

4-12-2018

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Recommended Citation

Mulhern, Colleen E. (2018) "'Song is the simple rhythmic liberation of an emotion': Stephen Dedalus' Musical Martyrdom," *The Criterion*: Vol. 2018 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://crossworks.holycross.edu/criterion/vol2018/iss1/7>

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Cover Page Footnote

This essay was the 2018 winner of The Leonard J. McCarthy, S.J., Memorial Prize.

Colleen Mulhern

“Song is the simple rhythmic liberation of an emotion”: Stephen Dedalus’ Musical Martyrdom

In 1926, James Joyce, in a letter to his literary patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver, wrote that “one great part of every human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wideawake language, cutanddry grammar and goahead plot.”¹ Joyce, renowned for his use of modernist form and stream-of-conscious narrative to inhabit the minds of his readers, also understood the limitations of that language; although he could force his readers into the minds of his narrators, he saw language as being unable to inhabit the soul – that “one great part of every human existence.” As Joyce proves through Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, music can evoke emotions unable to be communicated through language.² In other words, music can occupy a listener’s soul. Another prose writer, from whom Joyce took major inspiration, was interested in the limitations of language to express the movements of the soul; Cardinal John Henry Newman – founder of Joyce’s alma mater, University College Dublin – converted from Protestantism to Catholicism and fled England for Ireland. If Newman is the British renegade who converted to Catholicism, then Joyce – as represented by his semi-autobiographic figure of Stephen Dedalus – is a renegade who turned from Catholicism towards art.

¹ James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*. Compiled by Richard Ellmann, Vol. 3 (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 146.

² James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*. Edited by John Paul. Riquelme, Hans Walter Gabler, and Walter Hettche (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007).

Newman had a marked appreciation for music and wrote that, so long as the art did not displace the proper giving of attention to God, music could become an “aid to [Catholic] reflection.”³ In fact, not only did Newman believe that music could provide a medium for prayerful reflection, but also he wrote that music itself is the language of heavenly outpourings:

Is it possible that that inexhaustible evolution and disposition of notes, so rich yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic, should be a mere sound which is gone and perishes? Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what... should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial... No; they have escaped from some higher sphere; they are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound; they are echoes from our home. (6)

Newman refuses the idea that music is a purely earthly, “unsubstantial” art. For him, a song’s ability to emotionally affect its listeners is evidence that music has escaped from Heaven. Joyce, a reader of Newman as well as a fellow musician, echoes these sentiments in *Portrait*. Joyce writes of the ordinary in extraordinary terms; his language – at once “so rich yet so simple, so intricate yet so regulated, so various yet so majestic” – tells the search of Stephen’s search for the source of this “eternal harmony.” While Stephen, unlike Newman, struggles to understand from where the music of his life has escaped, he appreciates the ability of songs to arouse emotion and induce thought; the songs that Stephen encounters help to form his identity, first as a martyr and, later, as a creator.

Although Joyce abandoned his first attempt at novel writing, many themes from *Stephen Hero* pervade its completed counterpoint, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. While the Stephen of *Stephen Hero* expresses a more distinct interest in the performance

³ Edward Bellasis, *Cardinal Newman as a Musician* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1892), 6.

of music, the Stephen of *Portrait* has a distinct auditory appreciation of everyday life. In this way, *Stephen Hero* can be read as a steppingstone between the musical performances of *Dubliners* and the omnipresent noise-as-music explored in *Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*. In addition to further developing Joyce's use of music in his writing, *Stephen Hero* introduces some of the themes of Catholicism that were mentioned but not explicitly fleshed out in *Dubliners*, themes that will be especially scrutinized in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Stephen Hero, similar to its later completed counterpoint, tracks Stephen Dedalus' struggle to find his artistic identity while coming of age in Dublin. Unlike *Portrait*, however, we as readers are not fully engrained in Stephen's psyche. The Catholic priest in *Stephen Hero* uses his appreciation of music to unite – if only momentarily – the religions of Catholicism and Protestantism.⁴ In discussing clerical music, Father Moran admits that he was “no lover of the old droning chants” and longed for the Church to become associated with less “severe” music:

He said that one could not expect the people to take kindly to severe music and that the people needed more human religious music than the Gregorian and ended by advising Stephen to learn "The Holy City" by Adams.
<<There is a song now, beautiful, full of lovely melody and yet – religious. It has the religious sentiment, a touching a melody, power – soul, in fact>> (66).

The song that Father Moran recommends to Stephen, “The Holy City,” is what critic Zack R. Bowen refers to as a Protestant anthem.⁵ Ireland's longstanding history of Protestant-Catholic disputes would have coded Protestant music as distinctly British and non-Catholic – in other words, it was unacceptable as a form of Catholic worship. However,

⁴ James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (New York: New Direction Book, 1963).

⁵ Zack R. Bowen, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry Through Ulysses* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1974), 27.

despite the controversy that might arise from a Catholic priest lauding a Protestant tune, Father Moran believes that “The Holy City” better speaks the “humanity” within religion than the monotone, Catholic music of Gregorian chants. While Father Moran defines the nature of the chants as “severe,” he defines the humanity within the Protestant ballad as being rooted in its “beauty,” “melody,” “religious sentiment,” “power,” and “soul.”

This alignment of music and soul is a phenomenon that Joyce will explore in *Portrait*, whether that understanding of soul is sourced through Catholic belief or through art. Joyce writes of the aspects of one’s humanity that cannot be expressed through language; while we have full access to Stephen’s mind, music in *Portrait* allows us to see Stephen’s soul. Perhaps Joyce was taking inspiration from Newman who claimed that “music is the expression of ideas greater and more profound than any in the visible world” (5). While Newman sees these ideas as being centered in and created by God, Stephen desires to be the captor and creator of these ideas; he desires to express in language what music can express wordlessly.

A Portrait of the Martyr as a Young Child

The issues of musicality, language, humanity, and religion are all explored through the songs of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In this novel, Stephen struggles to use Catholicism to appease his desire for unity and order. Although Stephen will eventually become a writer, his early appreciation of language is auditory, rather than textual. During childhood, Stephen displays his exaggerated notions of self-importance through his appropriation of music. As early as the first page of the novel, Stephen makes himself the creator and the subject of the music that he encounters:

*O, the wild rose blossoms
 On the little green place.
 He sang that song. That was his song.
 O, the green wothe botheth (5).*

As Bowen explains in his book, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce*, the song recreated by Stephen in this scene is “Lilly Dale,” a ballad about the premature death of a young girl. The original lyrics, as composed by H.S. Thompson, read “Oh! Lilly, sweet Lilly, dear Lilly Dale/Now the wild rose blossoms o’er her little green grave/Neath the trees in the flow’ry vale.”⁶ Stephen, making the song his own, replaces the word “grave” with “place,” making the song far less mournful. However, the line is followed by his impeded speech and childlike inability to pronounce words of the song. While Stephen’s ignorance is shown in this scene, it also introduces his main artistic trait of shaping and reshaping language. The theme of premature death, obscured in Stephen’s version of the song but prevalent in the original “Lilly Dale,” will pervade the remainder of the first chapter, as well as much of the book. Perhaps Stephen, in making the song his own, omitted the lyrics about “Lilly” and her “little green grave” because, as his imagination will reveal later, he wants to be differentiated from his peers by martyrdom.

Beginning in the novel’s first chapter, Stephen’s appreciation for the musicality of language limits his ability to extract the moral lessons being communicated to him. In one of his earliest displays of burgeoning artistry, Stephen turns a threat of punishment into a nursery-rhyme-esque song. When a young Stephen disobeys his parents and hides under a table, his aunt warns that, if he fails to apologize, “the eagles will come and pull out his eyes” (6). Dante, a devout and learned Catholic, is referencing a biblical proverb: “The eye

⁶ H. S. Thompson, *Lilly Dale* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1852), <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/sheetmusic/838>

that mocks a father and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.”⁷ Proverb 30, often referred to as “The Words of Agur,” is a passage that instructs upon the importance of humility in front of God; the proverb warns against assuming that one has any knowledge without God and cautions, “Do not add to His words or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.” Stephen has no understanding yet of Catholic teachings; therefore, he unknowingly disobeys this teaching. Attracted to the rhythmic quality of the threat, he adds to His words, turning them into a little song: “*Pull out his eyes/Apologize/Apologize/Pull out his eyes. Apologize/Pull out his eyes/Pull out his eyes/Apologize*” (6). From a young age, Stephen’s desire to create puts him in conflict with the teachings of the Catholic Church. He unwittingly adds to the Word of God in his childish artistry – not out of malice. However, this desire to create and control will hinder him from ever fully acquiescing to Catholicism.

Stephen’s misreading of musical situations causes him, at a young and impressionable age, to fanaticize about himself as a martyr. Building upon the opening scene where he places himself within the funeral song of a young child, Stephen imagines his own burial while he is in the school infirmary. Picturing the morbid scene almost longingly, Stephen imagines the mourners and envisions that Wells, a school bully, “would feel sorry then for what he had done” (20). Stephen, turning to music to help himself cope with the scene, repeats the lyrics to “Dingdong! The Castle Bell!” The emotions of the song are easily identified as melancholic, but Stephen, in his musical practice of repetition and variation, rearranges the words to create new music. He characterizes the song as

⁷ Prov. 30:17 NASB.

“beautiful and sad” before elaborating, “how beautiful the words... How sad and how beautiful!... the words, so beautiful and sad like music. The bell! The bell! Farewell! O farewell!” (21). While the music registers as sad, their beauty prevents Stephen from realizing what they really mean: he is fantasizing about his own death. Stephen’s romantic ideas about martyrdom and sacrificial death have no cause other than to compel his bully to feel remorse.

Muscular or Musical Christianity?

As Stephen transitions into adolescence in the novel’s second chapter, the conflation of body and soul perpetuates Stephen’s fantasy of himself as a martyr – even if he does not yet know for what he is willing to die. During Stephen’s second year at Belvedere, the school is preparing for the Pentecostal holiday of Whitsuntide, a weeklong celebration of the Holy Spirit’s descent upon Jesus’ apostles. In British and Irish tradition, Whitsuntide, which falls on the seventh Sunday after Easter, is marked by traditions such as baptisms, parish walks, and dancing. These traditions, which are all highly physical acts, demonstrate the way in which the Holy Spirit enters and transforms the bodies of Jesus’ followers. At Belvedere, the celebration of Whitsuntide includes two public performances: a religious play and a gymnastics competition. While both performances demonstrate a conflation between the body and the Holy Spirit, the former is an intellectual endeavor and the latter is an exposition of the Victorian era ideal of “Muscular Christianity.”

Muscular Christianity, a phrase coined by historian Clifford Putney, was a nineteenth- and twentieth-century phenomenon in which boys and young men were

taught that a male bodies should be vigorous, strong and distinctly masculine in order to be fit to serve the Christian soul.⁸ This philosophy, which Belvedere seems to be encouraging through their Whitsuntide gymnastics competition, is an obvious conflation of Catholic bodies and souls – one which, similarly to the masculinity of Irish nationalists, may be perceived as preparing young men to die for their cause. Stephen does not join his fellow classmates in this physical competition, opting instead to participate in the intellectual performance of the play. After watching his classmates master the dumbbells and the vaulting horse, Stephen leaves the gym in irritation.

Passing by the theatre, Stephen hears “a sudden burst of music” which he recognizes as “the prelude of a waltz” (65). Stephen, unable to express in language the frustration he felt from his exclusion from the gymnastics competition, emotionally resonates with the song: “The sentiment of the opening bars, their languor and supple movement, evoked the incommunicable emotion which had been the cause of all his day’s unrest and of his impatient movement of a moment before” (65). The waltz – a simultaneously romantic and melancholic piece of music – carries Stephen’s thoughts away from the Whitsuntide celebrations towards creative images of an ark riding “the tide of flowing music... tailing her cables of lanterns in her wake” (65). This musical form is non-Irish and secular, yet the ark-image that it inspires is not fully disengaged from biblical themes. The music inspires in Stephen an imaginative, artistic spark – one that it only broken by the “dwarf artillery” applause “that greeted the entry of the dumbbell team” in the gymnasium. Stephen’s artistic imaginings conflict with the hyper-masculine

⁸ Brett and Kate McKay, "Muscular Christianity: Its History and Lasting Effects," *The Art of Manliness*, last modified September 12, 2016.
<https://www.artofmanliness.com/2016/09/12/when-christianity-was-muscular/>

Catholic ideal of his school. Here, we see that Stephen's artistic expression, which is feminized, biblical and inspired through music, cannot exist within the "muscular" Catholicism of his school.

"The Swoon of Sin, Softer than Sound"

When the masculinized, physical Catholicism of Belvedere fails to unite Stephen's body with the Holy Spirit, Stephen turns against religion to rebellious sexual transgression in order to align his body and soul. In *Stephen Hero*, a conversation between Stephen and Cranly elucidates why Stephen may see sexual debauchery as a replacement for Catholicism: he still desires to be a martyr and offer his body up for his soul's larger cause. Stephen and Cranly are discussing the validity of the concept of love; the works of great romantic poets inspire Stephen to make "a wreath of songs in praise of love" (175). The more cynical Cranly responds with doubt, stating that even if "such a passion really existed it was incapable of being expressed" (175). Ireland's bardic tradition has made the country "famous for the cultivation of the kindred arts of poetry and music."⁹ Further, the Romantic-age poets of whom Stephen is markedly fond of drew strong connections between their poetry and music. For example, William Blake's most famed collection is entitled *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, and he was known to perform his works in song form.¹⁰

Stephen wonders what, if not this hybrid, bardic form, Cranly believes can express love. This leads the boys to discuss the love that may cause a man to lay down his life for

⁹ "The Bards of Ireland," *The Dublin Penny Journal* 1, no. 3 (1832): 22-23.

¹⁰ Julian Walker, "The Music of William Blake's Poetry," The British Library, last modified May 15, 2014. <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-music-of-william-blakes-poetry>

another; Stephen cites the French philosopher Ernest Renan by claiming that “a man is only a martyr for things of which he is not quite sure” (175). Making a rather blasphemous connection between Jesus and the work of a prostitute, Stephen compares “men [who] die for two sticks put crosswise” and “women who give their bodies for hire” by claiming that they both give their bodies away in expression of love. Furthering the comparison, Stephen declares that he wants to mimic this sacrifice through his art: he states, “I feel emotion and I express them in rhyming lines. Song is the simple rhythmic liberation of an emotion. Love can express itself in part through song” (176). Here, Stephen is echoing the thoughts of Cardinal Newman who believes that music is expressive of heavenly love. Stephen especially emphasizes rhythm and rhyme as emotionally evocative, which echoes his opening, poetic passage related to the linguistic pleasures to family, comfort and love. As an artist, Stephen hopes to become a martyr to the religion of art, offering up his life in the expression of love and beauty. However, before he can become an enlightened artist, Stephen must experience the two other martyrdoms of his comparison: the giving of his body to sinful sexual encounters and the giving of his body to the Church.

At the end of chapter two, Stephen – as promised – gives his body to sin by seeking out prostitutes. In his first sexual encounter, Stephen sacrifices his virtue to a prostitute, “surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing [else] in the world” (88). In this perverse epiphany scene, Stephen feels his usually disjointed body and soul join together for the first time since the rhythmic, linguistic pleasure of his childhood nursery rhymes as he offers both up for physical love. As always, Stephen, lacking the proper words to categorize this feeling, experiences it musically. At the opening of

chapter three, Stephen – who has continued to seek out transgressive sexual acts – is attempting to come to a self-actualization through sin:

The vast cycle of starry life bore his weary mind outward to its verge and inward to its centre, a distant music accompanying him outward and inward. What music? The music came nearer and he recalled the words, the words of Shelley's fragment upon the moon wandering companionless, pale for weariness... It was his own soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin. (90)

While Stephen cannot unite his body and soul through the Muscular Christianity of his former school, he finds that, through sin, “no part of body or soul had been maimed but a dark peace had been established between them” (90). Stephen views himself as the martyr he always fanaticized about being; however, rather than give up his common life for a love of God, he has given up his Catholic life in order to express physical love. The “distant music” that Stephen hears harkens back to the final scene of Joyce's “The Dead” in *Dubliners*¹¹ In the short story, distant music united Gabriel's soul with “that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead,” whereas this internal music unites Stephen's soul with this new, dark identity of sin that he has created (191).

At the end of chapter three, Stephen's body and soul are once again united, this time through the fear of God. During his Catholic school retreat, the preacher's heady descriptions of Hell – “jellylike mass[es] of liquid corruption,” “brains boiling in the skull,” “the bowels a redhot mass of burning pulp” – put Stephen's classmates into “a blue funk” (107-109). However, these images prove too much for the ever-sensitive Stephen, causing his body and soul to unite in the act of becoming sick to his stomach. Here we see that rhythmic, affecting quality of language is not inherently indicative of love; the priest's words are repulsive to Stephen for their graphic content, but the musical sonic qualities of

¹¹ James Joyce, *Dubliners* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), 180.

lecture intensify Stephen's fear. This new epiphany causes Stephen to turn away from sin in order to pursue a life of Jesuit Catholicism.

Catholic Ascetics versus Artistic Aesthetics

Stephen's period of Catholic devotion is characterized by asceticism and subdued language. The musicality and irony of Stephen's language is absent for the majority of the fourth chapter, displaying the incongruity that he sees between Catholic life and artistry. After many pages of lifeless language, it is a scene of musical outburst that draws Stephen's soul back towards the realm of art and beauty. Stephen, walking with a Jesuit, is seeking premonition that his vocation is to the church; as the two men pass through a door to the street outside the church, Stephen "gave his hand as if already to a companion in the spiritual life" (140). Suddenly, the sound of church quartet's concertina encompasses Stephen:

The music passed in an instant, as the first bars of sudden music always did, over the fantastic fabrics of his mind, dissolving them painlessly and noiselessly as a sudden wave dissolves the sandbuilt turrets of children. Smiling at the trivial air he raised his eyes to the priest's face and, seeing in it a mirthless reflection of the sunken day, detached his hand slowly which had acquiesced faintly in the companionship. (140)

The music, although ephemeral and intangible, triggers instinctive joy in Stephen. Stephen looks to the priest expecting to see his sentiments mirrored. Instead the priest's face projects a "mirthless reflection of the sunken day." Stephen's recognition that the priest does not share the same instinctive aptitude for musical enjoyment causes him to withdraw, both physically and emotionally, from the priesthood. This sudden tide of emotion, inspired by the music and accompanied by evocative imagery of Stephen's creation, causes Stephen's realization that art has the ability to move him in a way that

Catholicism cannot. The music sets his senses aflame in a way that Catholicism deadened them: "A feverish quickening of his pulses followed and a din of meaningless words drove his reasoned thoughts hither and thither confusedly" (140). Realizing his incompatibility with the life of a priest, "some instinct... armed him against acquiescence" (141). Music – expressing its otherwise incommunicable emotions – has the power to dissolve the fabrics of Stephen's mind, causing him not to over-think but to just *hear* and *be*.

Returning to his house after having this realization, Stephen encounters yet another musical scene that prompts a new appreciation for his younger siblings when he finds them alone in the house. When he asks after his parents, his sister answers, in a childish gibberish language, that they were, once again, looking for a new house as the landlord would soon evict the increasingly impoverished family. Distracting himself from the pitiable situation, the youngest brother begins to sing "Oft in the Stilly Night" (143). Stephen listens to his siblings join in before taking up the melody himself. In his siblings' voices, Stephen hears the "overtone of weariness behind their frail fresh innocent voices"; he hears the voices multiply and reverberate until they were the voices of "endless generations of children" (143). Whereas music itself is ephemeral, Stephen sees the art form's emotional power as having the ability to form community, not just within a group but also within a larger history spanning "endless generations." Although Stephen has just recently turned away from the Church and the possibility of priesthood, he still appreciates the words of Cardinal Newman, who states that it is the experience of Nature's children to feel "pain and weariness yet hope for better things" (143). Despite his temporary sympathy with his family members, Stephen see his hope for better things as far away from this house, on continental Europe.

In order to understand Stephen's epiphany at the close of chapter four, it is important to identify a definition of what 'epiphany' is to Stephen. Looking back, once again, to *Stephen Hero* for answers, a conversation between Stephen and Cranly exposes Stephen's conception of epiphany. Stephen's definition for epiphany comes directly from Aquinas' philosophy of beauty; perhaps unsurprisingly, Stephen apprehends a religious definition and reforms it into a manual for secular epiphany: "You know what Aquinas says: The three things requisite for beauty are, integrity, a wholeness, symmetry and radiance. Some day I will expand that sentence into a treatise" (212). Stephen urges Cranly to "consider the performance of [his] mind when confronted with any object, hypothetically beautiful." Stephen explains that "integrity" is the perception of an object as "one integral thing" through the process of dividing "entire universe into two parts, the object, and the void which is not the object" (212). "Symmetry," as explained by Stephen, is the consideration of "the object in whole and in part, in relation to itself and to other objects... So the mind receives the impression of the symmetry of the object." The moment where the mind apprehends the third quality of beauty – radiance – is the "moment which [Stephen] calls epiphany":

First we recognise that the object is *one* integral thing, then we recognise that it is an organised composite structure, a *thing* in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognise that it is *that* thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany. (213)

While several things throughout *Portrait* have united Stephen's body with his soul – fantasies of martyrdom, physical sin, fear of God – his most powerful epiphany comes at the close of chapter four when he believes himself capable of apprehending the soul – the

“whatness” – of an object outside of himself; he believes himself capable of observing a *thing* and “recreating life out of life” (150).

Stephen apprehends an object’s “whatness” most clearly through music. As Stephen walks along the water, he feels an overwhelming sense of contentment that causes a poetic phrase from his memory to spring to his mind:

– A day of dappled seaborne clouds.

The phrase and the day and the scene harmonized in a chord. Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to glow and fade, hue after hue, sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the grey-fringed fleece of clouds. No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. (146)

Critic Celia Munisteri reads this passage as proof of Stephen’s (and by extension Joyce’s) synesthesia – a condition in which you perceive various senses as being connected to one another.¹² Stephen, supposedly a writer – an artist of words – cannot find a proper description for this day, this object that he sees as integral, symmetric, and radiant. Instead, he hears the day, “poised and balanced,” “harmonized in a chord.” This musical ear with which Stephen appreciates the “soul” or the “whatness” of the day with continues as Stephen walks. He watches the seaborne clouds voyage overseas to Europe and longs to follow them. His realization that he must leave Ireland in order to create the art he wishes to comes to him in a musical overture:

He heard a confused music within him as of memories and names which he was almost conscious of but could not capture even for an instant; then the music seemed to recede, to recede, to recede, and from each receding trail of nebulous music there fell always one longdrawn calling note, piercing like a star the dusk of silence. Again! Again! Again! A voice from beyond the world was calling (147).

¹² Celia Munisteri, “Looking for Evidence of Synesthesia in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,” *Hypermedia Joyce Studies* 8, no. 1 (2007).

Rather than a call from God, the cry that Stephen hears is from another father – his patron artificer Dedalus who is calling him abroad; calling him towards the life of an artist.

The Transubstantiation of Stephen J. Dedalus

The fifth chapter of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is characterized by Stephen's education at University College Dublin and by his attempts at artistry. Midway through this final chapter, Stephen awakes from sleep, "conscious of faint sweet music" (191). Stephen imagines as if Seraphs, the highest-ranking angels in Christian theology, were "breathing upon him" and filling him with a spirit "pure as the purest water, sweet as dew" (191). As Kevin Farrell points out in his article, "The Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S.J.: Sacramental Structure in 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,'" Stephen's artistic journey "remains construed along religious lines" (37)¹³ While the images that Stephen's mind conjures of singing seraphs and of a "word made flesh" in the "virgin womb of the imagination" are beautiful and evocative, he is not yet able to express the musical movements of his soul in language. The villanelle that Stephen produces lacks all of the evocative music which he desires to reproduce as he is limited by form and experience; the result of these limitations are mediocre fragments of poetry: "*Are you not weary of ardent ways/Lure of the fallen seraphim?/ Tell no more of enchanted days*" (191). After nearly 200 pages of witness to the melody of Stephen's thoughts, his poetry is disappointingly dry.

Stephen, in reference to the kind of art which he wishes to create, speaks about an old English song entitled *Turpin Hero*; this ballad (whose name sound deliberately akin to

¹³ Kevin Farrell. "The Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S.J.: Sacramental Structure in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." *James Joyce Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (2011): 27-40.

Joyce's first attempt at this very novel) is noteworthy to Stephen because it shifts from a first-person narrative to the third-person as the song plays on. And in fact, Joyce mimics this move in reverse with the larger structure of *Portrait* when he transitions from an indirect third-person narrative to direct first-person in the diary at the novel's conclusion. Stephen claims that the "dramatic form is reached when the vitality which has flowed and eddied round each person fills every person with such vital force that he or she assumes a proper and intangible esthetic life" (189). As an artist, Stephen, "like the God of the creation" wishes to remain "within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork"; he does not want his own narrative to be visible in the worlds which he creates. The artist should be "refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (189). Stephen, on the brink of leaving Ireland for the continent, views himself as capable of a secularized transubstantiation: to "recreate life out of life" in a way that is controlled by but has no traces of his own hand.

Music, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, plays an increasingly complicated role. Whether Stephen performs, hears, or simply imagines a song, it is accompanied by an attempt to forge its "incommunicable emotion" in language. Joyce attempted to use language to get into that "one great part of every human existence"; to project not only the mind but also the soul of his character. Music – like the soul – lacks a certain "whatness." It is ephemeral: it passes in a moment of beauty and then dissolves. At first, music prompts Stephen to try desperately to create unity between his body and his soul. He longs to have the movements of his soul be reflected physically so that he can become a martyr, giving up his body for the love of something greater than himself. As Stephen comes to terms with the pervasive Catholicism in his life, he realizes that he does not wish to be the

son of a larger system, but a creator – an artist responsible for but refined out of the life he creates. In the fifth chapter of *Portrait*, Stephen begins his transformation from martyr to artist; from the foolhardy Icarus to crafty Daedalus; and from adolescent Christ to God of creation. However, as revealed in *Ulysses*, Stephen does not have it all figured out just yet.