His Cheeks Were Aflame:

Masturbation, Sexual Frustration and Artistic Failure in James Joyce's Portrait of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*.

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A consideration of sexual frustration in the "Proteus" chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* will allow us to understand Stephen Dedalus's position as a failed literary artist. While is commonly acknowledged that Stephen's sexual frustration and his resulting recourse to prostitutes enable his writing in *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, when critics turn to "Proteus," they tend to disregard how sexual tension affects the artist as a grown man. In *Portrait*, Stephen's poverty and sexual insecurities keep him from girls like Emma Clery and push him toward prostitutes, instead. In an effort to overcome his sexual inadequacies, Stephen seeks out sexual expertise of harlots, who in turn, fuel his masturbatory fantasies and facilitate his creative process. But although his carnal urges are satiated through his sexual exchanges with prostitutes, vulgar monstrosities continue to grow in his mind and find expression in daydreams and fantasies. These daydreams and fantasies then become the fictions he crafts in poetry, the "distant music" (*Portrait* 103), as it were, to which he masturbates. In short, like a dog chasing his tail, Stephen Dedalus is entangled in a labyrinthine pattern of sexual desire that sexually frustrates him and forces a retreat into his art. In this context, the writing he produces and the sexual techniques he learns do not win him the love of the woman he desires.

The expression, "to win a woman's love" is taken from the "Wandering Rocks" episode of Ulysses where Stephen is going through some books at a bookstall: "How to soften chapped hands. Recipe for white vinegar: How to win a woman's love. For me this. Say the following talisman three times with hands folded: *Se el yilo nebrakada femininum! Amor me solo! Sanktus! Amen*" (10.846-49). This appeal to popular advice manuals, the two references to hands here, and the plea for solitary love is consistent with the argument I put forth about Stephen in "Proteus": his own writing and his self-stimulation do not secure him either the love of a woman nor literary recognition.

In "Proteus" then we learn that neither the harlots, nor the writing, have brought him any closer to love or literary fame. Therefore, when the reader learns in "Proteus" that Stephen masturbates on the beach and writes a poem, this time about vampires, it appears that he has not overcome his insecurities about himself and toward women. He has not, in other words, reconciled his carnal desires with his sexual reality. But as David Hayman explains, “masturbation, as practiced by Stephen (and Bloom) is not a disease but a symptom” (16). Masturbation, it could be argued is a symptom of sexual frustration. As a result of neglecting the study of sexual frustration in Stephen’s narrative, the cautionary note Joyce is sounding about overtly educated men like Stephen Dedalus, who find themselves sexually and professionally frustrated in the modern wasteland, goes virtually unheeded.

Stephen’s poetry is like his onanistic activity: singular and self-absorbed. Both his writing and his autoerotic practices contribute to his artistic failure and isolation. David Hayman is the only critic who addresses Stephen’s masturbation in detail. He maintains that “gratuitous eroticism and onanism provide Stephen with a false release from the self and especially from the body, a mock entry into the world of expression through art: the worst form of ‘romanticism’” (14). Hayman is right to argue that Stephen is trying to connect with the world through his art. But he fails to do so because the content of the poetry is too individualistic and does not speak to anyone but himself. I support Hayman’s position when he admits that he is not suggesting that the solution to Stephen’s dilemma is necessarily “the cessations of such meditations” (14). And yet, Hayman does not suggest and alternative method of coping with the world. Furthermore, I consider Stephen’s post-masturbatory response to the world in “Proteus,” of wiping his snot on a rock, to be a blind shot at forging a connection between himself and the world. Thus, Stephen’s arbitrary and instant bodily and literarily expression together suggest an anxiety he feels he needs to release, a sexual frustration requiring translation.

Suzette Henke explains how in *Portrait*, sexual frustration is conducive to Stephen’s literary production: “Poetry offers the timorous lover aesthetic compensation for frustrated physical desire, and the stirrings of adolescent sexuality are deftly sublimated through an exercise in lyrical fulfillment” (62). On the one hand, Stephen attempts to solve his body’s problem through gracious attempts at poetry, and yet on the other hand, this hopeless catharsis perpetuates his mad dissatisfaction with himself, his sexual life, and his art by reminding him of what he cannot have. While Henke attributes a significant role to Emma as the girl who inspires Stephen to write, Laurie Teal’s focus on the prostitutes aptly suggests that it is the physical experience of the prostitute that gives him inspiration to compose verse. While I agree that both types of girls influence Stephen’s writing, it is his initiation into the sexual world through prostitutes that dominate his imagination. Equally revealing is Freud’s association of sexual penetration with emasculation. The following passage both affirms and contrasts with Stephen’s sexual experience with prostitutes and helps to explain why he resorts to self-stimulation:

> The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity and of then showing himself incapable. The effect which coitus has of discharging tensions and causing flaccidity may be the prototype of what the man fears; and realization of the influence which the woman gains over him through sexual intercourse, the consideration she thereby forces from him may justify the extension of this fear. (Freud, *Sexuality* 271)

Stephen Dedalus does indeed "all but burst into hysterical weeping" (101) as he stands silent in the middle of the room waiting to be touched by the prostitute. Kate Soper defines Stephen as an outsider to his "masculine" environment, as representing a disruptive "feminine" sensibility (251). But Edmund Epstein takes a totally different approach to Stephen's reaction to the prostitute arguing that "Stephen is initiated into sexuality maturity amid much darkness, night and warmth" (62) as "[h]e wander[s] up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound" (100). For Epstein, visiting the prostitute "announces [Stephen's] development to sexual maturity; from this point onward the attack of the fathers grows both fiercer and subtler as they sense the presence of the rising generation" (62). According to Epstein then, Stephen's sexual maturity is inexorably linked to Stephen's political power and retaliations against church and state.

Epstein's equation is clear: the more Stephen sleeps with whores, the more politically aggressive he becomes. This gives new meaning to Dominic Maganiello's political analysis that Stephen "as revolutionary employs the 'cold steel pen' [U 1.153]" (99). What Maganiello means here is that "[a]s an artist [Stephen] believes in the supremacy of the word over force" (99). But Stephen is not writing anything but romantic drivel spewed as a reactionary measure of his adolescent passion. I argue later in this paper that Stephen's political fervor is sparked more by the sexual agitation and frustration he feels as a pubescent young man than a serious commitment to politics.

In the present study, I propose that the "Proteus" episode of *Ulysses* is a crucially representative site for the investigation of Stephen's sexual and artistic position as it has evolved since *Portrait*. Distracted by the philosophical issues so prominent in "Proteus," critics overlook sex in general and masturbation, in particular. This omission is especially surprising since Stephen Dedalus has a long history of masturbation: he is typically accustomed to stimulate himself erotically preparatory to, or in succession of, the composition of a poem. In what follows then, I will illustrate that while frustration was once conducive to Stephen's literary productions in *Portrait*, as Suzette Henke argues in *Ulysses*, it is a useless angst that is stirred by pornography and predatory fantasies. Stephen's anguish and troubles find expression not only in potentially exhibitionist demonstrations on public beaches, but also in vain attempts at composing unsuccessful poetry. *Portrait* leaves the reader expecting something of Stephen as an artist. But because the crucial link between masturbation, sexual frustration and his writing has not been adequately explored, his aesthetic failure has remained something of a mystery.

"Proteus" is a chapter among other things about different varieties of sex, punctuated by references and instances of literary production. Since "Proteus" depicts Stephen ridiculing his literary attempts alongside many references to sex, the episode lends itself to analysis of the interaction between his sexuality and writing. Richard Brown relates how "Joyce's fiction is quite evidently not one which seeks to reinforce the conventional distinction between serious art and sexual explicitness but one which deliberately and systematically offends that distinction" (132). And certainly, we see in Stephen an example of the artist charging his writing with sexual verve but denying its content any prolific or pronounced statement of this inspiration. In other words, Stephen incorporates his sexual frustration into his poetry insofar as the writing accompanies masturbation.

"Proteus" is also a chapter about disguises. Spiritual Stephen disguises his autoeroticism in poetic discourse to the extent that readers misunderstand him to be urinating in "Proteus." While masking sexual desire is in keeping with Stephen's alienating disposition throughout *Ulysses*, the disguise fundamentally contradicts the artist's role that he laid out for himself in *Portrait*. And yet, it does not. In other words, if "Stephen's fantasy is to transform the virginal souls of Ireland by giving them sexual experience" (Teal 72), how is the reader to believe that Stephen can teach her/him something about sex when Stephen himself cannot accurately and honestly describe his own sexual rituals? Yet, on the other hand, if Stephen believes he represents a "priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (*Portrait* 221), then the reader anticipates in *Ulysses* that he will surely make some kind of gracious sense out of his base desires, and articulate them instructively to Irish society. But, if his sexual frustration persists then the only thing he can communicate is his own personal torment.

Brown argues that there is an "apparently anti-sexual streak in Stephen's theory of art" (132). Stephen's reluctance in conveying his masturbation directly could explain why his art appears contrived rather than genuine. Robert H. Bell argues that Stephen does not offer any sparkling insights in Ulysses, except "several inflated 'epiphanies,' like God is 'a shout in the street' (2:386) and 'Ireland must be important because it belongs to me' (16.1164-65), and a few verses that the world might willingly let die" (25). I will argue that Stephen Dedalus effects a grand epiphany not only among the Irish but among all people who read Joyce *because* of this artistic failure. The futility of Stephen's art suggests that sexual frustration cannot be resolved through writing. This point is instructive since it prompts the reader to think beyond the written word and presumably effect change through action. Moreover, Stephen's artistic hopelessness urges the reader to reconsider the vanity of private frustration and reevaluate the purpose of art.

Compare, for example, Stephen's literary achievements with Joyce's. It could be argued that Stephen's literary products are a manifestation of his repressed sexuality just as Joyce's *Ulysses* is the purging of taboos and censure imposed upon Irish writers in the tightly controlled and repressive context of twentieth-century Ireland. The difference between Stephen and Joyce, however, is that Joyce subversively fights religious rules and political restrictions with *Ulysses* by representing provocative yet practiced sexual experiences in a new and different language with a revolutionary structure which is both intellectual and curious. Stephen's poetry, by contrast, lacks novelty and useful purpose.

Suzette Henke, for example, argues that while "absolutely refusing to communicate his passion, Stephen mediates libidinal desire through mimetic language and nineteenth-century literary convention" (53). His sentiments, therefore, appear forced and mediated, if not dull and contrived. In *Portrait*, Stephen adopts (or adapts) "an aesthetic theory to regulate the body," remarks Teal (67). But "such aestheticization of the body ultimately compromises the 'modernness' of Stephen's aesthetic, leaving him an unwitting subject of the romanticism which he disdains" (Teal 67). Teal asserts that what this tells the reader is that "the author of *Portrait* has completely outgrown Stephen's youthful romanticism." (67)

However, it is crucial to note that Stephen does not "absolutely" refuse to communicate his passion. He does communicate his passion quite sufficiently, one could assume, when he is having sexual intercourse with prostitutes. What Henke's argument fails to take into consideration then is that Stephen experiences an explosive sexual world with harlots. But, because Stephen measures his worth according to women like Emma, he is constantly preoccupied with compensating for his sexual peculiarities and moral deviations through masturbation and romantic poetry.

In order to appreciate the thematics of onanistic activity and writing as it relates to Stephen's sexual and artistic impotence in *Ulysses*, the following three issues need to be introduced at this time: Stephen's aesthetic theory and vision as it is described in *Portrait* and the critical debate surrounding Stephen's artistic mission; two key masturbatory scenes in *Portrait* that crucially anticipate Stephen's sexual and literary practices in "Proteus;" and, Stephen's experience with prostitutes. By tracing what Stephen set out to accomplish with art in *Portrait*, we will be better able to assess his sexual and artistic position in *Ulysses*.

Stephen's art is shaped by romance as he espies the birdgirl on the beach in Chapter IV of *Portrait*. The magical birdgirl sexually arouses Stephen and this "angel of mortal youth and beauty" (172) inspires him to want "[t]o live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!" (172). He expresses his devotion to art in reproductive and regenerative terms. However, he later redirects his lust in a heated political debate about universal peace with Davin Cranly and some classmates. Adamantly refusing to die for his country, he instead wants to fly by the nets of "nationality, language and religion" (203) that entangle him in Dublin. The politicization of his emotions may be considered a mask, as it were, because in this case it substitutes sexual restrictions for political restrictions.

Ireland, popular literature, and the Catholic Church are the political agents that thwart Stephen's sexual and artistic ambitions. Even Stephen's friends enforce a political agenda upon Stephen's creativity when they advise him: "Ireland first, Stevie. You can be a poet or a mystic after" (203). Stephen responds to them by reducing Ireland to "the old sow that eats her farrow" (203). The allusion to birth, death, and reproduction here finds even greater expression when Stephen defines his aesthetic theory using similar terms. He explains to Lynch: "When we come to the phenomena of artistic conception, artistic gestation, and artistic reproduction I require a new terminology and a new personal experience" (209). To acquire this experience, he flees from "virginal Dublin" to "corrupt Paris" (10.149-52).

Marilyn French argues that Joyce defines "mankind not as a political or even gregarious animal but as a feeling sexual animal cursed and blessed with intellect, cursed and blessed by outer necessity" (53). Since "it is mysterious sexuality that obsesses Joyce" (53), it is hard to avoid the sexual implications inherent in Stephen's wish "[t]o discover the mode of life or of art whereby your spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom" (*Portrait* 246).

In his conversation with Lynch, Stephen explains why some works are appreciated and others are rejected. He identifies two different kinds of literature in *Portrait.* There are books belonging to the "literary tradition" and those belonging to the "marketplace" (213). These two categories of writing correspond with Dedalus' other definitions of art: "kinetic" and "static" art. He distinguishes between the two:

> The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desiring or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. The arts would excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I used the general term) is therefore static. (204).

This passage implies that writing which is inspired by sexual arousal is also "kinetic." And yet, Stephen's writing itself is responsive to sexual stimuli. Stephen is masturbating as he composes the villanelle in Chapter V of *Portrait*. Because "some sort of self-stimulation precedes the completion of [the villanelle], we say that the work is kinetic in inspiration if not in effect" (Hayman 13). Notably, in "Proteus," the connection between popular literature, kinetic art and static emotion is revealed when Stephen stations himself upon a rock, masturbates and writes a poem.

Stephen also mutates the artist's role depending on who is having sex with him. If he has sexual intercourse with harlots, he is ready to tell the world about monstrosities.

If he is denied a sexual exchange with Emma Clery, he crafts romantic vignettes about love. Masturbation is the manifestation of his frustrated sexual desire toward women and it also takes the shape of the poem. In all cases, his art goes unnoticed by everyone. Much like his use of onanism, his writing serves his private purpose of illicit satisfaction and self-aggrandizement. Stephen feels that by using "silence, exile, and cunning" (247), he will accomplish his artistic goals. The famous and boastfully heroic claims that assert his will to art are individualistic and personal like Stephen's autoerotic impulses. To reject an audience, his art, like his sexuality, becomes a personal gratification which inverts Otto Rank's argument in *Art and the Artist*: "[t]he work of art for all its personal dynamic expression, always strives to make an effect on others" (95). Unlike some artists who thrive on an audience's applause, Stephen neglects this aspect of literary production and gives himself a hand instead. His poetry speaks more to his private and personal longings for women than to Ireland. It lacks a universal appeal.

Nevertheless, Stephen understands the importance of an audience to keep his art immortal. Rank questions: "How does the artist achieve this effect, that enables so many others to identify themselves with his work?" (95). In *Ulysses*, Stephen addresses Rank's query: "Books you were going to write…Someone was to read them…You were going to do wonders, what?" (3.139, 143, 192). Stephen forgets his audience, so his creations remain esoteric and narcissistic like his autoerotic ejaculations. His artistic theory has failed him because according to it, his writing is informed by a sexual anxiety and appear to have as a definite purpose the aim of advancing his position in society.

There are two key masturbation scenes in *Portrait* that I will touch upon here: the birdgirl scene and the morning Stephen composes the villanelle. The first occurs on the beach and the second in Stephen's bedroom. In the second instance, masturbation induces Stephen to produce a poem. While the occurrences are separate and distinct from one another they depict a common portrait of Stephen as a helpless young boy who struggles to integrate his physiological urges with a beatific vision of women.

Stephen turns to masturbation in "Proteus" for two reasons: he is insecure about his body and he is uncomfortable with his sexual knowledge he acquires from prostitutes. These are the seeds of a dangerous frustration that do not find reconciliation in "Proteus." In *Portrait*, Stephen stands apart from his bathing classmates on the beach and "he, apart from them and in silence, remembered in what dread he stood of the mystery of his own body" (169). He begins a daydream about his "strange name." He equates his name with "a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve" and as "a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being" (169). This self-importance physically separates him from the other boys on the beach and induces a kind of fantasy world that lures him toward another part of the strand where he sees the birdgirl. While masking his insecurities about his body in an inflated image of himself as a writer and prophet, he etherealizes the girl. He watches her standing "before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird" (171).

By framing this scene in terms of aesthetic bliss, Joyce captures Stephen's moment of sexual enticement that confirms for critics like Suzette Henke the reason behind "Stephen's intellectual choice of an artistic vocation" (73):

> She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame, or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faints as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither; an a faint flame trembled on her cheek.
>
> -- Heavenly God! Cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy.
>
> He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling. (*Portrait* 172)

The repetitious "hither and thither" movements of this moment suggest Stephen's masturbatory mechanics. The flame, or blush, on Stephen's cheek is the physiological response characteristic of an onanistic moment.

In the second instance of Stephen's masturbation, he transforms thoughts about the birdgirl and Emma into poetry when he composes the villanelle. Stephen's associative claim that Emma's life is "simple and strange as a *bird*'s life, gay in the morning, restless all day, tired at sundown…Her heart simple and willful as a bird's heart (216, emphasis mine), suggests that both the *bird*girl and Emma come to represent a source of "inspiration" for Stephen. But when we read that Stephen awakes the following morning (after he makes the connection between Emma and the birdgirl) "[t]owards dawn…that windless hour of dawn when the madness wakes and the strange plants open to the light and the moth flies forth silently" to find "O what sweet music! His would was all dewy wet" (216), we see that Stephen has eroticized the virgin. In other words, the ideal woman is turned into masturbatory fodder and churned into the romantic villanelle by the next page. She becomes both holy and sacrilegious for Stephen as she perpetuates a holy vision of beauty, and a "rose-like glow" (217), which also speaks for the physiological rise he feels upon waking.

The sexual insecurities Stephen feels in *Portrait*, he sublimates into poetry that offers him, in Henke's terms, a "successfully mediated and comfortably mastered form of sexual gratification" (75). For example, intimations of an actual sexual exchange with Emma are immediately shattered in an afternoon at school by the pestilent reality of a louse crawling along Stephen's neck. As a result, he aggressively attacks Emma in his mind: "Well then, let her go and be damned to her! She could love some clean athlete who washed himself every morning to the waist and had black hair on his chest. Let her" (234). Stephen, "ill clad, ill fed, louse-eaten…close[s] his eyelids in a sudden spasm of despair and in the darkness [sees] the brittle bright bodies of lice falling from the air and turning often as they fell" (234). He channels his weakness into lines of poetry by recollecting Thomas Nash's poetry and writing the lice falling from his head: "Darkness falls from the air" (232). But, he changes the lines to, "Brightness falls from the air" (234). The "brightness" ironically depicts Stephen's attempt to make light of his scantiness. He simultaneously glorifies his self-consciousness and disguises the "darkness," and his aggravation, in the forged lines of Thomas Nash's poetry that originally read: "brightness falls from the hair" (Thomas 49). The seeds of Stephen's sexual and artistic shortcomings are being sown here.

Although Stephen composes the villanelle and thinks up other lines of poetry to ignore his insecurities with respect to Emma, he turns to masturbation, but for another reason besides his obsession with physical image. He resorts to masturbation because it offers him a medium through which he can express his vile imagination and desires. When Emma appears at school, Stephen notices a "slight flush on Cranly's cheek" (232) and wonders if this explains "his friend's listless silence, his harsh comments, the sudden intrusions of rude speech with which he had shattered so often Stephen's ardent wayward confessions" (232). Stephen's reaction to the fact that "[Cranly] also" (232) desires Emma is rather violent: "he began to beat the frayed end of his ashplant against the base of a pillar" (232). Stephen tries to regain the attention of his distracted friend. This causes Stephen to seek solace in comforting thoughts about "eyes, opening from the darkness of desire, eyes that dimmed the breaking east" (233). The reference to eyes recalls Stephen's daydreams in class when he is thinking about prostitutes and sex:

> The equation on the page of his scribbler began to spread out a widening tail…The indices appearing and disappearing were eyes opening and closing; the eyes…were stars being born and being quenched. The vast cycle of starry life bore his weary mind outward to its verge and inward to its center, a distant music accompanying him outward and inward. (*Portrait* 103)

To abstract himself from the frustration he feels toward Cranly and Emma, Stephen conjures up more images, this time "with the eyes of memory kind gentlewomen in Covent Garden wooing from their balconies with sucking mouths and the pox-fouled wenches" (233). However, "the images he had summoned gave him no pleasure" (233) because "that was not the way to think of [Emma]" (233). But he cannot avoid thinking about her smell and her body because these fantasies have been so impressed upon his mind while masturbating: “A conscious unrest seethed in his blood. Yes, it was her body he smelt, a wild and languid smell, the tepid limbs over which his music had flowed desirously (233).

Of course, by identifying Emma’s angelic body over which “his music had flowed desirously,” Stephen recaptures his masturbatory moments as a means of integrating his crude thoughts with gracious ways. What is crucial to note here is the conflation of virgin and whore imagery his fantasies of Emma. The frustration he feels about his inability to attain Emma is heavily charged with sexual tension and finds physiological release through prostitutes. Although Stephen feels a “dark peace” (103) after a sexual moment, a new frustration emerges from his self-stimulation, a “cold indifferent knowledge of himself” (103), a realization that he is alone. Thus, Stephen relies on his supposed literary talent and masturbation to substantiate his physical shortcomings and compensate for his longings.

The purpose of Stephen’s sexual feelings and frustration in the case of the birdgirl and Emma Clery can be interpreted, at first, as bringing forth his *vita nuova*. But this image of Stephen as a religious and pious young boy finding God through a womanly creature and then mastering his artistic vocation through intellectual appropriation of her is, in a word, absurd. The paradisal invocation of non-sexual love by the Dantesque emblem of the rose, which concludes Stephen’s rapturous instance in Chapter IV, is a literary signature that signals beatific and platonic love between a man and woman. However, the difference between Dante’s longings for Beatrice and Stephen’s desire for the birdgirl and the virginal Emma Clery is large when Stephen’s sexual weaknesses are taken into consideration.

Dante explains how his “animal spirit” is “stricken with amazement, and speaking directly to the spirits of sight, said these words: ‘Now your bliss has appeared’” (4). And when Stephen’s soul cries, “Heavenly God!...in an outburst of profane joy” (172), as he sees his vision of ultimate beauty, and then walks away from the girl as did Dante, the reader cannot disregard Stephen’s inadequacies and prevalent insecurities which prevent him from engaging this beauty. Teal argues that Stephen’s “almost perpetual weariness in the novel results from the necessity to care for and in turn control the animal body to which he finds himself attached” (67). For Dante, the moment he see Beatrice, he confesses that “Love” governs his soul (4). Dante will write about Beatrice in service to God. Can we be so sure that such glory and respect direct Stephen’s desire and his literary ambitions? Idealizing sexual desire for literary production is what Dante did best with *Vita Nuova*. Stephen differs from Dante not only because he constantly relieves his sexual desire through masturbation and writing, and then tells the reader about it, but also because his primary motivation for writing is sexual.

Stephen employs the typically Dantesque rose imagery previous to the encounter with the birdgirl when he calls up the image of Mercedes in Chapter II. In conjuring up this romantic setting of meeting the fictional character “in the moonlit garden after years of estrangement and adventure” (99), his thoughts are “touched” immediately by “a tender premonition…of the holy encounter he had then imagined at which weakness and timidity and inexperience were to fall from him” (99). His “premonition” is about as magical as a rock: he plans on visiting a prostitute. But even as he learns how to have sexual intercourse, he is still limited to fantasies about romantic trysts and continues to view women like Emma as both “frustrating and desirable, and is assured to want to cause men pain” (Jukes 221). Stephen’s masturbation responds to this anger and comforts him through a mediated, to use Henke’s term, sexual act of self-stimulation.

Stephen’s problems about his body and his art begin in *Portrait*, when he realizes his unsuitability for “proper” girls like Emma Clery. For instance, when Stephen meets up with Emma “point blank in Grafton street” at the end of *Portrait*, his use of Dante is rather retaliatory: he employs the “spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus, invented and patented…by Dante Alighieri” (252), and talks rapidly of himself and his plans, neglecting her voice, in cold detachment. The distinction between a writer such as Dante and Stephen could not be clearer. After seeing Beatrice, who awakens his passions, Dante “returned to the loneliness of [his] room and began thinking of this most gracious lady” (6). Stephen, on the other hand, after seeing Emma, returns to his bedroom where there “hung an illuminated scroll…of the Blessed Virgin Mary” (104); Stephen wishes that he could be “her knight” and her image dwells with him “after the frenzy of his body’s lust had spent itself” (105).

Marilyn French addresses Stephen’s preoccupation with religious defilement and masturbation when she identifies the “two forces that draw him, his perverse sensuality and his sense of sex as sin” (79). What I conclude from Stephen’s attitude toward sex and masturbation is less a moral evaluation of his noted perversion than a cultural observation that men were expected to treat women in a particular fashion. While some may prize Dante’s treatment of Beatrice, others may caution against the tendency to place women upon pedestals. What this scene suggests, however, is Stephen’s interest in destabilizing religious norms and reconfiguring traditional roles for both men and women.

The prolific expression of desire for sexual intimacy with girls and women, and, the many instances in “Proteus” tracking Stephen’s efforts to impress women with his intellect, reveal his sexual anxieties. Frank Budgen in *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* attributes Stephen’s bad luck with decent women with his poverty:

> His poverty has conditioned his relations to women and is in fact at the root of all his distress. He has never been loved by any woman, for the love of a good woman is more expensive than that of the other sort. What love he had he bought and he had what he paid for, but no more. (43)

Joyce's consistent documentation of Stephen's sexual liaisons with female prostitutes continues in *Ulysses* where we learn in "Scylla and Charybdis" that Stephen spends most of a borrowed pound "in Georgina Johnson's bed, clergyman's daughter" (9.195). He lacks both money and a decent personality and he cannot engage the right women and this in turn, frustrates him. By "Proteus," we learn that he is just an "imbecile" (3.59) hunting for his identity through art and philosophy, looking to project some sexual appeal toward women by association with the cultured life of the university, the literati, and Paris. It is telling that he should compose poetry in the same moment of ecstasy proving that he only thinks of himself when it comes to pleasure and creation.

Stephen's preoccupation with his physical appearance and poor personal hygiene prevent him from getting intimate with anyone other than prostitutes. Their approximation to the "pox-fouled wenches of the taverns" (*Portrait* 233) set them apart from Emma Clery, a crush Stephen could not think of as "secret and inflaming": "That was not the way to think of her. It was not even the way in which he thought of her" (233). Stephen represses his erotic feelings toward Emma but they surface during his onanistic activity. He neither thinks of nor envisions Emma, but instead knows, feels, and smells the "odour and a dew" her flesh distills on the secret soft linen in his masturbatory fantasies from the morning.

While Emma Clery inspires Stephen to masturbate and then write some verses, Teal argues it is with the prostitute, "like the prostitutes of Joyce's youth, [who] is to purify Stephen so that he may write the kind of poetry, that comes to him 'in a dream or vision' from which he awakens 'all dewy wet'" (70-71). Using pen and penis, Stephens plans on converting Ireland. Laurie Teal explains concisely the process by which Stephen's sexual experience translates into art: "the prostitute loses her soul and acquires a penis" (73) with which she penetrates and teaches the virginal and inexperienced Stephen Dedalus. Stephen, penetrated by a prostitute, then prods Mother Ireland with his sexual knowledge into liberation. Or at least he tries. The male artist becomes a "soul-snatcher of sorts—who appropriates the female soul and makes it his own creation" (Teal 73). Contrary to Henke, Teal insists that "prostitute and artist become agents of knowledge" (70). This limits Emma's role to something of a mere routine in a boy's pubescent life.

Laurie Teal identifies how the prostitute evokes Stephen's literary grandeur in *Portrait* by isolating the potency of a supernatural oddity with which he endows himself: "[h]e imagines himself vampire-like, initiating both the men and women of Ireland into a kind of sexual awareness that will produce a revitalized and enlightened people" (74). I believe that while both Emma and the prostitute are necessary to Stephen's literary production early in his youth, there is the transition from a boyish admiration for the unattainable schoolgirl to a manly hunger for sex once he has grown up. Thus, I maintain that the prostitute encourages a sexual appetite in Stephen that is denounced and denigrated by the society Emma Clery represents. The sexual frustration he feels then is in part attributed to the cultural norms that decide what is, and what is not, sexually permissible.

Stephen's poverty and his insecurity about his body are not the only things holding him back from pursuing intimate relations with girls like Emma. Paradoxically, it is also the knowledge he gains from experienced prostitutes that keeps him from virgin "nice" girls and redirects his sexual energy into masturbation. While Stanley Sultan argues that "adolescent boys frequently both glorify objects of infatuation and engage in sexual adventure rather than have a balanced relationship with any one girl" (71), I would argue that it is Stephen's immature handling of common courtship *and* a vast sexual awareness that could potentially intimidate or even frighten a young girl who keeps Stephen separated from them. Perhaps this is more the portrait of a grown an trapped inside the young man's body:

> If she knew to what his mind had subjected her or how his brute-like lust had torn and trampled upon her innocence! Was that boyish love? Was that chivalry? Was that poetry? The sordid details of his orgies stank under his very nostrils. The soot-coated packet of pictures which he had hidden in the flue of the fireplace and in the presence of whose shameless and wantonness he lay for hours sinning in thought and deed; his monstrous dreams, peopled by ape-like creatures and by harlots with gleaming jewel eyes; the foul long letters he had written in the joy of guilty confession and carried secretly for days and days only to thrown them under cover of night among the grass…where a girl might come upon them as she walked by and read them secretly. Mad! Mad! (115)

Adam Jukes writes that "a truly intimate relationship, even allowing for no-holds-barred erotic behavior, is characterized by the presence of concern and awareness for the other" (220). The following excerpt from a letter Joyce sent to Nora, cited in Tisdale, illustrates how a balance between brutal, carnal urges and a deep love and respect for the other welcomes such curiosities as Stephen is prone to think and feel:

> When I go to bed at night it is a kind of torture for me. I will not write on this page what fills my mind, the very madness of desire…I see you in a hundred poses, grotesque, shameful, virginal, languorous…Be beautiful and happy and loving and provoking, full of memories, full of cravings, when we meet. (98)

In Stephen's situation, "[e]motional mutuality has been restricted to art" (Henke 62). And, sexual pleasure has been narrowed and restricted to himself:

> Whereas in sexual relations all the senses are involved in varying degrees, and the whole body becomes intensely energized—which is why orgasm is satisfying—in masturbation it is mainly the genitals and the eyes which are involved—this is one reason why orgasm is unsatisfactory. (Jukes 216)

Sultan explains that Stephen "persists in etherealizing his sexual feelings until he is made helpless by them and 'transfigured' into bestiality" in "Proteus" (72). According to Sultan, Stephen's progressive degeneration in *Ulysses* is distinctly marked by monstrous imagery.

In "Proteus", both Stephen's masturbation and his vampire poem about death, indicate that the content of his poetry has become increasingly erotic and his attitude during the moment of sexual arousal, cynical and abrasive. Besides using Emma as a muse, and snatching the souls of prostitutes to write his poems, Stephen masturbates to another seductive image—that of the vampire in the "Proteus" chapter, who also steals the life out of women. In "Proteus," Stephen is further removed from the Dantesque vision of a beatific love interest because the poem he drafts emphasizes physical sensuality and death. In "Proteus" we see Stephen facing the sexual and literary downfalls he hoped to disguise in Paris through pomp and posture. Finally, his cynical response to his artistic expression aligns him with his friend Lynch.

While his protean nature suggests he is always in flux, this transformative quality indicates less Stephen's initiative to adapt and mold himself to situations than it does his lack of will to assert himself in any other way. In other words, because we find Stephen in a chapter represented by the Proteus figure, we might think that his masturbation and writing are a way of integrating himself with the structure around him. But instead the only mutability that is taking place alongside his search for his new identity are his constant erections and a swelling pericardial lust that force him into written communication.

He composes a poem that reads: "He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth's kiss" (3.397-98). His poem indicates his preoccupation with seduction and immortality. Sex and art are central to this chapter and Jean Kimball gives a context for this concern by articulating Stephen's "problem on Bloomsday: to establish a loving tie to the flesh so that he can become capable of immortalizing that flesh in art" (153). But Kimball's investigation of how death affects Stephen's views of love and writing in *Ulysses* overlooks its connection with the masturbation in the "Proteus" chapter. Adam Jukes explains "that masturbation expresses what it is intended to deny: that the internal good object is damaged or dead. Masturbation is an attempt to breathe life back into the object and the self by experiencing desire for it" (220). Writing the vampire poem then, according to Jukes' theory, is like masturbation for Stephen in its depiction of "issuing breath, unspeeched" (3.402-3), or giving life, to an inanimate or imaginary object of desire.

There are numerous references throughout the "Proteus" chapter that connect Stephen's desire for sexual intimacy and his artistic failures. Stephen supplies the reader with a barrage of evidence about how obsessively he believed recognition would earn him fame and admiration: "Books you were going to write with letters for titles…O yes, W. Remember your epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries in the world…Someone was to read them" (3. 139-42). The self-deprecating rhetorical questions he constantly asks himself in "Proteus" about whom he is acting for, prove he was imitating behaviours to gain acceptance from others. In this episode, we find Stephen Dedalus congratulating himself for a most pathetic recollection in youth of self-aggrandizement before the mirror:

> 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. No-one saw: tell
> no-one. (136-139)

The immediacy with which Stephen convinces himself that "no-one" viewed his performance, and his insistence that "no-one" will hear about it either, demonstrate an anxiety he still feels about his body and potential admirers. Granted, no one wishes to be caught watching her/himself in the mirror. Pride can be an embarrassing thing. But Stephen's self-deprecating comments on his literary endeavours, which are inexorably bound up with this professional ambitions and his status in society, indicate more than mere dissatisfaction: in indicates that he has not changed at all since *Portrait* despite a maturity with which some critics credit him.

Hugh Kenner maintains that Stephen in Ulysses "has become a drinker like his father Simon" (16). He is poorly nourished, wears borrowed boots, sports second-hand clothing, has rotting teeth, ultimately urinates, masturbates, and wipes his snot on some rocks, while cheaply forging vampire poetry on Sandymount Strand. Stephen Dedalus, admittedly, is not the most attractive prospect for a sexual liaison with either a man or a woman, which could explain why he must resort to masturbating himself. His attempt at recreating himself in Paris by adopting a different gait fails miserably when he recalls how he relies on his mother for money, while others band the door in his face: "Proudly walking. Whom were you trying to walk like? Forget: a dispossessed. With mother's money order, eight shillings, the banging door of the post office slammed in your face by the usher" (3.184-85). Subject to "inner and outer influence (never fully distinguishable from one another)," he questions his self's permeability in "Proteus" (Lifton 50). His Paris disguise undergoes shifts and transformations when he arrives in Dublin. In keeping with his Protean nature, Lifton explains, that "rearrangements nonetheless permit a certain continuity amidst individual disruptions and explorations" (50). Stephen searches for continuity on Sandymount Strand: “Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?” (3.18-19). The only continuity that exists for Stephen between his days in *Portrait* and in *Ulysses* is his alienation and inadequacy that find expression in masturbation and writing.

The “Proteus” chapter illustrates the dreary outcomes of Stephen’s attempts to fly by the nets of virginal Ireland to corrupt Paris where pornography, “licentious custom” (3.236), and “lascivious people” (3.238) tempt and frustrate him. In *Portrait*, Stephen believes that Paris can offer him a mode of life where he can be free to express himself. But his reflections of Paris in “Proteus” show that Paris was just another fictional reality that he created for himself where he admits to pretending to be the lover and the artist he is not. In sarcastic recollection of his Paris behavior, he condems his act: “God, we simply must dress the character” (3.174)

But aside from adopting particular mannerisms and Paris fashions, Stephen also brings a collection of pornographic magazines back to Ireland. He recalls all the “Rich booty” he brought back from Paris: “*Le Tutu*, five tattered numbers of *Pantalon Blanc et Culotte Rouge*; a blue French telegram, curiosity to show: --Nother dying come home father” (3.169-99). In his mind, he successively groups his father’s telegram about his mother dying with instruction for Stephen to return home, alongside a list of erotic magazines. The telegram itself is a piece of shocking literature here as well. It pulls Stephen away from France, forcing him to abort his cultural life. He must discard his persona once he arrives back in Dublin because everyone knows who he is. While he was free to act like a novelty, the “*irlandais. Hollandais*” (3.222), in Ireland, this pretending will have to stop because people will know who he is. But while Stephen drops the physical disguise, are the pornographic magazines so readily discarded as well?

Joseph Heininger traces Stephen’s fall, as it were, stressing the importance of the reconstructed Paris episodes in “Proteus” that “serve to characterize Stephen’s attitude toward art and sex” (437). Heininger explains “the student-artist’s efforts to define a personal esthetic,” and defines Stephen as having a “preoccupation with his sexual desires and tensions” (437). But while Heininger’s focus is on Stephen’s Paris sojourn, it does not consider how the Paris reminiscing incites Stephen to masturbation. Pointing to Marilyn French as the authority on “Stephen’s sexual maturity or lack thereof” (435), Heininger neglects the implications of this sexual frustration on an older Stephen Dedalus.

“Stephen’s experiences of Paris have formed a pattern of frustrations to his hopes of personal distinction and artistic success” (444), writes Heininger. Marilyn French explains that “indeed, many of the characters in *Dubliners* suffer from inadequacy at the root and their inadequacy combines with their perverted values to create the paralysis and death that pervade the city” (31). Notably in “Proteus,” the connection between popular literature, kinetic art and static emotion is revealed as

Stephen stations himself on a rock to write his vampire poem. The kinetic energy that Stephen purges through the poem relates to his sexual thoughts about young virgins (3.426) and being touched by women (3.434). The simultaneous orgasm he has as he writes the poem represents a reflex action: "Our flesh shrinks from what it dreads and responds to the stimulus of what it desires by a purely reflex action of the nervous system" (*Portrait* 206). According to Stephen's own ideas about art, the writing he produces is "bad writing" because it is reactionary.

While he is composing the vampire poem, and "his shadow lay over the rocks as he bent" (3.409), he wonders: "Who ever anywhere will read these written words?" (3.414-15). This query leads him to ponder the issue of trust and virginity:

> She trusts me, her hand gentle, the longlashed eyes. Now where the blue hell am I bringing her beyond the veil?...She, she, she. What she? The virgin at Hodges Figgis' window on Monday looking in for one of the alphabet books you were going to write. Keen glance you gave her… (3.424-28)

The approximation of thwarted literary ambitions and the attempt at winning the love of a young virgin is revealing in this passage because it typifies Stephen's artistic posturing as nothing more than a "pickmeup," to use Stephen's term for his empty talk (3.430). Immediately following the recollection of his useless creations, his demands for physical intimacy begin to escalate: "Touch me, Soft eyes. Soft soft soft hand. I am lonely here. O, touch me soon, now. What is the word known to all men? I am quiet here alone. Sad too. Touch, touch me" (3.434-37)

At this time, he lays back on the rocks and "for a time, he accepts his own sensuality," writes Marilyn French (80). But while French perceives this moment to be a period of peaceful reconciliation between himself and the world around him, I would argue that the moment only displaces his obsessive preoccupation with his literary failures in favour of the autoeroticism that so often comforts his shortcomings. His literary inadequacies inspire in him thoughts about girls and "he lay back at full stretch over the sharp rocks, cramming the scribbled note and pencil into a pocket" (3.437-38).

Stephen next is "caught in this burning scene. Pan's hour" (3.442). The scene is conducive to masturbation. The moment is characterized by a "Sabbath sleep" (3.339), a lethargy that recalls the "languor of sleep" (*Portrait* 173) Stephen feels when he is aroused by the birdgirl in *Portrait*. The onanistic activity described in the "Proteus" passage is given full consideration by David Hayman. The "drowsiness of the scene," relates Hayman, "clearly prolongs and renews Stephen's erotic impulse, an impulse…he is trying to mask" (10). I would argue that the floral or "faunal noon" (3.442-43) here postfigures the Dantesque mood in *Portrait* but is now suggestively erotic. Henke writes that Stephen sublimates the sexual component of his experience with the birdgirl, vividly imagining “a metaphorical rose engulfing the heavens, and his language of flowers suggests a psychoanalytic exercise in erotic mimesis” (76). The Dantesque rose of romantic etherealizing from *Portrait* becomes now for an older Stephen, “gumheavy serpentplants, milkoozing fruits” (3.343). The scene is provocatively sensual.

In “Proteus,” Stephen addresses his sexual frustration in action after he has put his writing away. He stresses that he “[b]etter get this job over quickly” (3.456). David Hayman asks “What ‘job’? Why ‘quick’?” (10). “The ‘job’ in question,” concludes Hayman, “may as easily be masturbation which Stephen would want to finish ‘quick’ so as to not make a public spectacle of himself” (10). But for Stephen, what his “job” produces is both the steady dispersion of a handsome quantity of liquid that makes “a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, oos” (3.457), and, sloppy spurts of a thicker substance that “[i]n cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap” (3.458). To be sure, he is emitting fluids onto some rocks and into the sea in the context of a sexually ambiguous scene.

There are critics who argue that Stephen urinates into the sea during the “Proteus” episode. Hayman provides the following list of critics who assess the ambiguity of Stephen’s masturbation as pointing more toward urination: William York Tindall, Harry Blamires, J. Mitchell Morse, Erwin Steinberg and Marilyn French. The two possibilities are adaptable to Stephen in both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. However, the physiological responses to the birdgirl in *Portrait*—the blush on the cheek, the glow in the face, and the trembling limbs—are in part implied by “this burning scene” in “Proteus.” Furthermore, the liquid dispersed upon the rocks in “Proteus” is a peculiar, if not misplaced, register of micturition.

Marilyn French sees Stephen at the end of “Proteus” conclud[ing] his thought by urinating in the water…as if he were comically putting a seal on his decision to accept a piece at least of the human condition” (80). I maintain that if Stephen is urinating, we can take Stephen’s urination for an infantile sign that a seminal ejaculation has occurred, since sexual intercourse often ends with the discharge of urine (Freud, *Infantile* 81). A child’s urination can signal sexual intercourse in its image of cloacal emissions, while “a grown-up man in the same circumstances would feel an erection” (Freud, *Infantile* 81). Hugh Kenner lists masturbation as one of the activities Stephen accomplishes on the beach: “[Stephen]…scrambles on to the higher rocks to let the incoming tide flow by, composes a quatrain, lies back on the rocks, apparently masturbates” (57). Kenner also refers to David Hayman’s article, “Stephen on the Rocks” as a comprehensive examination of the ambiguity between Stephen’s urination and potential masturbation.

While there does not appear to be any significant difference in the way Stephen expresses his sexuality in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, his abundant self-consciousness and self-reflexivity in “Proteus” indicates a self-destructive trend. Stephen compensates for a lack of love from others by loving himself erotically instead. And, while Stephen masturbates in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, in “Proteus” there seems to be no other option available to him to overcome the futility of his position.

Sheldon Brivic credits Stephen with a “creative power or potentiality” because “he has individuated himself” and “cultivated the freedom of this personality” (144). However, Brivic remarks that the “inner identity that [Stephen] possesses cannot express itself and is in danger of self-destruction or perversion because of its opposition to all sensible phenomena” (144). This opposition to all sensible things suggests that Stephen is still a raging romantic in “Proteus.” Fragnoli misinterprets Stephen’s actions in “Proteus”: “As his daydreams on Sandymount Strand indicate, during the Proteus episode he takes a romantic, imaginative view of the life that surrounds him” (222). This is misleading because while Stephen does indeed fantasize about women, he closes the episode with a rather realistic signature of wiping his snot on a rock. Presumably, it accounts for Stephen’s more “Bloomlike” character at the end of “Proteus.” In “Why Stephen Dedalus Picks His Nose,” Ellmann gives context to this protean quality of Stephen’s behavior or identity. Ellmann explains that while “this chapter was protean and had change for its theme…it is also about permanence and identity” (23).

Ellmann writes that while Stephen openly wipes his snot on the rock, Stephen belies his nonchalance by looking quickly behind to see if anyone is watching him (26). What Joyce is implying here, according to Ellmann, is that “art is not self-isolation” (26). Marking nature with one’s nasal excretions is variably material and ostensibly, communal. The sociability of Stephen’s anti-social behavior is given expression through the senses. Mary King explains:

> The *humanly* sensuous therefore is necessarily social. Where identity or individuality are concerned, we are individual because we are social, and this in turn has crucial implications for the nature of our relationship to the world of objects and processes as well as to our fellow human beings. (341-42)

Both Stephen’s sexuality and his social persona bring him into relations with the world. Sexual interaction is conducive to communal cohesion: “To initiate sexual interaction it is necessary to open oneself to rejection: There is no way to say no affably and no way to hear it painlessly…Whenever there are high risks and high stakes, there are strong sentiments and strong values” (Dillon 188). Dillon gives sexuality a communal context: “We are all in this together…Everyone has sexual contact with someone who has had sexual contact with someone else. And that means that we are all in some way in contact with each other” (Dillon 189). But Stephen’s masturbatory fantasies about women distance him from real interactions with people and he compensates for this distance with his writing.

When Stephen picks his nose at the end of "Proteus," he pays tribute to his friend Lynch, showing that he rejects the theory of art that he set out in *Portrait*, and that he rejects "normal natures." In *Portrait*, Stephen discusses with Lynch whether or not a vulgar and self-indulgent gesture is considered an act of desire and therefore beauty, good art). Lynch tells Stephen about "that one day [he] wrote [his] name in pencil on the backside of Venus of Praxiteles in the Museum" (205). In response, Stephen says, "I speak of normal natures… You also told me that when you were a boy in the charming Carmelite school you ate pieces of dried cowdung" (205).

Stephen does not eat cowdung in Ulysses, but he does pick his nose "[f]or the rest let look who will" (3.501). And laying in on the rock is a move which associates him with Lynch who childishly marks objects of art with his signature. To be sure, Lynch requires the following from Stephen: "If I am to listen to your esthetic philosophy give me at least another cigarette. I don't care about it. I don't even care about women. Damn you and damn everything. I want a job of five hundred a year. You can't get me one" (204). David Weir, writing about Stephen's sexual aesthetics, explains: "Joyce means for the 'last cigarette' detail to signal some kind of parallelism between aesthetic theory and poetic practice (whether Joyce thought of the habit of smoking, as Freud did, as a substitution for the habit of masturbation, is another question)" (216). It is meant to show the "radical difference between the scholastic aesthetics Stephen announces and the sexual poetics he practices," writes Weir (216).

Lynch, by contrast to Stephen, thinks about practical matters like earning a decent living. Stephen, at the end of "Proteus" also thinks about practical matters like how to wipe his nose with a handkerchief he no longer has. Patricia Rimo argues that Stephen's acceptance of material reality at the end of the "Proteus" episode signals his maturity: "The closing pages of 'Proteus' signal Stephen's maturation as a character" (301). But Teal overlooks how a material process or concrete act such as masturbation is largely induced by abstractions-daydreams, fantasies, and poetry. Rimo offers that Stephen's writing "represents a mental *and* physical interaction with the image through he process of writing it down" (Rimo 299) showing that the mind and the body work together. Ellmann, for instance, considers that Stephen has an "abstract purpose too" (26) for some of his materialistic responses to the world. Ellmann argues that after depositing snot on the rock, Stephen's "backward glance is a parting denial of the subjectivist universe which briefly attracted him at the beginning of the episode" and he turns toward more optimistic times. But Stephen's recognition of what is behind him also signals what Robert Bell characterizes as the failed artist's blatant insecurity (25).

There is an important lesson to be learned from the recognition that the world can be a disappointing and lonely place. In "Proteus," Stephen Dedalus's self-deprecating nature shows that his sexual and professional frustrations have become repetitive and stifling. However, he is a man now and he must deal with his problems in a way in which *Portrait* has not prepared him. He can no longer channel his longings for women into poetry since this is both self-serving and juvenile and because it is not a financially rewarding pursuit. Now that his mother is dead, and his father utterly poor, he needs to consider how best to use his talent or skills to secure his livelihood on his own.

In "Proteus," then, as a result of this position, he is locked in stasis. His ambivalence is caused by an inherent sense of defeat "in that there is no external object, whether it be a lover or great wealth, which is capable of making up for the originally perceived failure and its consequence" (213). Here, his original failure is his inability to be with Emma Clery because of his insecurities about his body and his poverty. And yet, as Jukes argues in a general sense, "this failure is a necessary condition for maturation and entry into the social world. We have to look to ourselves for salvation and attempt come to terms with that failure by finding the means to forgive" (Jukes 213).

Stephen works out life's problems through masturbation and writing. But the maniacal acuity with which Stephen recalls his various longings for other women besides Emma throughout the "Proteus" chapter sully his thoughts about "the virgin at Hodges Figgis' window on Monday" (3.426-7) and transforms them into predatory inclinations. Dante's method of glorifying women in the name of God is not Stephen's purpose. His engagements with people throughout *Ulysses* prove that he is socially inept. His experience touching himself on a desolate beach in the "Proteus" chapter depicts him as a sexual recluse. His bold and daring approach to masturbating in public and wiping snot on the rock on Sandymount Strand is not a carefree and libertine attitude of self-exploration and personal freedom. In light of what we know about Stephen's efforts in securing the love of a woman, his behavior is creepy, and a "bit bizarre" (Clarke 71).

As readers, we seem to interpret Stephen's behaviour differently than Bloom's exhibitionism in "Nausicaa." Stephen, for the most part, is received as an educated and intellectual man. With all this pomp and verbal eloquence, we perhaps expect him to be more refined or sophisticated about sex. We are more willing to accept Bloom's erotic demonstrations because they are common, expected, and funny. In Stephen, there is a touch of the theatrical, an obsessive compulsion, and the macabre. Suzette Henke explains the role art plays for Stephen in *Portrait*, rescuing him from his sexual failures:

> Art alone promises to provide a refuge from reality and to invest Stephen with the powers of both priest and shaman—the ability to confront the beauty and mystery of creation while tasting the joy of loneliness. (61)

While he prides himself on being the "priest of the eternal imagination" in *Portrait*, his hauteur is persistent and negative by "Proteus."

Christine Froula gives context to the dangerous implications of Stephen's sexual and literary shortcomings in "Proteus" by linking the frustration and his mother's recent death to the vampire poem:

> The melancholiac's self-reproaches reflect the strong aggressive motive bound up with desire in this early stage of attachment: the child desires to incorporate the mother, and, that wish being by nature 'oral and cannibalistic,' to do so by devouring her… The melancholiac's narcissistic identification reawakens aggression and guilt: he blames himself the lost one's death, as though this hunger has somehow caused it. (98)

Equally as pertinent as the psychoanalytical explanation of the possible significance of the vampire poem and Stephen's transformation in "Proteus," is Alfred Killilea's cultural explanation of death. Killilea quotes Geoffrey Gorer summarizing our culture's attitude toward mortality by pointing to the "pornography of death":

> The repression of sexuality brought with it a flourishing of pornography. The attempt to deny the existence of death by repressing the subject has brought about a popular fascination with violence…As with sexual pornography, the pornography of violent death de-emphasizes feelings. (6)

Marilyn French notes that "the sexual themes of *Ulysses* merge into a great incertitude about what is natural and what is good" (46). But Henke confirms that Stephen's "nocturnal fantasies [in *Portrait*] are motivated not by love or tenderness, but by a narcissistic need to defile the invaginated other, to inscribe the hymeneal folds of the vaginal body/text with a male signature of conquest and impregnation" (53).

Violence also figures in Stephen's sexual fantasies. In the "Circe" chapter, of course, vampire imagery surfaces again, but this time, instead of the death kiss to Stephen's dead mother, the vampire man himself violently violates a nun: "All chic womans which arrive full of modesty then disrobe and squeal loud to see vampire man debauch nun very fresh young…" (15.3891-93). The link to chic clothing recalls Stephen's Paris disguise when he pretends to be a killer incognito: "Other fellow did it: other me. Hat, tie, overcoat, nose. Lui, c'est moi. You seem to have enjoyed yourself" (3.183-4).

Stephen's masturbatory practices and his forged poetry reveal that he has not matured sexually nor artistically since *Portrait*. His maturity, if we are to call it that, is a bland acceptance of the fact that his own stiffest theories can break in practice. Using his protean penis, he marks the ever-fluctuating tides of sexual life with sexual frustration and writing. Despite his rebellious postures, he has not affected any revolutionary change among *Dubliners*. However, Joyce's portrayal of a masturbating, sexually frustrated artist calls into question the purpose of art and audience. Does sexual frustration work better as the subject or form of a poem? Indeed, sexual tension and frustration provide the topic in many other modernist works like those of T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence. But Joyce admonished Lawrence's writing, admitting: "That man writes too poorly…Ask his friend Aldous Huxley for something instead; at least he dresses decently" (87).

But Joyce and Lawrence accused the other of writing pornography, but Joyce's complaints against Lawrence's writing parallel my argument against Stephen's writing: "He found the prose 'lush,' the English 'sloppy,' and the pornography imitation" (87). Stephen's posturing suggests an unwillingness to accept reality. Stephen's sexuality and art is fractured and frustrated by his separation from society. When we read Stephen's villanelle in *Portrait* we ingest fanciful prose and heroic posturing. In "Proteus" we interpret fraction of his vampire poem as a pronounced expression of death and eroticism but conveyed nonetheless in cheap verse. While the artificial prose acts like a mask, which hides his sexual anxieties and keeps him from embarrassment, his sexual failure depicts the sexually repressive regime that haunts him throughout both books.

The most obvious story of Stephen's sexuality can be read on his body. We read Stephen's flaming cheeks and erections to be physiological responses to sexual stimuli. David Hayman describes the situation where Stephen enacts a fight or flight response after masturbation: "belated embarrassment follows intense narcissism" after "Stephen has just conducted himself most curiously in a public spot" (16). In the course of his development from *Portrait*, through Paris, and to *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus has utterly undone himself through a sexual fatalism that dooms him to a destiny of "desire and corporeality which forever ensnare[s] men in their lusts" (Soper 264).

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