

Stephen Dedalus in the Library: A Portrait of the Actor as a Young Man

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Abstract

James Joyce's *Ulysses* contains an astonishing number of literary adaptations, the most prominent being Homer's *Odyssey* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Among their many correspondences, Stephen Dedalus and Hamlet have been linked because of their shared artistic temperaments. Yet, neither Stephen nor Hamlet has any significant artistic output, which raises the question of how the reader can reasonably confer artistic status on them. This paper argues that both Stephen's and Hamlet's artistry derives from their role as performers in the works they inhabit. Stephen's exposition on Shakespeare has been called a theory, lecture, and hypothesis. More than any of these, however, it is a performance. By examining the various strategies Joyce used to portray Stephen as a performer and his Shakespeare theory as a performance, this paper sheds light on an aspect of Joyce's use of Shakespeare that has been little examined. In the library episode of *Ulysses*, Joyce adopted a dramatic, or performative mode to take on Shakespeare at his own game. In doing so, Joyce created a protagonist to rival Hamlet, and set himself up as a rival to the world's greatest dramatist.

It is no secret that James Joyce was a prolific literary borrower. Joyce no doubt shared the opinion of his compatriot W. B. Yeats, who said: "Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with rage" (Yeats, 522). For Joyce and Yeats, two central figures of literary modernism (a movement whose rallying cry was to "Make It New"), originality was overrated. Critical companions like Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated* reveal the extent to which Joyce adapted from authors he admired; Homer and Shakespeare in particular. Joyce's biographer, Richard Ellmann, argues that while writing *Ulysses*, Joyce chose to assimilate the stories and characters of *The Odyssey* and *Hamlet* because "he sensed latent affinities with both, and recognized that for his purposes neither would do alone" (Ellmann, 46).¹ Joyce also recognized that when it came to his protagonist Stephen Dedalus, a correspondence with Homer's Telemachus alone would not suffice. According to Ellmann, Joyce needed Hamlet because he felt Telemachus lacked Stephen's artistic character:

Telemachus in Homer was an innocent, on the dull side, not least because he lacked Stephen's most convincing attribute, that of being an artist. Hamlet had no such shortcoming. Although in the play the only artistic works attributed to him are a high-flying stanza to Ophelia, a speech in the play within a play, and a doggerel verse after, he is still the type of the artistic hero. As such, he has been the darling of writers (Ellmann, 46).

The fact that Ellmann felt the need to justify Hamlet's status as an artist since there are only a few artistic works attributed to him in the play, is odd. Most readers do not try to qualify Hamlet's artistic status, as Ellmann does, by saying that he is "the *type* of the artistic hero" (*Ibid.*, my italics). On the contrary, most readers and critics would not hesitate to assert that Hamlet is not merely a "type," but the archetype of the artistic literary hero. Nevertheless, Ellmann raises an important point. Given the fact that Hamlet has little to show in the way of artistic output, can we reasonably apply the term 'artist' to him? In *Ulysses*, we find Stephen Dedalus in much the same position. Besides the "doggerel verse" he scribbles on the torn-off bottom of Mr. Deasy's letter, we possess no tangible works to confer artistic status on Stephen (*Ibid.*). And yet, in the minds of most readers, Stephen is unquestionably an artist because he thinks and speaks like a great artist (as Hamlet does). In many ways, Stephen acts as an artistic stand-in for Joyce (in the same way that Hamlet does for Shakespeare). Both Stephen's and Hamlet's artistry derives from what they say and think as opposed to what they make or do, meaning theirs is a performative artistry. In both *Hamlet* and *Ulysses* the reader is privy to the thoughts of these artist-protagonists: by means of soliloquy in Hamlet's case, and stream-of-consciousness in Stephen's. Exposed to this pair of brilliant performers, the reader confers artistic status on both without hesitation.

While this much is clear, it raises a related and equally important question: how is each protagonist able to win his fellow characters' belief in his artistic status? How, for instance, has Stephen earned the various monikers ("the bard Kinch" etc.) bestowed on him by Buck Mulligan, given that Mulligan has likely never read a scrap of his writing (*Ulysses*, 176)? Perhaps Stephen divulged his burning ambition to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 253). But this, given Stephen's evasiveness and Mulligan's mocking disposition, seems rather unlikely. Besides, sharing vaunting ambitions can only get you so far in winning the estimation of others, especially in the case of young male friends who are prone to teasing and ridiculing each other. It is far more likely that Mulligan and others consider Stephen an artist based on how he acts. Specifically, how he performs his role as an artist. In the middle sections of the works they inhabit, Stephen and Hamlet become virtuoso performers: Stephen in his exposition on Shakespeare, and Hamlet in putting his "antic disposition on" (*Hamlet*, 1.5.170, 225). In both cases, the artist becomes a performer, adopting a role, reciting a script, all with the aim of eliciting a certain response from his audience: approval and admiration in Stephen's case, confusion and misdirection in Hamlet's. For both the reader and the audience, these performances elicit another important response: recognition of each protagonist's artistic status.

In the ninth episode of *Ulysses*, which is often referred to as "Scylla and Charybdis," Stephen visits the National Library of Ireland and delivers a prolonged exposition on Shakespeare. Stephen's exposition has been called a theory, a hypothesis, a supposition, and a lecture by many critics. It is undoubtedly all of these, but moreover it is a performance. In what

follows, my purpose will be to show the various means Joyce employed to present Stephen as a performer and his theory of Shakespeare as a performance.

Before making our way to the National Library, however, it is important to note that “Scylla and Charybdis” is not the first episode in which Stephen muses on *Hamlet* or his theory of Shakespeare. The importance of the Shakespeare theme in *Ulysses* is established from the very first chapter, in which both the setting and the action recall the opening scenes of *Hamlet*. The Martello Tower, where Stephen and Mulligan reside, is said by Haines to resemble Hamlet’s own residence: “I mean to say, Haines explained to Stephen as they followed, this tower and these cliffs here remind me somehow of Elsinore. *That beetles o’er his base into the sea, isn’t it?*” (*Ulysses*, 15). Joyce’s characters also recall those in Shakespeare’s play. The reader’s first introduction to Stephen is as a brooding Hamlet-like figure who cannot bring himself into harmony with the spirit of the time and place. For Stephen, as for Hamlet, the world seems “out of joint” (*Hamlet*, 1.5.188, 227). Like Hamlet, Stephen seems drawn toward madness: “That fellow I was with in the Ship last night, said Buck Mulligan, says you have g.p.i. ... General paralysis of the insane” (*Ulysses*, 6). This madness stems partly from the fact that both Stephen and Hamlet are mourning dead parents when we are first introduced to them. In the first episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen twice remembers the ghost of his mother coming to him in a dream, which recalls Hamlet’s midnight meeting with the ghost of his dead father. It is not only Stephen who recalls a character from *Hamlet*. At the end of the first chapter, while Mulligan takes his morning swim, Stephen gazes at him and thinks, “Usurper,” recalling Claudius’s usurpation of the Danish throne (*Ibid.*, 19).

During the rest of Stephen’s morning, his thoughts often turn to *Hamlet* and Shakespeare. Critics have frequently pointed out that his thoughts in the “Proteus” episode are full of Shakespeare. William M. Schutte counts ten quotations from *Hamlet* alone during Stephen’s promenade on Sandymount Strand (Schutte, 21–22). These recurring thoughts about Shakespeare have less to do with Stephen’s own situation or any identification on Joyce’s part of Stephen with Hamlet, than with Stephen’s anxiety about his upcoming performance in the National Library. He is rehearsing his lines, as it were. We know that Haines has already asked Stephen for his “idea of Hamlet” and that Mulligan has postponed it until Stephen drinks the requisite “three pints” at The Ship tavern (*Ulysses*, 15). Stephen himself teasingly piques Haines’s curiosity over his theory of Hamlet, saying “it has waited so long,...it can wait longer” (*Ibid.*). In the “Nestor” episode, Stephen anticipates his upcoming performance (as a kind of entertainment) after his wit falls on deaf ears amongst his students:

No-one here to hear. Tonight deftly amid wild drink and talk, to pierce the polished mail of his mind. What then? A jester at the court of his master, indulged and disesteemed, winning a clement master’s praise (*Ibid.*, 21).

Stephen envisions himself not as an artist or even as a scholar, but as a “jester,” a performer

whose mission is to deliver an entertaining show. Stephen's expectant thoughts of his upcoming performance suggest not only that he is mentally rehearsing his lines so that he may deftly intersperse his theory with appropriate quotations from Shakespeare's work, but also that his performance, far from being spontaneous, has been previously enacted. Mulligan, we can be sure, has already witnessed it, given that he summarizes Stephen's theory, saying: "He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father" (*Ibid.*, 15). Moreover, Joyce is careful to emphasize that the performance Mulligan has heard is substantially the same as the one Stephen delivers in the National Library. Mulligan's summary is a humorous distortion of Stephen's contention that Shakespeare is in the father and the son, that he is "all in all" (*Ibid.*, 174). John Eglinton's statement that he "was prepared for paradoxes from what Malachi Mulligan told us" further suggests that Stephen's is a set performance (*Ibid.*, 159). As such, Stephen's theory of Shakespeare is all the more performative, a routine meant to be enacted several times in front of several audiences; more *shtick* than theory.

For whom does Stephen enact his Shakespeare shtick in *Ulysses*? Who is his audience? Primarily, Stephen's audience consists of John Eglinton, a critic and essayist; George Russell, a poet (known by his pseudonym, A.E.); Thomas Lyster, a librarian and Quaker; Mr. Best, another librarian; and, towards the end, Buck Mulligan, Stephen's housemate and rival. Throughout his performance in the National Library, Stephen is perpetually aware of this audience and their reception of his performance. However, this is not the first time Stephen exhibits his awareness of an audience. He shows his preoccupation with how other people see him long before he arrives at the National Library. While conversing with Mulligan in the opening episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen gazes at himself in a cracked mirror and thinks of how "he and others see me" (*Ibid.*, 6). This is the first of many instances of Stephen viewing himself through other people's eyes. Once we come to the library scene, Stephen's awareness of his audience is evident from the very start, even before his performance begins. After Lyster is called away by an attendant's "noiseless beck," Stephen takes stock of his remaining audience, thinking: "Two left" (*Ibid.*, 151). Stephen's tendency to keep a meticulous count of his interlocutors suggests both that he is perpetually conscious of his audience's reception (as any good actor should be) and that he is once again anticipating his imminent performance. In "Proteus," Stephen wonders "Who watches me here? Who ever anywhere will read these written words?" (*Ibid.*, 40). Who, Stephen wonders, will be his audience? Now that he has an answer to this question, he keeps close tabs on them, painstakingly aware of their movements and whereabouts: "They list. Three. They. I you he they" (*Ibid.*, 171).

Stephen's awareness of audience continues throughout the remainder of the episode, but seems particularly focused on John Eglinton. This is because it is Eglinton, more than any of his other interlocutors, whom Stephen wishes to impress with his performance. Thus, Stephen continually watches Eglinton, trying to gauge his response. Stephen is anxiously aware of

Eglinton shifting “his spare body, leaning back to judge” (*Ibid.*, 154). More specifically, Stephen’s thoughts keep reverting to Eglinton’s eyes and face, the seat of any audience member’s reaction to a performance. Stephen’s attention falls again and again to “Glittereyed” Eglinton (*Ibid.*, 151); his “rufous skull” (151); “newgathered frown” (154); “carper’s skull” (156); “active eyebrows” (157); “miscreant eyes” (159); “nothing pleasing mow” (160); “Head, redconecapped” (160); “Eglintoneyes, quick with pleasure” (171); and “gladly glancing” face (171). This preoccupation with eyes and faces extends to the other members of Stephen’s audience. No doubt A.E.’s approbation would be welcomed, as Eglinton’s is, but Russell shows little interest in Stephen’s biographical method and leaves while Stephen is still warming up. Nevertheless, Stephen’s thoughts light upon A.E.’s “face bearded amid darkgreener shadow ... holyeyed” (*Ibid.*, 151); his “smiling bearded face” (152); and his “brooder’s beard” while he is still present (156). Similarly, Stephen takes careful note of Best’s “unoffending face” (153); “Mr Best’s face, appealed to” (155); as well as Lyster’s “baldpink lollard costard” (156); his “Blushing...mask” (158); “benign forehead” (161); “meek head” (161); and “auk’s egg” (161). Stephen even muses on a previous interlocutor’s “Harsh gargoyle face” (164), recalling the time he met the Irish playwright J. M. Synge in Paris.

The abundance of examples cited above clearly shows that Joyce made a conscious and deliberate effort to depict Stephen’s preoccupation with the reactions (expressed through the eyes and faces) of his audience. By doing so, Joyce brings Stephen closer to the role of a performer—sensitive to his audience’s reactions, continually checking whether they “All smiled their smiles” (*Ibid.*, 169) or whether they are “frowning...waxing wroth” (153)—than to a detached artist, who creates his work at a distance from the reader and his response. Therefore, for Stephen the performer, what delights his audience, delights him also: “Both satisfied. I too” (*Ibid.*, 173).

Having established the preexistence of Stephen’s set performance and the careful attention he pays to his audience’s reception throughout, we move to the show itself. What does Stephen’s performance consist of? If Stephen is indeed an actor, what is his script? The answer, it would seem, is twofold. Primarily, Stephen’s ‘script’ consists of a dazzling array of quotation, citation, parody, and echo of Shakespeare’s plays and poetry. We have already seen Stephen rehearsing these lines throughout the earlier episodes of *Ulysses* so that he may pepper his performance with Shakespearean quotations. Secondly, Stephen’s ‘script’ is comprised of current Shakespeare criticism, notably biographies by Frank Harris, Georg Brandes, and Sidney Lee.² Having diligently studied these secondary materials, Stephen creates an original synthesis of these sources. Throughout his performance, Stephen cites these biographers’ speculations as facts to bolster his theory of Shakespeare and to ensure that his performance will wow his audience.

Although I have shown that Stephen’s is a set performance and I have referred to Stephen’s Shakespearean and secondary sources as a ‘script,’ I do not wish to suggest that he has

committed his performance to memory. On the contrary, Stephen's performance proves that he, like Shakespeare, is a "myriadminded man" (*Ibid.*, 168). Throughout the library episode, Stephen shows great intellectual agility, ready to adapt his argument to any and every challenge, no matter how abstract or unexpected: like Eglinton's dare, "Prove that he was a jew" (*Ibid.*). Although no part of his performance seems memorized, Stephen certainly has a mental outline of his act, and enough evidence to support every point he makes. In the library scene, Stephen quotes Shakespeare, directly or indirectly, in speech or in thought, no less than one-hundred and eight times. As if this were not enough, Stephen also peppers his performance with Elizabethan flourishes of all kinds: "How now, sirrah" (*Ibid.*, 155); "Marry" (155); "Take thou this noble" (155); "Go to!" (155); "Romeville" (156); "Whither away?" (157); "Nookshotten" (158); "mow" (160); "coistrel" (161); "birdsnies" (165); "strossers" (170); "a buttoned codpiece" (170); "nether stocks" (170); "meacock" (173); "all amort" (176); "mopping" (178); "patch's" (178).

As far as the biographies by Harris, Brandes, and Lee are concerned, Stephen cites them at every turn in his performance. Even the most cursory perusal of the "Scylla and Charybdis" section of Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated* shows the frequency of Stephen's reliance on these secondary sources. For the purposes of this study, one example will suffice. Having just embarked on his performance, Stephen sets the scene in Elizabethan London, referencing "the playhouse by the bankside," the "bear Sackerson," and the "Canvasclimbers who sailed with Drake" (*Ibid.*, 154). Internally, he applauds his method, thinking: "Local colour. Work in all you know" (*Ibid.*). The casual reader of *Ulysses* might miss the significance of the phrase "local colour," but the close reader, equipped with Gifford's annotations, learns that the phrase derives from "the heading of a subchapter on *Hamlet* in [the] Brandes [biography]" (Gifford, 203). We cannot fail to miss the point. Stephen is mentally bolstering himself at the start of his performance by turning to his sources (his 'script') for guidance and structure. Having already put in the time to study Brandes and others, Stephen now turns to them in thought (and later in speech) for direction and method, much like an actor might visualize the heading of a certain page of a script he has studied for months in preparation for a performance. Stephen recalls this visual cue before stepping out on stage to face the footlights, the sea of faces, and "their silence" (*Ulysses*, 167).

What is the purpose of Stephen's staggering use of quotation? Was it just straightforward literary allusion on Joyce's part, his own version of Yeats's rage against originality? It is certainly true that as Joyce's writing matured, he relied on allusion to a greater and greater extent. Weldon Thornton argues that this increased frequency of allusion is the most striking development in Joyce's oeuvre: "Each successive work shows a more and more pervasive use of the technique: the several dozen allusions in *Dubliners* become several score in *A Portrait*, several hundred in *Ulysses*, several thousand in *Finnegans Wake*" (Thornton, 235). In addition to an increase in the number of allusions, there is also a change in the way these allusions are used. Thornton continues: "*Ulysses* is Joyce's first work involving a significantly innovative use

of the technique. Here the novel's themes and structures are embodied by allusion and dependent upon it, and the allusions are an integral and organic part of the novel" (*Ibid.*) Certainly, there seems to be something unique at work in Stephen's allusive method. So what exactly is it? To begin to answer this question, let us look more closely at a particular passage of Stephen's performance in which several Shakespearean quotations occur one after another:

He chose badly? He was chosen, it seems to me. If others have their will Ann hath a way. By cock, she was to blame. She put the comether on him, sweet and twentysix. The greyeyed goddess who bends over the boy Adonis, stooping to conquer, as prologue to the swelling act, is a boldfaced Stratford wench who tumbles in a cornfield a lover younger than herself (*Ulysses*, 157).

In this passage, Stephen engages in five lines of quick-fire allusions which is bound to impress any listener with his virtuosity. Stephen's allusive method is to overwhelm his listeners with the abundance of his materials and the virtuosity of the performance itself so that they have little time to judge the merit of what he actually says. Since the majority of Stephen's theory relies on speculation and conjecture, he uses an array of quotations to mask the weakness of his argument's foundations. In the space of three sentences, Stephen refers to Sonnets 135 and 143 ("If others have their will"), *Hamlet* ("By cock she was to blame" and "tumbles"), *Twelfth Night* ("sweet and twentysix"), *Venus and Adonis* ("greyeyed goddess" and "the boy Adonis"), *Macbeth* ("prologue to the swelling act"), and Oliver Goldsmith to boot ("stooping to conquer"). In this and other passages, we find Stephen playing the role of the virtuoso performer, delivering one perfectly-placed allusion after another in an attempt to flaunt his knowledge of Shakespeare and win the approval of his audience.

Throughout his performance, Stephen makes use of over one-hundred quotations from, and allusions to, Shakespeare's works, cites dozens of other authors, and shows an intricate knowledge of contemporary Shakespeare scholarship. For the reader, as for his audience, this scene establishes the brilliance and breadth of Stephen's intellect. Moreover, it demonstrates the consuming nature of Stephen's mind, which absorbs primary and secondary materials and weaves them into the fabric of some future performance. Stephen's intellect is so consuming, in fact, that it seems he has absorbed an excess of 'script' material for his Shakespeare performance. As he leaves the National Library, he experiences a moment of staircase wit, recalling a few pieces of evidence he forgot to include in his performance: "Forgot: any more than he forgot the whipping lousy Lucy gave him. And left the *femme de trente ans*. And why no other children born? And his first child a girl? Afterwit. Go back" (*Ibid.*, 177). Briefly, he imagines returning to his audience to fill in the gaps of his argument: "Eh...I just eh...wanted... I forgot...eh..." (*Ibid.*). But for Stephen there will be no encore. His performance has ended with a "Strong curtain" (*Ibid.*, 175).

Apart from the methods outlined above, Joyce employs another important technique to depict Stephen as a performer and his theory as a performance. Reading through the pages of

the library episode, the reader is struck by how much Joyce's writing tends toward the dramatic mode. This tendency is evident from the first few pages. The narrative is meticulous in recording every entrance and exit in the scene, much in the manner of stage directions. Thus we have the entrance of a "noiseless attendant setting open the door" (*Ibid.*, 151); the "tall, young, mild, light" entrance of Mr. Best (152); "Portals of discovery opened to let in the quaker librarian" (156); the "leavetakers" (158); "The door closed behind the outgoer" (159); Mulligan's "Amen!...responded from the doorway" (162); the attendant once again "coming forward and offering a card" announcing the arrival of Leopold Bloom (164); "Brisk in a galliard he was off, out" (164); "a bowing dark figure following his hasty heels" (165); and the "quaker librarian, quaking, tiptoed in" (171). Of course, this meticulous list of entrances and exits may, once again, be the result of Stephen's desire to keep close tabs on his audience and their responses to his performance. Yet, there are other textual features in this episode that have dramatic resonance, suggesting that Joyce is deliberately molding his narrative to conform to the dramatic mode. The first of these textual features is the title of a play written in the air by Mr. Best's hand:

Hamlet
ou
Le Distrait
Pièce de Shakespeare (Ibid., 153)

This dramatic title gives way to snippets of Shakespearean dialogue: "*List! List! O list!*" (*Ibid.*, 154); "*If thou didst ever....*" (*Ibid.*); "*Between the acres of the rye / These pretty countryfolk would lie*" (157); and so on. Halfway through Stephen's performance, we come to the "*Entr'acte*" (162) which, Gifford explains, is French for "interval between the acts" and also "a musical number or skit performed during an intermission" (Gifford, 224). Thus, the reader is not surprised to find both a musical number —"*Gl-o-o-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o*" (*Ulysses*, 162)—and Buck Mulligan's skit parodying a play by Synge. After Mulligan's intermission of comic relief, we come to an abrupt shift from prose to dramatic blank verse in an exchange between Stephen and Eglinton (*Ibid.*, 167). All of these dramatic textual features coalesce toward the end of the library episode, when Joyce, no longer able to restrain himself, breaks into full dramatic mode, giving speech headings, lines of dialogue, and stage directions to his characters (*Ibid.*, 171-172). Joyce's dramatic technique anticipates the style of the "Circe" episode later in the novel, but seems to have more significance for "Scylla and Charybdis" since it is an episode preoccupied with performance. In case we have missed the point, we encounter a final dramatic textual feature in the form of Buck Mulligan's comedic play "*Everyman His Own Wife*" (*Ibid.*, 178). Once again, Joyce makes room in his text for a dramatic title page and, as if to drive the point home even further, a list of *dramatis personae* (*Ibid.*). By means of these textual features, the reader can hardly fail to recognize the way in which the library episode's narrative technique tends toward the dramatic mode, turning Stephen into an actor and Joyce into a playwright.

Joyce furthers the performative tone of the library episode by including numerous instances of Stephen thinking like an actor during his stream-of-consciousness asides. We have already seen evidence of Stephen's tendency to see himself in terms of a performer. In "Proteus," Stephen recalls the naïveté of his youthful ambitions with embarrassment: "Reading two pages apiece of seven books every night, eh? I was young. *You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face.* Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hray!" (*Ibid.*, 34, my italics). In the library episode, we find that Stephen has not altogether outgrown these youthful daydreams. Far from it, he still thinks of himself in terms of a performer and his thoughts closely mirror an actor's state of mind. For instance, near the middle of his exposition on Shakespeare, he takes a moment to reflect on the success of his performance thus far: "I think you're getting on very nicely" (*Ibid.*, 168). This is a phrase we might attribute to an actor appraising his own performance, making his way through his lines, only to have a momentary realization which brings him out of his role and back to himself. This is something many actors attest to having experienced. The actor realizes that far from being the Prince of Denmark, the King of Bohemia, or a medieval English monarch, he is just some guy from Birmingham, on a stage, in front of an audience, reciting Shakespeare. In Stephen's case, he is just some guy from Dublin, reciting a theory of Shakespeare synthesized from a series of scripts which he doesn't even particularly believe.

Similar moments of self-realization occur throughout the remainder of Stephen's performance, as he thinks of himself: "What the hell are you driving at?" (*Ibid.*, 170); "Are you condemned to do this?" (170); "What more's to speak?" (173); and "I am tired of my voice, the voice of Esau" (174). This last instance is particularly significant since the voice of Esau is, as Schutte tells us, the "voice of a pretender": a man who assumes the role of someone or something he is not (Schutte, 76). Perhaps the most significant, and certainly the most poignant, moment of self-realization occurs while Stephen is defending the significance of Ann Hathaway to Shakespeare's life: how she "saw him into and out of the world," "took his first embraces," and stood by him "when he lay on his deathbed" (*Ulysses*, 156). This final phrase brings Stephen out of his performance and back to himself and his family situation with a pang of guilt over his mother's death: "Mother's deathbed. Candle. The sheeted mirror. Who brought me into this world lies there, bronzelidded, under few cheap flowers. *Liliata rutilantium.* I wept alone" (*Ibid.*).

Equally significant is Stephen's rather cynical attitude to his performance. Asked by John Eglinton if he believes his own theory, Stephen promptly says "No" (*Ibid.*, 175). This again recalls the state of an actor, who isn't required to believe the lines he recites. Instead, he may easily separate himself and his views from his performance. Since Stephen does not believe his own theory, Eglinton is not interested in publishing it as an article in *Dana*, the literary journal associated with the Irish Literary Revival of which he was the co-editor. Nevertheless, Mr. Best encourages Stephen to write the theory *as a performance*: "You ought to *make it a dialogue*, don't you know, like the Platonic dialogues Wilde wrote" (*Ibid.*, 175, my italics). Hearing Mr.

Best's suggestion, Eglinton "doubly smiles," suggesting that both Best and Eglinton see through Stephen's Shakespeare theory, sensing that it is, at its core, more performative than academic or literary (*Ibid.*, 176).

Given the many pains Joyce took to portray Stephen as a performer and the few instances we have of his literary output, Stephen, like Hamlet, emerges as a "hesitating soul," one who hesitates to put quill to parchment, brush to canvas, thought to action (*Ibid.*, 151). Though we have little in the way of artistic output to confer artistic status on Stephen, we possess, by means of his masterful performance, more than ample evidence of the artistry of his thought and speech. Near the end of his performance, Stephen, in a moment of internal self-castigation, chides himself for being Hamlet-like; always talking, never acting: "Speech, speech. But act. Act speech. They mock to try you. Act. Be acted on" (*Ibid.*, 173). This is perhaps the most conclusive example both of Stephen's artistic status as a performer and of Joyce's conscious effort to situate Stephen and Hamlet side-by-side as fellow players.

As we have seen, Joyce used a variety of means to portray Stephen as a performer and his theory of Shakespeare as a brilliant performance. In the library episode of *Ulysses*, Joyce used Shakespeare and Hamlet as foils to portray his own protagonist as a performer. But to what end? Perhaps, like Shakespeare, Joyce recognized that "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players" (*As You Like It*, 2.7.140-141, 227). Or perhaps there is another dimension to Stephen's (and Joyce's) use of Shakespeare. To understand Joyce's motivation, we must ask why it is that Stephen is so hung up on Shakespeare? The answer, while simple, is nonetheless illuminating. Shakespeare is the greatest writer England has ever produced, undoubtedly the greatest playwright of all time. Unlike the nationalistic promoters of the Irish Literary Revival, like A. E. and John Eglinton, Shakespeare is a world-class writer. On the first page of the library episode, Lyster cites an admiring description of *Hamlet* by Goethe, the giant of German Romanticism. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Best refers to a prose-poem on *Hamlet* written by Stéphane Mallarmé, the French symbolist poet. Lyster, Best, and the other Irish literary figures in the library see Shakespeare as both immortal and international. If Stephen (and, by extension, Joyce) wants to fly past the nets of Irish Literary Nationalism, he has to contend with the greatest English writer and with what is surely his greatest play.

Before Stephen starts his performance, Eglinton states the challenge facing him: "Our young Irish bards...have yet to create a figure which the world will set beside Saxon Shakespeare's Hamlet" (*Ulysses*, 152). Here, Eglinton speaks of writing as something like an Olympic event in which Ireland must compete with England on the world stage in front of every nation. Irish literature needs a character that can rival Shakespeare's Hamlet. Alternatively, Eglinton goes on to say, Ireland needs its own national epic; something to rival Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. In both of these statements, Eglinton unwittingly throws down the gauntlet to Stephen. In stating the challenge faced by Irish writers, Eglinton implicitly asks Stephen "can you do it?" The answer, as it pertains to Stephen, is uncertain. But, as far as Joyce is concerned,

it goes without saying that he can and he did. Joyce directly answered Eglinton's challenge, making Stephen Dedalus the rival to Hamlet, and *Ulysses* the rival to *Don Quixote*. Viewed from this perspective, the library episode of *Ulysses* emerges as Joyce doing Shakespeare; even occasionally outdoing Shakespeare. Therefore, it is not only Stephen who is a performer, but also Joyce. Taking on the English bard at his own game, Joyce the Irish bard made himself an unquestioned rival.

Note

¹ Ellmann's book *The Consciousness of Joyce*, which traces the literary ancestry of *Ulysses*, contains an illuminating catalogue of the many unexpected and fortuitous correspondences Joyce stumbled upon when combining Homer and Shakespeare in *Ulysses*, which makes them seem, in Ellmann words, "predestined" (Ellmann, 58).

² William M. Schutte has established that Joyce drew on these three particular biographies. Ellmann adds that Joyce had more than a dozen books on Shakespeare in his flat in Trieste, as well as several editions of the plays (Ellmann, 59).

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