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Coming of Age in the Disciplinary Structures of the Catholic Church:
Power and Discipline in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *The Land of Spices*

Coming of age in Ireland carries with it cultural expectations from Irish culture and the Catholic Church. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce and *The Land of Spices* by Kate O'Brien depict the coming-of-age of two main characters struggling to create their own identity in a strict Irish Catholic Culture. In convent schools like Sainte Famille that Anna attends in *The Land of Spices* and Jesuit schools like the one Stephen attends in *Portrait*, rules are strict and always adhered to. In Ireland at the time of Joyce and O'Brien's novels, the Church controlled much of the education system, and middle class families like the ones described would usually—if not always—send their children to Catholic school. Even there, church doctrine and ritual practices held control over Irish society (Inglis 57). Controlling knowledge became a means of controlling morality and discipline not just in the church but in the whole of Irish society. Growing up in this society, the ideals of the Church became culturally instilled in Joyce and O'Brien, and the characters in their novels are motivated by their cultural experiences and personal discipline.

Examining *Portrait* and *The Land of Spices* within this Irish Catholic culture, the main characters Stephen and Anna reflect the way discipline and punishment becomes internalized. According to Michel Foucault's theories of discipline and the "means of correct training," the function of discipline is to train, and create individuals, specifically through three avenues—hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and examination (Foucault 170). The power of the church watching over children in school as they come of age, paired with the normalizing pressures of Catholicism to be a "good Catholic" and the constant examination to set children up against a specific standard ensures that the church has the power to create individuals who embrace Irish Catholic norms. In comparing *Portrait* and *The Land of Spices*, Michael Cronin

writes that *The Land of Spices* “can be read as a portrait of the artist as a young woman” (Cronin 104). As coming-of-age stories, Joyce and O’Brien’s novels encompass the cultural disciplinary structures of Ireland that motivate the characters to reject some cultural norms in favor of others. For Anna, she overcomes family boundaries to continue her education but does not escape the repressive culture Ireland has towards women when she leaves for Dublin. For Stephen, he ultimately does not achieve his own separation from Catholic Ireland because his means of escape are through Catholic salvation discourse.

In *The Land of Spices*, Anna’s experience of punishment is regulated by the rules of the convent school. When she mistakes a conjugation for her French examination, Mother Mary Andrew says, “Certainly they’re not all wrong. But in one conjugation you made a mistake so silly as to show that you have no understanding of your actions, and so cannot receive marks like an intelligent schoolgirl” (O’Brien 111). While the rest of her examination is perfect, this one conjugation error is a grave mistake in Mother Mary Andrew’s eyes; her expectations are beyond the normal scope of human error. Mother Mary Andrew’s words are demeaning—the mistake being “silly” does not seem like a huge problem, but the fact that a simple mistake showed she has “no understanding” is a huge exaggeration, putting Anna down even though she does well on the examination. Anna also experiences a hit to her self-esteem when Mother Mary Andrews says she “[is not] an intelligent schoolgirl.” Taking Foucault’s explanation of discipline into consideration, “the examination in the school was a constant exchanger of knowledge; it guaranteed the movement of knowledge from the teacher to the pupil, but it extracted from the pupil a knowledge destined and reserved for the teacher” (Foucault 187). Upon looking at Anna’s exam, she does well; however, Mother Mary Andrew’s dislike for Anna and expectations of perfection cause her to slash the whole examination because of one incorrect conjugation.

These tough standards, defined by the nuns in charge of the convent school, allow the nuns to create a power structure where they were in total control of the students and the school. Certain knowledge is reserved for the nuns and the students are expected to not question that.

Anna reacts to her punishment as if it is an injustice, yet Mother Mary Andrew's response normalizes the entire exchange. As Anna cries, "[Mother Mary Andrew] half dragged, half carried her to her cubicle and pushed her inside. 'Get yourself to bed at once, miss – I'll wait here until I know you're undressed and in bed. And don't forget an Act of Contrition!' ... [Anna] had never before been the victim of an injustice which she could see" (O'Brien 113). The physical violence defines the experience for Anna, not just emotionally put in her place, but also physically forcing her into the cubicle she belongs in. This power struggle places the teacher above the student. Anna does not set the regulation of standards, Mother Mary Andrew does. It also emphasizes the authority of the Church over Anna and the nun; an Act of Contrition, to be prayed for forgiveness of sins, shows that Anna is under a larger power—the church. The church expects the individual to pray when they sin and Mother Mary Andrew helps enforce this rule with Anna. The authority of the church "is an 'artificial' order, explicitly laid down by a law, a programme, a set of regulations. But it is also an order defined by natural and observable processes" (Foucault 179). The Act of Contrition is a regulation set down by the church but presumably one put in place because of the act of sin and the need to ask for forgiveness in a formal way. This order controls Anna's school days. The incident with Mother Mary Andrew goes so far as to make Anna feel like the "victim of an injustice," which shows the severity of disciplinary actions in the convent school. It is after this injustice that "Anna develops a meticulousness which eventually wins her a scholarship. She also, it seems, learns the futility of quarrelling with authority" (Wallace 19). Because of the requirement of perfection in her French

examination, Anna becomes much more careful with studies, which does lead to her winning a scholarship. The disciplinary structures are embedded in Anna's behavior. Arguing with a nun—although she felt injustice—is impossible, because it does not get Anna anywhere.

In Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen also experiences what he feels is an injustice. When he breaks his glasses and cannot read, the prefect of studies gets angry. For his punishment, Stephen gets hit with a pandybat. When he is punished,

Stephen closed his eyes and held out in the air his trembling hand with the palm upwards. He felt the prefect of studies touch it for a moment at the fingers to straighten it and then the swish of the sleeve of the soutane as the pandybat was lifted to strike. A hot burning stinging tingling blow like the loud crack of a broken stick made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire: and at the sound and the pain scalding tears were driven into his eyes. (Joyce I.1528-1535)

Stephen's visceral reaction to this punishment tells the reader a few things about the prefect of studies, and ultimately the Catholic education Stephen receives in Ireland. Stephen's "trembling hand" shows how terrified he is of the prefect. Stephen's reaction reveals that he is already conditioned to the pain of this punishment technique. It also shows that the prefect has done this exact thing many times—like discipline should be expected in this manner. Stephen is "trembling," and the prefect "straightens" Stephen's hand. The disciplinary act is not emotional or spiritual, but rather very physical and real to Stephen. Examples like this one show "While such schools offered a superior grade of education, they also exposed students to a form of eroticized pedagogical violence unique to the Catholic educational system" (Castle 370). The traumatic experience of such physical violence leaves an impact on Stephen. He simultaneously receives an excellent education from the school and becomes conditioned into the culture of the

Catholic Church, with expectations set upon him for church membership. The leaf and fire imagery creates a very physical image of Stephen's punishment, exaggerating the severity of the punishment. The words "hot burning stinging," "fire" and "scalding" invoke images of a fire, and more specifically an image of hell. The punishment is so severe and scalding to Stephen that all this visceral heat imagery comes to mind.

Stephen's education includes regulating behavior, causing him to grow into a certain kind of person that respects authority and emphasizes the importance of education. The prefect acts as an agent for correction; in this case, "Disciplinary punishment has the function of reducing gaps. It must therefore be essentially corrective" (Foucault 179). While Stephen does not appear to blatantly break rules, not being able to participate in studies because of broken glasses puts him at odds with the prefect. Studies are a priority, and disciplinary action in the Catholic Church has to enforce this. The prefect acts from a position of power; the act of physically hurting Stephen in itself establishes an authority wherein the prefect dominates. Stephen is at the mercy of the prefect and must respect the fact that this authority has power over him in all spheres of his life. This position is why Stephen puts his hand out, despite the trembling, rather than resisting the punishment altogether. There is an element of religious salvation in Stephen's cry. When Stephen gets hit, "A cry sprang to his lips, a prayer to be let off" (Joyce I.1537-1538). In a moment of pain, Stephen's cry is compared to a prayer that has to be let out, as if he already felt the necessity to confess for his alleged sin. Stephen's cry is reminiscent of Jesus' cry for mercy from the cross. Even in the punishment in Catholic school, Stephen has a connection to God. The ultimate authority of the church pushes Stephen to be fearful of the consequences of his actions much in the same way Anna becomes a more meticulous student.

Discipline also teaches Stephen and Anna how to behave in church when they are subordinate to the priest and expected to follow cultural norms. Particularly in a Catholic mass, there is a set pattern to sitting, standing, and kneeling, as well as preconceived expectations for behavior. When Anna goes to mass, Reverend Mother recalls, “At least there is no Schwarmerei in that face...Anna Murphy isn’t going to faint. Indeed, she looks as if she is memorizing the whole affair, for critical purposes” (O’Brien 5). Anna has no “Schwarmerei” which refers to excessive sentiment and emotion. Rather than caught up in emotional throws of the church, she is fascinated by it. While other girls cannot handle themselves and may faint, Anna looks at mass in a way that is more academic and less sporadic. Anna’s personal discipline in church allows the priest more power because she pays such critical close attention to him and the patterns of mass. When speaking to a congregation, “the moral education of children in this sermon is taken to be the responsibility of the father” (Inglis 146). In this situation, when a child like Anna is so enthralled in mass, the father, or priest, has the opportunity to teach a lesson knowing that the children are expected to listen. In the sermon, the priest may speak about sexuality, discipline, and expectations for each individual, fully aware that some of the children are really listening. This authority then comes with a huge responsibility—to ensure the lessons of the Catholic Church are properly taught to the children, who continue the society’s disciplinary structures onto the next generation. Anna’s own discipline shown in mass allows the priest to enforce and teach morality, especially in Ireland when such a great number of people go to church and rely on the church.

When Anna’s fascination with mass also allows for the opportunity to educate her on mass etiquette, Reverend Mother corrects her behavior. When Anna leans over the bars at mass, Reverend Mother responds, “You must try to kneel up straight, Anna. It isn’t respectful to stick

your head out through the bars...and now sit down until Mass begins” (O’Brien 5). Her instructions are taken and “Anna obeyed her immediately, and, clutching a hymn-book, began to turn its pages with care” (O’Brien 5). Anna’s immediate response to the nun’s instructions is a result of discipline and cultural expectations. Nuns are respected in the Catholic Church, and children are expected to obey them. The methodical sitting, kneeling, and standing at mass is part of a very specific ritual, and Anna is expected to learn how to behave like everyone else does; she must learn to be respectful. Sitting quietly and waiting for mass to begin is just one piece of the ritual. Anna’s care for the hymn-book is also particular to the cultural understanding of a hymn book. The book is sacred and Anna shows that she understands that by treating it with care. Mass creates this place of power, where Anna must follow very specific rules enforced by her elders. In this situation, “power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault 194). Anna’s reality is life in the convent school, and the way of life she knows is contained in the strict rules of the church. She knows the Reverend Mother will be watching her, giving her marks for class and correcting her; her reality is the necessity to listen in order to avoid punishment and learn respect. The power of the church holds some weight in her life, as she learns from it and becomes a great student out of it.

Stephen’s reaction to church power does not come from learned respect, but comes from a fear of God and a fear of the consequences of sin. On a particular retreat, one of the priests gives a sermon about fire and hell. He explicitly talks about the dangers of sin and the necessity for the individual to escape a terrible, burning fate in hell. Stephen reacts strongly to the sermon, questioning “Why was he kneeling there like a child saying his evening prayers? To be alone with his soul, to examine his conscience, to meet his sins face to face, to recall their times and manners and circumstances, to weep over them” (Joyce III.1229-1233). Stephen’s concern for

his soul comes from the emphasis the priest saying the sermon puts on an individual's fate. In the position of kneeling, Stephen is like a child again, invoking the image of God as a father and the child as the one who needs to ask for forgiveness. Stephen has to "examine his conscience" because that is where his moral decisions are made. He realizes the sins he committed—sleeping with a prostitute and going against the church—will cause him to go to hell and he decides this is not what he wants. Facing his sins, Stephen has to contemplate what he did wrong. Foucault's idea that "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" shows that the sermon creates a reality for Stephen that he does not want to face (Foucault 194). Stephen's reality is this fire and hell sermon. The fear that the priest invokes in Stephen stays with him and causes this total shift in morality where Stephen decides to live a life worthy of salvation. The core of who Stephen is will decide whether he goes to hell or heaven; based on the sermon, all Stephen wants is to go to heaven. The priest crafts a reality that Stephen is unhappy with, influencing his later confession of sins and ultimate life change. The normalizing judgement comes from God and priests, who have the power to judge sin and show that people need forgiveness.

While Stephen ultimately decides to turn his life around, this decision solidifies his relationship with salvation as something he cannot ultimately escape. The classical bildungsroman results in the movement towards adulthood, and while Stephen decides to leave Ireland to find his artistic self, "Stephen's entrapment in the discourse of salvation clarifies and rigidifies his subjection, leaving him farther than ever from the promised land of classical Bildung" (Castle 372). On one level, Stephen searches for salvation and eventually decides salvation exists outside of Ireland. While he later rejects Catholicism, the Catholic notion of salvation stays with him in his search for artistry. He has to figure out how to create himself as

an artist, and that does not seem to exist in the realm of the Catholic Church. Stephen is always under the authority of priests unless he leaves the church—and because Ireland is so situated in Catholicism, he feels he cannot leave the church without leaving Ireland. However, Stephen wants forgiveness after the sermon, not individuality. He thinks that his confusion “was the work of devils, to scatter his thoughts and overcloud his conscience, assailing him at the gates of the cowardly and sincorrupted flesh: and, praying God timidly to forgive him his weakness, he crawled up on to the bed” (Joyce III.1237-1240). Stephen believes he was corrupted because of his interaction with the prostitute and other sins he committed; the priest has him convinced that the devil has influenced him. He is a coward for not resisting the devil and feels the need to be forgiven. His timid action and attitude reflects a fear of God and makes begging for forgiveness more difficult. Furthermore, the priest is able to influence his thoughts and reactions because he is in a position of power in the church. Being respected allows the priest to command the attention of Stephen and others—conditioning them to believe they must act as good Catholics. Stephen’s fear shows the manipulative power a priest has in shaping the morality of an individual.

After disciplinary actions of priests and nuns taught Anna and Stephen to be perfectionists in their education and the reverence of mass showed them how they ought to act, the power of the Catholic Church came in contention with Irish Nationalism, instructing the two characters about who they are. Cultural norms that cross into the church pressure their abilities to come of age in the classical bildungsroman sense. An individual in Ireland is “likely to have a high level of embodied cultural capital within Irish society” if he or she adheres to Catholicism, but more specifically follows customs and expectations laid out by Irish society (Inglis 70). Anna’s challenge is to overcome the gender inequality that makes her life difficult. She has to

figure out how to choose her own path when her grandmother and the convent nuns exert power over her. Stephen's challenge is to find himself amidst his fear of discipline and fear of sin, and the necessity to disconnect from Irish society to do so. On the threshold of adulthood, the two characters come in contention with cultural expectations in Ireland.

Anna has to contend with her desire for education and her expectations as a daughter in an Irish family, when deciding to continue her education. Anna's grandmother adamantly opposes Anna's continuing education, saying "That doesn't interest me. I disapprove of money wasted on the academic education of girls...I wish Anna to stay near at hand and also to become of practical usefulness. To earn money, Reverend Mother" (O'Brien 270). The convent school, having made Anna a meticulous student, does not prepare her for the future the grandmother wants—likely because Reverend Mother comes from the rest of Europe and does not focus on the Irish Nationalist values that the grandmother finds important. The cultural norms expect Anna—as a young woman—to work or marry rather than continue education. Anna's grandmother is altogether uninterested in continuing education purely because Anna is a girl. Money is "wasted on the academic education of girls," which shows that Irish culture was not a place for educated girls. Instead, they are meant to become useful. In the grandmother's mind, that means making money for the family. There is inequality in the treatment of Anna's older brother and Anna, because he is allowed to go to the University. The narrow Irish Catholic worldview of the grandmother merely represents cultural norms that Anna does not necessarily agree with because she goes to a convent school with a nun from Europe. Her worldview is probably a result of expectations passed down generation to generation.

In fact, Reverend Mother—coming from Europe and not adamant about the specifically Irish culture—defends Anna's intent to go to university. She speaks to Anna's grandmother,

saying “I speak indeed without her authority, but simply because I know, from conversations during the year and from the passion with which she worked for her scholarship, that she desires to go through the University before choosing a career. And I wholeheartedly approve of that desire, and believe it to be the right thing for her to do” (O’Brien 274). Reverend Mother acknowledges that she speaks for Anna without her explicit consent when she goes against the grandmother, and is instilled with her own European ideal that girls too should go to the University. Anna’s actions while in school showcase her abilities and desires to continue her education before pursuing a career. The interest in pursuing a career also differs from the purpose of “making money,” showing that Reverend Mother’s ideas for Anna are more independently wrought and interested in the person rather than the usefulness. In one way, Reverend Mother’s authority gives Anna an opportunity she would not otherwise have in an Irish Catholic culture. Reverend Mother helps challenge the cultural expectations instilled in Anna’s family life. She sees Irish Nationalism “as ill-argued, emotional and ultimately restrictive of the individual” and tries not “to allow the education of children to become a ‘political weapon,’” (Wallace 23). Reverend Mother challenges the bishops when they tell her that the education system needs to include Irish Nationalist values, and she pushes back against Anna’s grandmother, adamant about Anna attending the university. Children should be allowed to make their own decisions about where they want their life to go, and the Irish Nationalist values—like those held by Anna’s grandmother—prevent girls especially from acting on their own accord. Had Mother Mary Andrew been in control, Anna may not have gotten to Dublin.

Stephen also has a problem leaving behind the Irish culture embedded in his entire life, although he does not have the same unequal treatment as Anna. When talking about his own formation, Stephen says “The soul is born, he said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of.

It has 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 try to fly by those nets” (Joyce V.1045-1049). While Anna is restricted because of her gender Stephen refers to the even greater restriction by the entire country. The formation of youth in Ireland happens with the birth of the soul, something mysterious and abstract to Stephen. The soul is important because that is the core of a person, which follows the Catholic idea of having a body and soul. With the birth of the soul in Ireland, Stephen is concerned with the cultural restrictions that come along with it. By saying “there are nets flung at it,” Stephen invokes an image of restriction—that the soul is trapped from making its own journey because of Ireland specifically. He is unable to move forward in formation of his soul because of the restrictions the nets place on him. In some way, Stephen thinks that leaving Ireland will allow him to become an artist without Irish cultural restrictions. However, “Individual identity and artistic creation become much the same thing: the individual creates himself in the same way as he creates artworks, and both then become subject to the same problematic reality all fictions involve” (Altieri 230). If the individual is so entangled in an Irish Catholic worldview, becoming an artist is an extension of him and cannot actually fly the nets that he talks about. Rather, his selfhood created while growing up is attached to the same reality as the artist. Living in Ireland is problematic because Stephen wishes to flee the very nets that create his identity.

Stephen holds enormous dissent for Ireland as it stands, vehemently opposing Irish Nationalism when others try to convince him of the importance of his country. When Davin says, “a man’s country comes first. Ireland first, Stevie. You can be a poet or a mystic after” Stephen responds by saying “Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow” (Joyce V.1052-1055). Stephen

not only rejects Ireland, but infers that Ireland has a history of destroying all things that should be saved and nurtured. Particularly when it comes to writers and artists, Stephen feels like he would have no artistic freedom in Ireland. Part of his reason for thinking this stems from the traumatic experiences he goes through in the Catholic school. The Irish Nationalist believes that Ireland has to come before anything else in this situation, being an artist is secondary and seemingly not as important. Though Stephen hates Ireland, he struggles to get out of it. Writer Michael Cronin contemplates the struggle that Stephen has between identity and artistry, saying, “The plot in *Portrait* is constructed out of Stephen’s struggle to forge and construct his own identity in opposition to the various social and cultural forces through which a set of pre-determined identities are foisted on him by his historical conditions” (Cronin 30). His historical conditions are exactly what Stephen keeps trying to reject, but he cannot avoid the fact that his own upbringing is set in these conditions. Whether he agrees or disagrees with different aspects of the church or Ireland in general, Stephen is trained in a strict environment and has to figure out a way to create an identity that can withstand some of those social and cultural forces that are influences around him.

When it is ultimately time for the characters to come of age, Anna and Stephen have to contend with their own Irishness, instilled in them through the disciplinary structures of the Church and Ireland itself. For Anna, her meticulous attention to education is ultimately important for her arrival into adulthood. Though Anna won the battle against her grandmother and accepted a scholarship to the University, she has the convent school to thank for that. Near the end of *The Land of Spices*, “Anna’s schooldays were closed, and there was no appeal against the advance of life and the flight of innocence. She had been taught to be good and to understand the law of God. Also, she had been set free to be herself. Her wings were grown and she was for the world.

In poverty, in struggle, in indecisiveness—but for some these were good beginnings” (O’Brien 296). In one aspect, she leaves the constraints of her Irish family and gains the help of Reverend Mother to advance in life. On the other hand, the disciplinary structures she experiences from Mother Mary Andrew’s cruelty to the priests’ sermons gives her a “good” Irish morality. She can also “understand the law of God,” which puts her in a position of merit in a society so hyper focused on Catholicism. While Anna advances and goes to Dublin, the reader leaves with no resolve as to whether she truly comes of age in Dublin in a bildungsroman sense; she could be under the same Irish Catholic expectations and end up pressured to leave her education, or be pressured to marry and therefore fulfil the cultural expectations placed on women in Ireland. There are still obstacles in her way even though overcomes some of them in the convent school.

In a way, Anna seems stuck because she faces so many inequalities and obstacles in Catholic Ireland as it stands, that leaving to go to Dublin is only a minor victory. O’Brien’s ideal result for Anna does not necessarily match the disciplinary structures that are so present in her growing up so that “if O’Brien’s narration of how an ideal liberal individualism can be cultivated suggests that historical change is possible and welcome, this narrative is simultaneously predicated on the impossibility of achieving such change” (Cronin 108). Change in the church itself seems impossible. When Reverend Mother gets a letter to become Mother Superior and go back to continental Europe, even the reason Anna got out of her grandmother’s grasp leaves. Her future in Dublin is ambiguous, as she approaches the threshold of adulthood. In Anna’s story, “O’Brien is also invoking two distinct models of individual development. One is a secular concept of art as ‘improving’ that is central to the liberal theory of culture...to the related origins of Bildung and aesthetics in eighteenth-century Enlightenment and Romantic thought” (Cronin 103). Anna now goes to Dublin in an attempt to fulfil the promise of individuality in art and

education. The ambiguity of Anna's change questions whether she is actually able to overcome the strict rule of the Catholic Church. She both receives aid from the convent school and is able to move upward on her own. Anna is the artist trapped by cultural expectations, but not without hope.

Stephen is similarly stuck in a struggle to become his own artist out of the Irish Catholic culture he is conditioned to. Though it seems like the artist gets his escape, the wrap that Catholicism has on Stephen will remain. When speaking to Cranly, Stephen says "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile and cunning" (Joyce V.25745-2580). Stephen acknowledges that he once believed in his home, his fatherland, and his church, but that has changed. With that change, Stephen feels that he can express himself in "life or art as freely as I can," despite the fact that he is still limited in his capabilities. Stephen obviously has a complicated relationship with Ireland, because he feels he has to defend his individuality from those things that he grew up knowing in Ireland. Growing up in Ireland "has led Stephen to feel, as he realizes so pronouncedly on his return from exile, a sense of alienation from himself, from the young man who not so long ago possessed a "mild proud sovereignty"" (Castle 379). The restrictions placed on him within Ireland are both a part of who he is and a problem he has to face in fully understanding himself. His identity is complicated because he is both of the church and against it, both Irish and ashamed of Ireland. Leaving Ireland he thought he would become proud and powerful, but his exile is so mixed up with hoping for salvation of his soul that he cannot achieve ultimate fulfilment.

The “arms” that Stephen has to use in his artistic expressions are ironic because they are a result of his Catholic education and upbringing. He has “silence, exile, and cunning,” all of which can be traced back to the power of the church. First, silence is enforced by the Catholic Church in mass, in censorship, and in other aspects of morality that the church controls. Subjects like sexuality are taboo and Stephen spent much of his education learning not to address those subjects. Exile is forced by the power that the Catholic Church holds in Ireland, as if Stephen cannot just leave the Catholic Church to be free, but has to leave the whole of his society. Because Catholicism and Irish Nationalism are so intertwined, exile has to be from both of them. The last one—cunning—comes from years of education in a Catholic Jesuit school. If Ireland gave him his tools, how can Stephen overcome Irish cultural expectations? In his discovery of identity “he struggled with the power claimed by the Church; not only over his personal life but over the country’s politics and public behavior” (Maher 490). Stephen cannot just leave Ireland to find the artistic freedom he desires because the power of the Church claims his personal life and polices his behavior. Stephen’s experiences are an inherent part of who he is, which is the reason the church has such a hold on him when he leaves.

The authority the church has over the lives of Anna and Stephen as told by O’Brien and Joyce has a hold on them even in their attempt to leave Ireland to become artists. Their training in a convent school and a Jesuit school ultimately shapes them into individuals wholly conscious of the observation, judgement, and examination that went into their formation. While Anna and Stephen both achieve some goals—Anna gets the scholarship and Stephen makes plans to leave for Paris—both novels end without the reader knowing what came of them. Did Anna make it to school in Dublin? Was she allowed to choose her own career path afterwards? Did Stephen succeed as an artist? In the context of *Portrait*, his fate is unknown. Regardless of where they

end up, they are unable to enter fully into adulthood in the classical bildungsroman sense because they are perpetually subordinate to the church as children of God, expected to be obedient to the Irish Catholic cultural norms.

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