“Telemachus”: Ghosts and Cannibals

*A tale told of Shaun or Shem?—“Finnegans Wake”
A tale told of Stephen Dedalus

At the outset of *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus no longer seems to be the cold, esoteric aesthete who had recourse to Dante’s “spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus” at the end of *Portrait (PA 252)*. Chastened by an abortive flight to Paris, lapwing Stephen has begun to mature. His theories have been tempered, at least intellectually, by the developing conviction that art must take root in personal experience. As a nascent poet, Stephen demands the rights of self-expression so long denied the Celtic bard. He refuses to chronicle sagas of Irish history or to heed the church’s strictures concerning art. He wants to create from the fabric of his soul, and his heated pursuit of aesthetic freedom is tantamount to a personal quest for the liberty of self-determination.¹

Beneath the mask of paradox, Stephen harbors a secret terror of betrayal and martyrdom. In “Telemachus,” he inhabits a closed, almost paranoid world of physical and mental asphyxia-
tion. He nervously hovers in the dark Martello tower and mounts the stairs like a caged, suspicious animal. The fortress is the "omphalos" of the earth; yet despite its uterine interior, Stephen never feels secure in its belly. He fears being overwhelmed by the claustrophobic objects of a hostile, foreign environment.

The sea terrifies Stephen because it portends engulfment—a sinking down into matter and the annihilation of personal identity. It calls up womb images and metaphorically functions as a giant placenta, encompassing Ireland in viscous amniotic fluid. The unborn souls of men float paralyzed in the "deep jelly of the water" (p. 21).  

Stephen is further alienated from his surroundings by the private experience of "Agenbite of Inwit"—a medieval "prick of conscience" that suggests the free-floating anxiety of existential dread. Ethical horror emanates from the ghost of Mary Dedalus, who indicts her son for his refusal to kneel and pray at her deathbed:

—The aunt thinks you killed your mother. . . . That’s why she won’t let me have anything to do with you.
—Someone killed her, Stephen said gloomily.
—You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you, Buck Mulligan said. I’m hyperborean as much as you. But to think of your mother begging you with her last breath to kneel down and pray for her. And you refused. There is something sinister in you . . . (P. 5)

Already Mulligan has proved himself worthy of Stephen’s telegram quoting Richard Feverel: "The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done" (p. 199). Mulligan cares little about his friend’s departed mother and less about the sin of apostasy. He uses all the sentimental rhetoric at his command to arouse Stephen’s unconscious guilt, and he enjoys watching his victim squirm. Buck is not emotionally involved in the demise and has incurred none of the "immense debtorship" associated with the nominal murder. By using such maudlin clichés as "dying mother" and
"begging you with her last breath," he appeals to the subliminal guilt that every individual retains from the vague, primordial "memory, more and more galling, of his having consented to live in his mother, then to leave her." Mulligan conflates the guilt of existence with the "debtorship" of a murderer toward his victim. His melodramatic language vies with the sticky romanticism of Gerty MacDowell. Like Iago, he plants the seeds of psychological agony in Stephen's mind and grimaces at his victim's self-torture:

Stephen, an elbow rested on the jagged granite, leaned his palm against his brow and gazed at the fraying edge of his shiny black coat-sleeve. Pain, that was not yet the pain of love, fretted his heart. Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting. (P. 5)

All of Stephen's senses are sharply attuned to perceive his mother's specter. He feels tactile pain "fretting" his heart and experiences the gustatory horror of imagining the phlegm spit up from her cancerous liver. Tortured vicariously, he re-creates the sensation of an internal organ slowly being ripped apart by Promethean vultures.

Mary Dedalus appears to her son with the detailed visual clarity of a pre-Raphaelite painting. She reeks of "wax and rosewood" and "a faint odour of wetted ashes." The "once beautiful May Goulding" resembles Rossetti's Blessed Damozel peering down from her golden perch in heaven. She approaches her son like a departed mistress courting erotic favor, evoking an amorous distraction "not yet the pain of love." She recriminates him as both son and lover, roles that the Freudian censor makes psychologically exclusive.

By publicly refusing his mother's deathbed request, Stephen
hoped to free himself from a double bondage to home and church; and perhaps, simultaneously, to renounce precon­scious incestuous desires. Now, if he fails to yield to the phantom temptress, he offends the sanctum sanctorum, "mother love." If, in turn, he violates the ideal virginity of his maiden-mother, he offends the most primitive strictures of social behavior.

Looking out from his tower prison, Stephen is surrounded by a "ring of bay and skyline." The circle that binds his vision becomes cramped until the sea-ring shrinks in his anxious imagination. He recalls a much smaller circle, the rim of a white china bowl that stood by his mother's deathbed. Inside the dish, the "snotgreen sea" changes to "green sluggish bile," a minute quantity of liquid that drowns his mind in a flood of excruciating memories.

Stephen muses on the secrets that had defined his mother's life: "old feather fans, tasselled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer" (p. 9). The once beautiful May Goulding is now "folded away in the memory of nature with her toys" (p. 10). Stephen senses the acute pathos of these nostalgic mementoes. Death is terrible because human life can be reduced to so little: a collection of shadows and reflections too trivial to bear the weight of personal sorrow. One need not believe in Irish fairies or in Catholic spirits to perceive the ghost of Mary Dedalus. She is painfully present in the "mode of absence," a shade negatively constituted by the remnants of a life-world once imbued with conscious meaning.

Stephen is enslaved to the memory of his mother, who in turn was bound to physical reminiscences. He is being suffocated by a morass of paralyzed matter: "Memories beset his brooding brain. Her glass of water from the kitchen tap when she had approached the sacrament. A cored apple, filled with brown sugar, roasting for her at the hob on a dark autumn evening. Her shapely fingernails reddened by the blood of squashed lice from the children's shirts" (p. 10). Stephen mentally associates food and drink with cannibalism, since Mary Dedalus partook of
“the body and blood of Christ” in the Eucharist, just as she ingested “a cored apple” and squashed the lice feeding on her children’s bodies. The mother returns after death in ghoulish fashion, “her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul” (p. 10). Her son becomes the eucharistic victim to be consumed in holy Viaticum, the Catholic communion for the dying. He will be masticated like a cored apple, assimilated back into the maternal body shunned at birth. Enraged by the ghost’s psychic cannibalism, Stephen wakes from his reverie in violent protest: “Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! / No mother. Let me be and let me live” (p. 10). Mary Dedalus wants to devour her son’s life fluid as the lice had fed on his blood. Stephen fears she would annihilate his personality in a sacramental attempt to save his immortal soul.

The phantasm defends a religion of decay and of mouldering devotion:

In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes.

... On me alone. ... Her eyes on me to strike me down. Liliata rutilantium. ... (P. 10)

Resembling a priest of the grave, Mary Dedalus wears sacramental vestments. Her garb reeks of strange incense, and she utters “mute secret words” of religious ritual. Her ashen breath recalls the rites of Ash Wednesday, the memento mori preached by a rotting corpse. Stephen remembers his mother on her deathbed—a hard, frenzied creature trying to subjugate his rebellious spirit. Her ghost calls him to a eucharistic feast in which he himself will be the sacrificial victim.

In the womb of mother Ireland, in the lap of the ocean, Stephen is haunted by Mary Dedalus. Physically confined in a round, granite bastion, he is being mentally asphyxiated by a ghost who fills every space available. No crevice is safe from the phantom’s ashen breath. Like the sea, that “great sweet mother,” Mary Dedalus is a castrating female who evokes
"scrotumtightening" anxiety. Part of the dead past, she threatens to engulf the present in paralytic stasis.

Because drowning serves as a synecdoche for death, the shade of Stephen's mother is a sea-ghost. At the mere mention of water, Stephen recalls Agenbite of Inwit, the guilt evinced by her imputed murder. Mulligan, Haines, and Mary Dedalus all are symbolically connected with the ocean's claustrophobia. They inhabit a dead world of determined essences where nothing is new, nothing created. All is categorized, mechanical, and automatic.

In opposition to the forces of engulfment, Stephen is fighting to become a bardic "priest of the imagination," capable of transmuting the materials of common experience into the sanctified wafer of art. His aesthetic vocation is undermined by Mulligan, the usurper who tries to drown his companion in a sea of undifferentiated matter. Preaching the joys of pagan decadence, Mulligan dons a mask of public gaiety to cloak cruelty, envy, and jealousy. Superficially a "stage Irishman" who will do anything for a laugh, Buck is in fact a poseur with the malevolence of a Faustian Mephistopheles.

Mulligan is masculine and aggressive, a "naturalistic man." He wields the razor blade, an instrument of butchery, for the purpose of cutting through aesthetic images reflected in the mirror of art. He wants to reduce the literary world to palpably sensuous terms: "The bard's noserag. A new colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen. You can almost taste it, can't you?" (p. 5). The jest has a tinge of malice intended to denigrate poets who, despite esoteric cries of "art for art's sake," live by the same bodily functions as common men. Algernon Charles Swinburne becomes "Algy"—but more appropriately, the vegetative parasite, "algae," attached to the womb of the "great sweet mother, Mother and lover of men, the sea" ("The Triumph of Time"). Buck deliberately misquotes Swinburne's verses and conflates the ocean with Whistler's "grey sweet mother" (p. 5).

Mulligan perpetually chides Stephen for aesthetic "mumming" and for his failure to use art as a vehicle of Zolaesque
naturalism. He wants Kinch to recognize the bloody knife and razor perched on the mirror of art, to think in excretory images, and to regard death in terms of "beastly" medical cadavers.

Throughout "Telemachus," Mulligan is described in non-human imagery: his face is "equine"; his "untonsured" hair resembles "pale oak." "He swept the mirror a half circle in the air to flash the tidings abroad in sunlight now radiant on the sea. His curling shaven lips laughed and the edges of his white glittering teeth. Laughter seized all his strong wellknit trunk" (p. 6).

Behind a veneer of elegance, Mulligan harbors predatory instincts. He suddenly becomes an animal with "curling lips," a wolf anxious to sink "his white glittering teeth" into the soft flesh of "poor dogsbody." Buck is metamorphosed into a sentient automaton, a machine no longer in control of its actions. His bodily parts seem to function independently. Mulligan himself does not laugh: "His curling shaven lips laughed and the edges of his white glittering teeth." His body responds automatically to external stimuli until even the muscles are denied initiative. His frame is controlled entirely from without: "Laughter seized all his strong wellknit trunk."

Joyce's language changes Mulligan from a rational animal to a sentient predator, and finally to an inanimate vegetable. In a single paragraph, Buck has descended the Thomistic scale of being. He starts out as angelic messenger to the heavens, a wizard-priest flashing circles in the air. In the next sentence, he becomes a snarling beast, flashing nothing more than glittering white fangs. Ultimately, he is reduced to arboreal immobility: like the oak, he can boast of a "strong wellknit trunk."

Mulligan judges himself and his companions by the mask of "being-for-others." He tries to annihilate Stephen's self-image by forcing the poet to turn his attention from inward brooding to external identity:

—Look at yourself, he said, you dreadful bard.

Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack, hair on end. As he and others see me. Who
chose this face for me? This dogsbody to rid of vermin. It asks me too. (P. 6)

Stephen is rightfully befuddled by Mulligan’s crude mimesis. He looks at the physical image of himself “as he and others see me.” As the language slips from external description to interior monologue, Joyce reflects Stephen’s mental confusion through syntactical ambiguity. Stephen “peered at the mirror held out to him, “cleft by a crooked crack, hair on end.”” Of the three phrases that succeed “mirror,” the first two are introduced by participles that modify the noun. The glass is “held out” by a hand and “cleft” by a crack. The third phrase, “hair on end,” fails to balance the triplet. It refers back to Stephen, the subject, who notices a coiffure so disheveled that even he is startled.

One might further extend the verbal ambiguity by associating the word “cleft” with the preceding pronoun, “him”— reflexively, “Stephen.” The sudden shock of seeing his image has proved psychically “cleaving” to the bard. He feels disoriented, torn between introspective self-consciousness and an external mirror image. Stephen experiences a split in existence, a psychological extension of the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy. On the one hand, he identifies with the “transcendental ego,” the self as it perceives itself in the process of conscious activity. Simultaneously, he apprehends his body as “other,” alienated from the mind by its failure to respond to mental and volitional control. A man cannot will his heart to beat, his body to stay young, or his hair to lie flat. The body as a material organism constitutes a separate, foreign identity.

Confused by this sudden sensation of duality, Stephen asks, “Who chose this face for me?” He speaks of his ego as “first person” and of his body as objective “third person.” He distinguishes the conscious “I” from the “me” confined to matter. His physical identity seems to be composed of arbitrary parts put together by an unknown artisan from prefabricated faces, hands, feet, and bodily organs. Stephen has yielded to Buck’s degrading epithets. He regards his image
as a louse-ridden "dogsbody," a hunk of meat breeding maggots. The physical self has become "it," a thing "not-I" that joins the mass of oppressive matter sealing the poet into a confined space and crushing his potential expansion.

Stephen feels "the rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in the mirror." He has not been shown a reflection of the self he identifies as "I." He has viewed, instead, an image of "poor dogsbody," a Caliban whose animal body houses the consciousness of a man. Stephen is unable to bridge the gap between physical and spiritual existence. Hence his vertiginous sense of personal disintegration.

Unlike Cranly in Portrait, Mulligan cannot get close to Stephen, even though he boasts that "I'm the only one that knows what you are" (p. 7). He employs the relative pronoun "what" rather than "who"; and by his choice of language, he answers his own question, "Why don't you trust me more?" (p. 7). Mulligan takes pains to define what Stephen is—a physically alienated object and a man guilty of matricide. While Stephen meditates, Buck proposes that the two join forces to establish a new religion of pagan materialism. "To ourselves . . . new paganism . . . omphalos" (p. 7). For Buck, contemplation will involve navel-gazing at a body that is "beastly" alive. His cult is more hedonistic than meditative, a religion of egotistical self-involvement. No matter how long Mulligan looks at his omphalos, he will never see more than a symbol of physical birth.

Mulligan is so self-centered that he uses egotism as an excuse for his jibes against Stephen. "I can't remember anything," he argues. "I remember only ideas and sensations" (p. 8). His mode of perception is both Lockean and solipsistic. He recalls only those things that impinge directly on his ego, and he takes refuge in a private world from which he is loath to escape. He lives on a sentient, instinctual level, affected only by random stimuli and by "ideas" that touch his mind as passive sensations. Because Buck dwells so close to the bestial, he interprets life in animal terms. He strips "poor dogsbody" of his integrity and casually remarks that
Stephen’s mother is “beastly dead.” If, in fact, Mary Dedalus can be described as “beastly dead,” then Stephen might rightfully be addressed by his jeering companion as a “dogsbody,” little more than a walking carcass. The dam of “dogsbody” could be labeled a “bitch”; and Buck’s derogatory nickname would brand Stephen as an S.O.B., one of the lowest figures of Dublin vulgarity.

“And what is death, he asked, your mother’s or yours or my own? . . . I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissecting room. It’s a beastly thing and nothing else. It simply doesn’t matter” (p. 8). Death “does not matter” if life is only a beastly exaltation of animal enjoyment. A dead man becomes food for the dissecting room, since the human machine is no more than the sum of its parts, “cut up into tripes” the moment it stops functioning. Mulligan’s language suggests cannibalism and invites us to taste human entrails, “tripes” cut out of a cadaver.

Such flippant remarks offer a direct challenge to Stephen’s spiritual definition of his own aesthetic vocation. When Mulligan protests, “I didn’t mean to offend the memory of your mother,” Stephen retorts:

— I am not thinking of the offence to my mother.
— Of what, then? Buck Mulligan asked.
— Of the offence to me, Stephen answered (Pp. 8–9)

Buck’s pagan mockery constitutes a genuine threat to the notion of sacramental creation. The reduction of human life to “beastliness” invalidates the role of the artist-god. If the poet is to function as priest of the eternal imagination, his identity is contingent on the spiritual dimensions of human existence. More than denying the reality of the soul, Mulligan is negating the primacy of consciousness as the source of personal integrity. He defends a mechanistic view of life and refuses to recognize the unity of physical, intellectual, and emotional experience.

Surprised that Stephen should take offense at his profanity, Mulligan complains that his friend is too exacting, too discrim-
inating and jesuitical: "Look at the sea. What does it care about offences? Chuck Loyola, Kinch, and come on down" (p. 9). Buck invites Stephen to abandon judgment and to sink into the bliss of hedonistic materialism. But yielding to pagan irresponsibility would entail forfeiting personal will and drowning in a whirlpool of spiritual annihilation.

Psychologically, the "gloomy domed livingroom of the tower" reinforces Stephen's terror of asphyxiation. The belly of the tower is a smoky pit worthy of Beelzebub. Dark gloom, the yellow glow of the hearth, and "a cloud of coalsmoke and fumes of fried grease" create a hellish atmosphere. "We'll be choked," Mulligan screams; and he soon translates his frenzy into the present tense: "Janey Mack, I'm choked. He howled without looking up from the fire:—Kinch!" (p. 11). Mulligan is looking at the fire, but the prepositional phrase is sufficiently ambiguous to place him in the midst of the flames. Like a howling devil, he seems to address his companion from a Luciferian abyss. We know rationally that Buck is staring at the flames; but we are encouraged linguistically to visualize him yelling "from the fire," screaming to Kinch-Christ for the key to salvation.

Within the tower, the infernal environment destroys individual identity. Human beings no longer function as volitional agents, but as "forms," material objects externally animated: "Buck Mulligan's gowned form moved briskly about the hearth to and fro. . . . A tall figure rose from the hammock where it had been sitting, went to the doorway and pulled open the inner doors" (p. 11; italics mine). Even after the door has been opened to "welcome light and bright air," the draught does nothing to alleviate the tower's enclosedness. Mulligan continues to describe himself in similes that refer to inanimate objects: "I'm melting, he said, as the candle remarked" (p. 12).

Themes of violence and cannibalism dominate the morning repast. When Old Mother Grogan figuratively appears in the person of an aged Irish milkwoman, Buck responds to her exclamation of "Glory be to God" with the wry remark: "The
islanders . . . speak frequently of the collector of prepuces” (p. 13). His medical reference to the Hebrew-Christian God as barbaric foreskin-hunter is as meaningless to the old lady as Haines’s Gaelic-French. “Are you a medical student, sir?” (p. 14), the woman inquires.

The crone panders to her medicine man, and Stephen cynically envisions her “unclean loins” as prey to the phallic serpent. But like the old woman, the poet is himself an “unclean bard” who refuses to perform ritual ablutions: “They wash and tub and scrub. Agenbite of inwit. Conscience. Yet here’s a spot” (p. 16). He recognizes the darkness endemic to the human soul and refuses the ineffectual waters of sacramental cleansing. He will listen only to the chaste moon, Diana, who bids him purify his body once a month.

When Stephen scorns Buck’s “puppet” pose of gaiety and demands money from Haines, he is rhetorically metamorphosed into a hoofed quadruped, then into a parasitic louse: “You put your hoof in it now . . . your lousy leer and your gloomy jesuit jibes” (p. 16). In Mulligan’s sphere, human beings are stripped of personal volition, and physical objects take on independent existence. Buck speaks to his “rebellious tie,” “stiff collar,” and “dangling watchchain,” chiding them for insubordination. Despite his Whitmanian egotism, the mocker is not in control: “Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. Mercurial Malachi. A limp black missile flew out of his talking hands” (p. 17). Hands talk and hats fly in a realm of automata presided over by a human machine.

Once outside the tower, Mulligan continues to fight quixotic dragons, clubbing “with his heavy bathtowel the leader shoots of ferns or grasses,” and crying, “Down, sir. How dare you, sir?” (p. 17). Buck is a prime example of mechanical perverseness. Believing himself a Nietzschean superman, he is in fact a slave to the world of physical matter. His actions are perverse and impulsive, predetermined by automatic responses. Belli­cose Buck is appropriately housed in a Martello tower of war, built by “Billy Pit . . . when the French were on the sea” (p.
But he has an enemy closer than France—the pseudo-French bard sporting a Latin-quarter hat.

Because Stephen is fervidly concerned with personal freedom, he resists the dehumanizing powers of “mechanical man.” In the “bright silent instant” of “Telemachus,” he experiences a sudden epiphany: he recognizes himself as a melancholic Hamlet figure cramped between Mulligan and Haines. He walks alone, isolated in garb and identity, and hemmed in by two malevolent stage jesters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Brightness falls from the air, but the luminescence is a Luciferian glow from Mulligan’s twinkling eyes. In Buck’s stare, Stephen confronts a psychological rather than a physical reflection of himself; he becomes painfully aware of his body as the object of a penetrating “Medusa gaze.” In a grotesque way, Mulligan is an inverted double who turns on his victim a diabolical “evil eye.”

Like Mulligan, Haines allies himself with the light and has eyes “pale as the sea” (p. 18). The invader gazes over the bright skyline, dazzled by his empire. Stephen identifies the Saxon conqueror with oceanic dominion and sees the Englishman as a representative of the threatening, all-encompassing sea. The Irish poet refuses to play “jester at the court of his master” (p. 25). He will not prostitute his wit to the arrogant Oxonian, and he deliberately withholds his theory proving “by algebra that Hamlet’s grandson is Shakespeare’s grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father” (p. 18).

In anticipation of Stephen’s aesthetic discussion, Haines introduces a “theological interpretation” of Hamlet: “The Father and the Son idea. The Son striving to be atoned with the Father” (p. 18). He flippantly offers a paradigm of all religious myth—from the classical Zeus-Jove hurling thunderbolts to a Christian God demanding the death of his only Son in expiation of Adam’s sin. All religion might be defined as a “striving to be atoned with the Father,” if we interpret the word “atone” both in its primary sense of “suffering to make up for a debt due”
and in the synthetic sense of being "at one" with a supernatural power. Shakespeare's Hamlet is striving to be atoned with the displeased shade of a murdered king, but he cannot be united with Hamlet senior until he himself has embraced death. Stephen is similarly frustrated in his quest for atonement: he can never be spiritually reconciled with Simon Dedalus, a sentimental Irishman who lives on wine, song, and nostalgia. The young poet is searching for the "shade of Kinch the elder," a man in some way worthy of consanguinity.

Clownish Buck Mulligan feels he can make himself "one" with the Father by reducing the Godhead to the level of vulgar materialism. At the mention of Christian atonement, Mulligan puts on "a blithe broadly smiling face." He becomes a Renaissance fool with eyes "blinking with mad gaiety" and moves "a doll's head to and fro" like a puppet or a machine. Even his words are automated, as he chants "in a quiet happy foolish voice" the "ballad of Joking Jesus":

-I'm the queerest young fellow that ever you heard.  
My mother's a jew, my father's a bird.  
With Joseph the joiner I cannot agree,  
So here's to disciples and Calvary.  

(P. 19)

Mulligan's song begins with a mock-definition of Christ's identity in terms of biblical parentage. Christ is alien, an isolé. His "mother's a jew," a member of the outcast race of Leopold Bloom and Lunita Laredo. His father is the Holy Spirit, usually represented in Christian iconography as a dove; or, as Joyce suggests in Stephen Hero, a "spermatozoon with wings" (SH 141). "The ballad of Joking Jesus" is a reductio ad absurdum of the doctrine of virginal conception. Like Yeats in "The Second Coming," Mulligan draws on the bestial element of pre-Christian mythology. He makes Christ's father subhuman, rather than supernatural. And he parodies earlier myths of apparent bestiality: Leda coupled with swan-Zeus; Deirdre raped by a "grey hawk." For the Messiah described in Mulli-
gan's ballad, atonement is impossible: the Savior could never be "at one" with an incompatible "bird-father." According to Mulligan, Christ "could not agree" with either his heavenly progenitor or his earthly father. Joseph the joiner remained skeptical of Mary's explanation of pregnancy, "C'est le pigeon" (p. 41). Alienated from both male parents, Christ became a wandering Messiah. Like Stephen, he could not identify his consubstantial father, the Holy Spirit, with his adopted protector, Joseph. Unable to achieve atonement, he embraced a "pseudo-paternity" over his disciples. Buck's poem is a theological parody of Stephen's Hamlet theory: both Christ and Shakespeare "atoned" to the Father by making themselves spiritual fathers of all mankind.

Chanting his song in the first person, Mulligan the mock-priest assumes the persona of Christ. He flutters "his hands at his sides like fins or wings of one about to rise in the air," recalling both the fish-symbol of Christ and the Messiah's parodic bird ancestry. "What's bred in the bone cannot fail me to fly / And Olivet's breezy . . . Goodbye, now, goodbye" (p. 19). Mulligan carries his thesis to absurdity by interpreting Christ's ascension into heaven as a literal manifestation of avian powers.

In contrast to the religious mockery in the "ballad of Joking Jesus," Stephen insists on a dogmatic definition of Catholicism. He rigidly pronounces himself an apostate:

—You're not a believer, are you? Haines asked. I mean, a believer in the narrow sense of the word. Creation from nothing and miracles and a personal God.
—There's only one sense of the word, it seems to me, Stephen said. . . .
—Yes, of course, he said, as they went on again. Either you believe or you don't, isn't it? Personally I couldn't stomach that idea of a personal God. You don't stand for that, I suppose?
—You behold in me, Stephen said with grim displeasure, a horrible example of free thought. (Pp. 19-20)

If Haines is a satanic figure, he is tempting Stephen not to deny God the Father but to relinquish a libertarian rebellion
against Catholic doctrine. He tries to exact a profession of apathetic rationalism that would acknowledge an impersonal, deistic God. Stephen, emulating his patron saint, jealously guards the role of martyr. If the rebel is to fly above the labyrinth of dogma, religion must maintain its rigidity. Stephen willfully condemns himself to a Catholic hell. He wants to distinguish himself as “horrible” in freedom, just as Daedalus the Greek must have appeared terrible to the Cretans who witnessed his escape.\textsuperscript{14}

Haines has unconsciously defined Christianity in terms of eucharistic consummation. He “personally” could not “stomach that idea of a personal God.” The verbal repetition reiterates the theme of latent cannibalism associated with the Mass. According to Catholic doctrine, the individual “stomachs” the body and blood of a personal God, Jesus Christ, in the reception of Holy Communion. Haines unwittingly rejects the Eucharist and possibly reminds Stephen of his own refusal to “stand for” Easter communion in Portrait.

Ironically, the Englishman comments: “After all, I should think you are able to free yourself. You are your own master, it seems to me” (p. 20). Haines is referring to the “free thought” that would liberate Stephen from Irish Catholicism. His companion responds by implicating Haines and his countrymen in a bondage from which the Irishman can not free himself. “I am the servant of two masters, Stephen said, an English and an Italian. . . . And a third . . . there is who wants me for odd jobs” (p. 20). Contradicting the biblical injunction that “no man can serve two masters,” Stephen is in servitude to three: Britain, the Roman church, and Malachi Mulligan.

The sudden appearance of two men searching for a drowned body focuses the theme of “Telemachus,” once again, on the psychological terrors of enclosedness:

Two men stood at the verge of the cliff, watching: businessman, boatman.
—She’s making for Bullock harbour.
The boatman nodded towards the north of the bay with some disdain.

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—There’s five fathoms out there, he said. It’ll be swept up that way when the tide comes in about one. It’s nine days today.

The man that was drowned. A sail veering about the blank bay waiting for a swollen bundle to bob up, roll over to the sun a puffy face, salt white. Here I am. (P. 21)

The spectators await a corpse returning from its unholy novena in the womb of the sea. Like Lycidas, the drowned man has “sunk beneath the watery floor” and will rise again. But he will be resurrected as nothing more than a “swollen bundle” bobbing to the surface, a mutilated image with “puffy face, salt white.” The corpse is a paradigm of the alien, the man who has become an object engulfed by inanimate matter. As part of a mechanistic universe, the dead body is reduced to the space it occupies. It can be identified numerically in temporal and spatial terms: “five fathoms out there”; “nine days today.” The drowned man has become food for fishes, and his “salt white face” is reminiscent of the Dantesque “salt bread” of exile that Stephen himself consumes (p. 21).

Stephen ironically concludes with the phrase “Here I am” placed in the mouth of the dead man. The corpse no longer enjoys a personal ego and cannot participate in Being-there, the Dasein described by Heidegger. The drowned man has been asphyxiated by total immersion in an alien environment. His remains are distinguished as “not-I,” matter whose spatial location here is devoid of the existential Being-there that defines human experience. Stephen’s satirical animation of the body is characteristic of an episode of metamorphoses. In the bizarre world of “Telemachus,” dead men speak and living men are transformed into weird amphibians. “A young man clinging to a spur of rock near him moved slowly frogwise his green legs in the deep jelly of the water” (p. 21). In a reverse evolutionary process, individuals sink into matter and return to the primal fluid of the sea.

When nature does not objectify, other human beings do. “I got a card from Bannon,” declares the frogman. “Says he found a sweet young thing down there. Photo girl he calls her” (p. 21). The man never identifies Milly Bloom; he describes her
as "a sweet young thing," the object of Bannon's male amusement. Similarly, Seymour, the medical student turned soldier, has been "stewing" around with female flesh, food for his sexual appetite.

The sudden appearance of an aged crab-man adds to the cast of metamorphosed characters: "An elderly man shot up near the spur of rock a blowing red face. He scrambled up by the stones, water glistening on his pate and on its garland of grey hair, water rilling over his chest and paunch and spilling jets out of his black sagging loincloth" (p. 22). Mulligan crosses himself piously at what seems to be the ghost of a resurrected corpse. The old man is an impotent Poseidon stripped of his powers over the sea. Despite immersion in the waters of fertility, his loincloth is sagging and black, spilling forth seedless rills of salt water. His decrepit body is one step removed from that of the dead man. In contrast to the spectral figure, Buck Mulligan declares himself a Nietzschean superman: "My twelfth rib is gone, he cried. I'm the Uebermensch... Thus spake Zarathustra" (pp. 22-23).

Psychologically weakened, Stephen is easy prey to Mulligan, the "bird-man" who feeds on his victim's conscience. Stephen finds himself helpless to protest when Mulligan demands the key to the tower and "twopence... for a pint." But the final imperial command will not be obeyed: "The Ship... Half twelve" (p. 23). Like Homer's Telemachus, Stephen recognizes the ambush set by his friends and exiles himself to the life of a wanderer: "I will not sleep here tonight. Home also I cannot go" (p. 23). The poet romantically strikes out as an isolated and rebellious spirit. He casts off mental paralysis and determines to exercise the liberty of self-creation. "Horn of a bull, hoof of a horse, smile of a Saxon" (p. 23): none is to be trusted. Stephen will himself become the Uebermensch.

The conclusion of "Telemachus" resembles a climactic moment in Joyce's earlier work Stephen Hero. Beset by "hemiplegia of the will," Stephen resolves to free himself from spiritual and psychological bondage: "The spectacle of the world in thrall filled him with the fire of courage. He, at least,
though living at the farthest remove from the centre of European culture, marooned on an island in the ocean, though inheriting a will broken by doubt . . . would live his own life according to what he recognised as the voice of a new humanity, active, unafraid and unashamed" (SH 194).

As Stephen turns to leave at the end of "Telemachus," he witnesses Buck's final metamorphosis: "A voice, sweet-toned and sustained, called to him from the sea. Turning the curve he waved his hand. It called again. A sleek brown head, a seal's, far out on the water, round'" (p. 23). Mulligan has been attempting to reduce his companion to a fawning "dogsbodies"—an object of derision and a helpless being-for-others. Now Stephen can recognize the animality Buck has disguised as sophisticated paganism. He sees his opponent for what he is: a barking seal immersed in a sea of matter, a "usurper" drowning in the womb-tomb of a deterministic universe.\(^{16}\)

Mulligan, Haines, and Mary Dedalus all have been overwhelmed by a claustrophobic world of mechanical action. The ghost of Mary Dedalus is a puppet of religion; Mulligan is enslaved to an Irish stage persona; and Haines is shackled to British imperialism. They are automatons, particles of matter and energy being reabsorbed into the paralyzed Irish environment. It is precisely this "hemiplegia" that Stephen eschews in his search for the aesthetic vocation so dimly and so idealistically conceived in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

1. For a further discussion of Stephen as hero, see Thomas F. Staley's article "Stephen Dedalus and the Temper of the Modern Hero," in *Approaches to *Ulysses*, ed. Thomas F. Staley and Bernard Benstock. As Staley remarks, "Stephen's struggle in *Ulysses* . . . is Joyce's portrait of the creative individual's struggle in the modern world. Paradox and suffering emerge from the beginning of *Ulysses* as the inevitable conditions of the creative modern temper as it seeks to define itself in its own terms" (p. 15).

2. "Inauthenticity" constitutes a metaphorical drowning—the total immersion of consciousness in a world of traditional values. As artist and rebel, Stephen refuses to sink down into the comfortable anonymity of what Heidegger terms *das Man*: "the neuter, the 'they', which is nothing definite,
and which all are. . . . Distantiality, averageness, and levelling down, as ways of Being for the 'they', constitute what we know as 'publicness'. . . . In these modes one's way of being is that of inauthenticity and failure to stand by one's Self." As Heidegger declares, the third-person "they" "deprives the particular Dasein of its answerability. . . . Everyone is the other, and no one is himself" (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 164-67).

3. As Thomas Staley reminds us, Stephen's "refusal to kneel and pray has been the one overt break with his past that has forced him to face directly the human consequences of his intellectual integrity" ("Stephen Dedalus," p. 18).

4. Mulligan's rhetoric is etymologically derisive. He calls Stephen "Kinch, the knife-blade," perhaps alluding to his sharp, caustic wit, but possibly insulting him, according to William York Tindall's derivation of "Kinch" from "kinchin" or "child" (A Reader's Guide to James Joyce, p. 139).


6. Stephen is terrified of his mother's ghost because it embodies the threat of "immanence." As Simone de Beauvoir explains in *The Second Sex*, "if the little boy remains in early childhood sensually attached to the maternal flesh, when he grows older, becomes socialized, and takes note of his individual existence, this same flesh frightens him." The feminine "presence calls him back to those realms of immanence whence he would fly, exposes roots from which he would tear himself loose. . . . To have been conceived and then born an infant is the curse that hangs over his destiny, the impurity that contaminates his being. And, too, it is the announcement of his death" (p. 136).

7. Stanislaus Joyce reports his brother Jim saying: "Don't you think . . . there is a certain resemblance between the mystery of the Mass and what I am trying to do? I mean that I am trying in my poems to give people some kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment by converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own . . . for their mental, moral, and spiritual uplift" (My Brother's Keeper, pp. 103-4). James Joyce ascribes the same artistic vocation to Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait* (p. 221).

8. In *Ulysses on the Liffey*, Richard Ellmann arrives at a similar conclusion about Mulligan: "Since Molly occupies the end of the book, it would follow that someone at the start must say, with Goethe's Mephistopheles, *Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint.*' This role was clearly apposite for Mulligan. . . . To the extent that Mulligan is the denying spirit, Joyce was faithful to the project he mentioned to his brother, of making *Ulysses* an Irish *Faust*" (pp. 8, 11).

9. In *Sartre's Nausea*, Roquentin has a similar experience of alienation in front of his mirror image: "There is a white hole in the wall, a mirror. It is a trap. I know I am going to let myself be caught in it. I have. The grey thing appears in the mirror. I go over and look at it. I can no longer get away. It is the reflection of my face. Often in these lost days I study it. I can understand nothing of this face. The faces of others have some sense, some
direction. Not mine. I cannot even decide whether it is handsome or ugly. At heart, I am even shocked that anyone can attribute qualities of this kind to it, as if you called a clod of earth or a block of stone beautiful or ugly.” (Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, p. 27).

10. Buck’s quotation is from Wilde’s preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray.

11. Robert Boyle makes a similar observation in his essay “The Priesthoods of Stephen and Buck.” He remarks that the Martello Tower as “not totally unlike, in smaller scale, the confines of the smoking and fuming prison of hell described in the retreat” (Approaches to ‘‘Ulysses,’’ ed. Staley and Benstock, p. 37).

12. For further discussion of “impulses of perverseness” and the role of the “evil eye” in Joyce’s writing, see Maria Elisabeth Kronegger, James Joyce and Associated Image Makers, pp. 97–100. In The Mechanics of Meaning, David Hayman also remarks on the Shakespearean resonances of this scene.

13. It is quite possible that Joyce intended the theories proposed by Haines and by Mulligan as parodies of Ernest Jones’s study, The Problem of Hamlet and the Oedipus Complex. See Ellmann, The Consciousness of Joyce, pp. 54, 114.

14. A. M. Klein interprets the dialogue between Haines and Stephen as a representation of the biblical temptation of Christ in the desert: “‘And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan: and was with the wild beasts’ (Mark 1:12). . . . Out of the very text the colloquy between Satan and his intended victim may thus be rendered. . . . The answer, as tradition required, was ambiguous. Free thought was confessed but was declared horrible. Despite his insinuating understatements, his ‘rather’ and his ‘somehow,’ his feigned concession. . . . Satan is no further advanced than when he began his seduction.” (“The Black Panther,” pp. 142–43).

15. “Now I eat his salt bread” (p. 20). Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman note that the phrase echoes Dante’s Paradiso. XVII:55–65, in which “Dante’s great-great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, predicts the future course of Dante’s life and the bitterness of his exile” with the prophecy, “Thou shalt make trial of how salt doth taste another’s bread” (Notes for Joyce, p. 14).

16. In Epic Geography, Michael Seidel reminds us that “mockers are Protean parasites” and that “Proteus in the Odyssey was a keeper of seals. . . . Menelaus captured Proteus by disguising himself and his men in seals’ hides and taking control of his domain” (p. 140).