



## AN ARTIST IN THE MAKING: STEPHEN'S SEARCH FOR SELF-IDENTITY IN JAMES JOYCE'S *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*

OLUŞUM AŞAMASINDAKİ SANATÇI: JAMES JOYCE'UN "SANATÇININ BİR GENÇ ADAM OLARAK PORTRESİ" ESERİNDE STEPHEN'İN ÖZ-KİMLİK ARAYIŞI

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### Abstract

Tracing the transformation of Stephen Dedalus into an artist in the making, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* presents the individual's ongoing search for self-identity within the background of various notions such as religion, politics, Ireland, aesthetics, disillusionment and freedom. As an aspiring artist to be, Stephen goes through various stages and out of each stage he comes up with a new perception that enables him to broaden his horizon. While doing that, he rebels against the norms, and the codes of identity that he believes his home, his religion, and his country are trying to impose on him. As the hybrid quality of his name also testifies – bringing the religious (St. Stephen) and mythical (Deadalu) side by side – Stephen Dedalus takes the first step into a more unified vision which will enable him to see beyond the daily experience and turn it into an aesthetic inspiration. Accordingly, in addition to presenting an analysis of the thematic elements in the novel, it will also be attempted to illustrate the way in which Joyce points to an aesthetic and unified vision where the binaries give way to the encompassing vision of aesthetic unity.

### Öz

Stephen Dedalus'un sanatçı oluş sürecini ele alan James Joyce'un *Sanatçının Bir Genç Adam Olarak Portresi* adlı eseri bireyin süregelen öz-kimlik arayışını din, politika, İrlanda, estetik, yanılısma ve özgürlük gibi çeşitli kavramlarca oluşturulan bir arka plan çerçevesinde inceler. Sanatçı olmaya hevesli Stephen karakteri roman boyunca, sonrasında yeni bir bakış açısıyla algısını genişlettiği çeşitli aşamalardan geçer. Bunu yaparken evinin, dininin ve ülkesinin üzerinde kurmaya çalıştığı değerlere ve kimlik kurallarına karşı çıkar. İsminden de anlaşılacağı üzere – dini (Aziz Stephen) ve mitolojik (Deadalu) olanı bir araya getirerek – Stephen Dedalus, onun günlük tecrübenin ötesini görmesini sağlayacak ve bunu estetik bir ilhama dönüştürecek olan o bütüncül görüşe doğru ilk adımını atar. Tüm bunlardan hareketle, bu makalede, romanda yer alan tematik noktaların analizine ek olarak, Joyce'un tüm zıtlıkların estetik görüşün öngördüğü o bütüncül bakış açısına doğru evriliş sürecini ele alışını incelenmektedir.

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First published in the United States in 1916, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* had blossomed as a conception in the mind of its author as early as 1904. It is the year when Joyce wrote an essay titled "A Portrait of the Artist" for the Irish periodical *Dana* (Bulson 47). Failing to get it published however, in the following year, Joyce decided to expand his essay into an autobiographical novel, *Stephen Hero*, which is an earlier version of *A Portrait*. By the time *Stephen Hero* was completed, the author was not satisfied with the result; therefore, he decided to rewrite the whole novel in 1907 – which developed into *A Portrait* in 1914. Accordingly, "Joyce's retention of the dateline 'Dublin 1904 – Trieste 1914' at the end of the published novel makes it clear that he saw *A Portrait* as the culmination of a compositional process" (Seed 3). Thus, it can be said that Joyce formed a connection

between the compositional process of the work and the *evolution* of the artist, Stephen Dedalus– which is achieved through presenting an overview of Stephen’s development from childhood to his transformation into an artist-in-the-making. In this sense, in terms of illustrating the evolution of Stephen, *A Portrait* is also seen as “a *bildungsroman* [novel of education], a form that conventionally concludes at a momentous point in the hero’s life” and hence points to an accumulation of a “process of self-discovery” (Canadas 16).

Nevertheless, rather than situating *A Portrait* into a strict category or genre, it will be attempted to illustrate how Joyce tries to bring various binary oppositions such as the factual and the fictional, the history and the myth, the religious and the pagan, the hero and the traitor, the virgin and the prostitute, the local and the global under the same roof of his novel, and eventually points to a transcendental ground where all of these pairs collide into one another and form an aesthetic unity. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to present an analysis of the thematic elements in *A Portrait* such as religion, politics, Ireland, aesthetics, freedom, and the role of women as catalysts of the individual’s ongoing search for self-identity – by mainly foregrounding Stephen Dedalus’ disillusionment with his own environment and his subsequent emergence as an artist.

Written in accordance with the literary conventions of the Modernist fiction, it is not surprising that *A Portrait* goes against the Victorian mind-set of the nineteenth century which tends to compartmentalize everything into separate boxes, and prioritizes the social reality over that of the individual. As John McCourt also argues, “if Stephen Hero belatedly bears many of the hallmarks of the nineteenth century novel, *A Portrait* substantially complicates and sometimes abandons realism as it embraces new modernist gestures” (11). In this respect by founding his work on an autobiographical basis, Joyce does not intend to keep an account of his whole life but uses Stephen as a functional figure whose “development of [...] religious and national self directly reflects that of Joyce himself” (Turgut 33). Making use of autobiographical elements, yet blending them into his fiction, Joyce replaces much of the “factual [...] material of [his] own growing up present in Stephen Hero” with “the phantasmagorical background” of *A Portrait* (McCourt 11). By this means the author gets the opportunity to rise beyond the restrictive and dualistic atmosphere of the Irish Catholic experience – which is marked by religious and political quarrels in the first place; and puts forward the emotional and intellectual experiences of the individual – Stephen, the protagonist – as an alternative.

The epigraph of *A Portrait*, taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is important in that "it describes Daedalus' reaction after King Minos tells him that he cannot return to his native country: 'Et gnotas animum dimittit in artes' ('He turned his mind to unknown arts')" (Bulson 49). Left without any alternative, Daedalus finds the escape in applying to the 'unknown arts' and fashions *artificial* wings for himself and his son Icarus. While Icarus plunges into his death in the end, since his wings melt due to his flying too close to the sun, the father flies safely to Sicily. Stephen Dedalus, like his name sake, is also entrapped by the restrictive atmosphere of his environment – represented through three nets: "nationality, language, religion" (Joyce 231). As Daiches contends, "[w]e see Stephen (who is Joyce) rejecting one by one his home, his religion, his country, growing ever more aloof and proud, exclaiming 'Non serviam' ('I will not serve') to all the representatives of orthodoxy and convention" (199). Gradually ridding himself off the figurative shackles that bind him to a certain label, Stephen turns his mind to an all-encompassing vision of the artist that does not separate but brings the opposing poles together. In order to understand his so-called evolution from the caterpillar to the butterfly, it is necessary to examine Stephen's interaction with the social reality since it inevitably shapes the formation of his consciousness – covering the memories starting from his infancy and childhood, and then reaching up to his sexual and intellectual maturation as a young man.

According to Hugh Kenner, "[e]ach chapter in the *Portrait* gathers up the thematic material of the preceding ones and entwines them with a dominant theme of its own" (140). In this way Joyce is able to portray the maturation process of Stephen from a deeper perspective and enables the reader to make a comparison between the changing dynamics in his life. In chapter I, Stephen is depicted as a passive observer of the impressions that are rooted in the exterior world: first at home and then at Clongowes Wood College (Bulson 51). During the Christmas dinner scene – which is generally associated with harmony and happiness since all the family members gather around the same table – religion and politics are juxtaposed against each other through an argument over the figure of Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) who was the president of the Irish National Land League. Despite the fact that Parnell was an important nationalist leader that supported Home Rule, due to his affair with Katherine O'Shea, the wife of his colleague, he was "disgraced as an adulterer" and offended his supporters on moral grounds (Blades 17). It causes the Catholic clergy to turn against him – a position that is also supported by Dante, the Catholic governess of Stephen in the novel who

calls Parnell “[a] traitor to his country” (Joyce 43). As opposed to their fundamentalist and dogmatic stance towards religion and politics, Mr Casey and Simon Dedalus hold a secular stance and consider Parnell as a martyr. As it is argued by Blades, “*the more crucial point for Stephen lies not in who is correct, his father of Dante, but in the memory of the terrible conflict itself which the question sparks off*” (29). In the wider perspective, the polarity that is generated between the members of the same social group does in fact stand for the separation that is experienced on the country level, signifying the political and social unrest that is caused by the division between the Unionists and the Nationalists in Ireland. Within the context of Stephen’s search for self-identity however, these divisions pose as serious threats that prevent the artist from realising his mission – which is to penetrate through all kinds of nets and reach an ultimate unity.

The Christmas section lays bare the following conflict that will befall on Stephen at Clongowes Wood College where he comes to learn about the arbitrary nature of crime and punishment. This time it is not the church and the state that are brought in opposite to one another, but Stephen and the Catholic Church – embodied through the figure of Father Dolan. His glasses having been broken beforehand, Stephen is bound to sit idly in Mr Harford’s writing class. It causes Father Dolan to assume that Stephen has broken his glasses on purpose so that he will be exempt from the class, and he gets pandied in the end. Commenting on Stephen’s response to the pandying, Blades states that though Stephen’s reaction is complex “*it is clear that the physical pain is not as wounding as either the emotional pain or the affront to his pride*” (Blades 31). It is a total blow to Stephen’s sense of identity and brings him to the verge of making an important decision which will either help him escape from the nets that have begun to weave around him, or will cause him to comply with the norms that are dictated from above. His dilemma is whether to complain to the rector that he was unjustly punished, or to continue living with its humiliation forever. Eventually Stephen asserts his integrity by choosing to see the rector. It marks an important step in the formation of Stephen’s moral individualism, as in this way he proves to himself that unlike Parnell who was considered to be a traitor on moral grounds, he rebels against the label that Father Dolan tried to impose on him. In other words, he shows to others and to himself that he is not a schemer at all, but an innocent victim.

As a part of the inner development of Stephen the artist, in chapter II Joyce focuses more on the internal stimuli rather than the external. Now Stephen is able to escape into the world of his own, which is made evident through his reading of Alexander Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* in the evenings. Associating himself with a fictional character now – as opposed to the historical image of Parnell in the first chapter – Stephen blurs the distinction between art and fiction as he imagines himself to be searching for a Mercedes figure in the real world:

Outside Blackrock, on the road that led to the mountains, stood a small whitewashed house in the garden of which grew many rosebushes: and in the house, he told himself, another Mercedes lived. Both on the outward and on the homeward journey he measured the distance by this landmark: and in his imagination he lived through a long train of adventures, marvellous as those in the book itself, towards the close of which there appeared an image of himself, grown older and sadder, standing in a moonlit garden with Mercedes who had so many years before slighted his love, and with a sadly proud gesture of refusal, saying: – Madam, I never eat muscatel grapes. (Joyce 70-71).

Inspired by the book, Stephen answers the demands of his soul for adventure by leading a gang of boys, however no longer satisfied with what the play-world and the imagination are to offer him, he soon grows discontent and the gang disbands. He is in need of a real touch and experience – which illustrates the evolution of Stephen's sexual urges at this stage. Mercedes is nothing other than a literary guide that is to shape and control Stephen's newly awakening sexuality. Brooding over her image, he feels a fever gathering in him which leads him to walk alone in the evening along the quiet avenue. He wants Mercedes to appear before him in body and flesh, and carry him beyond:

He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how, but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. [...] They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment. (Joyce 73).

The sexual awakening Stephen is going through and the change it impels on his consciousness is further exacerbated by the family's move to Dublin. Finding himself in a totally new environment, Stephen feels disconnected from "*the comfort and reverie of Blackrock*" (Joyce 74), and the only thing that can reconnect him to a sense of security is his ongoing search for Mercedes: "*A vague dissatisfaction grew up within him [...] and yet he continued to wander up and down day after day as if he really sought someone that eluded him*" (Joyce 75). Since Stephen is in the first stages of his sexual and artistic development, he is not able to reach a unified synthesis where the physical and the spiritual images of femininity can formulate an aesthetic unity within themselves. Although he desperately longs for a physical encounter with the *image* turned into the real; ironically enough, he draws back once *she* becomes a reality for Stephen. It is best illustrated in the children's party where he meets Emma whom he feels physically attracted to and wants to kiss, but he cannot let weakness and timidity fall from him in that *magic moment*. Standing together in the entrance to a tram, their bodies stay close to one another. It is as if the vision that Stephen has imagined beforehand has become real – they are surrounded by the night and the silence: "*No sound of footsteps came up or down the road. No sound broke the peace of the night. [...] They seemed to listen, he on the upper step and she on the lower*" (Joyce 78). As Seed elaborates further on:

Although a verbal exchange is taking place, the passage relies for its effect on a meta-dialogue between the two characters' bodies. Stephen stays physically immobile while the girl moves to and fro balletically miming out a flirtatious invitation. (116).

Not able to kiss Emma, Stephen finds the escape in transforming her back into a literary image in his poem titled 'To E – C –.' In this way Stephen manages to abstract Emma's body together with that of his own so that *Stephen the persona* manages to kiss *her* within the literary realm of the poem itself:

There remained no trace of the tram itself nor of the trammen nor of the horses: nor did he and she appear vividly. The verses told only of the night and the balmy breeze and the maiden lustre of the moon. Some undefined sorrow was hidden in the hearts of the protagonists as they stood in silence beneath the leafless trees and when the moment of farewell had come to the kiss, which had been withheld by one, was given by both. (Joyce 79-80).

Due to the decline of his father's financial means, Stephen starts attending Belvedere College, which is another Jesuit school. *"It is here that he begins to discover his talents as an essay writer and actor"* (Bulson 52). Reminiscent of the way Father Dolan accused him of scheming in order not to attend the class duties at Clongowes Wood College, in his new school he is accused of using heretical remarks in his essay and he is forced to rephrase them under the command of Mr Tate, the English master. However, in the next section, Stephen defends his cause before his rival Heron and expresses his admiration for Lord Byron, who is considered to be a heretic poet of his period. Moreover, Stephen gets the leading role in the college play – mostly *"on account of his stature and grave manners"* (Joyce 83), which in reality acts as a façade covering the emotional conflicts that he has been through, and his acting experience depicts his growing interest in the world of art and literature: *"It surprised him to see that the play which he had known at rehearsals for a disjointed lifeless thing had suddenly assumed a life of its own"* (Joyce 96). In contrast to Stephen's stripping Emma off the physical qualities and reducing her into mere credentials, this time he realises the way in which the abstract and the ideal can find their way into the real world. His consciousness torn between the real and the imaginary, Stephen is no longer able to situate himself on a secure ground; therefore, he has to come to terms with reality by reminding himself that he exists within the realm of the physical world. In his visit to Cork with his father it is possible to see how Stephen reacts to his ontologically shaken status:

I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names. (Joyce 105).

Here Stephen has almost returned to his childhood period when he would make clear cut distinctions between objects and use a very simple language. In this way, he tries to escape from the confusing interaction of the physical and the spiritual, and attempts to re-identify himself. However, after witnessing his father's spending a good time with his friends at Newcombe's coffee house, and learning about his being *"the boldest flirt in the city of Cork in his day"* (Joyce 107), Stephen starts questioning his own condition and feels older in their company:

No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them. He had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude male health or filial piety. Nothing stirred within his

soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys and he was drifting amid life like barren shell of the moon. (Joyce 108).

His soul fuelled by the need to fulfil the sexual aspirations of the body, Stephen finds himself back to his wanderings again: *“The veiled autumnal evenings led him from street to street as they had led him years before along the quiet avenues of Blackrock”* (Joyce 112). However, this time he is not able to associate himself with Edmond Dantes, who refuses Mercedes after encountering her after years of estrangement and adventure. Stephen is ready to accept Mercedes in any form she is likely to appear before him – as long as she is tangible, close and within his reach:

His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. (Joyce 113).

Not able to find the solace in the total idealization of the unsubstantial image, now Stephen tries the other way around. He tries to find it in the complete degeneration of the image which makes itself apparent in the body of a prostitute – which is *“a manifestation of his seeking of solace from inner and outer turmoil”* (Redford 106). Nevertheless, he once again fails to attain the unifying vision of the artist since he cannot reach a conciliation that brings the body and the soul, the real and the ideal, the virgin and the prostitute in the same bowl. This is the reason why like a pendulum, he goes from one end to another, and returns to the very same place that he has started from.

In chapter III, Joyce portrays the guilt-ridden conscience of Stephen Dedalus – the sinner, and *“presents a concentration of his emotional involvement with sin on the one side and the Church on the other”* (106). Father Devon’s pandy-bat enlarges itself into the frightening descriptions of hell, damnation and eternal punishment delivered through the sermon of Father Arnall. Having *“sinned mortally not once but many times”* (Joyce 117), Stephen is well aware of his desperate condition because as the student of a Jesuit school, he has the necessary theological knowledge – which in the end triggers more conflicts and causes Stephen to question his position. As Hugh Kenner also argues:

The conflict of this central chapter is again between the phantasmal and the real. What is real – psychologically real, because realized – is Stephen’s anguish and remorse, and its content in the life of the flesh. What is phantasmal is the ‘heaven’ of the Church and the ‘good life’ of the priest. (142).

In his interaction with the authority figures in the previous chapters Stephen was able to assert his identity and take the initiative upon himself – no matter what the results may turn out to be in the end. Nevertheless, here Stephen’s actions are mainly motivated by his fear of eternal damnation. Accordingly, Blades argues that, “*in terms of Stephen’s progress towards artistic freedom and intellectual autonomy, this chapter marks a figurative as well as literal retreat towards conformity*” (48). While it may be regarded as a paradoxical reaction on the part of Stephen – in that he is in search of an autonomous self but here he decides to repent and comply himself with the Church – on the other hand, it enables Stephen to develop a much more comprehensive insight concerning the interaction between his mind, body and soul. Just like a bird which hovers up and down in the air by flapping its wings, in order to have the unifying vision of the artist Stephen is bound to inhabit the life of the sinner and the repentant at the same time. He should be able to rise and fall, because only then will he be able to transcend the both ends.

So far it has been attempted to illustrate the changing phases in Stephen’s evolution into an artist. His so-called *becoming* is represented “*as a three-way struggle toward the fulfilment of sexual, religious, and aesthetic desires*” (Connolly, Introduction 4). Not satisfied with the fulfilment of his bodily desires through the medium of an idealized image, represented via the figure of Mercedes coming to life in the body of Emma; Stephen chooses the prostitutes who are too real to be fictionalised. In a similar vein, in his endeavour to fulfil the religious desires he finds himself deeply engrossed in sin only to be able to repent and reconnect himself to God’s grace. However soon enough he comes to the realisation that religion is merely a tool used as an excuse to turn heroes into traitors – as it is proved in the example of Parnell; as well as serving as a mask to hide the true face of the oppressor and the hypocrite – represented by Father Dolan and his pandybat, and the latter by Stephen himself who continues to be a prefect of the sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary while continuing to visit brothels.

Thematically, chapter IV holds an important place in *A Portrait* in that here Stephen is expected to make a decision concerning his ultimate destination – whether to become a priest or to follow the course of his own soul. Contrary to the

director's expectation who thinks that St. Stephen will be an inspiration and Stephen will "make a novena" to his patron saint by choosing to become a priest (Joyce 182), Stephen's focus "switches to the significance of his surname, from Christian to Deadelian mythology" (Blades 53). Just like him who applied to the unknown arts and found a way out of the labyrinth – though at the expense of his son Icarus's death – Stephen too will find his own way by piercing through the nets that have been confining him for too long: "The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world" (Joyce 184).

Not being able to wait any longer (Joyce 187), Stephen "strides off 'abruptly' to discover his destiny, leaving behind both his father, who is trying to arrange a place for Stephen at university, and the Church which has just tempted him with a lifetime of order and obedience" (Blades 50). Making his way to the seaside, Stephen first encounters a group of his friends from Belvedere College. Playing in the seawater, they call Stephen to join them; however, Stephen is determined to follow his own path: "Perhaps they had taken refuge in number and noise from the secret dread in their souls. But he, apart from them and in silence, remembered in what dread he stood of the mystery of his own body" (Joyce 192). Ignoring their call – similar to the way he ignored that of the director's – Stephen gradually releases himself from the dictates of the physical world and his soul begins to rise: "His soul was soaring in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude and made radiant and commingled with the element of the spirit" (Joyce 192-193). This is the moment when his body and soul come together, thereby preparing Stephen for the next stage of his awakening which will transform him from a would-be priest to the Catholic Church into a priest of art. In this way, as the hybrid quality of his name also testifies – bringing the religious (St. Stephen) and mythical (Deadelus) side by side – Stephen Dedalus takes the first step into a more unified vision which will enable him to see beyond the daily experience and turn it into an aesthetic inspiration. This is the way in which the birdlike girl that he encounters on the beach surpasses all of the reductive descriptions and labels that he has constructed so far. Respectively Epstein argues that

[t]he girl symbolizes the realm of "error," "lots," "chances," that he has chosen over the dead certainties of the altar of the "absorbing" father; she is the earth itself, the "vegetable chaos" of earthly life. The

girl on the beach is the symbolic descendant of Eileen Vance whom Stephen was going to marry [...]; she is E. C., the girl who lingered on the tram step for Stephen's word of love, which did not come. She is Mercedes and the Virgin to whom he prayed in his fear during the sermons on hell. She is the prostitute who initiated him into sex amid flickering gas-flames. (99).

In other words, "*she is the word made flesh*" (Blades 57) who blurs the distinction between the ideal and the real; the sacred and the profane. She is "*the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory*" (Joyce 196). From this moment onwards, Stephen finds the true source to whose call his body and soul are able to answer most willingly, and thus collects his power to escape from the nets that have been binding him: home, fatherland and the church.

In the last chapter Joyce depicts not only the formation of Stephen the artist but also his aesthetic theory which is to replace the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Here, "*we see the young artist moving among representative institutions and personalities of his society, his race, and in these circumstances striving to become a 'father,' to begin his lifework of creation*" (Epstein 103). Rebellious against the oppressive father figures of the previous chapters, finally Stephen has set out to assert his own symbolic fatherhood by associating himself with Deadelus the artificer. As a part of his evolution process, he has gone through various trials that enable Stephen to test the wings before the flight. "*So it is that Joyce presents him during this last third of the book completing the severing of ties and analysing, defining, testing the artistic and intellectual equipment which is to bear him up in his flight*" (Redford 109). Accordingly, it is not surprising that the chapter is formed around various discussions that allow the reader to examine the mind-set of the artist more thoroughly.

In a series of conversations with his friends Davin, Lynch, and Cranly Stephen tries to elaborate on the reasons why he must break with his nation, home and church (Bulson 52). Davin, the athletic peasant student, is a believer in "*the sorrowful legend of Ireland*" (Joyce 205), and supports Irish nationalism and Gaelic League. He criticizes Stephen for engaging himself too much in the works of art and forgetting about his country. As an answer, Stephen reminds him about the fate of Parnell and how he was betrayed by his own country. For Stephen, nationalism is nothing but a threat against the development of individuality:

The soul is born, he [Stephen] 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 231).

Cranly, on the other hand, acts as a medium that deliberately tries to test Stephen's reactions by uttering heretical remarks about Jesus, as well as posing him provoking questions such as whether he would rob if he had nothing (Joyce 280); or whether he would deflower a virgin (Joyce 281). Instead of coming up with concrete answers; or supporting a definite position that completely disregards the existence of Jesus as a religious figure; Stephen is more interested in his own reactions as an individual being – devoid of any religious or social doctrines. As he eventually answers Cranly:

You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. 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 wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning. (Joyce 281).

In comparison to David and Cranly, Lynch functions as a mere listener to Stephen's aesthetic theory or his theory of art which "*can be divided into two aspects: on the one hand the definition of beauty [...] and on the other the role and position of the artist in relation to the work of art*" (Blades 60). Stephen's ideas concerning the notion of beauty are primarily shaped by the classical teachings of Aristotle and Aquinas. By developing his argument on Aristotle's idea that the tragedy causes either pity or fear in its audience, Stephen makes a distinction between the two types of art: *static* appealing to the intellect and the spiritual appetites; *kinetic* appealing to the sensations and the physical desires (Joyce 233). He further develops his theory by focusing on the act of aesthetic apprehension by drawing on Aquinas who associates the apprehension of truth with the intellect and that of beauty with imagination. For the apprehension of beauty however three things are needed: "*wholeness, harmony, and radiance*" (Joyce 241). In relation to that Blades explains further:

Stephen uses these three “things” to explain the phases of aesthetic apprehension that enable the viewer to contemplate the “beauty” of an aesthetic image. With *intergritas* [wholeness] the aesthetic image achieves its oneness, with *consonantia* [harmony] the aesthetic image is seen both a sequence of parts and a whole thing, and with *claritas* [radiance] the aesthetic image achieves its singularity or whatness. (60).

Only after these three acts of perception are realised by the artist, does the object get linked to an epiphany and its full beauty is apprehended (Connolly, *Joyce's Aesthetic Theory* 271). Moreover, to locate the position of the artist in relation to the work of art, Stephen subscribes to the theory of Aesthetics which interfuses the subject and the object so that the personality of the artist is impersonalised and the act of perception becomes more important than either the perceived or the perceiver. In this fusion Joyce “*equates the objective beauty of the art work with the subjective process by which it is seen*” and thus triggers a collaboration between the artist and the viewer (Beebe 148).

In the last pages of *A Portrait* however, the point of view shifts from the third person to the first-person narrator in Stephen's journal as he prepares to take the flight from the nets that have been binding him for so long and decides to take control of his life. Mainly focusing on the thematic aspects, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse the formal and the stylistic characteristics of the novel, however the shift in narration at the end of the novel should also be pointed out. The aesthetic unity that Stephen accomplishes by bringing the binary oppositions such as the factual and the fictional, the history and the myth, the religious and the pagan, the hero and the traitor, the virgin and the prostitute, the local and the global together, does not necessarily indicate a total dissolution of the self in a transcendental platform. The evolution that Stephen is going through does not follow a continuous and progressive line either, but it is marked by relapses into previous modes of thinking and behaviours and it is this very quality that earns *A Portrait* a dynamic and interactive character signifying the continuous interaction between the opposing ends such as the factual and the fictional. As Fleischer elucidates: “*Stephen's aim is ultimately to create an identity for himself and by himself as a great writer and at the same time present this image to the world as based on a true story*” (18). It is this paradoxical rendering of the interaction between imagination and reality – as powerful forces shaping and reshaping each other – that gives rise to an artistic composition at the end.

To conclude, in his semi-autobiographical novel Joyce traces the development of Stephen Dedalus' character by starting from his childhood and reaching up to his adolescence. As an aspiring artist to be, Stephen goes through various stages and out of each stage he comes up with a new perception that enables him to broaden his horizon. While doing that, he rebels against the norms, and the codes of identity that he believes his home, his religion, and his country are trying to sculpture onto him. Similar to Joyce the author/artist who creates, and in a sense, paints the portrait of a fictional protagonist; the artist portrayed – that is Stephen – also tries to create an unmediated self that is formulated according to nothing or nobody other than his own artistic vision, because only then will he be able to leave Ireland behind and fly through the nets that are binding him. Accordingly, it is not surprising that at the very last sentence of the novel we hear Stephen's invocation to the great artificer, Daedalus: “*Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead*” (Joyce 288).

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