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Stephen Dedalus's *non serviam*: Patriarchal and Performative Failure in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

ALAN WARREN FRIEDMAN

In "Party Pieces in Joyce's *Dubliners*," I analyzed Joyce's complex depiction of the Irish trope of "party pieces," and of performance generally, in his first fictional text.[1] After writing the first fourteen stories of *Dubliners* in a style he called "scrupulous meanness," Joyce felt that he had given short shrift to the Irish tradition of expansive hospitality and to a Dublin that was, as Mary and Padraic Colum put it, "oral as no other [city] in Western Europe was" (Colum 57). So in "The Dead" Joyce depicted a more complex and nuanced social world, one whose ambiguities derive in part from his treatment of "party pieces," which become cultural, political, and moral barometers, especially for Gabriel Conroy, whose after dinner speech (a form of singing for one's supper) engages the host/guest economy, while both praising and exposing the dying tradition that Joyce sought to recuperate. For all of his and its failings, Gabriel's generous-spirited speech, and especially his praise of Aunt Julia's singing as a "revelation," underscores the privileged status of party pieces in this story and leads both to Gretta's praising him for generosity and to his own potentially life-transforming revelation at the end.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which as his brother Stanislaus says is "almost autobiographical, and naturally as it comes from Jim, satirical" (*CDDSJ* 12), Joyce further complicates the moral valance of performance that he depicts in *Dubliners*. He does so primarily by fictionalizing his relationship with John Joyce not as it was

[1] See my "Party Pieces in Joyce's *Dubliners*."

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—tolerant and amicable for the most part—but defined by Stanislaus-like bitterness toward his father. Commenting on the autobiographical gap, Roger McHugh suggests that in Joyce's creation of Stephen, "His sense of humour and his gay tomfoolery are little to be seen" (32): no one in or out of Joyce's fiction calls his protagonist "Sunny Stephen."[2] According to Stanislaus Joyce, "People like Jim easily" (*CDDSJ* 146), unlike himself.

In both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, Joyce recreates John Joyce, who, according to Stanislaus, "was quite unburdened by any sense of responsibility" toward his large family (*MBK* 50), as the stage Irishman he seems to have been. According to John Joyce's biographers, "even Stanislaus had to admit that his father had the stage skill and temperament to make an audience friendly towards him: he was perfectly at ease on the boards. In fact he shone in the limelight" (Jackson and Costello 76). But Joyce depicts him as a caricature of conviviality whose excesses of oral performance (of song, drink, and foulness of mouth) utterly displace familial, economic, political, and religious obligations. Where Gabriel Conroy had evoked John Joyce's oratorical style in praise of hospitality, Simon Dedalus increasingly embodies performance as either self-serving (like Bartell D'Arcy in "The Dead") or mean-spirited and ungenerous, to the point of using it as a weapon against his son. And Stephen reacts with growing hostility to his father and all he represents, a reaction that ultimately inhibits his growth as an artist since it negatively characterizes performance itself.

As his earliest recollection of his brother, Stanislaus describes "a dramatic performance of the story of Adam and Eve, organized for the benefit of his parents and nursemaid," in which Joyce "was the devil. What I remember indistinctly is my brother wriggling across the floor with a long tail probably made of a rolled-up sheet or towel" (*MBK* 3)—Joyce's first recorded Luciferean moment, and with his parents cast as Adam and Eve. Saturating all his texts with evidence of the career not taken, Joyce embodied the performative above all in his representation of John Joyce, who was not only a singer but had also starred as a comic performer in college theatricals (*MBK* 24–25). Joyce and his father seem to have communicated best through music, and it was through music that Joyce and his father, who had objected to his elopement with Nora, ultimately made peace. On Joyce's visit to Ireland with Giorgio in 1909, his father played and sang for him. In response to his father's quizzing him, Joyce identified the aria as one sung by Germont to his son in Verdi's *La Traviata*: learning that his son's beloved is dying, Germont expresses remorse for having treated them cruelly (*JJII* 276–77). And so John Joyce accepted Nora, and father and son were reconciled through the mediation of performance. But in his fiction Joyce radically reinflects the father/son relationship, denying Stephen his Nora and omitting the benign paternal performance and consequent reconciliation.

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[2] Joyce mockingly alludes to his nickname as "Sunny Twimjim" (*FW* 211.6).

Joyce's self-representation in *Portrait* enacts or evades a series of performances almost from the first, as "in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him, the nature of which he only dimly apprehended" (*P* 64). Like Stanislaus', Stephen's earliest memories are of performances, three of which occur on *Portrait*'s opening page when his sense of rhythm, along with his five physical senses, begins to operate. All three performances promise domestic order, and identity, that is soon destabilized. His father, an inveterate storyteller as well as singer, begins the narrative with "Once upon a time and a very good time it was . . .," asserting an assured and fabled tone that soon degenerates into discord, and a defining role for Stephen as the story's central figure, "a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo."[3] A lyrical song, "Lilly Dale," the first of some 25 songs embedded in the text, immediately follows the story:

> *O, the wild rose blossoms*
> *On the little green place.*[4]
> He sang that song. That was his song.
> *O, the green wothe botheth.* (*P* 3)

The song subsequently reappears when Stephen conflates its elements into the fanciful "green [or Irish] rose" that he first longs to discover "somewhere in the world" (9, 67); then, failing that, in the world of his imagination into which he increasingly retreats: "I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world" (273). In the third of *Portrait*'s opening performances,

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[3] In a letter to Joyce written decades later, John Joyce remembered such occasions fondly: "do you recollect the old days . . . when you were Babie Tuckoo, and I used to take you out in the Square and tell you all about the moo-cow that used to come down from the mountain and take little boys across?" (*Letters III*, 31 January 1931, 212).

[4] Joyce substitutes "place" for "grave," thus suppressing allusions to death that emerge later. Similarly undisturbing, "the red and the green are, until the Christmas dinner scene, completely compatible in Stephen's mind" (Bowen, *Musical Allusions* 35).

Stephen's mother "played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance {while} Uncle Charles and Dante clapped" (3). The young Stephen later recalls such scenes of ephemeral musical and familial harmony as more substantial than Simon's place in the world: "He thought of his own father, of how he sang songs while his mother played and of how he always gave him a shilling when he asked for sixpence and he felt sorry for him that he was not a magistrate like the other boys' fathers" (24). The expansive paternal performance, which displaces worldly and familial responsibility for Simon, soon degenerates into "a long and incoherent monologue" about his fallen fortune (68). Stephen's response is increasingly condescension and alienation rather than the "filial piety" expected of him (102).

Like Joyce, Stephen himself comes to play numerous performative roles—storyteller, essayist, actor, singer, piano player—and to the applause of schoolmates, teachers, priests, and family. But the initial mood of benign performance is quickly countered by accusations and imperatives—beginning with Dante's demand that he "apologize" (presumably for his friendship with the Protestant Eileen), followed by submit, obey, admit, confess, pray, repent, commune, sign, conform (the list is lengthy[5])—and by Stephen's growing resistance to all such imposed speech acts. At first he accepts the roles that others want him to perform: according to his father, "He was baby tuckoo" (3); he doesn't reveal that Wells pushed him into the cesspool because "His father had told him, whatever he did, never to peach on a fellow" (6, 19); he says the grace before the Christmas dinner, cued by his father's "Now, Stephen" (28); and urged on by his classmates, he resolves to report his pandying to the rector, doing "what the fellows had told him. He would go up and tell the rector that he had been wrongly punished" (54).

Soon, however, Stephen determines that "he was happy only when he was far . . . beyond" all who call or demand of him (89)—whether the call is "to the religious life," or to empathize with the "recurrent note of weariness and pain" he hears in his siblings' voices, or to mind the mocking cries of his friends or Davin's appeal to join the Nationalist cause. Heron and Wallis demand that he admit to his relationship with Emma, but quick-witted Stephen, who "knew that the adventure in his mind stood in no danger from their words . . . ,

[5] Cixous finds a similar process of development ruled by imperatives in *Finnegans Wake*: "orthodoxy and security are to be found in 'the howtosayto itiswhatis hemustwhomust worden schall' (p.223)" (*Exile of James Joyce* 296).

began to recite the *Confiteor*," and the successful performance causes Heron and Wallis to laugh "indulgently at the irreverence" (82). Wandering nighttown "like some baffled prowling beast," Stephen awaits "a sudden call to his sinloving soul" (106, 109), but after the retreat and his confession he finds himself able to resist when "he felt his soul beset once again by the insistent voices of the flesh" (165). His bathing friends cry out to him from the water, but he "parried their banter with easy words" (182). As Joyce has it in *Stephen Hero*, only one imperative is to be heeded: "he would suddenly hear a command to begone, to be alone, a voice agitating the very tympanum of his ear . . . . He would obey the command and wander up and down the streets alone" (*SH* 30–31). Joyce, as he commonly does, deflates Stephen's self-aggrandizement, following the transcendent "A voice from beyond the world was calling" with his friends' worldly mocking of his name and destiny:

> —Hello, Stephanos!
> —Here comes The Dedalus! (*P* 182)

The repeated "alone," a word Joyce often attaches to Stephen, expresses all that lies in opposition to communal engagement, including the performance of party pieces.[6]

My argument here is that Stephen's flight is essentially negative: *from* his father and all that he embodies—familially, culturally, politically, historically, and performatively—rather than toward his goal of artistic creation. In 1912, when Irish Home Rule was approved, Joyce prophesied that the celebration would be an uneasy one: "there will be a ghost at the banquet—the shade of Charles Parnell. . . . The ghost of the 'uncrowned king' will weigh on the hearts of . . . the new Ireland" (*CW* 224, 228).[7] That prophecy plays out during *Portrait*'s Christmas dinner scene, a site of political, religious, and family conflict and animosity rather than the party peace that the occasion and Mrs. Dedalus demand. Joyce crystallizes Simon's failure by having him precipitate and preside over this domestic disaster, Stephen's first and last communal dinner. Such rituals ended early for Joyce as financial ruin precluded proper family meals, which may have been just as well given *Portrait*'s account of his father's performance as host and initiator of the crisis. Whatever Joyce may be satirizing in "The Dead," his representation of hospitality there seems genuine, and Gabriel's after-dinner speech in praise of both the tradition and its current manifestation largely unironic. Gabriel's performance goes unchallenged because his antagonist, the nationalist Miss Ivors, has already left the Morkan party. Dante, in contrast, remains to rise to Simon's bait.

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[6] In his satirical poem "The Holy Office," Joyce similarly represents himself:

> I stand the self-doomed, unafraid,
> Unfellowed, friendless and alone,
> Indifferent as the herring-bone . . . . (*CW* 152)

[7] Like Huston's movie of "The Dead," Joseph Strick's film of *Portrait* is more overtly political than Joyce's fiction. The film begins with a scrolled text: "Ireland 1885. Ruled by Britain but moving towards independence under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, a Protestant nationalist supported by the Catholic majority of his country." Shortly thereafter a second text appears: "1891. Parnell has fallen from power. Named as the secret lover of Mrs. Kitty O'Shea in a divorce suit, he was vilified and abandoned by most of his supporters and forced from politics in disgrace. For the time, the independence movement is

Stephen's performance of "the grace before meals" at the beginning of the Christmas dinner unwittingly serves to set the stage for its opposite: a fierce confrontation between guest and host. When Simon introduces the topic of religion and politics ("—That was a good answer our friend made to the canon. What? said Mr Dedalus" [*P* 29]), Dante responds by aggressively defending the clergy who denounced Parnell from the pulpit, attacking both her host and his dwelling: "—There could be neither luck nor grace, Dante said, in a house where there is no respect for the pastors of the church" (32). Though Mrs. Dedalus and Uncle Charles plead that "political discussion [should be avoided] on this day of all days in the year," the host-guest conflict escalates as Simon first croons "like a country singer" and then "began to sing in a grunting nasal tone":

> *O, come all you Roman catholics*
> *That never went to mass*. (30, 34)

Dante insists that what she calls morality supersedes not only politics but the spirit of the occasion, and she lays claim to defending Stephen's youthful innocence: "—O, he'll remember all this when he grows up, said Dante hotly—the language he heard against God and religion and priests in his own home" (33). She is right, of course,

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badly damaged." Similarly, where Joyce has Stephen vaguely hear voices and then imagine the return to Ireland of Parnell's body (25), Strick has two priests, whom Stephen and we overhear, whispering about Parnell's lust and pride, and his death resulting from "inflammation of the brain."

though not in the way she means: Stephen's climactic *non serviam* —"I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church" (268; also 260)—represents a pox on all the houses that would claim him.[8] Lacking both voice and an alternative expressive outlet after pronouncing grace on the graceless, Stephen begins his retreat from the furor into "silence, exile, and cunning" (269),[9] having learned a lesson in withdrawal and survival in the domestic realm presided over and betrayed by his father. The latter's most intense passion is expended in mourning for another defeated patriarch, a lesson Stephen transmutes into the artistic credo of withdrawal that comes to define his ultimate alienation and failure.

Shortly after the Christmas dinner fiasco, Stephen experiences a second disaster with graceless patriarchy when he is pandied for neither doing his schoolwork (owing to having accidentally broken his glasses) nor explaining this lapse to the satisfaction of Father Dolan, the sadistic representative of Catholic authority. The blows Stephen receives are as much to his naiveté as to his hands, for he believes that a truthful recounting of his innocence should be persuasive even to a skeptical audience. Hence, Stephen is made to feel guilt—a mixture of "shame and agony and fear"—when Father Dolan trumps his story: "—Hoho! The cinderpath! cried the prefect of studies. I know that trick" (52, 51). Stephen seems shocked less by the physical hurt he suffers than because the flogging offends both his sense of justice and his narrative sense (a true story should be believed), and it casts him in the role of guilty victim ("scarlet with shame" [53]) that he rejects as inappropriate since he has done nothing wrong. The prefect had also assailed his sense of identity by twice asking him his name:

> Why could he not remember the name when he was told the first time? Was he not listening the first time or was it to make fun out of the name? The great men in the history had names like that and nobody made fun

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[8] Stephen first hears the defiant words on the retreat: the preacher declares that Lucifer's fall resulted from "the sin of pride, the sinful thought conceived in an instant: *non serviam*: *I will not serve*" (126). Stephen repeats his "*Non serviam*!" in *Ulysses*, defying the vision summoned by his "intellectual imagination": his mother's corpse urging him to repent (*U* 15.4227–28).

[9] Samuel Beckett intertextually deploys "silence" (twice), "exile," and "cunning" in "Home Olga," his acrostic homage to Joyce (*Collected Poems* 8). Joyce himself parodies Stephen's credo as "the bruce, the coriolano, and the ignacio" (*FW* 228.10–11).

> of them. It was his own name that he should have made fun of if he wanted to make fun. Dolan: it was like the name of a woman that washed clothes. (56–57)

In contrast, the sympathetic rector, Father Conmee, both hears Stephen out and knows who he is without having to ask: "Your name is Dedalus, isn't it?" (58). Even this early Stephen finds special meaning in his "strange name," which "seemed to him a prophecy . . . of the end he had been born to serve" (178, 183)—an identity that intensifies his isolation.

Recounting the pandying incident to the rector and being assured that he will receive no further punishment, Stephen feels "happy and free" in part because he has regained narrative authority and thinks that he can now reclaim the initiating role: "he would not be anyway proud with Father Dolan. He would be very quiet and obedient: and he wished that he could do something kind for him to show him that he was not proud" (60–61). Yet the desire to enact such condescension proves unsatisfiable because Stephen's initial view is accurate: as Joyce depicts them, the Church's representatives (even Father Conmee, as his subsequent mocking "account of the whole affair" indicates [75–76]) are powerful patriarchs, often arbitrary in their wielding of authority, as likely to be wrong as right.[10] Perhaps in consequence the episode remains just below Stephen's consciousness, susceptible to being recalled in an instant. In the "Aeolus" chapter of *Ulysses*, Myles Crawford urges Stephen to write the book of Dublin, "Give them something with a bite in it. Put us all into it, damn its soul. Father, Son and Holy Ghost and Jakes M'Carthy." Like Father Dolan, he claims to be able to read Stephen: "You can do it. I see it in your face," and Stephen is back on his knees before the pandyer: "See it in your face. See it in your eye. Lazy idle little schemer" (*U* 7.621–22, 617–18).

Shaped and repressed by forces more powerful than himself, the young Stephen finds that his richest experiences are imagined or envisioned: his death and funeral (*P* 22); the return of Parnell's body to Ireland (25); his patronizing of Father Dolan (60–61); embracing the role of "that dark avenger" out of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (64); being damned forever in hell; "accomplishing the vague acts of the priesthood which pleased him by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it" (171); attending his English lecture (192); and performing party pieces for Emma (237–38). He takes solace in the romantic future that surely awaits him, a future that is far more vivid than the past he remembers only dimly (98): "The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him, the nature of which he only dimly apprehended" (64). Yet his forays into the world are unsatisfactory and brief; his retreats from it come sooner, and deepen, as a sense of foreboding repeatedly "dissipated any vision of the future" (66). He founds "a gang of adventurers," but soon decides "that he was different from others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld" (65–67). The horrific threat of the retreat, which produces "a terror of spirit [that] blew death into his soul" (120), drives Stephen to confession, but its seemingly life-transforming impact soon dissipates. And rather than serving as "the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life" who will "throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory," as Stephen would have it, the "bird girl," like Emma on the tram, becomes something he can imaginatively capture and make into what he will so long as no actual contact occurs: "His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling . . . . Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy" (186). The masturbatory fantasy Stephen experiences here anticipates what occurs during the only creative act that Joyce allows him, when Stephen's "soul had passed from ecstasy to languor" during the writing of the villanelle (242).

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[10] An older Stephen recalls that he had twice been pandied, both "dealt him in the wrong," but he also acknowledges "that he had often escaped punishment" (169).

Stephen retains "his habits of quiet obedience" (88), never allowing his "turbulent companions to seduce him from his habit of quiet obedience" (169), well into adolescence, even as he becomes increasingly alienated from a domestic space that initially nurtured performance. The phrase "He was sitting" (which recurs three times in less than two pages [70–71]) emphasizes Stephen's self-willed isolation, his failure to enter into the spirit of these several occasions. The third time occurs at a children's party where, "though he tried to share their merriment, he felt himself a gloomy figure amid the gay cocked hats and sunbonnets." Constrained to perform his party piece before he can escape into himself, "when he had sung his song and withdrawn into a snug corner of the room he began to taste the joy of his loneliness" (71). Joyce elides the party piece, revealing nothing of what Stephen performs, or how it is performed, or what response it receives.[11]

Such narratival amnesia comports with Stephen's alienation from the party and his aloofness from others that plays out in the tram scene with Emma, which follows immediately. Here his pride of self-sufficiency causes him *not* to "catch hold of her . . . and kiss her," although (or because) he thinks that that is what she wants and expects. Instead, he suppresses "his dancing heart," rejects the gift she offers, and "stood listlessly" (72–73). Then through a mounting series of negatives—"There remained *no* trace of the tram itself *nor* of the trammen *nor* of the horses: *nor* did he and she appear vividly" (74; my emphasis)—he transmutes the experience that did not happen into a work of art, which is also elided, that Joyce mocks by depicting the creative process as the performance of a series of clichéd gestures. First, Stephen sits "at his table in the bare upper room for many hours. Before him lay a new pen, a new bottle of ink, and a new emerald exercise." He then begins mechanically, writing at the top of the first page "from force of habit . . . the initial letters of the jesuit motto: A.M.D.G." and a Byronic title, "To E— C—," with "an ornamental line underneath" (73). He inappropriately concludes, again presumably "from force of habit," with the initials of another Jesuit motto: "L.D.S." For all the evocations, however, it is neither God nor some poetic forebear but Stephen himself who solipsistically both inspires and serves as recipient for the art of this creative act, whatever it may actually be: "After this . . . he went into his mother's bedroom and gazed at his face for a long time in the mirror of her dressingtable" (74). Stephen's narcissism replays that of his father, who "looked at himself in the pierglass above the mantelpiece, waxed out his moustache-ends, . . . and still, from time to time, he withdrew a hand from his coattail to wax out one of his moustache-ends" (26). Effacing both Stephen's art and artistry, Joyce also effaces the would-be artist by exposing him as simultaneously subject and object of his own gaze, a creature of his mother's vanity mirror whose best and only audience is himself.

At school Stephen's performative accomplishments include starring in the Whitsuntide play in the role "of the farcical pedagogue"

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[11] Given Stephen's flight from such performances, it is appropriate that Joyce has him, while mortifying his senses after his anguished confession, neither sing nor whistle (163).

(77), which he finds embarrassing: “He felt no stage fright but the thought of the part he had to play humiliated him” (89). Heron, his friend and rival, challenges him to deviate from the script and send up the rector instead, which he can apparently do well: “Go on, Dedalus, he urged, you can take him off rippingly” (79). But unlike Joyce, who on the analogous occasion offered a “cheeky mimicry of the ‘pedantic bass’ of the Belvedere Rector,”[12] Stephen adheres to his text, heeding “the voice of the plump young jesuit which bade him speak up and make his points clearly.” Momentarily forgetting himself, he enters fully into the occasion and the part he plays: “Another nature seemed to have been lent him. . . . For one rare moment he seemed to be clothed in the real apparel of boyhood . . . he shared the common mirth.” And the play, unexpectedly, comes alive: “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” (89–90). Nonetheless, when the performance ends he flees his waiting family, especially “his father's questions,” in “Pride and hope and desire,” which quickly deflate into “wounded pride and fallen hope and baffled desire” (91). He returns physically, but the book's next scene, the trip to Cork that climaxes Simon's economic and social decline, underscores his psychological distance from Simon as both failed father and impoverished storyteller: “He listened without sympathy to his father's evocation of Cork and of scenes of his youth, a tale broken by sighs or draughts from his pocket-flask. . . . Stephen heard but could feel no pity” (92). Simon's self-indulgent and drunken nostalgia, which causes Stephen a succession of embarrassments (99–102), deepens his isolation, cold aloofness, and sense of “drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon” (102), and leads ultimately to his mocking dispraise of Simon to Cranley (262).

One of Stephen's rare gestures of filial empathy occurs just before Simon's humiliating bankruptcy auction when he compliments his father's singing of the self-referential song, “‘Tis youth and folly/ Makes young men marry” (93–94).[13] At this latest low point in his life, however, Simon reacts by boasting to his pub audience that he's "a better man than [Stephen] is any day of the week," and offers to prove it by performing: "I'll sing a tenor song against him" (101).[14] The young Stephen had, when challenged, vaguely denoted his father "A gentleman" (5); Simon elaborates on the notion, insisting on the linkage between performance and gentlemanly (and nationalist) status:

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[12] Jackson and Costello 209; see also Deane, Notes to *Portrait* 293 n.31. Jackson and Costello also comment on the talent for mimicry of Joyce's mother (260).

[13] John Joyce's biographers suggest that the song was one that he commonly sang during his family's many moves (Jackson and Costello 218). It was also, according to the Colums, a favorite of Joyce's, one he sang often (51).

> . . . remember, whatever you do, to mix with gentlemen. When I was a young fellow I tell you I enjoyed myself. I mixed with fine decent fellows. Everyone of us could do something. One fellow had a good voice, another fellow was a good actor, another could sing a good comic song, another was a good oarsman or a good racketplayer, another could tell a good story and so on. We kept the ball rolling anyhow and enjoyed ourselves and saw a bit of life. . . . But we were all gentlemen, Stephen—at least I hope we were—and bloody good honest Irishmen too. (97)

Stephen later parodies this passage, amalgamating and embellishing all the roles, depicting his father's "zigzag career"[15] as a succession of unsuccessful performances or auditions as he "began to enumerate glibly his father's attributes": "—A medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a taxgatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past" (262).[16] In *Ulysses* Bloom too sees Simon primarily as performer, though he spins it more positively: "It's the droll way he comes out with the things. Knows how to tell a story too" (*U* 8.54–55). According to Bloom, Simon "Could have made oceans of money" by singing (*U* 11.696), but he prefers to proffer his talent for drinks in the Ormond bar: "—I have no money but if you will lend me your attention I shall endeavour to sing to you of a heart bowed down" (11.658–59). Simon's role playing supersedes or becomes his reality perhaps because, as Joyce puts it in *Stephen Hero*, he is such a good audience for himself that he "was quite capable of talking himself into believing what he knew to be untrue" (*SH* 110). Fed up with his father's boasting and profligacy,

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[14] Like Shem the Penman, Simon has "a plaintiff's tanner vuice" (*FW* 182.22–23).

[15] The phrase is Oliver St. John Gogarty's; quoted in Cixous 38.

[16] Joyce parodies this catalogue in *Finnegans Wake*: "a blighty, a reeky, a lighty, a scrapy, a babbly, a ninny, dirty seventh among thieves and always bottom sawyer" (*FW* 173.27–29).

Stephen is his sullen and reluctant audience until he manages to effect his escape.

Stephen's main appearance in the receiving role of audience occurs during the preacher's mesmerizing performance at the retreat, when, internalizing the sermon on hell and damnation, he hears a call that scares him nearly witless: "Every word of it was for him. Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed" (*P* 123; also 134, 149). Reduced to cowering self-abasement and weeping "for the innocence he had lost" (150), Stephen finally recounts his sins under duress and with extreme embarrassment, repeating in words what he had physically enacted: "His sins trickled from his lips, one by one, trickled in shameful drops from his soul festering and oozing like a sore, a squalid stream of vice. The last sins oozed forth, sluggish, filthy. There was no more to tell. He bowed his head, overcome." Stephen receives, in response, the church's "grave words of absolution[, its] token of forgiveness," and its injunction to cease committing "sins of impurity," which seem uniquely to be "dishonourable and unmanly": "Promise God now that you will give up that sin, that wretched wretched sin. . . . God bless you, my child. Pray for me" (156–57). But Stephen soon learns that the sins of his past remain in the present (rising up against him, like Bloom's in "Circe" [*U* 15.3025–40]), and must be recounted repeatedly: "with humility and shame," he must "confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly" (*P* 166). The part of confessor, having been learned well, seems to be his in perpetuity.

Joyce depicts such Catholic dramas as the mass, sermon, and confession as ritual party pieces: occasions to perform assigned parts before a designated audience in order to reaffirm shared belief or to earn the accolade of (spiritual) approval. But he drains meaning from these performances, often turning them into occasions of pain, absurdity, or mockery. Stanislaus, who broke with the church earlier and even more fully than his brother, provided Joyce with the basis for his parody of the confessional:

> . . . You should never do that, my child. You should never eat meat on holy days . . . days of abstinence. You should always observe the rules of our Holy Mother, the Church. Our Holy Mother, the Church, makes these observances for the good of our souls . . . and eh . . . you should be careful, for the future, always to keep the observances of our Holy

> Mother, the Church . . . and eh . . . never to eat meat on days of abstinence especially among Protestants . . . Is there anything else, my child? (*CDDSJ*, 14 September 1904, 102)

In his obsessive devotion and abstemiousness after his confession, Stephen unwittingly enacts Stanislaus's parody. Playing the role to the hilt, Stephen dedicates each day to spiritual mystery, hallows himself anew every morning, begins each day "with an heroic offering of its every moment of thought or action for the intentions of the sovereign pontiff and with an early mass," lays out his daily life "in devotional areas" while constantly saying the rosaries (*P* 159). Further, having vicariously suffered the torture of "[e]very sense of the flesh . . . and every faculty of the soul" (131), he reverses the book's opening expansiveness by mortifying his senses one by one—until penitent and penance seem to become indistinguishable (159–64). Yet ultimately the path of excessive denial leads to its obverse, and "he felt his soul beset once again by the insistent voices of the flesh which began to murmur to him again during his prayers and meditations" (165).

All his life Stephen has felt himself "beset . . . by the insistent voices" (and "calls," appeals, summonses) that challenge and prescribe action for him, becoming increasingly strident and "hollowsounding" as the book progresses. He hears "the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic above all things"; he heard another voice "urging him to be strong and manly and healthy"; "and yet another voice had bidden him to be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition." A "worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours," while "the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school" (88). Davin's "simple" appeal to the Nationalist cause "touched Stephen pleasantly,"[17] as does Davin's being alone in using his christian name (or, rather, the "homely version": Stevie). In response to "the young peasant . . . [with] the attitude of a dullwitted loyal serf," however, Stephen shifts focus from the political to the personal and aesthetic by performing

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[17] Joyce went so far as to attend Irish classes with George Clancy (the original of Davin) that were given by Padraic Pearse. Deane, *Portrait* 309 n.28, 317 n.123.

"the verses and cadences of others which were the veils of his own longing and dejection" (195).

The "message of summons" to the priesthood that Stephen receives (167) at first seems the definitive call that will exclude all others, a means of escaping failed patriarchy by becoming "father" to himself. In his initial response to the "voice of the director urging upon him the proud claims of the church and the mystery and power of the priestly office" (175), Stephen remembers how he had often imagined himself acting out the greatest role of all:

> as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence! . . . He had seen himself, a young and silentmannered priest, entering a confessional swiftly, ascending the altarsteps, incensing, genuflecting, accomplishing the vague acts of the priesthood which pleased him by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it. In that dim life which he had lived through in his musings he had assumed the voices and gestures which he had noted with various priests. (171)

But this "exhortation," like the earlier imperatives, quickly becomes just one more in a series of external appeals that he rejects. Stephen has long since recognized that "Nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him. He could respond to no earthly or human appeal" (98). Further, his excessive devotion at the beginning of Section IV seems to have exhausted that vein in him so that, in response to "the call" to the priesthood, he merely "wondered vaguely" about the possibility, contemplates "the remoteness of his soul from what he had hitherto imagined her sanctuary, at the frail hold which so many years of order and obedience had of him," and realizes that his "destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders." He comes to view this call as but the latest and greatest of traps, "and he knew now that the exhortation he had listened to had already fallen into an idle formal tale" (175). Convincing himself that he rejects the priesthood for the "snares of the world," Stephen becomes both mock priest and false altar in the religion of his art (188–89), performing at the opening of Section V a parodic, self-indulgent mass that enacts his final break with the church.

But Stephen has increasingly shifted his focus away from action in the world to language, to words and names (most of which seem "queer" when he dwells on them), and then more to their rhythms and sounds than to their meanings. At first, words are his way into the world: "Words which he did not understand he said over and over to himself till he had learned them by heart: and through them he had glimpses of the real world about him" (64). The linkage is disturbing at times, however, as when "he read the word *Foetus*" carved in a desk in the classroom where his father had attended school: "It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind" (95). And the word assumes a haunting presence that undermines his self-confidence: "The letters cut in the stained wood of the desk stared upon him, mocking his bodily weakness and futile enthusiasms and making him loathe himself for his own mad and filthy orgies" (96–97). Similarly, word and deed fail to cohere in the scene with the prostitute. "—Give me a kiss, she said," but despite his lustful longing his body, as it had on the tram, remains stiffly withheld: "His lips would not bend to kiss her . . . his lips would not bend to kiss her." This time, however, the word does become flesh as "she bowed his head and joined her lips to his. . . . It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips" (107–8). Yet this fleeting contact quickly becomes parodic: an excess of sensual indulgence followed by an excess of sensual denial.

He is intrigued by the multiple meanings of "belt" (5) and "suck" (whose "sound was ugly" [8]), by Athy's punning name (23), by the fact that "Vincent Heron had a bird's face as well as a bird's name" (80). It is unclear to him whether it is the words "cold and hot" on the faucets or the water that comes out of them that produces the sensations of chill and warmth (8). He contemplates "himself, his name and where he was" in the universe (12) both in isolation and again while walking alongside his father (98), and also all the "different names for God in all the different languages in the world" (13). The "winy smell off the rector's breath had made him feel a sick feeling on the morning of his first communion," but "The word was beautiful: wine" (47). A similar dichotomy occurs when he cannot summon up any of his childhood's vivid moments. "He recalled only names: Dante, Parnell, Clane, Clongowes" (98). So, too, with his rejection of the priesthood: what he really opts for are "Words. Was it their colours? . . . No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself . . . he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose" (180–81). And rather than experience directly the Dublin that he traverses on his way to the University, Stephen's imagination sets up a screen, envisioning the "rainladen trees" as figures out of the plays of Hauptmann. Tidal flats evoke "the cloistral silverveined prose of Newman"; provision shops "recall the dark humour of Guido Cavalcanti"; a stonecutter's work summons up "the spirit of Ibsen" and "a grimy marinedealer's shop" the lovely lyrics of Ben Jonson (190). For Stephen even language—which confuses by using words both "according to the literary tradition [and] according to the tradition of the marketplace" (203)—becomes a means not of engaging the world but of distancing himself from it.

The most poignant appeal made to Stephen occurs when, returning home after the summons to the priestly vocation, he encounters "The faint sour stink of rotted cabbages . . . from the kitchengardens," and "He smiled to think that it was this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father's house and the stagnation of vegetable life, which was to win the day in his soul" (176). But when actually there, Stephen cannot long sustain this attitude toward "his father's house" where, as Stanislaus recalls, "They all used to sing. The singing of sentimental ballads was a backwash of that ebbing wave of romanticism, in which poetry and all it is wont to express had degenerated, Tommy Moore assisting, to a drawing-room accomplishment" (*MBK* 15–16).[18] Stephen's siblings, like the Joyces, "would sing so for hours, melody after melody, glee after glee, till the last pale light died down on the horizon, till the first dark nightclouds came forth and night fell" (*P* 177). The song they sing, Thomas Moore's "Oft, in the Stilly Night," serves more as metaphor than performance. It contrasts "boyhood's years" of innocence, hope, and love with present sadness, loss, and death, and the speaker's lonely survival (*Moore's Poems* 497–98). Stephen hears the implicit plea in his siblings' voices as he listens "with pain of spirit to the overtone of weariness behind their frail fresh innocent voices. Even before they set out on life's journey they seemed weary already of the way." His range of choices narrowed—to equally destructive empathy and rejection—Stephen reenacts his life to this point by first taking "up the air with them" and then fleeing their implicit appeal as both the song, with its "recurring note of weariness and pain," and the domestic scene recapitulate the family's downward spiral that results from his father's wastrel behavior. This flight of Stephen's—"walking rapidly lest his father's shrill whistle might call him back" (*P* 177–78)—prepares for the climactic crisis on the beach, which follows almost immediately, and his utter alienation from others that culminates verbally in his reiterated negative credo: "*non serviam*: I will not serve" (126, 260, 268).

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[18] Stephen feels similar contempt for Moore as he views "the droll statue of the national poet of Ireland" (*P* 194).

In fantasizing a meeting with a Mercedes out of Dumas' *Count of Monte Cristo*, Stephen had imagined that in a "moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment, he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment" (67). Yet Joyce ironizes and deflates the moment of transfiguration even before it happens; and he does the same thing with the scene on the beach. Just before it occurs, Stephen's musings turn to his sense of a special destiny, to which a "voice from beyond the world was calling [him]" (182): to "create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable" (184; Stephen again invokes Daedalus on 244, 276). But even as he feels his soul "soaring in an air beyond the world," the "call" repeatedly sounds in the mocking voices of his rude and "characterless" friends crying out vulgarly Latinate variations on his name (182–83).[19]

Furthermore, the encounter with "the birdgirl," like the tram scene with Emma, is most striking for being a non-occurrence. As manager of the *mis-en-scène*, Stephen transforms her into an abstraction, "a strange and beautiful seabird" that "Long, long . . . suffered his gaze." He then flees from any possible contact in order to sustain the ideal form, beyond action, beyond language: "Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy" (185–86). It is not, as Stephen would have it, the world's "misrule and confusion" that he embraces, but his aestheticized retreat from it. Having deafened himself to all the calls made upon him, Stephen determines that he can be happy only when he is beyond the hearing of such voices (89), heeding instead "a confused music within him," "his throat throbbing with song" in response to "the call of life to his soul" to create and perform in "the fair courts of life" (181–86). And yet it is precisely in those courts that Stephen refuses, or finds himself unable, to live and to create. The party pieces that Stephen performs early on enact positive aspects of the culture he inherits, and seem to set the stage for achievement to come. But by representing Simon as a caricature of both conviviality and irresponsibility, and transforming Stephen's relationship to his father from his own to that of his embittered brother Stanislaus, Joyce depicts Stephen as not only alienated from all the forces that would claim him, but also culturally deprived, cut off from both creative resources and an artist's necessary audience even as he claims to embrace them.

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[19] Such rhythmic counterpoint is characteristic of Joyce's treatment of Stephen. For example, his lecture to Lynch on aesthetics is punctuated by a "long dray laden with old iron [intruding] the harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal" (226), by Donovan's "benevolent malice" (228) as he recounts exam results, and by rain that provokes Lynch's question: "—What do you mean . . . by prating about beauty and the imagination in this miserable Godforsaken island?" (233). Later, Stephen's romantic fantasy of Emma—"it was her body he smelt: a wild and languid smell: the tepid limbs over which his music had flowed desirously and the secret soft linen upon which her flesh distilled odour and a dew"—yields to the reality of a "louse crawl[ing] over the nape of his neck" (254).

The pattern of willful isolation and mounting self-aggrandizement that his friends repeatedly note in Section V begins with Stephen's definitive break with Simon, who execrates him as a "lazy bitch." Stephen's response is merely semantic, mocking the rhetoric of Simon's curse: "He has a curious idea of genders if he thinks a bitch is masculine" (189). But the calls continue, and they continue to take their toll: "His father's whistle, his mother's mutterings, the screech of an unseen maniac were to him now so many voices offending and threatening to humble the pride of his youth" (190). Though occasionally he feels the need "to find himself still in the midst of common lives" (191), he responds with ever greater self-assertion and detachment, taking pleasure in provoking his friends' repeated charges that recapitulate his aloofness from them and all others. McCann says, "—Dedalus, you're an antisocial being, wrapped up in yourself" (191); Davin: "—You're a terrible man, Stevie, . . . Always alone" (218); Cranly: "—Have you never loved anyone?" (261) and "—Alone, quite alone. . . . Not only to be separate from all others but to have not even one friend" (269). The isolating refrain only feeds its provoker's "pride of . . . spirit which had always made him conceive himself as a being apart in every order," as one who exults in being "alone and young and wilful and wildhearted" (174, 185).

Stephen's main counter to this drumbeat is the solipsistic, masturbatory villanelle ("He too was weary of ardent ways" [241]), which

Zack Bowen calls "the microcosm and artistic epiphany of the entire novel."[20] While writing it, Stephen recalls performing for Emma, who "beg[ged] him to sing one of his curious songs. Then he saw himself sitting at the old piano, striking chords softly from its speckled keys and singing . . . to her . . . a dainty song of the Elizabethans, a sad and sweet loth to depart, the victory chant of Agincourt, the happy air of Greensleeves" (237–38).[21] With the villanelle Stephen "had written verses for her again after ten years" (241), yet Joyce has his would-be artist recite the poem only to himself and in private; fearful of being mocked, he fails to offer it to her or the world. In Joseph Strick's film of *Portrait*, Stephen does recite an abbreviated version of the villanelle to a bewildered Emma who says, "It's lovely Stephen. I don't understand it, but the music of it is lovely." Responding to her feeble critique, Stephen contemptuously proposes, in a moment taken from *Stephen Hero*, that he and she "live one night together . . . and then . . . say goodbye in the morning and never . . . see each other again!" In *Stephen Hero* Emma, trying to disengage herself from him, "murmured as if she were repeating from memory: —You are mad, Stephen" (*SH* 198). The stunned, insubstantial movie Emma merely flees without a word, leaving Stephen looking foolish.

Seamus Deane argues that Stephen's final creation, his diary, affirms his achievement of artisthood: he "takes over the telling of his own story, finally replacing the words of others with his own words, ultimately achieving eloquence after beginning in baby lispings and mispronunciations" (*P* xvi). Joseph Strick's film of *Portrait* visually endorses Deane's assessment by showing Stephen—answering the call of the birds (and "of the hawklike man whose name he bore" [244])—sailing away from Dublin toward Paris at the end, having begun both the journal and the journey that seem to promise artistic success.[22] Yet Joyce's Stephen, though he has told Davin that "the shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead" (273), never embarks. He remains fixed in place because, as Joyce told Frank Budgen, "He has a shape that can't be changed."[23] Stephen may stand at Dún Laoghaire pier but he gets no further, and there, or within short walking distance, he still is when we next see him in the Martello Tower at the beginning of *Ulysses* (or as Richard Rowan in *Exiles*): still proclaiming his independence and artisthood, still ensnared by the forces that begot, reared, and misshaped him. Stephen's Paris, like Hamlet's England, exists only offstage, requiring an imaginative leap on our parts if we are to accept the reality of an intervening journey out and back. Like Tennyson's Ulysses forever declaiming on the dock at Ithaca, Joyce's Stephen remains in a state of penultimacy, poised for what never happens: the journey to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience" (275–76) and the artistic career that, despite all the evidence to the contrary, he has convinced himself lies just beyond.

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[20] Bowen, *Bloom's Old Sweet Song* 85. Interpretation and evaluation of the villanelle have long been a matter of critical dispute. Important discussions of the subject include: Rossman, "Stephen Dedalus' Villanelle"; Benstock, "The Temptation of St. Stephen"; Scholes, "Stephen Dedalus, Poet or Esthete?"; and Bowen, "Stephen's Villanelle," *Bloom's Old Sweet Song* 85–90.

[21] Bowen speculates that "Stephen is probably trying to establish himself with E.C. as a singer of touching ballads of antiquity rather than a singer of popular faddistic songs" (*Musical Allusions* 42).

[22] Strick's *Portrait* makes Stephen less complexly performative than Joyce's. Joyce renders Stephen's relationship to art ambiguous and dubious, raising questions as to whether he could ever succeed as an artist. But the movie's flattened and simplified Stephen has virtually no relationship to art at all.

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[23] Quoted in Budgen 105.

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