

On *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Beyond Subjectivity—The Toddler Stephen Theory and the Quest for Truth

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James Joyce is integral to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century period of transformation still called modern. That revolutionary time is led by original thinkers who commit themselves to pursuing undiscovered truths and often conduct their lives in unconventional ways. Responding to the limitations and failures of established ideas, they produce unique and widely significant advances. They transform art, reorient science, challenge industry and government, and cut across the spectrum of civilization in ways that alter understanding and appreciation of their own culture no less than others. By the time Joyce writes *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* he knows well and undertakes to convey in his novel that insular, socially conditioned perspectives are suspect—relative, we might say, as long as we use the term in Albert Einstein’s rather than the misconstrued sense conveyed by the cliché “Everything’s relative”—and must be balanced by others.

In Einstein’s sense, relative means “in relation to.” Einstein’s special theory of relativity displaces Isaac Newton’s centuries-old, oft-confirmed, and empirical idea that the speeds of moving bodies can be measured against the stationary space they move through and that time progresses equally for all. Einstein posits that, except for light, the speeds, sizes, and temporal conditions of moving bodies are determined in relation to the platforms or frames of reference from which they are measured. But no matter what the frame of reference, light’s speed remains an invariant 186,000 miles per second, and with that astonishing velocity as the limit, time slows down and extension shrinks as an object’s speed increases. Light’s speed is unattainable, and the time and space occupied by moving objects are relative to it. If it were possible to reach it, extension for the rocketing object would shrink to

zero and time would stop. No matter how fast objects travel in relation to other frames, sizes and elapsing time for objects that are not moving in relation to each other stay the same, and, if the necessary numbers are available, unknown details of other frames of reference can be determined exactly. Uncertainty has not yet come to the attention of physicists. All velocities except light's are determined relative to the frames of reference from which they are measured; there are physical laws that are invariant; and light's speed is not relative at all. That and three other Nobel Prize-worthy breakthroughs by Einstein, including evidence that light exists in quantum units called photons, are published in 1905, a year after Joyce starts working on *A Portrait*.

It is to the processes of approaching invariant understanding of the relative aspects of daily life that Joyce turns our attention in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The approach involves demanding analyses from a variety of frames of reference—points of view, literary types would say, that produce ironic perspectives from which vigilant observers can draw accurate conclusions. The novel is written in the third person—Stephen Dedalus like every other male gets the pronoun “he”—but Stephen is the person through whom the narrative sees the world he moves through. The story is told from his not point but points of view—as toddler, little boy, adolescent, and young man—and his limited perspectives must be factored into readers' assessments of the information being conveyed. At times Stephen gets things right, at other times wrong, and the narrative does not distinguish between the two. That situation is complicated by the readers' awareness that Stephen's experiences are related to those of the novel's author, sometimes directly and at other times altered to heighten effects. But even in the first case, that Joyce had such experiences must not deflect readers from their calculations. Joyce acknowledges through Stephen that sometimes he got things wrong.

Both are born in Rathgar, an upscale suburb of Dublin. But Dublin is the backwater capital of politically and religiously dominated Ireland. Looking back, we see this time in Ireland's history as early years

of the remarkable Irish Renaissance—splendidly embodied in Joyce’s fiction, the poetry of William Butler Yeats, and the drama of George Bernard Shaw and John Millington Synge, among others—but as the period is unfolding the islanders are subjugated politically to England and religiously to the Roman Catholic Church. Before Joyce escapes those constraints, he like Stephen sees the world through the distorting lenses of received opinion. He frees himself first by paying careful attention to the differences between his actual experiences, emerging thoughts, and feelings and those valorized by the authorities around him—father, mother, elders, and priests—whose positions he at first venerates.

Overcoming that honoring once it is in place is difficult, but at the beginning of the novel, when Stephen is a toddler, not yet aware enough to be subject to external pressures, he starts out well. The book thus begins with an apparent contradiction. The title tells us that a young man is the subject, but the story opens with a toddler. “The child is father to the man,” William Wordsworth declares about one hundred years before Joyce is writing, but Wordsworth’s intent is not Joyce’s. In Wordsworth’s Romantic eyes the transition from child to adult is characterized by an unrelieved diminishing of insight, from transcendent prenatal knowledge to forgetful age. Romantically idealizing youth, Wordsworth thinks infants are born “trailing clouds of glory” from their spiritual existence, when they were in possession of truths that fade from memory as people age. Joyce’s point is very different. There is no prenatal glory to be lost. The near infant Stephen sees not with transcendently informed but with clean eyes. He is then a long distance in time from the young man of *A Portrait*’s title and soon falls victim to conventions, but the clear-eyed child remains part of that young man—as memory.

The distance between toddler and young man is temporal, a stretch that Joyce paints in words, the material of narrative, which communicates in time. The portrayed is thus allowed to develop in age. Not long before Joyce begins writing his book, Oscar Wilde publishes *The Pic-*

ture of Dorian Gray, a novel predicated on an intriguing impossibility, that the face in a painted portrait records future effects of the model's experiences while the model remains unchanged. Dorian Gray's picture pays the price of Dorian's dissipations, growing more deformed with his every misdeed while Dorian is unblemished until a grotesque reversal at the end. He undertakes to stab his portrait, is thus stabbed himself, and dies grotesquely deformed while his picture regains its unblemished youth. A picture that registers misdeeds while the person remains unmarked would be a valuable asset, and fancifully in Wilde's story life imitates art; a painting imposes its condition on a man. But regarded seriously the picture is a fantastic way of commenting on the effects of experience, that what one does affects how one is.

Joyce's story conveys that realistically. It portrays a developing artist without the fantastic as the informing conception, tracing the way basic characteristics, affected by experiences, set later attitudes, perceptions, patterns of thought, and behaviors. Joyce implicitly includes in his portrait the often-ignored distinctions between what the portrayed perceives and the realities from which those perceptions are derived. When Stephen, battered by accusatory sermons, full of remorse for his sexual adventures, thinks, "The eyes see. . . . Then in an instant it happens. . . . The serpent, the most subtle beast of the field," readers realize that he is conflating the penis rising in sexual excitement with the notion in Christian interpretations of the Eden story that the devil took the form of a snake to lure Eve into sin. Informed readers distinguish between natural human sexuality and Stephen's religion-warped opinion. His anguish and the image of phallus as snake are at once touching and laughable. They are not so wrongheaded as to prevent understanding, not so touching as to obscure judgment, and not so laughable as to exclude sympathy.

Joyce's psychological portrait in time is more accurate than pictorial renderings in temporally fixed space. His developing young man moves through evolving thoughts, feelings, and experiences from toddler to child to adolescent to young adult rather than from ear to ear and

crown to chin. If we wish to characterize what Joyce does using the conventional German word for the story of an artist's development, *Künstlerroman*, he writes a strategic, intentionally tactless "not yet *Künstlerroman*," with the artist-to-be's experiences, feelings, and thoughts presented with all their childish limitations and absurdities and no mediation by the narrative voice. The text depends upon evaluation from other frames of reference that enable readers to work through what is said to what is.

Joyce's use of deep history in the account of Stephen Dedalus's psychic development accords with the theory of personality promoted by another of his great radical contemporaries, Sigmund Freud, a translation of whose *Interpretation of Dreams* is published by the Hogarth Press of Virginia Wolfe and her husband, Leonard. Freud posits that we are the products of inherited physical and emotional constituents modified by every somatic and psychological development and experience from womb to tomb. Every present modifies the past it inherits and passes it on, influencing and being modified by the present to come. The idea can be seen as a microcosmic psychological adaptation of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in which over millions of years species form and flourish or languish and die in response to environments to which they can or cannot adapt. If they live, their presence changes their environments. In the psychological model, inherited traits modified by past experiences result in functional or nonfunctional individuals who are affected by new experiences that their new conditions help to create.

Darwin himself dies in 1882, the year of Joyce's birth, but the Darwinian idea is as radical and transformative as Einstein's. Darwin develops an approach to science and life that not only changes his field but also challenges religion and reverses cause and effect in a way that enables people like Joyce and Freud to see anew. Darwin's theory of natural selection and evidence for evolution transform biology from a cataloging activity into a discipline that explores past and ongoing developments among life-forms. Darwin shakes Christianity to its core

by eliminating the need for a creator of the apparently well-structured universe. Order is the result of accidental congruence between new species that survive and the environments that accommodate them. In accounting for evolution through a process of random changes in offspring that either flourish or die off because they can or cannot fit themselves into their environments, Darwin proposes an unanticipated sequence of developments. The creation of chicken eggs precedes chickens; effects precede causes; change precedes the reasons for death or survival.

Living forms were not modeled by a provident designer who intended them to function as they do, Darwin argues. Instead, born different from their parents by chance into an unprepared world that either suits or does not suit them, they thrive or vanish because they do or do not happen upon conditions cordial to their attempts at adaptation. Cause enters when accidental alterations in offspring confront environments in which they happen to be born. Accidental fit or lack thereof between randomly generated life-forms and the environments they chance upon determines success or disaster. Cause explains what happens to, but it does not factor into the production of, new life-forms. The intentional designs of a thoughtful creator have no place in such a world.

Freud agrees. The best psychological portraits from his point of view are pictures in time, people understood with reference to the history of their lives. Freud, his associates, and their eventual competitors trace a sexually fraught path of personal development to which the interpretation of dreams gives access. Even as Darwin's analyses roil the establishment, Freud's offend conventional moralists. The pacific intent of his treatments, aimed at correcting antisocial behavior, freeing the troubled from destructive neuroses by helping them to uncover and master the causes and thus guiding the formerly troubled toward balanced, productive lives, does not save Freud from being condemned by the religious establishment. Undeterred, he argues that his patients' dreams are analogous to great stories—great from his perspective be-

cause they embody desires and fears that motivate all humans and produce neuroses among the maladjusted.

Joyce too considers stories, as part of the human environment, relevant to our lives. *A Portrait* starts with a story. Toddler Stephen Dedalus begins his experiences with the first words of his father's tale about a cow and a little boy: "Once upon a time, and a very good time it was, there was a moocow coming down along the road." After the quotation, the text conveys the Toddler Stephen Theory that fiction records events that exist in relation to daily life, but the issue of how to represent them arises implicitly before that. The moocow met "a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo." Obviously, when Stephen's father spoke capitalization was not relevant, and Stephen is thinking, not writing. But the text undertakes to present those thoughts more exactly than conventional writing allows. A conflict between rules of writing and accurate representation comes to the fore in the printed version of Stephen's thoughts about his father's story. As represented on the page the nature of Stephen's reflections rather than conventions of capitalization take precedence. The "nicens" boy's name, "baby tuckoo," is rendered in lowercase because Stephen does not think baby tuckoo is really the boy's name. Stephen identifies baby tuckoo as himself, helped no doubt by remembering that he (like his creator, Joyce, as a child) has that nickname. But nicknames are not family or given names, and loyal to Stephen's way of thinking rather than his actual thoughts (as a toddler he would not be thinking about capitals), the text records "baby tuckoo" in lowercase. In keeping with his theory of fiction's relation to life, Stephen identifies the road the moocow was coming down as a specific street where moocows might be found, a road on which Stephen was treated with a tasty confection sold by a woman named Betty Berne.

Stories are identifiable representations of life, the Toddler Stephen Theory asserts. They relate to people and places in the everyday world. For what purpose, he does not ask. But the printed text counts among the legitimate tools of accurately conveying its subject a freedom from

the rules of conventional writing. Exactitude is thus served in an economy of words. If a character believes that a name that comes up is not a given or family name, that thought can be conveyed through the withholding of capitalization. Even in a fanciful story in which a cow and a person strike up a relationship, the demand of supraconventional representation of the thoughts involved transcends mere realism. (There is an additional frame for the cow and person relationship which we will consider hereafter.) The narrative's "no-caps technique" represents ideas being formed in the course of a character's thinking more exactly than realism, which is stuck with conventional grammatical representation. People apprehend the world individually, and the commitment to convey their unique apprehensions as exactly as possible is exemplified by the no-caps technique. Not the world apprehended but the process and nature of apprehension and the consequent ideas in their contexts are the subjects involved. The reader can thus understand the psychological reality, assessing the characters' frames of reference using information to which those characters do not have access.

This liberated approach to writing—as unique and demanding as stream of consciousness, which imitates the flow of thoughts and consciousness, a form perfected by Joyce and Virginia Wolfe several years later—is the mode of communication in *A Portrait*. The Toddler Stephen Theory maps Stephen's father's story onto his daily world. Its characters represent living beings, beginning with a cow and himself. He is not yet the young man of the novel's title, but, whatever we make of his theory's applicability in general, in the case of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, of which Toddler Stephen is a protagonist, it applies generally. With the same significant differences already present in Toddler Stephen's father's story, as "baby tuckoo" is Stephen, Stephen is James Joyce; Stephen's father and mother are Joyce's father and mother; and so on. But, as Stephen never met a moocow coming down the road, sometimes what happens in the novel did not happen to Joyce. Toddler Stephen, not yet able to pronounce words accurately, accurately characterizes both his father's story and the novel of which

it is a part, as well as *Ulysses*, the novel that follows it. *A Portrait*, full of high-minded literary theory that draws on Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas when its protagonist becomes a young man, actually begins with literary theory, an approach to fiction that Stephen repeats in *Ulysses* when he argues that William Shakespeare's Hamlet is a stand-in for Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, and that Shakespeare, the ghost of Hamlet's father, is asking Hamnet to take vengeance on Shakespeare's brothers, who slept with his wife.

Of course the Toddler Stephen Theory is incomplete. Having identified baby tuckoo, Stephen leaves theorizing to consider his own experiences in the world, embodying rather than describing a purpose of good fiction. Good stories, unmediated by conventional demands, give us accurate accounts of human life. There is a difference in smell between fathers and mothers that tact asks us to disregard. Stephen records it. There are special sensations and smells involved in living that we ignore or suppress or fail to note, like the feeling of peeing in bed and the smell of oil sheets with which mothers protect mattresses. Those sorts of recollections give us more accurate pictures of what the world actually is than tact-warped censoring allows. Toddler Stephen, unimpeded by social and moral constraints, records perceptions that accurately convey the world, the functioning of the human body, and the senses.

He is already somewhat impeded by well-intentioned misrepresentation foisted upon him by adults when he tries to sing H. S. Thompson's "Lily Dale." In the actual song, a "wild rose blossoms" on Lily's "green grave." In the painless adaptation Stephen knows, the rose blossoms on a "green place." When he sings it, Stephen doesn't quite remember that accurately. "O, the green woth botheth." Having conflated "wild rose" and "green place," half knowingly, he substitutes "botheth" for "blossoms," acknowledging that he stuck the two together. But "green place" itself is wrong, and, unaware, he can do nothing about that. Adults, seeking to shield him from death, doomed his uninformed attempt to get lines right. The reader must know this (or

consider the relevant stanza in Don Gifford's *Joyce Annotated*) for the irony to take hold. Shielded from the idea of death by the adults who altered the poem, Toddler Stephen can neither correct the misrepresentation nor confront the reality it hides. Still, he is very bright, very talented, accurate in his characterization of experiences he actually has, thoughtful about the nature of art, a good beginning for the person who will become "the Artist," but the absence of accuracy in "Lily Dale" is detrimental to his knowledge of the poem and death.

Religious prejudice does not impede Toddler Stephen, but little boy Stephen runs right into it. He likes his friend Eileen. Unaware of the attitude of his family's elderly friend Dante (the youngster's mispronunciation of "auntie") toward Eileen's Protestant family, he declares that he will marry Eileen. The militantly Catholic Dante scolds him. Stephen's mother assures Dante that he will apologize, to which Dante responds, "If not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes." Knowing readers can compare Dante and her shameful persecution of a child ironically with the great medieval Catholic poet, who had the honorable temerity in his *Inferno* to place some popes in Hell, but that long-range contextualization is unavailable to Little Stephen.

Some attempts at identifying literary relationships are more helpful than others, and immediate contexts help us determine which. The threatened punishment has been associated by some with Oedipus, who blinded himself after realizing that he had unknowingly killed his father and married his mother, and by some with Prometheus, who after saving humanity was tortured by having a vulture eat his liver every day after it regenerated the previous night. Gifford ties it to a hymn by Isaac Watts, a Protestant. But Dante hates Protestants. The most probable reference in this case is the biblical reference that Watts paraphrased. Dante, who once aspired to be a nun, is probably thinking religiously and not quite accurately of Proverbs 30:17, which threatens the eye that offends parents with being picked out by ravens and eaten by eagles.

Stephen, frightened, hides under the table, attempting to protect himself physically, and turns the threat into verse:

*Pull out his eyes,
Apologize,
Apologize,
Pull out his eyes.*

The sensory relationships of the words in meter and rhyme suggest an undisclosed meaningful relationship. Marrying Eileen is unacceptable and thus punishable. Why? Because Eileen is Protestant, Stephen later observes. Is that what the matched words imply, or are their aesthetic relationships accidental? Unknowingly, Stephen raises a new critical question. Do congruencies in sound entail meaningful relationships? In *Ulysses*, Stephen thinks, “Mouth, south. Is the mouth south somehow? Or the south a mouth? Must be some.” *Psychocausally*—that is, causally-as-perceived rather than objectively so—there can be such relationships, as in “Womb, tomb,” the body’s enclosures at the beginning and end of life, of which Stephen also thinks. Objectively, linguistic structuralism tells us, such congruencies are accidental. But whether physically or only psychologically taken to be causal, the representation of meaningful relationship is the business of art. In his preface to *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* Joseph Conrad makes a related point, linking the artist to science: “Art . . . may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth . . . in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life.” Facts of life include the visible but they are larger than that. *Visible* is synecdoche for all features of human perception.

In Joyce’s estimation, too, art seeks to embody truths, but one’s ability to apprehend those truths changes, and the accurate representation of limitations and changes is itself true. Even the Dedalus of *Ulysses* is the artist-to-be, but his promise is unmistakable from the start. Little Stephen would not call an early poem in *A Portrait* a poem, but it is a fine piece of imagist truth telling that locates him astronomically: “Stephen Dedalus/ Class of Elements/ Clongowes Wood College/ Sallins/

County Kildare/ Ireland/ Europe/ The World/ The Universe.” He validates it arithmetically, adding words up from “Stephen” to “Universe,” the largest physical place in which he exists, and then subtracting from “Universe” to himself again. His friend’s effort on the facing page fails that test. Such comparisons illustrate the first avenue of escape into truth for Stephen, minding the differences between his thoughts, feelings, and perceptions and those of others—including authorities—and honoring the former when they prove just.

The second way in which Stephen frees himself is by listening and reading. Sometimes he reads what is both helpful and damaging, like *The Count of Monte-Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas, *père*, which inspires him to dramatize himself romantically but also leads him to see the liberating value of education. He reads widely and often intelligently, a commitment aided by a gift for languages that enables him to engage the originals and accurately track developments in continental Europe as well as in England and Ireland.

Young Joyce is so impressed by Henrik Ibsen’s plays that he learns Dano-Norwegian to read the unmediated words. Ibsen, August Strindberg, and Anton Chekhov challenge conventional mores by taking unseemly subjects for their plays, even when they entail tracing the demise of the dominant class. Chekhov also pioneers the seemingly plotless short story that more accurately conveys life as experienced than do stories that follow the artificial twists of plotlines. In a congratulatory letter to Ibsen, Joyce praises the playwright’s “lofty impersonal power” and avers that Ibsen’s “resolution to wrest the secret from life” delights him. Great writers reveal their intimate desires and activities, Joyce argues. Beyond Aristotle in literary pursuit of the true, Joyce considers chance—as part of the human tapestry—relevant to art. Psychocausal accidents illuminate, producing small *e* epiphanies, secular insights that are as important as the appearance of a god. There is fine-gauge irony here: what casual viewers correctly see as objective accidents, the engaged correctly understand as deeply significant.

Little Stephen, like Joyce, makes psychocausal connections.

Whether through reading Plutarch's *Lives* or Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* or hearing stories about Caesar, Stephen/Joyce knows about the betrayal of the splendid leader, who conquered the English, did not conquer the Gaelic Scots, and declined to cross the channel and attack Ireland. Stephen is not yet ten when Charles Stewart Parnell, the great political leader who was gradually succeeding in an effort to gain home rule for Ireland from England by peaceful endeavors as Irish representative in the English Parliament, is brought down by his love affair with Katherine O'Shea, a married woman. The Catholic Church condemns him, and Irish voters cast his party out. Parnell dies soon thereafter—of a broken heart, supporters say. Stephen/Joyce's father, a Parnellite, is horrified. Little Stephen/Joyce writes a poem about the great leader, comparing him to betrayed Caesar. His father proudly has the poem printed up, but both the original and the printed copies are lost. Joyce, committed to seeking wide truths by examining his own experiences, embeds an account of the event, with Stephen as poet, in *A Portrait*. Though the poem is not provided, the comparison to Caesar is highlighted, the first example in Joyce's work of what years later T. S. Eliot will, in praising Joyce's *Ulysses*, call "the mythical method." Little Stephen/Joyce's use of classical analogy is promising. Others see time as the present; Little Stephen/Joyce already understands the now in relation to the past.

Aware of advances abroad, Stephen/Joyce sets himself the task of seeing his local world anew in light of other worlds, spatial and temporal. He is the child of a culture that is subject to both the Roman Catholic Church and political England, but he resists, helped by wide perspective. The church and England conspired against Ireland in the twelfth century, when the island was conquered by Henry II, and an Irish king was complicitous. Shamefully Henry II, who was granted permission to invade by Pope Adrian IV, was helped by the king of Leinster, Diarmaid Mac Murchada. Diarmaid, who had been deposed by the High King of Ireland, Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair, pledged fealty to the English in order to gain Henry's military aid in fighting Toirdelbach. Henry pro-

ceeded to subjugate Ireland, declaring his son John its lord. That subsequently Diarmaid was derided by the Irish as Diarmaid of the Foreigners changed nothing: Ireland was sold out by her own and a pope of the faith that commands her, and such histories provide perspectives by which to gauge the present. Betrayed by her church and her own from of old and, as Parnell's fall demonstrates, still subject to the church and betrayed by her own, political Ireland strikes Stephen/Joyce as lost. Bold declarations of contemporary nationalists, in a land bartered by her own, her church, and England for centuries, pale. Moreover, Stephen/Joyce's father's financial failure and ill behavior, his mother's simple piety and respect for priestly opinion, his condemned passions during his teen years, and his personal experience of duplicity and corruption lead Stephen for personal reasons to renounce religion, nationalism, and his own family, which remains tied to the first two.

Sadistic Father Dolan doled out unfair punishment to Little Stephen. Untrustworthy Father Conmee conned Stephen, promising to protect him, only to laugh about the matter with Dolan and Stephen's easily duped father. Stephen's mother, meanwhile, was concerned not about her abused son but about the opinion of the priest. Young Stephen ventures forth in search of "the reality of experience." Like his creator, he measures the everyday and the political ambitions and history of his subjected nation against events in the mythological and historical worlds out of which his evolved and the contemporary world in and outside Ireland. He is still self-absorbed; his positions cry out for evaluating from outside perspectives. But the idea of exploring the significance of the mundane in the context of other stories stays central for him as it is for Joyce.

That analogical method (the "mythical" is just one form of analogy Joyce uses) is apparent not only in *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake* but also in work that precedes *A Portrait*, the stories of Joyce's first book of fiction, *Dubliners*. In "Two Gallants," for example, John Corley, a sullied would-be savior whose initials, J. C., bring him no closer to Jesus, practices a debased form of love, extracting coins from

the cleaning woman he services. Psychocausally for the reader, Corley aspirates the first letter of his last name, rendering it, “Whorely.” In *A Portrait*, as we have seen, the telling use of fictional analogy declares itself from the start, when Toddler Stephen recognizes himself as protagonist of his father’s story. The relationship between Stephen Dedalus, artist-to-be developing into a young man, and the mythical Daedalus presses itself on the reader within the first pages of the book, when Little Stephen’s classmate Nasty Roche (note the psychocausal appropriateness of his nasty, though oddly spelled, last name) asks, “—What kind of a name is [Dedalus]?” Well, what kind is it? It invokes the first great artist in relation to a little schoolboy trying to negotiate his life. “No symbols where none intended,” Joyce’s Nobel Prize-winning admirer Samuel Beckett wrote of his novel *Watt*. Nasty Roche’s question signals a narrative intention beyond Little Stephen’s ken. Stephen is not yet sophisticated enough to know it, but informed readers answer easily.

The analogical method unfurls, not to provide an orderly framework on which to hang chaotic contemporary events, but rather to provide relative perspectives, frames of reference, from which to view those events, yardsticks by which to measure them. Mythological Daedalus, the Ovid-celebrated original of artistic excellence, was an outsider. He fled his native land, and on the island of Crete his convention-challenging creation of a cow in which Queen Pasiphae could be serviced by a bull led to his imprisonment by King Minos. He flew by that net—at great cost. Those who can no longer accept the answers provided by home, religion, and society can take him as a flawed model.

Stephen, who psychocausally finds himself blessed with a version of that great artist’s name, undertakes to fly by his nets—home, church, and fatherland—as well. At the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* he sails off in search of “the reality of experience,” but experience proves to be cruel, and the artist “as a young man” is not yet the artist. He experiences painful failures, and in *Ulysses*, Joyce’s next great work, he finds himself back in Ireland, mourning his mother, be-

fore whom as she was dying he refused to kneel and pretend to pray, struggling now to assert that what he sees as his sin of abandoning her will become the subject of great art. At that moment, he is an anguished failure, but the book that explores his troubles—and his meeting with an everyday bumbling salesman who is a comically mundane but worthy analogue of Odysseus, Jesus, and Shakespeare in modern garb—proves him right. The process of reaching that paradigm of laughable and admirable modern heroism begins in *A Portrait*, with the picture in time not just of Stephen Dedalus, the artist as a young man, struggling through a maze of social, religious, and personal barriers toward honest engagement with what's true, but of a time and place that illuminate and are illuminated by our own.

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