

Discourse and Punish:
an Analysis of the Ideological Power of the Catholic Church in

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

by

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Abstract

Although long underestimated in terms of its importance, the conflict between Stephen Dedalus and the Catholic Church dominates James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. By shaping Stephen through education and religious instruction, the Church leaves an indelible legacy on Stephen's mind. Yet the effects of a Jesuit education are not limited solely to Stephen. Instead Stephen's education provides a model of the indoctrination and ideological control that allowed the Catholic Church to dominate the social life of Ireland in Joyce's day.

Beginning by looking at Joyce's own views of the Church and his abortive attempts to tell the story of Stephen Dedalus in *Stephen Hero*, Joyce reveals his intention to use his character as a vehicle for his commentary against the Church. But whereas that text failed because its strident tone approached the issue too directly, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* succeeds by viewing the Church indirectly through the eyes of the growing Stephen. Because of this shift Joyce succeeds in incriminating the Church through its own abuse of power and corrupted rhetoric.


The Church's method of gaining and maintaining power is through education, and as seen in Stephen's unjust punishment and Father Arnall's hellfire sermon, the Church does not hesitate to use physical and psychological coercion to maintain its power. So centrally concerned is the Church with power that Stephen's education is devoid of any spiritual instruction, as the Church only teaches him to obey its authority. Due to his harsh treatment and sexual awakening, Stephen strays from the faith, but even there it shapes the course of his rebellion, turning into a simple inversion of his Catholic instruction. Arnall's sermon, though, causes Stephen to rededicate himself to the faith, and his mechanistic devotion inspires the Jesuits to pay him the ultimate compliment by attempting to bring him into the order. While Stephen rejects the priesthood, the offer to exercise the power that once held him down briefly tempts Stephen to abandon his artistic calling.

Joyce's own fear of Catholicism's political designs gives the novel its impetus, but ultimately *Portrait* becomes more than a novel of a young man's mental development. It is both an expose of the process by which the Irish Catholic Church maintains its control of Irish life and an act of rebellion against it, showing how the discourses it uses to justify its power can be turned against it.



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Textual Note

The edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* cited in this text is corrected version, edited by Hans Walter Gabler and Walter Hettche and published by Vintage International.

“We can’t change the country. Let us change the subject.”

Of all the wry and often bitter comments Stephen Dedalus makes throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, this may come closest to accurately appraising Stephen’s tortured relationship to Ireland. Delivered to Leopold Bloom as Stephen sobers up after a night of binge drinking in which he barely avoids a nervous collapse, the comment obliquely suggests the antipathy and resignation Dedalus feels about his nation. Weary from continuously fighting what he views as provincial Irishness, Stephen appears, for the moment at least, to let the opportunity to criticize and condemn his homeland pass.

But like so much else in the writing of James Joyce, this quote is laden with subtle, shaded nuances. In the context of a drunk man attempting to maintain a cordial conversation with another person, the meaning of this quote appears straightforward. Given the surrounding lines, missing the play on the word “subject” is quite easy; Dedalus and Bloom, like all Irish, are “subjects” of the British Empire, and in a country at a time when the relationship between the Irish and the Empire is being radically challenged the double meaning takes on an ironic twist.

A more flexible reading of Stephen’s comment opens another possibility for interpretation. While unintentional, Stephen’s drunken request verbalizes the single goal that motivates his adult life in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*—freeing himself mentally and psychologically from Ireland. Being a subject is much more than holding a British passport; in a set of novels in which the nature and limits of human consciousness play such a profound role, the philosophical concept of “the subject” as a rational actor stands as a central guiding theme. The development of such a subject as a perceiver and

interpreter of external reality is the central concern of *Portrait*, which structures not just its narrative but its very form around the development of Stephen Dedalus's mind. By doing so, the novel takes on as its own subject all the people, thoughts, feelings, institutions and fears that shape Stephen's life.

The three-part pun on the word subject unites two crucial themes in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. While the novel's most apparent theme is its protagonist's mental development and the formation of his active, engaged intellect, the importance of Stephen's relationship to institutions cannot be minimized. Ultimately, those themes become indistinguishable, as the discourses of the institution that dominates Stephen's life, the Roman Catholic Church, shape the very way in which Stephen understands himself and the world. Through its use of physical and psychological coercion Catholicism determines Stephen's mental, intellectual, spiritual and emotional lives; its control becomes so complete that even though Stephen repudiates his faith he can never escape the formative role the Church has had on him.

Stephen is destined to lose his mental battle with the church because it controls all the discourses available to Stephen. The Irish Catholic Church, through its monopoly of all spiritual matters in *Portrait*, controls one of the preeminently powerful discourses in human society—the discourse of faith. Through the privileged place that religion holds as the shaper of personal thought and action, politics and social life, Catholicism permeates every bit of Irish life as seen in *Portrait*, especially the most fundamental structures of Stephen's mind. So complete is the Church's dominance that Protestantism, its great spiritual rival, is almost completely excluded from the text, eliminating what is perhaps the most powerful mode of resistance. Consequently, even religious dissent gains

its shape from Catholicism, as it never transcends a simple inversion of Catholic belief and practice.

Only through the shrewd use of power can a single institution wield such unassailable influence. As a product of Jesuit schools, Joyce experienced first hand that power. In expressing his awareness of such power in his novels and letters, Joyce attempts to stand against it, which in itself challenges the orthodox view of him as an apolitical writer. The need to encourage the development of a modern, pluralistic and cosmopolitan Ireland was never far from Joyce's mind. Nor was the awareness that in its struggle to free itself from the British Empire, Ireland threw itself into the arms of an often reactionary Church. Out of this awareness *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* emerges as Joyce's attempt to expose the power of the Church.

By focusing on the role of Catholic education in shaping Stephen Dedalus, Joyce exposes the two chief instruments of Catholic hegemony—the classroom and the chapel. Indeed, the two are scarcely indistinguishable, as their goals and methods are so intertwined. By encouraging complete dependence and obedience through physical and psychological intimidation, Catholicism as seen in Joyce's novel roots itself in the mind, psyche and soul of each of its followers, gaining and maintaining its power on Irish society one believer at a time. In exposing the basic mechanism by which the Church exerts its influence and derives its power Joyce confronts and attempts to help subvert that power.

Although Joyce's own tortured relationship with Catholicism has been the subject of many biographies, rarely does Catholicism receive a sophisticated analysis in scholarly literature about *Portrait*. Nearly every introductory guide notes the brutality of the

Church's treatment of Stephen and its hypocrisy, and very many critical texts mention it at least in passing, but no study devotes itself entirely to explicating the ideological power of Catholicism in the novel and showing its workings. Oddly, this gap in the scholarship comes at a time when analyses of Joyce's relationships to politics, nationalism, colonialism, popular culture and history have gained ascendancy in Joycean studies. Little recognized is that fact that Joyce's fear of Catholic power motivated his approach to each of those topics.

In an attempt to help fill that gap, this paper conducts a close reading of Joyce's depiction of the Catholic Church in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Special attention is given to the rhetorical and discursive manner in which the Church presents itself in the novel, both to the laity and to itself. Analysis of the language the Church employs to express its doctrine shows that its primary concern is not religion but power, which it is willing to wield in whatever way best serves its purpose. Two instances in Stephen's education illustrate this concern clearly; the first is the Jesuits wrongful punishment of Stephen, which they refuse to acknowledge was wrong despite concrete proof. The second is the sermon which temporarily brings Stephen back to the Church after he sets himself on a deliberate course of sin. These two moments are the keys which can open a rich yet overlooked understanding of *Portrait* and Joyce's own views and practices as a politically engaged author.

Supersaturation

If Joyce had stated his views about Ireland and Catholicism plainly, though, he would have turned his back on his artistic calling. Instead Joyce embedded his political sentiments in his art, specifically in the form of his fictional avatar Stephen Dedalus. In *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait's* abandoned predecessor, Joyce first attempted to give life to Stephen. Initially conceived as a picaresque novel in which Stephen would wander Dublin exposing the hypocrisy, vapidness and insularity of Irish society, Joyce abandoned the project, throwing the unfinished manuscript into a fire. What remains of that text was saved by Joyce's sister before it could go up in flames (Beja 41).

The surviving pages of *Stephen Hero* suggest the completed novel would have been an unmitigated failure. Much of this is owed to Stephen's insufferably grating character. Typically assuming the pedantic tone of a self-proclaimed misunderstood genius, Stephen's primary narrative purpose is to shrilly ramble on about the terminal ignorance of those he encounters. In a heavy handed attempt to rescue Stephen, Joyce frequently interjects his authorial voice into the novel, resorting to a technique that almost never appears in his mature work. As Hugh Kenner astutely observes, *Stephen Hero* was doomed by Joyce's lack of a unified theme, form and convincing protagonist (Kenner 111).

Another mortal flaw in *Stephen Hero* was Joyce's inability to mask his own scorn for Ireland, making the text more screed than novel. Yet what remains provides the clearest picture of Joyce's political and religious views at that stage of his career. Dominic Manganiello's seminal study *Joyce's Politics* sheds light on Joyce's opinions by cataloguing the many blatant political rants in the novel. He quotes one especially

strident passage in which Stephen articulates his “scorn for the rabblement” and castigates his companions who “[respect] spiritual and temporal authorities,” especially “the spiritual authorities of Catholicism and of patriotism” (Manganiello 82).

According to Manganiello, the Catholic Church is Stephen’s primary object of contempt, which he sees as the major barrier to liberty in Ireland. Referring to the Church as a “plague,” Stephen holds special scorn for his Jesuit schoolmasters, claiming that “the toy life which the Jesuits permit these docile young men to live is what I call a stationary march.” Finally, Stephen proclaims that it “is too troublesome for me to adopt the manner of these slaves. I refuse to be terrorized into stupidity” (90-92).

Clearly, Joyce envisioned Stephen as a tool to criticize the role of Catholicism in Irish life from the outset. But whereas Stephen functioned as Joyce’s crude mouthpiece in *Stephen Hero*, in *Portrait* Joyce puts him to much subtler use. The majority of the preachy moments of the original text have been purged in favor of letting Stephen’s antagonists reveal their own hypocrisy and wrongheaded beliefs. This tactic succeeds brilliantly in the first and third chapters of *Portrait*, where the Church’s abusive use of power hits Stephen directly. At *Portrait*’s close Stephen does sound as shrilly confident as ever, yet his prior suffering earns him the sympathy of readers which would have been denied him in *Stephen Hero*.

Despite Stephen’s tone, the end of *Portrait* provides the best starting point for a discussion of Stephen’s character. While seeming self-righteously overbearing to many critics, including Hugh Kenner¹, the college-aged Stephen is at least able to articulate

¹ Kenner articulates his dim view of Stephen in *Dublin’s Joyce*, his highly influential study of all Joyce’s works. Aside from being one of the first critical works to discuss *Stephen Hero*, Kenner also was among the first critics to distinguish between Stephen and Joyce, thereby opening up the possibility that Stephen fails in his quest to forge “the uncreated conscience of [his] race.”

clearly what he seeks from life and why he cannot find it in Ireland. He does so in the following passage at the very same time he exhibits the tendencies that Kenner and his followers scorn when he tells his classmates at University College, Dublin:

The soul is born...[in] a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall fly by those nets. (196)

Stephen's ostentatious self-confidence and sense of profundity are refuted by his peasant classmate Davin's level-headed response of "Too deep for me, Stevie."

Even if Stephen self-indulgently feeds his persecution complex, the role of Ireland's provincialism in shaping Stephen must be addressed. In saying that an artist must rise above the constraints his time and place of origin place on him, Stephen is doing little more than saying the self-evident. However, when Stephen makes that statement at the end of the novel, having suffered the worst that Irish society could throw at him in the form of poverty, religious intolerance, bad parenting and abusive teachers, he speaks with an undeniable justification. Given his childhood, Stephen must attain a type of self-authorship and self-creation if only to become a successful adult, let alone a great artist. By attempting to throw aside the values and constructs that others impose on him, Stephen's theory of what he must do to become an author also articulates what he must do to become an autonomous, self-determining person. As *Ulysses* shows, Stephen's poetic career will be doomed until he can attain a freer subjectivity.

Like a wide-eyed paranoid identifying those out to get him, Stephen identifies a lengthy list of adversaries. Ultimately, though, a constant antagonist emerges, as it

becomes clear that most of Stephen's problems originate from his alienation from Catholicism. As the dominant ideological force in Ireland during Joyce's time, the Catholic church exerted a power over its adherents that was at once spiritual and political. While the British Empire ruled Ireland, the Catholic bourgeois dominated Irish social life, especially in the form of the Gaelic Revival, which swept through all Ireland but especially the universities at the time Stephen would be in college (Kelly 26-27). Even Stephen's family displays the influence of the thinking Stephen rebels against as his mother finds her faith to be her only refuge in the face of her family's poverty (Williams 97-99).

Catholicism also moved into the overtly political domain at this time, as agitation for Irish independence made irreversible gains. Propagandists linking Catholicism to nationalism were gaining prominence, as D.P. Moran's *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland*, which advocated an exclusionist view of Irish nationality based on religious lines, became required reading for nationalists, as did Sinn Fein founder Arthur Griffith's anti-Semitic paper *The United Irishman*. Increasingly the public viewed writers with impeccable nationalist credentials like William Butler Yeats, a non-practicing Protestant, with suspicion, especially if they challenged Catholic sensibilities as Yeats did with his play *The Countess Cathleen* (Nolan 50-51, Kelly 29)².

Given the pervasive influence of the Church on social life, Stephen's desire to break free of it makes perfect sense; after all, to be the great artist he yearns to be he must offend bourgeois sensibility. But this incorrectly suggests that Stephen stands outside of

² Joyce places Stephen at this play's premier, which Joyce himself witnessed. The play sparked a near-riot as the audience took exception to the plot of a noblewoman who sells her soul to feed her peasants. Infuriatingly for Joyce, many of his classmates from University College were Yeats's most vociferous critics (Manganiello 27-28).

Catholicism's influence, which is most certainly not true. Instead, the Church takes its most troublesome form inside Stephen's head in the shape of the Catholicized form of subjectivity, which exerts a comprehensive and totalitarian power over Stephen's mind. As Stephen's closest friend Cranly tells him, "It is a curious thing...how your mind is supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve" (232). Cranly recognizes that Stephen cannot escape the mental constructs his Jesuit education has instilled in him.

In fact, they shape the very nature of Stephen's rebellion against his religion and nation by setting the terms on which he will rebel.

Despite the influence of the Church on social life, the impression it makes on Stephen derives from a much more powerful source. The reason for that is Stephen's immersion in the Jesuit school system from the age of six. While traces of Catholicism's influence appear everywhere in Irish daily life (at least in Joyce's fictional world), nowhere is that influence stronger than in the schools. Through physical and spiritual brutality—both of which Stephen finds himself the unfortunate target of—the Jesuits maintain an unquestioned vise grip on their students. Their power is so corruptive that practicing Catholicism becomes less an exercise in spirituality than an act of political submission. Only barely does Stephen escape from being "terrorized into stupidity," the fate that Joyce railed against in *Stephen Hero*.

Learned Helplessness—The Power of the Pandibat

In his study *A History of Christianity*, Paul Johnson discusses the historical link between the birth of Catholic educational programs and the Counter-Reformation. Attempting to regain the power it had lost to the nascent Protestant churches developing in Europe, the Church needed a method of both training better clergy who would combat the Reformation more effectively and to maintain or regain Catholicism's hold on Europe's political elite. By fortuitous accident, this need was addressed by the rise of the Society of Jesus, which had earned a reputation for its rigorously trained priests. As Johnson argues, the rise of the Jesuits, known for their obedient devotion to the pope, was encouraged by the papacy and Catholic monarchies to spread throughout Europe. "[T]hey became the specialists in upper-class schooling," and, according to Johnson, their success in shoring up Catholicism's political support made it seem "absolutely natural and inevitable that a man with vested interest in the established order should be not only a Catholic, but a militant papalist" (Johnson 302-303).

The use of Jesuit education to ensure Catholic hegemony can be seen in *A Portrait of the Artists as a Young Man*. Through their determined use of power, the Jesuits maintain a spiritual and ideological control that would be the envy of the Counter-Reformation. But while they shape Irish society as depicted in the novel through education, they also control a vast system of patronage. It is the role of the Jesuits as doorkeepers to Ireland's Catholic bourgeoisie that draws Dedalus family's attention. As the first son of the Dedalus family, once fairly wealthy and prominent in rural Ireland, Stephen is expected to become the family's standard bearer. At least Stephen's father has that pretension. "Christian brothers be damned!" he says, speaking of a Catholic order

that took the responsibility to educate the poor. It is decided that Stephen will “stick to the Jesuits” because, Simon Dedalus explains, “they’ll be of service to him in after years. Those are the fellows that can get you a position” (66).

As Kevin Sullivan attests in his biographical study of Joyce’s education *Joyce Among the Jesuits*, Joyce’s family confronted the same situation. After John Joyce’s loss of his job as a political functionary the family’s steady slide into debt began. Sending his sons to Jesuit boarding schools was his last attempt to “keep up appearances”. Yet as biographer Morris Beja notes, the situation for the Joyces was worse than the fictional Dedaluses. After a brief stint at the Christian Brothers school, where Joyce went because his father could not afford Clongowes, Joyce attended Belvedere College free of tuition. While there, the Joyces’ condition declined so rapidly that the school’s headmaster ensured Joyce ate with the faculty, so that he could have at least one solid meal a day (6).

While the Dedaluses decided to place Stephen in Jesuit schools because of its upper-class cachet—Clongowes Wood and Belvedere Colleges remain two of the most fashionable schools in Ireland—they also respect the academic curricula of the Jesuit schools. For centuries the Jesuits educated the Catholic elite of Ireland, and Catholic parochial schools in general were viewed as superior to the schools set-up by the British, which were widely seen as another tool in the British domination of Ireland (Moody and Martin 280-81).

Into this context Stephen enters. Significantly, his interactions with the clerics who run his boarding school will constitute his first exposure to Catholicism, at least as detailed in the text. Not only will the priests be his teachers, giving him the knowledge

that his family expects will get him a good job and return the family to good standing, but they will be shape Stephen's lifelong view of the faith.

The essence of Stephen's education will not be the academic knowledge or skills he learns from a set curriculum, but rather the teaching of a particular way of viewing the world. That itself is the goal of a parochial education, as will be explicitly stated to the sixteen-year old Stephen before a religious retreat. "We have been sent into this world for one thing, and one thing alone," says Father Arnall, "to do God's holy will and to save our immortal souls. All else is worthless" (*Portrait* 104). While denigrating the value of any knowledge that cannot be subsumed by the spiritual, the Jesuits posit a view of education that emphasizes the chapel over the classroom and the soul over the intellect. In their expansive and totalitarian view, where every desire, thought or impulse may have dire and irrevocable influence over the soul's immortal fate, no mental boundary can be drawn that limits their purview—they claim the complete consciousness and spirit of an individual as their domain, and any form of resistance must be challenged and conquered. They are given free reign to do this, as their accepted control of spiritual discourse, with its emphasis on the power of judgment and the threat of damnation, is considered by adherents to be the guiding force behind their own beliefs and actions.

While Stephen never hears this view articulated while in elementary school he clearly senses it. At this moment in his life, he literally cannot conceptualize anything independent from God. One night Stephen tries to imagine the extent of the universe and what lay beyond it, but finds himself unable to. "It was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that. He tried to think what a big thought that must be but he could think only of God" (12).

Stephen's concept of God and the universe shows how primed Stephen's mind is to accept the discourses of the Church. For him no universe exists outside of God, and the clergy, as God's chosen initiates into a secret realm of knowledge, receive extra respect. He is the perfect blank slate on which Church doctrine can be transcribed. Moreover, Stephen displays a defining aspect of his subjectivity. Even at a young age, Stephen has a remarkable ability to deal with abstract concepts and attempt to assimilate them. While Stephen is much too young to begin to posit a contrary theology, he already is aware that there are limits to the Church's, and by implication there can exist other discourses. Stephen constantly attempts to understand the deeper lessons of the Church, and frequently must reconcile differences he sees between dogma and practice. That faculty will only grow in prominence as he ages.

Stephen's thinking about cosmology parallels his experiencing of the world around him as a flowing patter of thoughts and sensations. Like his blurring the distinctions between God and the universe, Stephen sees life as a fluid, uninterrupted stream. Of the two immediate consequences of this, Stephen's constant linking of his own present moment to larger and more abstract concepts of space and time is the less immediately useful. Instead, Stephen's undifferentiated view of the world takes center stage. Among other things, it makes him blur the difference between his classroom experiences and the rest of his life. Stephen's schooling, which already dominates his life because he attends a boarding school, provides him with no space to withdraw from it, making it further dominate his conscience. While at his boarding school Stephen's life *becomes* his schooling, just as the Jesuits would have it. Far from being limited to the classroom, his education lacks any temporal or spatial bound; in the cafeteria, the chapel,

the dormitory and the playing fields, Stephen cannot escape his Jesuit teachers. Because of this constant state of being under the Jesuits' control, Stephen comes to link anything that happens at the school with the Jesuits and their teachings. Through the conflation of the two the good the Jesuits do for Stephen in teaching him their rigorous curriculum is overwhelmed by the contemptuous fear they ultimately instill in him.

Clearly, the Dedaluses place Stephen in a position of absolute dependence and inferiority when they enroll him at Clongowes. At a very important time in his life, Stephen finds himself under the control of a strange and forbidding group who will shape his education. But the relationship between Stephen and the Jesuits has such a much greater imbalance. While the Jesuits hold the power to instruct, they also have the power to coerce. Ultimately, the misuse of that power leads to Stephen's rejection of Catholicism, but Stephen was not always alienated from his faith; in fact, Stephen once deeply respected the Jesuits. Once a model student, Stephen always excelled academically. Yet his relationship with the Jesuits transcended the classroom, as the Jesuits chose Stephen to serve as the head of his school's prayer society, making him the moral leader of his class and signaling their esteem for his apparent devotion. The Jesuits' fondness for Stephen runs so deep that they finally invite him to join the priesthood, believing that God has blessed him with a vocation (153).

Close attention to Stephen's first experiences with the Jesuits shows how deep a positive impact they made on him and why he invests so much in the order before his final break from it. As one of the youngest and smallest boys at the Clongowes, Stephen begins his education quite inauspiciously, as a bully pushes him into an open cesspool (4). That incident leads to a severe case of the flu, which forces Stephen to be

hospitalized in the college's infirmary. Fearful that "he might die before his mother came," Stephen imagines his funeral mass, where "all the fellows would be...dressed in black, all with sad faces" (19). Remembering the death of another little boy at the school, Stephen imagines his funeral in some detail and is caught up in the sadness of the prayers and hymns he imagines will be said and sung for him.

While Stephen overestimates how sick he is, it is striking to see the way in which Stephen thinks of himself. Not only does he alarmingly envision himself dying, but Stephen's reverie also displays for the first time a behavior that comes to define Stephen's way of understanding himself and the world. Throughout *Portrait* and *Ulysses* Stephen's mental life is characterized by viewing himself and others with a self-conscious but cold detachment. While he can either be self-aggrandizing or self-excoriating, Stephen habitually removes himself from reality to interpret and imagine. It is in these moments of introspection that Stephen will later articulate his view of himself as a martyr assailed by his homeland; that persecution complex defines Stephen's worldview as a young man, and the outlines of it can be seen in his fears at the infirmary.

Religious discourse also shapes Stephen's reverie. Particularly, the ritual of the funeral mass distracts him from deeper fears about what death could hold. When operating in this way religious discourse serves a natural and justified purpose, as one of religion's primary functions is to mediate between life and the unknown of death. But throughout *Portrait* religion will leave this important realm and assume far more problematic roles³.

³One such role is Irish politics. In the infirmary Stephen learns of the death of Charles Parnell, the hero of his staunchly nationalist father (22-23). The Church's abandonment of Parnell because of his long affair with a married woman led to his political destruction, causing no end of bitterness in Stephen's father.

As educators, pastors and *de facto* parents, the importance of the Jesuits in Stephen's life exceeds that of anything else. Already responsible for his mental and spiritual wellbeing, the violence of the other boys against Stephen make the Jesuits his physical protectors as well. Stephen rewards their protection and responsibility with profound and fearful respect. He respects his teacher Father Arnall solely because of his status as priest, which suggests to Stephen a high degree of learned knowledge. "Father Arnall knew more than Dante because he was a priest" Stephen thinks, comparing one of his schoolmasters to his clever governess, viewing Arnall's collar as a badge of his learning (7). He also notes the distinctions between members of the order and sees the differences not in terms of hierarchical standing, but of holiness and intelligence. "It was queer that you could not call him sir because he was a brother and had a different kind of look" Stephen thinks about Brother Michael, the infirmary attendant at Clongowes. "Was he not holy enough or why could he not catch up on the others?" (18). At this stage Stephen's respect is automatic yet superficial, as Stephen inextricably ties respect with status and not any understanding of character.

Stephen becomes aware of the personal warmth of the Jesuits after they care for him when he falls sick. Forced to miss mass because of his fever, one of the school's prefects visits him to make sure he is okay, or, significantly, punish him if he is lying. Feeling his forehead, he notes the fever and helps Stephen to the infirmary. But the priest's help is more than just directing him to the doctor. He also attempts to set Stephen's mind at ease. "We must pack off to Brother Michael because we have the

Throughout *Portrait* and *Ulysses* Stephen will remember Parnell, seeing in the disgraced "uncrowned king of Ireland" a precursor to his own supposedly impending martyrdom.

collywobbles. Terrible thing to have the collywobbles! How we wobble when we have the collywobbles!” the priest says, joking with Stephen (18).

In a moment of insight that shows his growing maturity, Stephen recognizes the priest’s motive. “He was very decent to say that. That was all to make him laugh” (18). Although Stephen “could not laugh because his cheeks and lips were all shivery”, he feels that the priest cares for him. Despite Stephen’s fear of his sickness and of the Jesuit, whose remote power he finds intimidating, he feels soothed by the priest’s affectionate attention. Because of his tender actions, the prefect makes Stephen feel a little safer at the school and more trusting of the priests. In this moment of dependence—which Stephen fears is a matter of life and death—Stephen’s trust of the Jesuits is reinforced.

Because Stephen and his classmates find the Jesuits intimidating, the way that the priest builds confidence in Stephen deserves examining closely. The use of the word “collywobbles” sounds quite funny to readers now, and the word has had a humorous connotation throughout its history. Defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as colloquial word for “a disordered state of the stomach” often brought on by nervous fear, the historical examples of the word’s use are all humorous, with a quotation from the satiric magazine *Punch* alongside a usage linking it to the equally outlandish medical term “mulligrubs”.

By choosing this outlandish word, the priest makes himself seem less threatening. The repetition of collywobbles three times, each time adding the inflection that the exclamation point suggests, and then joking about wobbling bring down his language to the level of baby talk. What makes this passage noteworthy, though, is not the baby talk.

Indeed, it is fairly common for adults to self-consciously make their language seem silly to comfort or amuse children. Instead it is the great disparity between the Jesuits' conventional form of rhetoric and the specific type of utterance shown here. In the classroom the relationship between the students and their teachers is mediated by a form of language that reinforces the authority of the Jesuits; as learned scholars, what the Jesuits say is presupposed to be correct and worth learning. Their linguistic superiority is magnified greatly when the Jesuits act as God's priests, using their magisterial knowledge of the Church's doctrines and mysteries to signify how distinct they are from the laity. Even the use of Latin in mass and other liturgical services reiterates the message that the clergy's power derives from their mastery of extremely privileged rhetorical discourses.

So when Stephen, anxious about being sick but more fearful of the Jesuits and how they will react, hears the prefect of this school speak gibberish to amuse him, he rightfully appreciates the unexpected change. Seeing the priests, who normally seem so stern and forbidding, goofing around with him is funny if only because of the gesture's subversion of accepted priestly behavior. But Stephen's reaction runs deeper than just being amused because he understands the priest's motive, which implies with it a sense that Stephen sees the prefect as being especially warm-hearted. This is the first moment when the priests show warmth toward Stephen, and the prefect's words and actions create a feeling of faith and confidence in Stephen that tempers his fearful awe.

Sadly, Stephen's faith in the Jesuits sets him up for a calamitous shock when he learns how fickle his masters can be. Discipline in Catholic schools has gained the status of stereotype in American culture, but despite that the vehemence with which some

priests in *Portrait* act continues to shock. In the last section of Chapter One, the threat of harsh, unavoidable punishment runs throughout. Joyce devotes the opening pages of the to a discussion between Stephen and his friends of the punishment to be handed out to a group of students for a major yet unclear violation of the school's rules (37-41). The students, sensing scandal, believe the students secretly drank all the communion wine before being persuaded that they were caught "smuggling". Although the precise nature of the crime is never clear to the reader or the boys, the punishment is definite: flogging.

The smuggling incident deserves attention not just because it is the first example of the Jesuits punishing students, but also because Stephen never quite figures out what smuggling is. "He wanted to ask somebody about it. What did that mean about the smuggling in the square?" (37-38). Stephen assumes the boys were "there for a cod," but that contradicts the seriousness of which the boys speak of the crime. Ultimately Stephen never does figure out what happened, but the thoughts he has but fails to connect reveal that the act was one of opportunistic schoolboy homosexuality. Regardless, Stephen's ignorance of the violation makes the punishment seem all the worse for him, as the Jesuits, instead of rectifying a clearly defined wrong, are now harshly punishing his classmates for mysterious reasons. This deepens Stephen's fear of the Jesuit's power, affecting him so deeply that he marvels at how the boys could laugh at something so serious and terrifying (40).

The feeling of fearful foreboding that results from the smuggling affair sets the tone for Stephen's own unjust punishment. After having broken his glasses during recess, Stephen's teacher, Father Arnall, exempts him from work. However, Stephen unfortunately encounters the sadistic Father Dolan, on one of his rounds to terrorize the

boys into rigid obedience (43-45). Dolan believes Stephen is just a “lazy little schemer”, ignoring both Stephen’s valid excuse and his reputation as a model student, and violently beats his hands in front of the class, where he must remain as an example until the priest is satisfied that his is sufficiently humiliated (47).

What terrifies Stephen is not only the physical pain, but the humiliating spectacle of punishment Dolan forces him to endure. “To be called a schemer before the class and to be pandied when he always got the card for first or second and was the leader of the Yorkists!” Stephen thinks in shock, noting his high academic standing. Stephen also feels slighted because there was no recognized difference between him and a student made to stand in front of the class because of his idleness. “It was unfair and cruel,” Stephen thinks. “The prefect of studies was a priest but that was cruel and unfair” (47).

The disciplinary power of the Jesuits is triply abused when Stephen is punished. First, he should not have been punished at all, as he had been excused from work both by the school’s doctor and his teacher Arnall, who refuses to intercede with Dolan on Stephen’s behalf. Second, the punishment, which ultimately becomes a spectacle of humiliation, is excessive. But most importantly, it is a violation of trust. Stephen’s faith in the Jesuits had been hitherto absolute, as he recognized their authority and power as being fair and legitimate. Though intimidated, Stephen believed that following their rules would keep the Jesuits from harming him. Both Dolan and Arnall prove him wrong. Instead, Dolan does not condescend to check on whether he acts fairly or not; issues of right and wrong disappear when he, overcome by his power and license to punish, violently assaults helpless children.

Dolan indisputably acts excessively and cruelly when punishing Stephen. But the incident displays much deeper problems with the school's hierarchy and the view the Jesuits take toward their disciplinary responsibility. First, the obvious question of how a brute like Dolan could be given responsibility and power must be asked. Ultimately there is no explanation, showing Joyce's deliberate depiction of the Jesuits as being capable of being harsh and incomprehensible masters. Surely the Jesuits would have noticed Dolan's cruelty, as he enters a classroom, beats his pandybat on a desk and cries "any lazy idle loafers that want flogging in this class?" (43). His deliberate intimidation is so excessive it sounds comical, as he shouts "Father Dolan will be in to see you every day. Father Dolan will be in tomorrow" before asking individual students to repeat when he will be in (44). While schools need discipline, order can be maintained without empowering unbalanced thugs, who strut down the halls, baton in hand, looking for "idle loafers [and] lazy little schemers". Moreover, Dolan's punishments portray him as being much more interested in being violent and feared than in being a positive corrective force in students' lives. The Jesuits become more like aggressive and vindictive police officers than kindly guides in forming moral young men.

Putting Dolan in charge of discipline is a massively revealing mistake by the Jesuits. As all responsible teachers do, they surely want to instill in the boys a sense of what is right that will guide them. But instead of teaching through example and persuasion, the Jesuits teach through physical coercion. Instead of making the students understand, they make them fearfully submit. The result is that the boys learn nothing about morality but instead learn that the Jesuits are not only hypocritical but act completely amorally. Dolan's act suggests violence and power determine morality and

what is right and wrong. Because of his position, the prefect is beyond question, and while quite a few students know exactly how Stephen accidentally broke his glasses they are silenced; even if Dolan listened and attempted to learn the facts, Stephen and his classmates' talking would be useless, as what actually happened is meaningless. In this situation Dolan exerts the most extreme form of power, as he is above having to obey reality; what he says happened *is* what happened.

Father Dolan's brutality has its match in Father Arnall's cowardice. As Stephen's teacher, Arnall himself excused Stephen from doing the exercises. It must be assumed that he believed Stephen, as his lack of suspicion indicates he has no fear that Stephen was a schemer. What causes his silence? The only explanations are fear or solidarity. Of the two, the former may be the most understandable; Dolan is Arnall's superior, and challenging him in front of students might be unwise. But Dolan asks Arnall why he is not writing, and Arnall says he exempted Stephen (45). A confrontation would be unlikely as Dolan asked the first question, but Arnall remains silent. If fear motivates Arnall's silence it shows a disgusting lack of backbone on his part.

Yet if Arnall did not question the prefect because to do so would be bad form, the comment on Arnall's character is damning. The Jesuits do have principles they live by; presumably violence against children is not one of them. Unless Arnall never really believed Stephen he must think that Dolan's punishment is without merit. If his silence is due to following convention, the Jesuits have strayed far from their guiding principles and have become closer to a corrupt police force than a group of moral guides. While Dolan could be understood as a sadistic man given too much power, one would hope that he was an aberration. But if toleration of this is an accepted feature of the Jesuit system

they have revealed themselves to be morally bankrupt on a fundamental level.

Unfortunately this view gains credence because Arnall does not cut short Stephen's punishment after Dolan leaves, suggesting that he was not silently at odds with the prefect but supported him (47).

The injustice that Stephen experiences affects him so greatly that it shatters an integral part of his worldview. Not only does Stephen come to understand unfairness for the first time, but the punishment reveals to him painful facts about the relationship between himself and the Jesuits that he was unaware of. The most shocking realization is that the priest are not infallibly just and caring. Instead they can be viciously mean. Stephen reveals his agonized shock in a single line. "The prefect of studies was a priest but that was cruel and unfair" (47). The subordinate clause suggests that the linguistic concept of priest by definition does not contain the capability to be cruel and unfair; the concept of "Priestness" as defined by Stephen is irreconcilable with being unjust, and being a priest makes one *ipso facto* a righteous person. While they may be intimidating and may punish with justification, they will always do so judiciously and as the infraction warrants. Even the sentence, which seems tense and ill-fitting, conveys Stephen's surprise, as the word priest awkwardly creeps into it. Should not another adjective take its place to contrast with "cruel and unfair"?

The beating also shows just how much distance separates Stephen and the priests in terms of power. Stephen displays an unusually keen awareness of the hierarchical nature of the Jesuit order and intuitively understands that he is at the very lowest level (18). Yet not until that point did Stephen have any knowledge that not only did the Jesuits have precedence over him according to an abstract ranking system, but that their

higher status allowed them the unchecked use of force. Although he had an awareness of the threat they posed through their punishments, Stephen felt immune to them because of his ability to follow their strictures. While other boys were beaten, in Stephen's view they deserved it, as the Jesuits were infallible. For Stephen the Jesuits seemed remote because of their power and authority, but that was always indefinable and abstract. Not until Dolan beats Stephen does he know what the Jesuit's power meant when it took palpable shape.

The punishment is even harder for Stephen to accept because he feels that by following all the rules and being a good, hard-working student the Jesuits should treat him better. For Stephen the humiliation he endured caused as much pain as the beating, as being public identified as an idler and schemer by the school's prefect is a slap in the face which contradicts all his efforts at being a good student. Then being forced to kneel beside his desk, next to a student who actually is something of an idler, compounds Stephen's sense of shame. In fact, Stephen remembers the humiliation more than the pain when thinking about his punishment hours later. "He suffered time after time in memory the same humiliation until he began to wonder whether it might not really be that there was something in his face which made him look like a schemer and he wished he had a little mirror to see" (48). The ordeal impresses on Stephen doubts that he is what he thinks himself to be, and he gradually begins to accept that his masters must be right. By forcing on him such doubts, the Jesuits perform a common role for oppressors where they coerce their victims into believing they deserve the violence directed at them.

Ultimately Stephen can only seek comfort from his friends, who, in what amounts to a depressing burlesque of victims trying to understand the power that oppresses them,

decry Father Dolan's actions for violating the legalistic technicalities the Jesuits have erected to make their violence appear to be more humane. Sadly, Stephen finds little solace in his friends' commiserating outrage, as they too cannot reconcile the discrepancy between the moral righteousness the Jesuits are supposed to uphold and Dolan's sadism (47-48).

Instead Stephen's classmates suggest that he tells the school's rector about Dolan's unfairness. The student who first proposes it, interestingly, is Fleming, the student punished alongside Stephen for being idle. While Fleming may hide his desire for his own vindication (he oddly fails to complain about his beating), he believes that Stephen should be brave, if only because Dolan threatened to come in the next day to beat Stephen again (48). Although it is unclear if Fleming has accepted the Jesuit's view of discipline or is trying to use Stephen to strike back at the prefect, the idea sticks in Stephen's mind. Stephen decides to "go up and tell the rector that he had been wrongly punished" (48).

What makes Stephen decide to be bold, rather uncharacteristically given his temperament, is his belief that he has precedence on his side. "A thing like [telling the rector] had been done before by somebody in history, by some great person whose head was in the books of history," Stephen thinks (48). Only by appropriating the discourse of history, with its stories of heroes standing up in the face of brutality, does Stephen gain the courage to act. That Stephen would absorb texts, in this case his lessons about Greek and Roman history, and find inspiration in them is a trait that marks him throughout *Portrait*. Later on in life he will form his famous aesthetic theory by appropriating and editing Aquinas; both instances reveal how his actions as a person are determined by the

discourses he absorbs mentally. This phenomenological process, where Stephen, a thinking subject, interprets and orders external reality in a manner that depends heavily on his experience and feelings reaches its climax in the “Proteus” section of *Ulysses*. But this process will appear throughout *Portrait*, with the crucial difference that Stephen has not developed enough intellectually or emotionally to be much more than a passive receiver of the Jesuits’ moral and spiritual discourses.

Trembling with fear as walks to the rector’s office, Stephen begins to lose his nerve. “It was best to forget all about it,” he thinks “...it was best to hide out of the way because when you were small and young you could often escape that way” (50), articulating the sad logic of the oppressed. His experiences at Clongowes, where he has been abused by bullies who are both classmates and teachers, have taught him the quiet perseverance may be the best strategy for survival, especially as Dolan has promised to check on Stephen everyday and would likely be furious if he knew Stephen complained to the rector about him (49). Somehow, though, Stephen manages to find the courage to speak out.

As Stephen is walking to the rector’s office, he passes down a long corridor, on the walls of which are pictures that Stephen believe are of famous Jesuits.

He peered in front of him and right and left through the gloom and thought that those must be portraits. It was dark and silent and his eyes were weak and tired with tears so that he could not see. But he thought they were the portraits of the saints and great men of the order who were looking down on him silently as he passed. (50)

Included among the pictures are Loyola and Xavier, but also saints who died when they were young, like Gonzaga.

The multiple meanings imbedded in this passage can hardly be missed. As Morris Beja notes, Stephen's appeal to the rector is taken from Joyce's own life (Beja 5-6). It is highly unlikely Joyce clearly remembered the portrait lined hallway, and given the circumstances of *Portrait's* composition it is highly improbable that Joyce could have checked his facts, provided that he wanted to⁴. Instead, Joyce likely places them in the novel in a moment of scathing irony. All the Jesuits depicted had courage and compassion, especially Aloysius Gonzaga, Clongowes's patron saint who died at age 23 while attending plague victims. By prominently displaying those pictures, which culminates in the picture of the school's founder, Clongowes self-consciously claims the undeniably noble legacy handed down by those Jesuits. But the Jesuits who run Clongowes are not only the institutional heirs of Loyola and Xavier—as practicing Jesuits priests, Father Dolan and his colleagues are supposed to devote themselves to emulating their saintly lives. Yet Stephen's experience has showed the severe hypocrisy of the school, a message that Joyce clearly intended.

Among the portraits is Lorenzo Ricci, the general of the order when they were abolished by the pope in the late eighteenth century (Gifford 154). Having been expelled from a number of countries for their militant political interference, the Church was forced by the ruling Catholic families of Europe to abandon the Jesuits (Johnson 363). The inclusion of Ricci shows a defiant reading of history by the school's administration, one that makes no apologies for the excesses that led to the order's suppression. By

⁴ Only the first of the ten years it took Joyce to compose *Portrait* were spent in Dublin, with that year being devoted to *Stephen Hero*.

presenting itself in such terms, the Jesuits inspire little hope that they will right a wrong, instead suggesting that their primary concern is keeping their unchecked power.

However, the portraits work in a more profound way than reinforcing the Jesuits' hypocrisy. The men are in many ways the "great men" that Stephen imagines in his history books. The saints best exemplify the Christian devotion the Society of Jesus desires, and each individual persevered through great hardship. While Clongowes's leadership attempts to appropriate their images as signifiers that legitimize their actions, they are instead open to a counter-reading, one that would be very accessible to Stephen. The greatest of the men stood up and were willing to die for their principles, often putting themselves at odds with those in power⁵. Although this adds to the irony of the Jesuits's hypocrisy, it adds support to Stephen's mission; the heroes on the wall fought against injustice and brutality, much as Stephen does.

Finally, Stephen makes it to the rector's door. Despite his fear, he finds the rector, Father Conmee, "kindlooking," much like the comforting Jesuit who cared for Stephen during his sickness. Initially Conmee treats Stephen sympathetically, calling him "my little man" and telling him he must write home to get new glasses. But when discovering that Stephen is reporting on a priest's misconduct, Conmee turns a bit cold. He asks Stephen to repeat his story, and after it is clear that Stephen tells the truth Conmee thinks in silence before excusing Dolan. Conmee's initially claims "it was a mistake. I am sure Father Dolan did not know," but after Stephen explains that Dolan knew it was an accident and not a "scheme" Conmee searches for another justification. Conmee never apologizes to Stephen, but instead turns responsibility back on him, saying

⁵ Ironically Loyola himself was targeted by the Inquisition (Johnson 301).

that as Stephen failed to tell Dolan he had sent home for a new pair he was at fault for the misunderstanding. Although Stephen contents himself with a non-apology, he persists, saying that “Father Dolan...will come in tomorrow to pandy me again” (52).

Conmee’s agitated response speaks volumes. “Very well” he says, “It is a mistake and I shall speak to Father Dolan myself. Will that do now?” The tone of exasperation comes across clearly, as does the reluctance to offer an apology. Instead Stephen is told it was a mistake, which implies error, making it stronger than a misunderstanding, but still falls short of contrition. Although too much can be made of Conmee’s reluctance, he clearly wants to side with Dolan, as admitting to wrongdoing by the school’s second-in-command would be embarrassing. He seeks to excuse and minimize Dolan’s cruelty for no reason other than that they are both part of the same institution. The schoolboy code of not tattling on your friends has its mirror among the priests, but with the possibility of much more serious injuries going without redress.

Albert Wachtel is one of the few critics to treat this episode in depth. He views Stephen’s reporting of the priest as an two-fold assault on patrimony. In exposing the truth, Stephen violates to only bit of advice his father gives him, that he should never tell on a fellow, and in violating it he acts out against the school’s authority as a surrogate father (Joyce 5; Wachtel 64-66). While Wachtel correctly sees the entire pandybat affair as lessening Stephen’s respect for authority, he overstates the case. Stephen lacks any intention to challenge the power of the priests. In fact, he wishes that “he could do something kind for [Dolan] to show him that he was not proud,” and pledges to be “very quiet and obedient” (54). Despite his joyful feeling of vindication, Stephen never considers “getting uppity,” but hope to slide back into the normal order. Despite

Conmee's reluctance to admit that anything was improper, Stephen's faith that in the end the Jesuits will be just is temporarily restored, and Stephen happily returns to his life of submission.

Stephen's trust is shattered, though, when he learns the truth about what the Jesuits thought of him. Some years later, Stephen's father runs into Father Conmee in Dublin. The two chat amiably, and Conmee tells Mr. Dedalus about his son coming into tell him about Dolan. While Conmee calls Stephen a "manly little chap" and claimed not to be annoyed by Stephen's story, it all seemed like a joke to him. Mr. Dedalus recounts the story, aping Conmee's "mincing nasal tone": "When I told them all at dinner about it, Father Dolan and I had a great laugh over it. "You better mind yourself, Father Dolan...or young Dedalus will send you up for twice nine." We had a famous laugh together over it'" (67).

The contrast between the student reaction and the clergy's reaction to Stephen's boldness could not be more different. Where the boys carried Stephen around on their shoulders in triumph (53-54), the priests mock him. Even Stephen's agony over being beaten is laughed away, as Conmee suggests the maximum corporal punishment will be inflicted on Dolan. The laughter of the priests reveals the lack of concern the powerful have for the helpless. As Simon Dedalus says, it "Shows the spirit in which they take the boys there."

The placement of this passage could not be more revealing. Chapter two marks Stephen's descent in to poverty, his sexual awakening and the beginning of his disaffection with the Church. Within months Stephen's restlessness will culminate in his first break with Catholicism. Although fate and his father's improvidence make Stephen

leave his masters at Clongowes, the scars left from his time their remain, forever poisoning his faith.

Spiritual Terrorism—The Power of the Pulpit

If Stephen Dedalus's alienation from the Catholic Church occurs gradually, spanning the years between his beating by Father Dolan and his first sexual experience, his return to the fold is a drastic about-face. Enjoying the thrill of transgressions that seem to refute everything his Jesuit education had taught him, Stephen takes pride in his sin in an adolescent way, enjoying the thought of spiritual rebellion more than the actual physical acts themselves. He abandons this life completely, though, after hearing a "fire and brimstone" sermon at a Church retreat. The sermon's effects are not limited to rededicating Stephen to the Church, but instead lead him to the brink of a nervous breakdown, momentarily shattering Stephen's sense of self.

The life Stephen leads before the fateful retreat is clearly unhealthy and misdirected. Many of the factors that contribute to his sense of aimlessness are beyond his control. Stephen's father has all but bankrupted the family, causing the comfortable life Stephen had during his childhood in Dublin's stately suburbs to vanish; instead his family moves from one house to another because his father cannot pay the rent. Eventually Stephen's ever-growing family lands in Dublin's slums (60-61). The upheaval also requires Stephen to leave Clongowes, which, despite his lack of regret over leaving the school, leaves his life less structured.

These changes could not have come at a worse time. The rapid descent of Stephen's family down the class ladder occurs simultaneously with the onset of puberty. Stephen finds himself growing increasingly frustrated and disaffected, for reasons which are yet unknown to him. Feeling the burden to restore his family's fortunes was "being

laid upon his shoulders...the thought of the bare cheerless house in which they were now to live made his heart heavy” (60-61).

The move from the suburbs does have one benefit. “The disorder in settling in the new house left Stephen freer than he had been in Blackrock,” enabling him to escape his family to enjoy the “new and complex sensation” of urban life. Thinking of the reveries inspired by *The Count of Monte Cristo* that had earlier soothed his pain during another family crisis, Stephen roams the streets along Dublin’s port, feeling that “amid this new bustling life he might have fancied himself in another Marseilles.” But whereas the stories of Romantic heroism gave Stephen solace in his childhood, now his frustration and malaise boil over. Instead, Stephen feels “a vague dissatisfaction [growing] within him as he looked on the quays and on the river and on the lowering skies and yet he continued to wander up and down day after day as if he really sought someone that eluded him” (61).

Clearly Stephen’s unease has sexual origins. Stephen discovers this himself during a social gathering, where Stephen’s “feverish agitation” is stoked by the glances of a girl he has a crush on. Later in the evening the two awkwardly talk to each other, the girl Emma coyly moving nearer to Stephen, who refrains from trying to kiss her despite his wish to. Instead he attempts to release his frustrations by writing a poem, which he never manages to finish (64-65).

Stephen’s sexual frustration steadily builds after a series of awkward encounters with Emma. “Savage desire” builds in him and sex dominates his dreams, but he awakes “pained...[by the] dim memory of dark orgiastic riot, its keen and humiliating sense of

transgression” (93). Finally, with his “blood in revolt,” Stephen succumbs to his desire, finding relief in the arms of a prostitute (95).

The brothel visit rapidly leads to a cycle of what Stephen imagines to be Baudelairean dissipation, as he sees “his own soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin” (97). What for most adolescents would be rebellion against family and authority becomes for Stephen an outright revolt from the Catholic Church. The resonance of the word “sin” throughout the third chapter shows this, as Hugh Kenner points out (Kenner 126). While teenage resistance to authority and the need to “sow wild oats” have come to be acknowledged as being a universal phenomenon, what distinguishes Stephen’s wanderings is his self-consciousness and his belief that his transgressions are not merely youthful indiscretions but attacks against God.

Even before his first encounter with a prostitute Stephen has adopted the discourse Catholicism uses to castigate sinners as his own. Stephen wants “to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin” (Joyce 94). Stephen not only accepts the Church’s opposition to normal human desire but revels in it; not only are his own sexual urges being satisfied, but his need to negate the moral laws that were instilled in him is as well. Instead of feeling guilty about his violations, Stephen takes immense joy in them, as this passage demonstrates:

From the evil seed of lust all other deadly sins had sprung forth: pride in himself and contempt of others, covetousness in using money for the purchase of unlawful pleasure, envy of those whose vices he could not reach to and calumnious murmuring against the pious, gluttonous enjoyment of food, the dull glowering anger amid which he brooded upon

his longing, the swamp of spiritual and bodily sloth in which his whole being had sunk. (100)

While sin is unavoidable according to Christian theology, Stephen's deliberate, purposeful pursuit of sinning for the sake of sinning reveals more than just weakness in the face of temptation. His need to sin borders on the pathological. The clearest reason for this is the way two opposed discourses have taken control of his mind: Catholic morality and poetic decadence. Of the two, the decadence has the weaker grasp on Stephen. An ardent fan of Byron, Stephen's assumes the role of *poète maudite* as a self-conscious pose which reaches its quite grating peak in the "Telemachus" section of *Ulysses*⁶. While the role is far more apparent in *Ulysses* than *Portrait*, Stephen's rambling dissertation on art with the highly annoyed Lynch shows signs of his impending conversion to an uncompromising aesthete.

Even though Stephen has found models in literature, Catholic morality has affected him much more. Defiance becomes Stephen's aim, much more so than sensual gratification, which is strikingly excluded from any discussion of Stephen's feelings about his sin. At its core Stephen's battle is a power struggle, with himself cast as a latter-day Lucifer:

"What did it avail to pray when he knew that his soul lusted after its own destruction? A certain pride, a certain awe withheld him from offering to God even one prayer at night though he knew it was in God's power to take away his life while he slept and hurl his soul hellward ere he could beg for mercy. His pride in his own sin, his loveless awe of God told him

⁶ In *Ulysses* Stephen foppishly wears puce gloves, green boots and lavender pants, aping Oscar Wilde, talks about Swinburne and, most damning of all, associates with the even more affected Buck Mulligan.

that his offence was too grievous to be atoned for in whole or in part by a false homage to the Allseeing and Allknowing.” (97-98)

The focus on power distinguishes Stephen’s spiritual revolt. While Stephen thinks it is his prideful nature that will condemn him, the vision of his damnation explicitly refers to his relationship to God in terms of power. The words “destruction”, “awe”, “mercy” and “homage” all point to his weakness in comparison to the omnipotent deity. Unfortunately for Stephen, all feelings of redemption, peace or meaning have been stripped from his views toward religion. The spiritual realm has become a devoid wasteland (Williams 107-08).

While Stephen chooses to see religion in this way the role of the Jesuits in shaping his view is clear. Father Dolan’s beating is just the most obvious manifestation of their warping of Stephen. Much more significant is the emphasis on obedience. While Dolan’s paddle signifies the physical consequences of disobedience, the Jesuits provide more than enough examples of outrage over picayune offenses to suggest that they are more concerned with legalistic adherence to their laws than faith and devotion. By this time Stephen has been beaten-up by his classmates for claiming Byron was a better poet than Tennyson in what may be the stupidest school yard fight in English literature (Joyce 75-76). More seriously, Stephen has been publicly denounced by his English teacher for committing heresy in a homework assignment over what appears to be a semantic mistake⁷; characteristically, as soon as Stephen admits his error the dogmatic teacher is “appeased” (74).

⁷ Writing about “the Creator and the soul,” Stephen writes the “heretical” line “without a possibility of ever approaching nearer.” After he changes it to “without a possibility of ever reaching” his teacher relents.

Catholic historian Paul Johnson claims that such outrage over imagined insubordination has been a sad aspect of the order's history since its founding. Loyola himself thought obedience was the surest path to salvation and thus the highest goal, while Johnson quotes a later Jesuit arguing that the strength of the Jesuit order derives from "the assurance we have that in obeying we can commit no fault...because God will only ask you if you have duly performed what orders you have received, and if you can give a clear account in that respect, you are absolved entirely" (Johnson 301). Stephen's teachers surely follow in this legacy.

By being raised in such a background it becomes obvious why Stephen only thinks of religion in terms of power. The word obedience denotes submission to power, and the Jesuits relentlessly reinforce that message. Moreover, the Jesuits also instill a deep sense of inferiority in Stephen. While Dolan's *pandybat* physically manifested the power imbalance between the Jesuits and their students, Church teaching embeds it in their doctrine by teaching that even questioning the incongruities in Church doctrine too much can lead to mortal sin (Joyce 100-01). Instilled with the teaching that the Church stands above all questioning, and then seeing it reinforced constantly in even the slightest gesture, Stephen's framing of his alienation as a power struggle has a perversely unassailable logic. The hard, cynical truth of his education is that Stephen has learned nothing at all about faith, but everything about submission to the powerful.

Stephen, however, does hold power over one thing—his soul. As his intentional sinning shows, Stephen believes that damnation is a price worthy of ensuring independence. His deliberate scorn for "paying false homage" shows in his feeling about believers. "Towards others he felt neither shame nor fear," denouncing their "dull piety".

In an attempt to keep his spiritual sovereignty Stephen not only courts possible damnation but lonely isolation from the fold he contemptuously rejects.

But despite Stephen's sinfulness, his revolt is overdetermined by his Jesuit background. As opposed to leading a life independent of religious dogma and observance, Stephen inverts everything he has been taught. Because Church doctrine is so firmly rooted in his mind Stephen cannot simply ignore religious matters. While this suggests the impossibility of Stephen's ever being able to divorce himself from the Church, it also suggests that given the right circumstances a skilled manipulator might bring Stephen back to the Church.

What breaks Stephen's resistant spirit is a sermon delivered by Father Arnall, his former elementary school teacher. Although Arnall's oration if this linguistic equivalent of a bludgeon, it serves its purpose well. Delivered in the charged setting of a Church retreat, where the students spend the better part of a school week attending mass, the setting primes Stephen and his comrades for the rededication to the Church the Jesuits hope to cause. Their method, though, is not persuasion, but intimidation, emphasizing "death, judgment, hell and heaven" in their masses. Even the sight of Father Arnall, who silently watched Stephen's beating years earlier, fills Stephen with a sense of foreboding and immediately forces him to revert to a position of inferiority and relive his past traumas. "The figure of his old master, so strangely rearisen, brought back to Stephen's mind his life at Clongowes...His soul, as these memories came back to him, became again a child's soul" (102-103).

The feeling of impending powerlessness stands in juxtaposition to the announcement of the retreat earlier in the chapter. Scheduled to commemorate the feast

day of St. Francis Xavier, Belvedere's patron saint and a comrade of Loyola reputed to have converted one million people, the rector of Stephen's school waxes rhapsodic about the Xavier's power. Xavier

“is a true conqueror...A saint with great power in heaven, remember: power to intercede for us in our grief, power to obtain whatever we pray for if it be for the good of our souls, power above all to obtain for us the grace to repent if we be in sin”. (101-102)

Typically, the Jesuit focus on power reappears. Even the most rudimentary biographies of Xavier note his genius for missionary work, which depended not on his use of power but his flexibility in adapting to local customs and his training locals for the clergy (Doniger 1150). The power was supplied by his Portuguese sponsors, which Xavier mediated through his respect for locals. Yet this is overlooked by the rector, who laments Xavier's death before he could “go to China to win still more souls for God” (102). Instead, the Belvedere faculty offers a vision of a saint more interested in scoring points than in bringing the divine truth to those who were without it, enabling their salvation. Even the view of religion only in terms of power reappears, as the boys are told not to consider Xavier's enlightened example of devotion but to appreciate his power.

Just as the rector was infatuated with power, so too is Arnall, who makes the theme of power and conquest nakedly clear in his sermon. Featuring a lurid and protracted description of the pain Hell inflicts on the soul, the sermon makes little effort to persuade through rational argument or even focusing on the emotional aspects of redemption. Instead, it seeks to inspire terror, using images of brutality and suffering.

According to Arnall's vision, Hell is a prison⁸, where "the damned are so utterly bound and helpless that...they are not even able to remove from the eye a worm that gnaws it", filled with searing and eternally burning fire (113 and following). Even the smell is described.

Yet if the sermon limited itself to simple description of Hell, the psychological effects on Stephen would be minor. Instead, Arnall repeatedly attempts to place his audience in the position of the damned; given the setting and his numerous sins, the tactic has a profound effect on Stephen, who has been psychologically weekend by the mere sight of Arnall. "Every word of it was for him" Stephen thinks. "Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed. The preacher's knife had probed deeply into his diseased conscience and he felt now that his soul was festering in sin" (109). Even Arnall's description of the falls of Lucifer and Adam seems designed to shatter Stephen's psyche. Predicting Stephen's famous credo at the end of the novel, Arnall interprets Lucifer's sin as "the sinful thought conceived in an instant: *non serviam: I will not serve...*He offended the majesty of God by the sinful thought of one instant and God cast him our of heaven into hell for ever" (111). Stephen, of course, has to this point seemingly devoted his every waking hour to cherishing the rebelliousness of his sin; not surprisingly, this description affects Stephen the most adversely.

The most salient aspect of Arnall's sermon is its tendency toward overkill. While intimidating Stephen into submission, he comes across to most readers as bully.

Understandably, critics universally condemn the preacher and his tactics, which are not

⁸ The use of the prison imagery in describing Hell deserves notice, as prisons not only symbolize the limit of state power, but would have special resonance in Ireland. as countless dissidents had been jailed by the British. Also, practicing Catholicism was punishable by imprisonment just 100 years before Joyce's birth (Moody and Martin 231) .

only brutal intimidation but which also contain self-contradictions and outright incorrect interpretations of the Bible and Church dogma (August 275-279). Yet what is truly distinct but not at all surprising about Arnall's sermon is his decision not to speak in the discourse of religious redemption, salvation or grace, i.e. any of religion's many uplifting effects, but instead through a deliberate discourse of power and punishment. Not only are the strategies he uses to communicate strategies of intimidation, but his beliefs of power infect his very language⁹.

Even a quick skimming of the sermon reveals Arnall's repeated use of the words "power" and "punishment". To those words "torture" must be added. In Arnall's vision God does not abandon sinners in Hell, but instead becomes the Divine Torturer. "The fire of hell... was created by God to torture and punish the unrepentant sinner," while Hell is "the instrument chosen by divine design for the punishment of soul and body". In what is the grandest passage of the sermon, Arnall spares no detail in imagining the nature of the torture:

Every sense of the flesh is tortured and every faculty of the soul therewith: the eyes with impenetrable utter darkness, the nose with noisome odours, the ears with yells and howls and execrations, the taste with foul matter, leprous corruption, nameless suffocating filth, the touch with redhot goads and spikes, with cruel tongues of flame. (115-16)

Perhaps even more tellingly, Arnall ends this passage with "the offended majesty of the offended God". The reason for God's fury is because sinners disobey his rule, despite the

⁹ Joyce's fictional sermon, while representing *some* of the ideas and beliefs circulating at the time, is for dramatic effect. William Noon, himself a Jesuit, details the atypical nature of the sermon in a 1957 article in *The James Joyce Review* (Noon 13).

fact that “we are His, inalienably His” (121). Not only must Stephen subordinate himself to God, but not even his soul is meaningfully his.

While Christian theology has an almost perverse fascination in enumerating and categorizing the punishments in hell, it is nevertheless startling to witness the “highlights” of that tradition concentrated into one place¹⁰. Rarely does the depiction rely so heavily on a legalistic conception of punishment and torture. Instead of positing a hell where the victim’s greatest pain is the absence from God, God is indeed quite present, as torturer. Unlike Dante’s conception of hell as a desolate pit, Arnall’s version strikingly mirrors that of a medieval dungeon or a prison in a police state, complete with the inhuman physical suffering. In doing so most vestiges of religious discourse are stripped from the sermon, replaced by a tyranny’s threats to its people. The auditors and readers no longer function as rational, spiritual agents contemplating their faith, but instead become prospective victims of the worst subjugation imaginable. The only hope for escape is complete acceptance of the ruler’s doctrine, in this specific case Catholic doctrine.

That religious leaders would chose use such a violent discourse is disquieting, yet the reason why is clear in Arnall’s sermon. As the sermon becomes a treatise on the exercise of retributive violence, the only avoidance of that punishment is through complete submission to doctrine, symbolized by penance and taking communion (104). In terms of power relations, the Church acts as God’s proxy, with divine punishment being reserved for those who fail to yield. Stephen and his classmates completely depend on the Church to save them from damnation, forcing them into complete submission.

The conflation of Church and the wrathful God could not be made clearer than in Arnall's description of sin. Obedience becomes the only virtue, just like Loyola said, not conviction or just action. Following this reason, sin is not folly committed out of ignorance or weakness, but "rebellious pride" and "hideous malice," words connoting political action against legitimately held power. It should surprise no one that this view is indistinguishable from Stephen's earlier attitude toward sin; after all, he learned it from the Jesuits.

Arnall's sermon has the desired effect on Stephen. Immediately he believes he is in mortal danger, terrified that he will not even live the night. On entering his bedroom after hearing the sermon, Stephen hallucinates fiends watching him in the dark and hears them talk about his damnation. Feeling that "he had sinned so deeply against heaven and before God that he was not worthy to be called God's child," Stephen fixates on his unworthiness (129-130). Oddly, his fixation on his sins—which he had once taken such pride in committing—delays his going to confession. "How could he utter in words to the priest what he had done? Must, must. Or how could he explain without dying of shame?" (133). By simply flipping the feelings he has about his sin from pride to shame Stephen shows how poor a rebel he was.

Finally, Stephen brings himself to confess. After saying his penance, he walks home in a near-manic state, thinking that it "would be beautiful to die if God so willed" (139). His psychological state makes him move through the day in a dream-like trance, culminating in his taking communion. "Another life!" Stephen thinks, "A life of grace and virtue and happiness!...It was not a dream from which he would wake" (140).

¹⁰ One need look no farther than Dante, but the specific lineage of this vision derives from St. Ambrose and St. Catherine of Sienna, whom Arnall quotes, and the devotional text *Hell Opened to the Christians, To*

After being forgiven for his sins, Stephen goes through a period of intense religious devotion. While Stephen soon abandons this phase, it deserves attention nonetheless. The hallmark of this time is Stephen's superficial devotion. To call it superficial seems odd at first, as Stephen devises increasingly stranger ways to mortify his senses. For example, Stephen "never consciously changed position in bed, sat in the most uncomfortable positions, suffered patiently every itch and pain, kept away from the fire, [and] remained on his knees all through the mass except at the gospels" in an attempt to mortify his sense of touch (145).

Despite his great love of self-mortification, Stephen never comes close to anything resembling Godliness. Instead he becomes increasingly irritable, especially when disturbed during his devotions. He remembers "the outbursts of trivial anger which he had often noted among his masters," discouraging him in his attempt to "merge his life in the common tide of other lives," with the failure to do so creating "in his soul...a sensation of spiritual dryness together with a growth of doubts and scruples" (145). Ultimately Stephen's hyper-devotion leads him to feeling isolated emotionally and spiritually. As Martin Prince notes, Stephen "anticipates Samuel Beckett's heroes in a number of ways...[with his] arithmetical literalness" (Prince 81).

Indeed, at his most spiritual moments Stephen is the most absurd. Instead of focusing on worthwhile good works or a deeper understanding of his faith, Stephen becomes obsessed with self-indulgent visions of the powers of his prayers.

He seemed to feel his soul in devotion pressing like fingers the keyboard
of a great cash register and to see the amount of his purchase start forth

Caution Them from Entering into It by the seventeenth-century Jesuit G. P. Pinamonti (Gifford 177-78).

immediately in heaven not as a number but as a frail column of incense or as a slender flower. (Joyce 142)

That Stephen would think in such superficial terms is quite understandable, as the example the Jesuits set for him was so poor. None of his masters displayed any great devotion, and, as has been seen above, the focus of his religious training was obedience to power. While feeling peace and awe at the gift of redemption he has been given, Stephen's faith dissipates quickly because what he really found was psychological solace from his guilt-causing desires, not true divine grace.

Given the fact that Stephen's turnaround bears a closer resemblance to the Stockholm syndrome than a genuine religious awakening this is to be expected. Stephen simply has reconciled with the power he has offended. Far from awaking a religious impulse that was deep in Stephen, Arnall's sermon just momentarily convinced Stephen he was in the gravest danger. Instead of making Stephen truly change his ways, the Jesuits just play their final trump card; while they themselves can no longer physically torture dissenters into submission, they can offer the threat of eternal torture, which, given the properly weakened psyche, can be a form of torture in its own right. Out of fear Stephen appeased his masters, which in turn unburdens him of the tension his sinful revolt had created. Once again in the good graces of the Church, Stephen begins to realize how unimportant the approval of the Jesuits has become to him.

Fittingly, the Jesuits find Stephen's behavior to be commendable, as they have no apparent concern for anything other than rigorous adherence. The sad fact is, though, that the Jesuits had never noticed Stephen's emotional and then spiritual turmoil when he was rebelling against the Church. There is no indication in *Portrait* that they saw what

was happening, an oversight that contributes to their look of ineptitude in offering helpful guidance to their students. They do, however, notice Stephen's newly directed energy, and think it might be a sign of his calling to the priesthood.

If Stephen's devotion was superficial, his interest in becoming a priest is not. Long having imagined himself as "a young and silentmannered priest," Stephen longed to wield "calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence" (152). Stephen feels quite proud when the director of the Jesuits in Dublin asks if he feels he has a vocation. And why not? As would be expected at this point, the priest emphasizes power:

No king or emperor on this earth has the power of the priest of God. No angel or archangel in heaven, no saint, not even the Blessed Virgin herself has the power of a priest of God: the power of keys, the power to bind and to loose from sin, the power of exorcism, the power to cast out from creatures of God the evil spirits that have power over them, the power, the authority, to make the great God of Heaven come down upon the altar and take the form of bread and wine. What an awful power, Stephen! (151-152)

That the priest would choose to emphasize power in his speech to a prospective novice reveals just how deeply the reverence of power has saturated the order. Not once in his conversation with Stephen does he use the word responsibility or allude to a priest's pastoral role in guiding his congregation; the lack of humility from a man who vowed to live a life of contemplation and relative asceticism shows where his true priorities lie. Seeing how the order chooses to represent itself *to itself* in such terms it is

not surprising at all that the order would see in every schoolboy's idleness an affront to its power. While there are many noble reasons to devote one's life to religion, the only reason offered by the Jesuits is a hunger for raw power.

Stephen is not immune to the lure of such power. In fact, the secret discourses which are unavailable to the laity are what drive his interest. Listening to the priest's appeal "in reverent silence," Stephen hears "a voice bidding him to approach, offering him secret knowledge and secret power" (153). Knowledge of the mysteries of the Church and the power that is attendant with that knowledge almost proves too great a temptation for Stephen, who clearly desires such power for impure reasons.

He would know obscure things, hidden from others, from those who were conceived and born children of wrath. He would know the sins, the sinful longings and sinful thoughts and sinful acts, of others, hearing them murmured into his ear in a confessional...He would hold his secret knowledge and secret power, being as sinless as the innocent: he would be a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech. (153)

Being taught his entire life to respect and venerate power, Stephen feels compelled to accept it when offered. Finally, the power that has long abused him, reminded him of his inferiority and indelibly imprinted its shape in his mind has opened up to he who has striven for so long to stay in its good graces. At this moment Stephen's ultimate refusal of this power could scarcely matter; he has received the invitation to share and wield power, the highest approbation power can give to its subjects. Nothing else could be so tempting.

Exorcism

James Joyce would hold contempt for Catholicism's affects on Irish society for his entire life. Feeling that Irishmen were all too ready to submit to conventions imposed by the Church, Joyce strongly believed the Church had no authority to interfere in politics, lest its reestablishment in Ireland would lead to a new Inquisition (Letter 148). Speaking of his feelings about the Church in a letter to his eventual wife, Joyce declares he will "make open war upon it by what I write and say and do" (Letter 48).

Paradoxically, Joyce was never able to make a complete break with the Church. Just as he mined the Dublin he exiled himself from for creative material, the faith Joyce abandoned became a constant source for his writings. Despite his negative feelings about the politics of the Church, Joyce himself acknowledged his immense debt to the rigorous, classical education the Church provided him. As he told his official biographer Frank Budgen, "to get the correct contour on me, you ought to allude to me as a Jesuit" (Ellmann 27). Much like Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's mind is saturated with a religion he disbelieved.

Yet Joyce does succeed in freeing himself from his subservience to his Jesuit masters. The "priesthood of art" the Stephen desperately seeks Joyce finds (Deane 175-76). But Joyce never takes comfort in simple aestheticism. Instead he achieves the ultimate subversion of the Church's power by freeing his mind from it. By appropriating the language of the Church and turning it back on itself to reveal its corruptive influence Joyce breaks from the Church in the most transgressive, rebellious way.

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