann, the earliest chapters of *Stephen Hero* “were lyrical . . . the tone becoming more bitter and realistic as Joyce proceeded” (*JJ* 148). This movement suggests that the novel’s progression was far more continuous and teleological than what we see in *A Portrait*, which resists a straight teleology through both its inconclusive ending and

its lengthy time-skips (not present in *Stephen Hero*) that break up the narrative and, in rendering the account of Stephen's growth full of obvious holes, also confounds gigantism. It is also fairly clear from Ellmann's description that the rest of the novel would have been as myopically focused on Stephen as the fragment we have would suggest. Ellmann describes how Joyce initially thought of changing the title to something other than *Stephen Hero* "apparently because he felt the first title might imply a more sardonic view of his hero than he intended" (*JJ* 193). This indicates that, at least early in the composition process, Joyce rejected a more ironic presentation of Stephen. Elsewhere, Ellmann comments that Joyce planned for *Stephen Hero* to be a way "to make the world compensate him for thinking badly of it" (*JJ* 199). Perhaps more important for my argument, Ellmann notes Joyce's abandonment in *A Portrait of Stephen Hero's* "episodic" structure in favor of "a group of scenes radiating backwards and forwards," which he says has the effect of "other human beings not [being] allowed much existence except as influences upon the soul's development or features of it" (*JJ* 297). Thus, Joyce stabilized his novel's structure by essentially abandoning his maximalism, spiraling his novel inward instead of outward in order to capture Stephen's "embryonic" development more hermetically. Ellmann's reference to *Stephen Hero's* "episodic" structure is important in light of a characteristic Bakhtin observes in the epic, where the larger story "is composed of a series of short segments that correspond to separate adventures; [where] within each such adventure, time is organized from without . . ." ("Forms of Time," 91). That the abandoning of the pseudo-epic episode structure came also with a form of character development that, though still myopic, embraced a model of selfhood based on a process of eternal re-creation, suggests the increasing presence of the Bakhtinian grotesque in Joyce's fiction, even as Joyce retreated from maximalist form in *A Portrait*.

In the fragment of *Stephen Hero*, Stephen's position relative to the other characters is similarly central. While, as Ellmann argues, the presence of an episodic narrative structures the plot around the things that happen to Stephen, rather than on Stephen himself, there is much else in the novel, which affirms that, no matter who else is in it, this is always Stephen's show. We see this focus, for example, when Madden first appears, being "a little scared . . . [but] grateful for Stephen's attentions" (*SH* 25). Likewise, when Stephen's sister Isabel dies, the scene begins with the narrator informing us that "Stephen was present in the room when his sister died" (*SH* 164), before presenting a two paragraph description of her deathbed

in which Stephen's name appears four times while Isabel's appears only twice (*SH* 164–5).

This structural narcissism comes out most clearly in the novel's many debates. Debates are frequent in Joyce's work, and they often form the basis of some of his key scenes: for example, the series of arguments at the end of *A Portrait*, or those in the "Scylla and Charybdis" and "Cyclops" episodes of *Ulysses*. But *Stephen Hero* exceeds these other texts in the sheer quantity of the arguments, which frequently form the center of the chapters in which they occur. Unlike comparable disputes in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, however, Stephen's supremacy in these arguments is rarely in question. One debate early in the fragment ends in typical fashion: "Maurice, when he had understood the meanings of the terms [Stephen used] and had put these meanings carefully together, agreed that Stephen's theory was the right one" (*SH* 26). Elsewhere we find out that Father Butt "expressed great admiration" for Stephen's English essays and that he "readily agrees" with the "theories" they put forward (*SH* 27); the narrator informs us that Stephen's reputation had grown to the point that "people began to defer to him . . ." (*SH* 39), and that when he did come to argue with Father Butt, Stephen "did not greatly care which way the argument went, at the same time never losing a point" (*SH* 42). As the previous quote shows, Stephen even wins arguments without even advancing his points. This pattern is repeated in the debate with McCann, where we are told that "Stephen delighted to riddle [McCann's] theories with agile bullets" (*SH* 49) without discovering what these "bullets" consist of. Furthermore, the incongruity between Father Butt agreeing with Stephen's essays at one point and then debating them at another may result from Joyce's need for Stephen to be recognized as a genius *and* an intellectual martyr at the same time. This contradiction comes to the fore most clearly in the debate with the university president over whether Stephen should be allowed to present his paper. Even when the president rejects the paper, he still "admires the style" and criticizes not Stephen's argument but rather the "atheistic writers" that Stephen cites (*SH* 91). In the ensuing argument (*SH* 92–8), Stephen almost never actually talks about the points he makes in his essay, spending more time instead defending Ibsen—whose work, predictably, the president had never actually read (*SH* 93). While the president is not converted in the end, he still allows Stephen to give the presentation (*SH* 98). When Stephen does so, and is rejected by the audience, the criticism likewise focuses on Ibsen, and not on the argument itself (*SH* 102). This pattern is important, as it

allows Joyce to include ample justification for his protagonist's persecution complex without showing Stephen to be *wrong*, or even facing genuine criticism. The possibility that Stephen is in error is so remote that the arguments of those who disagree with him must be illogical. By focusing on Stephen's sources instead of his argument, his antagonists' criticism becomes petty and irrelevant. This inability to show Stephen's side of the debate crops up again in *A Portrait* during the Christmas dinner scene: Throughout the longest and most pivotal debate in the book (and one that shapes much of Stephen's later development), he does not say a single word, but instead watches, like a tourist. Stephen becomes relevant to the discussion only when he is used as a rhetorical tool by his father and Dante who debate over whether it is appropriate for them to have their discussion within his earshot (*P* 27–8). Stephen here is a small child unversed in politics—he does not have any arguments to make. Thus, one of the longest and most pivotal debates in the novel proceeds without Stephen even knowing what is being discussed.

The difference between the presentation of the debates in *Stephen Hero* and those in *Ulysses* is stark, and the variations reveal how Joyce resolved the limitation of Stephen's centrality and thereby recast his maximalist work. "Scylla and Charybdis," for example, follows the contours of the Shakespeare debate in all of its tangents and transgressions, and "Proteus" even gives us a view of the thought process behind some of what Stephen later says in the Library. But the first sounding of the Shakespeare debate that we see in *Ulysses* comes not from Stephen, but instead in "Telemachus" from Buck Mulligan, who mocks it in speaking to Haines. Hearing this mockery, Stephen refuses to elaborate (*U* 1.545–60). In fact, during the conversation generally in this first episode, Stephen is quite out-matched by Mulligan as the center of attention. Stephen's first spoken line in the novel is directed *at* Mulligan and, as a simple "tell me," appears initially to be an open-ended request for Mulligan to continue speaking, until Stephen completes the statement (after being interrupted by Mulligan), revealing it to be a question about Haines (*U* 1.47–9). Prior to this first bit of dialogue, the chapter consists mostly of Mulligan's talk—with nine of the first ten timesteps being derived from his speech (*U* 1.5–49). Furthermore, though Mulligan's second line is directed at Stephen, it is an order ("come up") and uses a nickname of Mulligan's choice ("Kinch") (*U* 1.8). Not only does this nickname bury Stephen's identity until his name appears in full a few lines later (*U* 1.11), but it also diminishes one of his key modes of self-reflection in *A Portrait*—his practice of pondering

the various implications of his allusively charged name, Dedalus. In these first pages, we see a systematic carnivalizing of Stephen that is operative throughout *Ulysses*. An important function that Mulligan serves, in this first chapter, is to usurp the centrality that Stephen had in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait*, and to do so before Stephen is even named. For the maximalism of *Ulysses* to avoid the pitfalls of *Stephen Hero*, it must lose the baggage of Stephen's "sacredness" as quickly as possible, and Mulligan accomplishes this. In doing so, *Ulysses* makes it possible for Stephen to fail, for his problems to *not* be necessary stumbling blocks on the road to self-actualization, but to be simply things that he has failed to do.

Both *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* make their stories ultimately about Stephen's success, which is affected through his leaving Ireland. They thus come with a built-in structural teleology centered on Stephen's development. *A Portrait* is able to sustain Stephen's centrality by narrowing its narrative focus, using an economy of events that circumscribes the immediate world Stephen inhabits and so keeping the Heideggerian "gigantic" at bay. *Stephen Hero*, however, brings us into contact with the gigantic through the exhaustiveness by which it attempts to present Stephen's life. With *Stephen Hero*, Joyce encountered the problem of "turning his life to fiction at the same time that he was living it," and he duly sought to incorporate every perceived slight by his friends into his work (*JJ* 149). Joyce's early desire for competition, and his impulse to mock and carnivalize the parts of society that he disliked, brings us back to the definitions of "maximalism" that over-stress its supposedly "pandictic" nature, while failing to take into account the necessary open-endedness that must come with an invocation of the gigantic. *Stephen Hero* attempts to describe *all* of Stephen Dedalus's life without taking account of the discordant, polyphonous, and un-totalizeable world in which he lives, and so lacks an "aggressive self-reflection."³³ Being stuck with a plot built around its protagonist being a cast-out artistic martyr, the novel can only function without internal *aporia* by either circumscribing its field of detail so as to not invoke the gigantic or by pushing itself into the distance and so invoke the rounding off of its material as the ancient epic had done. Before Joyce chose the former option in *A Portrait*, *Stephen Hero* had taken on the impossible mission of being, at once, present and full of close detail *and* epic and monologic, of holding its reader up close to the world in all of its grotesqueness while at the same time telling its story through a protagonist who was totally self-contained—a clean, uncomplicated "hero." Stephen's inability to lose an argument thus derives from

the novel's monologic structure, which demands that "every struggle between two voices within a single discourse for possession or dominance . . . [be] decided in advance, [so that] it only appears to be a struggle . . ." (Bakhtin, *Problems* 204). If one's self is constructed from the "succession of presents" that Joyce describes, then that novelistic self would be too unstable for a story written within the structural logic of an epic. Unless the novel is able to sustain polyphony, its focus on this unstable, grotesque selfhood would only doom it to failure.

Let us look, then, to one of the *Ulysses*'s most important narrative transitions, which comes between the need of "Proteus" and the introduction of Leopold Bloom in "Calypso." Bloom's characterization, and his description by the narrator, makes a re-naming like the one Mulligan performs on Stephen seem comparatively slight. In just "Calypso" he is called "Mr Leopold Bloom" (*U* 4.1), "Mr Bloom" (*U* 4.17), "Poldy" (*U* 4.246), and "Dearest Papli" (*U* 4.397). He is half of "Mr and Mrs L. M. Bloom" (*U* 4.518), and at the beginning of the next episode he is revealed to have used the alias "Henry Flower Esq" as part of his secret correspondence with Martha Clifford (*U* 5.62), who later refers to him as simply "Henry" (*U* 5.241). The multiplicity of names, similar to the many discourses at the start of *A Portrait*, seems to run in the Bloom family: Molly's letter is addressed to "Mrs Marion Bloom" (*U* 4.244), while Milly becomes "Silly Milly" in Bloom's thoughts (*U* 4.284) and signs her letter with three names—as "your fond daughter," then as "Milly," then after the postscript as "M" (*U* 4.411–4). Thus, in the first episode and slightly after, we see that the Bloom household contains a plurality of names. Similarly, in "Calypso," and in the Bloom episodes generally, the use of pronouns is much more common than they are in the Stephen Dedalus episodes: because Bloom's identity is in much greater flux, he is able to fall back into the vague pseudonymity of a pronoun in a way that Stephen cannot. The rigidity of his identity keeps him from *not* being Stephen, from fading into the narration and become simply "he." It is likely for this reason, too, that, in "Circe," it is Bloom who is more often the subject of transformation, and whose transformations are more radical: from court plaintiff, to mayor, to mother, and so on. This instability of identity goes along also with Bloom's greater acceptance of ambiguity and doubt. It is thus through Bloom that Joyce is able to sustain the maximalism of *Ulysses*, bringing forth in his novel the gigantism of Dublin without pushing it into the distance. As Andrew Gibson explains, Bloom is free from the "antagonism" which "traps [Stephen] in particular structures of

thought and feeling,” because “as a Jew whose family has not been long in Ireland, Bloom is not caught in the same traps as Stephen.”³⁴ The frequent debates that in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* help Stephen perform his intellectual and aesthetic development eventually force him to construct his identity almost entirely in opposition to the social structures that he rails against, and this limits his growth. It should be notable, then, that Bloom’s only significant debate, in “Cyclops,” ends with both a victory *and* a defeat: he defends his Jewish identity (*U* 12.1808–9), which brings forth the citizen’s anger and hypocrisy (“by Jesus, I’ll crucify him so I will” [*U* 12.1812]), but then proceeds to retreat from the bar “like a shot off a shovel” (*U* 12.1918). Bloom clearly does not want to fight, and so is protected from the danger of having his identity defined by the battles that he has won or lost. By fleeing from the citizen, Bloom defeats him—saving himself from an oppositional debate (which can only end in monologue), and so preserving his ability to sustain contradiction, the trait that makes the maximalism of *Ulysses* as successful as it is.

PART III: ROUNDING IT ALL OFF

I have been rather hard on *Stephen Hero* so far. However, given the context that I have provided—Joyce’s maximalism and its relation to the gigantic and the grotesque—we can see this initial attempt at a novel as more than merely a first draft of *A Portrait*. Indirectly, *Stephen Hero* is also a first draft of *Ulysses*, and one that looks ahead to *Finnegans Wake*. In the *Wake*’s seventh chapter of Part One—“Shem the Penman”—we encounter a description of the process by which Shem makes the ink that he writes with: defecating into his hands and distilling the ink from the result. The description is written in Latin, with the occasional interjection in English. Roland McHugh’s annotations come with a full translation.³⁵ The passage demonstrates Shem’s willingness to carnivalize, himself, the Latin language, and the act of writing from which his title “the Penman” derives. In a way that even the more modest Stephen of *Ulysses* never could, Shem, here, embodies the carnival.

This embodiment takes us closer to the territory occupied by *Stephen Hero* when we observe the origins of the excrement. Earlier in the same chapter of the *Wake* we receive a description of what Shem had been eating, and what thus makes up his later defecation: “So low was he that he preferred Gibsen’s teatime salmon tinned, as inexpensive as pleasing, to the plumpest roeheavy lax of the friskiest parr or smolt troutlet.” The

paragraph continues to describe all of the fancy foods that Shem would *not* eat before going on to say that “he even ran away with hunself and became a farsoonerite, saying he would far sooner muddle trough the hash of lentils in Europe than meddle with Irrland’s split little pea” (*FW* 170.25–171.6). That Shem would choose to ingest cheap, low-quality food, knowing that it would eventually be the basis of his ink suggests, once again, that he takes himself far too un-seriously to be aligned with Stephen, the Aristotle-quoting university student. There are, however, some lines in *Stephen Hero* that suggest premonitions of Shem’s openness. In particular, a passage early in the fragment describes how Stephen often ventures out on walks, eavesdropping on the ambient conversations, which he repeats “to himself until they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables” (*SH* 31). This description anticipates the way in which Joyce wrote *Finnegans Wake*, and it also appears, in hindsight, as a premonition of Shem’s unusual method of making ink. While Stephen’s method is still tinged by his self-centeredness (he calls “plodding” the “public” that provides him with free material), recalls both Shem’s creation of the writer’s ink from his excrement and Joyce’s use of a medley of polyglot speech in Trieste as an inspiration for the *Wake*’s multilingual polyphony (McCourt 13). That Joyce was also exposed to Trieste’s Jewish community, and by extension to the material he needed to construct Bloom, through his teaching at the Berlitz school where he “would have heard the different accents on each word from the mouths of the different nationalities, all trying, like Bloom, to fit in.” These experiences suggest a close biographical connection between the polyphony of *Ulysses* and the *Wake* and also the openness and polyphony that both demonstrate (McCourt 52).

Writers have taken material from the world around them for as long as literature has existed, but when Stephen eavesdrops on conversations in *Stephen Hero*, the words he hears are stripped of their “instantaneous meaning.” This experience of hearing decontextualized fragments is analogous to the way Joyce composed the manuscript of *Finnegans Wake* from his notebooks. As Dirk Van Hulle describes, Joyce, when plundering a review of his work by Wyndham Lewis for material, “decomposed Lewis’s argumentation. He jotted down fragments that must have seemed to him to be potentially useful . . . [and] show[ed] strikingly little interest in the rest of Lewis’s argumentation” (78). Van Hulle later argues that “the obliteration of the original context creates opportunities for new associations,” which may have served as a ready smithy for the *Wake*’s myriad-minded narrative (89).³⁶ This is the kind of creative environment that the

“obliteration” described in *Stephen Hero* would have performed if the novel had been capable of the kind of carnivalization that we see with Shem. The willingness to accept anything is, notably, also what brings about the *Wake*’s gigantism—for it is not enough that one knows all the languages, classical allusions, folk songs, and historical references. One must also be aware, for example, that the monument to the Dublin surgeon Sir Philip Crampton has drinking fountains attached to it, and that in November of 1922 the periodical *Leader* published a line reading “Messrs. the Provisional Government Ministry” (McHugh 88, 178). The minuteness of the allusions brings us back to Heidegger’s “atomic physics” comparison, where, by encountering the very small, we become aware of the gigantism of the world. But, of course, for that process to work Joyce has to be willing to include both the high and the low, to quote from “the mouths of the plodding public” rather than simply describe them. In *Stephen Hero*, that simply does not happen.

In the famous “Grand Inquisitor” chapter of *The Brothers Karamazov*, we encounter perhaps the most counter-intuitive use of polyphony in Dostoevsky’s body of work: a polyphony achieved through a monologue. The chapter begins with the second coming of Christ, which occurs in Seville during the Spanish Inquisition. After performing a few miracles, Jesus is arrested and locked in a jail cell, where he is visited by the eponymous Inquisitor who explains, at length, why the Church had chosen to abandon his teachings. At the end of the speech, Jesus, having said nothing, simply stands up and kisses the Inquisitor, before leaving the cell. What is important here is the absence of speech on Jesus’s part. Within the narrative, he quite literally is the son of God, and is therefore about as “sacred” as an author could possibly make a character. If his actions were anything less than completely ambiguous, and if he had said even a single word, then a thousand pages of the Inquisitor’s protest would be insufficient. One can look at Joyce’s artistic evolution from *Stephen Hero* to *Ulysses* as the process of learning that lesson. A novel is no place for a messiah, and if one should appear then they must remain in silence. We get an echo of Dedalus’s messianic tendency in *Ulysses*, where he sardonically remembers himself as a “fiery Columbanus” (*U* 2.144). However, this kind of self-reflection and self-criticism is not only absent from *Stephen Hero*, but it would contradict the narrative logic of the book, which proposes that Stephen can never be wrong. It is in this sense that the usual understanding of *Stephen Hero* as being just a “rough draft” for *A Portrait* is utterly insufficient. It stands instead as a kind of failed hybrid

between the maximalism of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, on one hand, and the circumspection of *A Portrait* and *Dubliners*, on the other. It is the peculiar result of a tremendously gifted young writer who has not yet gained full control of his abilities. If he were to stand as the protagonist of a *novel*, Stephen Dedalus could not be a Jesus Christ: He must, instead, forsake his sacredness and his centrality. Furthermore, unlike Tim Finnegan, when he was finally put to rest in “Ithaca,” he could never be allowed to rise again.

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Professor Michael Groden and Professor Stephen Adams for their invaluable help with this article. Portions of the essay were presented at the 2014 UCD James Joyce Research Colloquium in Dublin, and the 2014 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in St. Catharines, Canada.

2. For example: John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon, forward to *Stephen Hero*, by James Joyce, ed. Theodore Spencer, John J. Slocum, and Herbert Cahoon (New York: New Directions, 1963), 3. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

3. Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of “Ulysses” and Other Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 69. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

4. John Barth, “A Few Words About Minimalism,” in *Further Fridays: Essays, Lectures, and Other nonfiction, 1984–94* (New York: Little, Brown, 1995), 69.

5. John Barth, “It’s a Long Story: Maximalism Reconsidered,” in *Further Fridays: Essays, Lectures, and Other Nonfiction, 1984–94* (New York: Little, Brown, 1995), 83–4.

6. One of the few extended analyses of maximalism that I could find, a book on Frank Zappa and maximalism published in 2005, observes that “one of the difficulties in dealing with Zappa’s (or anybody else’s) maximalist art arises from the lack of serious attention to the development of maximalist aesthetics itself. That the history of maximalism in the arts is the *parent pauvre* of contemporary criticism is already indicated by the fact that the term is systematically absent from all lexicons of literary terms . . .” (Michel Delville and Andrew Norris, *Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart and the Secret History of Maximalism* [Cambridge, U.K: Salt Publishing, 2005], 7). It is, in part, my purpose here to help reverse this trend.

7. Stephen G. Kellman, “Telling It All: Pandictic Art,” *South Central Review* 6, no. 4 (1989): 2, 8.

8. Edward Mendelson, “Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon,” *MLN* 91 (1976): 1269.

9. Stephano Ercolino, “The Maximalist Novel,” *Comparative Literature* 64, no. 3 (2012): 243.

10. Tim Conley, *Joyces Mistakes: Problems of Intention, Irony, and Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 36.

11. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 13.

12. John McCourt, *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste 1904–1920* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2000), 14. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

13. Richard Brown, "More 'Sherlockholmsing' in Joyce's *Ulysses*," *Notes and Queries* 55, no. 1 (2008): 66–7. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

14. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland, 1977), 134. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

15. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 36.

16. Joyce's use of lists is a good example of how this incompleteness can take effect. I think here of an anecdote reported in *Ulysses in Progress*, which described how Joyce, during the printing of *Ulysses*'s first edition, sent a note to the printers asking to add a name to the list of "Irish heroes" in "Cyclops," only to be told that no changes could be made, though the name was eventually included in the Gabler edition (Michael Groden, *Ulysses in Progress* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977], 165). As with Rabelais, Joyce's lists actually confound the notion of completeness. This anecdote shows that the "end" of a Joycean list is only ever provisional; the completeness is illusionary.

17. Dominick Lacapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 299.

18. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 264.

19. R. Bracht Branham, "Inventing the Novel," in *Bakhtin in Contexts: Across Disciplines*, ed. Amy Mandelker (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 79–82.

20. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

21. That *Ulysses* is fragmented in this way seems to me to be an echo of Joyce's earlier "epiphanies"—the short, almost imagist prose scenes where a kind of revelation would be inscribed. We can look at these pieces as a kind of singular detail ripped out of the larger context and, unlike the bits of notebook jottings that Joyce would go on to incorporate in *Finnegans Wake*, not inserted into a larger context of pieces that would allow a feeling of the gigantic to arise. Thus, the epiphanies can be seen in relation to the *Wake* notebooks as *Stephen Hero* is to *Ulysses*, in the sense that both are cases of Joyce hitting on a kind of writing early in his career that would be employed to great effect later on, while lacking the necessary skill or understanding to put it to its proper effect—a relationship that Dirk Van Hulle, among others, has pointed to (*Manuscript Genetics: Joyce's Know-How, Beckett's Nohow* [Gainesville:

University Press of Florida, 2008], 102). Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

22. I covered similar ground in my conference paper “*Ulysses* and the Poetics of Doubt” (presented at The 18th Irregular Miami Joyce Birthday Conference, Miami, Florida, February 2013).

23. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 10. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

24. Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

25. There are many divergences, small and large, between Joyce’s and Stephen’s lives, but a few are especially important in the context of speculations about Stephen’s future as a writer. The Stephen of *Ulysses* is a woefully unproductive author, but Joyce, according to a letter he wrote to James Starkey in 1904, had already produced quite a bit of writing by the time he spent his week in the Martello Tower, leaving behind unfinished manuscripts for both *Stephen Hero* and *Chamber Music* when he ran off (*SL* 29). This difference is notable in contrast with Stephen’s portrayal in *Stephen Hero*, as it shows that he has, by the start of *Ulysses*, gone from an idealized self-portrait of his author to a far diminished version of the same. Perhaps Stephen has a literary future in front of him as he walks off into the night, but it is profoundly unlikely to be anything like Joyce’s.

26. Fritz Senn, *Inductive Scrutinies: Focus on Joyce*, ed. Christine O’Neill (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995), 157–8.

27. Mikhail Bakhtin, “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Towards a Historical Typology of the Novel),” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 21.

28. I first became aware of the importance of “Ireland at the Bar” thanks to Ayesha Malik’s conference paper “Colonial Politics of Language in James Joyce’s *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writings*” (presented at The 18th Irregular Miami Joyce Birthday Conference, Miami, Florida, February 2013). Though I do not cite any specific passage from it here, it has undoubtedly had an unconscious effect on my interpretation, which I would like to properly acknowledge.

29. An unprovable hypothesis: It may very well be that Joyce was always, at his core, a maximalist writer, and that his development from *Stephen Hero* to *Finnegans Wake* was defined, in part, by developing the ability to make his maximalism work, with the abandonment of *Stephen Hero* being brought on by his inability to properly direct his maximalist impulse. Short of reading Joyce’s mind, I have no idea how one would go about making this argument convincingly.

30. R. B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 18.

31. Greg Winston, *Joyce and Militarism* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2012), 9.
32. Sheldon Brivic, "Joyce, Lyotard, and Art as Damnation," *James Joyce Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2004): 703.
33. Art Berman, *Preface to Modernism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 30.
34. Andrew Gibson, Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in "Ulysses" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13.
35. Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 185. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.
36. Also see Finn Fordham, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo: The Textual Genesis of Modernist Selves in Hopkins, Yeats, Conrad, Forster, Joyce, and Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 215.