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**JOYCE'S FICTION  
AND  
THE NEW RISE  
OF  
THE NOVEL**

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*edited by  
Franca Ruggieri*

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‘THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF AQUACITY WITH THE ERRATIC ORIGINALITY OF GENIUS’ (*U* 17. 247). CONSIDERATIONS ON STEPHEN DEDALUS’ FLUID DEVELOPMENT

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“I have just got a letter asking me why I don’t give Bloom a rest. The writer of it wants more Stephen. But Stephen no longer interests me to the same extent. He has a shape that can’t be changed.”

(Budgen 1972: 107)

While Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* may indeed appear as a somehow static character as Joyce famously comments in the above-mentioned conversation with Frank Budgen, his “shape” undoubtedly undergoes significant changes from when he is first introduced to the readers at the beginning of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*<sup>1</sup>. His development does not follow a predictably linear path, however; on the contrary, it is quite fluid as emerges from a close analysis of *Portrait*, and is characterised by a centripetal movement as the opening of *Ulysses* reveals. It is my intention in the present article to bring out the characteristics of Stephen’s development and to ascribe the character, as well as the works in which he appears, to a sub-genre of the modernist novel of formation, which I define as *fluid anti-developmental narratives*. In order to position Stephen within this narrative category, I will first indicate what I identify as the main characteristics of fluid

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter *Portrait*.

anti-developmental narratives<sup>2</sup>. This necessarily brief introduction will be supported by a comparison and close reading of chosen passages from *Portrait* and the consideration of few, but significant, elements particularly in the “Telemachus” and “Proteus” episodes of *Ulysses*, which account both for the continuity between the two works and for the ‘discontinuity’ of Stephen’s development.

My definition of fluid anti-developmental narratives refers to those modernist novels of formation in which the impossibility for the young protagonists to develop into mature adults is both symbolised and determined by their adverse relationship with the element of water<sup>3</sup>, which therefore has an important diegetic function in such narrations. The hostility towards the aquatic dimension shared by the protagonists of fluid anti-developmental narratives is very much in line with the overall dystopic representation of water that is characteristic of the modernist aesthetic. The dangerousness of water and the riskiness of journeys at sea, recurring motifs in modernist literature and poetry, are also among the leading subtexts of fluid anti-developmental narratives. Directly connected to these is the overall ambiguous representation of mariners. In this sense, it is almost needless to point out that in *Ulysses*, clearly inspired by one of the founding sea epics of the Western literary canon, the sailor is a surprisingly marginal figure (with the exception of the begging one-legged sailor, who occasionally appears throughout the novel, particularly in “Wandering Rocks”, and the dubious figure of the old seafarer D. G. Murphy, whom Stephen and

<sup>2</sup> The category of fluid anti-developmental narratives is the object of my current research project, which extends to comparative study of literary and cinematic texts, combining an analysis of the narrative function of water with an analysis of a ‘fluid’ linguistic style.

<sup>3</sup> Although the figure of Stephen Dedalus constitutes one of the main *foci* of my investigation, my research is not restricted to the works of Joyce. Another name that cannot be omitted, for instance, is that of Virginia Woolf. Even though Woolf’s characters often belong to social and cultural backgrounds that differ from those of Joyce’s, in novels such as *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) the relationship between the protagonists’ “arrested development” (cf. Esty 2012) and the aquatic dimension is outlined in analogous ways and by means of similar stylistic devices.

Bloom meet in “Eumaeus”). Another characteristic feature of fluid anti-developmental narratives is that the journey at sea, which in the traditional novel of formation often represents a successful achievement of adulthood<sup>4</sup>, loses this rite-of-passage function altogether. It is therefore indicative that, as John Brannigan observes in his volume *Archipelagic Modernism*, “whenever any of Joyce’s principal characters approach the Irish Sea, or consider its shores and crossings, they turn back” (2015: 69).

The presence of waterways, rivers, sea and seashores is of undeniable symbolic and narrative importance in Joyce’s work, and this aspect has been investigated extensively<sup>5</sup>. Yet, what I aim to highlight is that for *young* Joycean characters water, and particularly the maritime environment with its constitutive elements, often represent a danger and/or an obstacle that they cannot or are not willing to overcome. Eveline and Gerty McDowell are two evident examples, yet special attention should also be paid to the short story “An Encounter”, and to a significant turn that occurs by the middle of the narration. After having crossed the river Liffey (allegedly, a rite-of-passage moment) the two young protagonists find themselves in the dangerous space where they eventually meet the “queer old josser” (*D* 18) and in a dimension whose signs they are unable to decipher. The story therefore constitutes possibly the first example in Joyce’s work of the maritime environment clearly represented in a dystopic way with respect to young characters. Of the latter, however, Stephen Dedalus is surely prototypical: as he confesses to his friend Cranly in *Portrait*, the sea

<sup>4</sup> As Margaret Cohen in her essay “The Chronotopes of the Sea” points out, “[t]he narratives set on shipboard” are centred on “a character’s passage in personality, a *rite de passage*, quite often from youth [...] to maturity through the acquisition of cunning and know-how” (Cohen 2006: 664).

<sup>5</sup> Noteworthy among the early investigations on this topic, are essays by Sydney Feshbach (1985), Joseph Kestner (1994), and Robert Adams Day (1996), as well as Katharina Hagen’s monograph (1996). Equally important contributions include articles by Roberta Gefer Wondrich (2006), Sam Slote (2007), and Nels Pearson (2011), as well as, more recently, Greg Winston’s essay (2014) and a chapter in John Brannigan’s study (2015). (Cf. ‘Works Cited’ for a complete list of these contributions).



counts among the things he fears the most, together with “dogs, horses, firearms, [...], thunderstorms, machinery, the country roads at night” (*P* 243), and we also know that “his flesh dread[s] the cold in-frahuman odour of the sea” (*P* 167). This peculiar attitude towards water is further confirmed in *Ulysses*, where Stephen is mockingly referred to by Buck Mulligan as the “unclean bard [who] makes a point of washing once a month” (*U* 1.475) and where he is also described as a “hydrophobe” (*U* 17.237).

It is my contention that throughout Joyce’s production, the maritime dimension has a decisive role in determining the impossibility of a linear (and predictable) development for young protagonists. Moreover, in particular as far as Stephen is concerned, his peculiar relationship with water is further reflected in Joyce’s style and how it varies throughout *Portrait* and, at least, in the first three chapters of *Ulysses*. Crucially, many of the central episodes in Stephen’s growth revolve around his perception of language and his relation to it; many of these episodes are in turn also connected to the marine environment and its constitutive elements.

In order to describe Stephen Dedalus as a representative character of fluid anti-developmental narratives, it is first of all useful to consider *Portrait* “in terms of its peculiar failure to conform to the strict generic demands of the Bildungsroman form,” as Gregory Castle does in his study *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006: 1). As already pointed out, unlike the protagonists of the traditional novel of formation<sup>6</sup>, the main characters of the modernist Bildungsroman do not follow the path that leads them to a condition socially definable as mature adulthood. Indeed, in the case of Stephen, it cannot be said with clarity whether his formation is accomplished by the end of *Portrait* or whether he will eventually become a poet as he aspires to be. With subtle irony, Joyce has the rebel artist note in his diary, on the

<sup>6</sup> Notably the English Bildungsroman, in which, as Franco Moretti maintains, the “narrative transformations have meaning in so far as they lead to a particular marked ending [...] that establishes a classification different from the initial one but nonetheless perfectly clear and stable” (1987: 7)

eve of his voluntary exile from Ireland, “Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order” (*P* 252); in the triviality both of its content and of its tone, this sentence stands in sharp contrast to the resolution that Stephen so unambiguously presents to Cranly: “I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, be it my home, my fatherland or my church” (*P* 246-247).

The “incompatibility” of Stephen with “aquacity” (*U* 17.247), decisive in defining him as a quintessentially fluid anti-developmental character, can be better understood if considered against the backdrop of the modernist developments of the Bildungsroman. These, as both Gregory Castle and Jed Esty demonstrate, are heavily influenced by the rapid imperial expansion that took place in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Castle 2006; Esty 2012). In anti-developmental novels, the tension between youth and adulthood symbolically translates the conflict between the open-ended temporality of global capitalism and the physically and politically delimited temporality of the nation (Esty 2012: 4). If in the traditional Bildungsroman there is a certain correspondence between the formation of the individual and that of the nation, in its modernist version this linearity is replaced by a spatial and temporal boundlessness, which also has significant effects on the narration. In particular, the narrative boundlessness that characterises the work of Joyce becomes all the more meaningful if, as Castle proposes, we compare the Irish modernist novel of formation with its English counterpart; “in ‘semi-colonial’ Ireland,” Castle notes, “modernization had been at best an uneven process, in large part because colonial rule tended to retard development in some sectors of society and to encourage it in others” (2006: 57). This can easily be inferred by considering the maritime references related to Haines in *Ulysses*, where there is a “general tendency [...] to yoke the diverse elements of Britishness together with the imperial and monarchical state” (Brannigan 2015: 86). A pertinent example in this sense is the passage of the “mailboat clearing the harbourmouth of Kingstown” (*U* 1.83–84), which Stephen observes from the top of the Martello Tower in the opening scene of the novel. On the one hand, through the words of Mulligan, the passage of the boat is linked to the memory of the death of Stephen’s

mother, the reason why he returned to Dublin from his Parisian ‘exile’, and therefore also one of the main causes of his state of paralysis<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, some pages later, the “smokeplume” of the same mailboat is also seen by Haines, “[t]he seas’ ruler” (*U* 1.574); this epithet clearly alludes to the supremacy of the British Empire, thereby connecting the sea “with political power, and with the material and symbolic forms of imperial domination” (Brannigan 2015: 86), which, in turn, is among the main causes of Ireland’s paralysis.

While *Ulysses* is undoubtedly crucial to understanding Stephen’s attitude towards water, my analysis starts, chronologically, with *Portrait*. I intend to emphasise the complex symbolic, thematic and stylistic network that, through *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, links the fluidity of Stephen’s identity with the intrinsic fluidity of water and the (equally intrinsic) fluidity of language. On first reading, the style of *Portrait* seems indeed to undergo a substantial transformation between the first and the last chapter, describing an evolution that, supposedly, is in line with Stephen’s psychological, intellectual and artistic growth. Nevertheless, a more attentive approach reveals how the style follows a non-linear variation, characterised by sudden changes in tone and repetitions that contribute to underline the fluid character of Stephen’s *actual* development into a ‘young man’. As Naremore pertinently points out, in *Portrait*, just as “nearly in the whole body of Joyce’s work”, the style is “designed to suggest the ambiance of character” (1967: 332); in fact, it “not only takes us into Stephen’s rather florid imagination,” but also “gives us a clue to the attitude Joyce has towards his hero” (ibid.: 335). In particular, the narrative rhythm of *Portrait* is characterised by what I propose to define as a ‘tidal evolution’, thereby also translating into marine terms Hugh Kenner’s observation that each chapter in the novel “works toward an equilibrium which is dashed when in the next chapter Stephen’s world becomes larger and the frame of reference more complex” (1955: 121). Such

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Edmundson (2009) highlights a correlation between Stephen’s feeling of guilt for his mother’s death and the recurring references to drowning linked to it.

contrasts also occur within the single chapters, thus establishing a “sequence of rises and falls for Stephen’s development” (Riquelme 2004: 116) throughout the narrative. The tidal pattern, however, is particularly meaningful in the fourth and fifth chapters of *Portrait*, and it becomes decisive in the passage from *Portrait* to *Ulysses*, which, ultimately, is the key to understanding Stephen’s arrested development.

Among the episodes that mark the formation of the aspiring artist, the scene set on Dollymount Strand in the fourth chapter of *Portrait* is, of course, one of the most important. Here Stephen resolves to “create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul” (*P* 170), and meets (or has a vision of) the bird-girl, who embodies his idea of art and beauty. After having considered several possible sources for his inspiration – from an idealised image of Mercedes, to the ambivalent fascination for Emma, through a (presumptive) religious vocation – Stephen seems to identify in the girl on Dollymount Strand a definitive image. As a matter of fact, it is plausible to think that the creature Stephen sees on the shore is in fact a projection of his own self. Indeed, the girl appears to his eyes “like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful seabird” (*P* 171); she is described as a hybrid winged creature, thereby also symbolically translating Stephen’s particular condition. The fact that she has the features of a bird, suggests that the girl is able to take flight and, as we know, Stephen will declare himself ready to “fly by [the] nets” of “nationality, language, religion” (*P* 202). Furthermore, in her half-human and half-animal form, she reflects Stephen’s hybridity, as he has become neither a ‘young man’ nor an artist yet. On the one hand, the scene on Dollymount Strand describes the undoubtedly decisive moment in which Stephen acknowledges his artistic talent and ambition, translating them into the image of the girl. On the other hand, though, throughout the book, there are several moments in which Stephen equally seems to recognise the path he has to take. Significantly, also from a stylistic point of view, these passages are often characterised by very similar traits; in fact, the scene in the fourth chapter is anticipated in several instances in the early chapters of the novel. The style employed for the description of these moments of revelation is thereby

in some ways codified, possibly also indicating that these events have all been of equal importance to Stephen. While the recurrence of words and phrases in different passages throughout the novel certainly contributes to highlight the fact that the episodes they describe are meaningful to him, this also further suggests that his growth and formation are indeed characterised by an uneven process.

It is worth considering the passages that describe the appearance of the bird-girl in greater detail. On Dollymount Strand, Stephen is alone, “unheeded, happy and near to the wild heart of life. He [is] alone and young and wilful and wildhearted” (*P* 171). The brief, yet intense interaction between him and the girl is thus presented:

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, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither; and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.

—Heavenly God! cried Stephen’s soul, in an outburst of profane joy. (*ibid.*)

What certainly stands out in the description of this scene is the loneliness of the two figures, as well as the silence that surrounds them, two details to which I will briefly return later. Moreover, in this paragraph, as often happens in *Portrait* in moments of particular intensity, the syntax is considerably simplified and marked by the repetition (cf. also O’Connor 1957: 303) of sentences, phrases, and single words (e.g. “hither and thither,” “eyes,” “gaze,” “faint”). All these features become even more evident and meaningful in the famous passage that follows:

He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling. On and on and on and on he strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea, crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him.

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on! (*P* 172)

This ecstatic moment at the end of the fourth chapter is closely connected with Stephen's final decision to leave Ireland, clearly expressed in the fifth chapter. It is therefore useful to consider at least two of the diary entries that conclude the novel. The first is particularly important because of its clear maritime reference (and, possibly, setting) coinciding with the moment in which Stephen seems ready to undertake his journey:

16 April: Away! Away!

The spell of arms and voices: the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say: We are alone. Come. And the voices say with them: We are your kinsmen. And the air is thick with their company as they call to me, their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth. (*P* 252)

The fact that Stephen is able to see ship masts ("the black arms of tall ships") suggests that he is close to the coast or, in any case, facing the sea, thereby evoking the setting of the scene in the fourth chapter. The second of the diary entries I would like to refer to, which is also the second-last in the whole book, is Stephen's solemn declaration:

26 April: [...]

Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. (*P* 252-253)

This can definitely be seen as a climactic moment, both in Stephen's and in the narrative development, which apparently reaches a peak in these closing lines. Nevertheless, a passage that appears early in the fourth chapter corresponds to it almost literally. When Stephen is asked by the director of Belvedere College whether he would consider becoming a priest, "[i]n vague sacrificial or sacramental acts alone his will seemed drawn *to go forth to encounter reality*" (*P* 159; *emphasis added*). At this moment, Stephen arguably thinks of the religious vocation as one of the possible answers to his striving. Nevertheless, it seems that what attracts him to priesthood is merely the privilege that such a position would give him; indeed, as the director assures him, "[n]o king or emperor on this earth has the power of the priest of God" (*P* 158). Still, in reaction to this idea "[a] flame began to flutter [...] on Stephen's cheek" (*ibid.*); incidentally, the same image is used to describe the reactions of Stephen and of the girl on Dollymount Strand: "a faint flame trembled on her cheek" (*P* 171), and "[h]is cheeks were aflame" (*P* 172).

Interestingly, some elements of these pivotal scenes from chapters four and five are also to be found in another significant passage from the second chapter. Here a young Stephen, who seeks in the streets of Dublin the idealised image of 'his' Mercedes, "want[s] to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image that his soul so constantly beheld" (*P* 65). The subtle reference to his ultimate decision to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience" (*P* 253) is clear. Furthermore, it is very revealing to observe how Stephen imagines this meeting:

a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. [...] They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of

supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment, he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment. (*P* 65)

As will eventually be the case on Dollymount Strand, Stephen here foresees that this special encounter will take place in a condition of loneliness, “surrounded by darkness and silence,” and that, almost without his having too much agency in it, the “image” he seeks will be revealed to him. Moreover, “the moment of supreme tenderness” in which, as Stephen imagines, “he would be transfigured” (*ibid.*), comes true in chapter four when the image of the bird-girl “passe[s] into his soul forever” (*P* 172). Lastly, it should be noted once more how, just as in the passages considered above, the prose here becomes simpler and generally repetitive; the recurrence of the phrase “in that moment”, for example, certainly stands out, thereby also preparing the reader for the very instant, in the fourth chapter, in which the meeting will eventually turn out to be decisive for Stephen.

Another pivotal episode in the novel is Stephen’s first encounter with Emma, who, as mentioned above, becomes the object of his ambivalent devotion, thereby also replacing the “unsubstantial image” of Mercedes. The famous scene on the tram is important in many respects: first of all, Stephen’s excitement is translated by an ‘aquatic’ simile: “[h]is heart danced upon her movements like a cork upon a tide<sup>8</sup>” (*P* 69). More importantly, however, in the next few lines there is another reference to the first of the above-mentioned diary entries from chapter five:

He heard what her eyes said to him from beneath their cowl and knew that in some dim past, whether in life or reverie, he had heard

<sup>8</sup> A simile that also recalls another passage, which occurs just a couple of pages earlier, and which, incidentally, is set in the port of Dublin: “[Stephen] passed unchallenged among the docks and along the quays wondering at the multitude of corks that lay bobbing on the surface of the water in a thick yellow scum[.]” (*P* 66)



their tale before. [...] Yet a voice within him spoke above the noise of his dancing heart, asking him would he take her gift to which he had only to stretch out his hand. (ibid.)

Significantly, what Stephen reads in Emma's eyes is defined as a "tale," a word that returns right at the end of the novel in the "tale of distant nations" (*P* 252) offered to Stephen by the "tall ships" (ibid.), to whose appeal he seems to respond. Their "black arms" are "held out" (ibid.) to welcome him; if he wanted to take their "gift" (*P* 69) he would only have to "stretch out his hand" (ibid.), as the voice within him suggests at the end of the passage quoted from chapter two. Interestingly, this passage is also echoed in the scene already commented on in which Stephen meets the director of Belvedere: "He listened in reverent silence now to the priest's appeal and through the words he heard even more distinctly a voice bidding him approach, offering him secret knowledge and secret power" (*P* 159). This further confirms that the narrative peak apparently reached at the end of the novel is just one of the climactic points that, as Kenner infers (1955: 121), will be inexorably followed by an anti-climactic fall.

The opening of *Ulysses* is undoubtedly among the most important of these anti-climactic falls as it clearly reveals the centripetal movement that characterises Stephen's development. Indeed, notwithstanding his determination to leave his country, at the beginning of *Ulysses* we find him "displeased and sleepy" (*U* 1.13) on top of the Martello Tower overlooking Sandycove Strand, and therefore back in Dublin after (what we will learn to have been) a short stay in Paris. What should definitely be highlighted in *Ulysses*, and especially in the "Telemachiad" episodes, is the recurrence of images of death and immobility, often used in relation to Stephen, which contribute to bring out both his unsuccessful attempt at exile and his equally unsuccessful career as a poet, and which are, in turn, also often linked to the maritime environment.

To understand Stephen's development (and failures), in addition to the aforementioned example from "Telemachus" relating to the pas-

sage of the mailboat, the “Proteus” episode is undoubtedly of central importance. Being set entirely on the seashore, it also serves as a fitting counterpart to the vision of the bird-girl in the fourth chapter of *Portrait*. Indeed, while walking and musing on Sandymount Strand, Stephen again experiences a sort of vision that inspires him to write some verses, even though, ironically, he is at first unable to find a piece of paper to write on (*U* 3.404-407). Not a new situation for the would-be poet, who, already in *Portrait*, when he is about to compose his villanelle, resolves to jot it down on a packet of cigarettes (*P* 218) as he cannot find “paper and pencil [...] on the table” (*ibid.*). Moreover, on both occasions, Stephen thinks about the inefficacy of his verses and/or the impossibility for them to be understood by a potential reader. In *Portrait*, he considers sending his villanelle to Emma, who inspired it: “If he sent her the verses? They would be read out at breakfast amid the tapping of eggshells. Folly indeed!” (*P* 222). Similarly, in “Proteus,” he wonders, “Who ever anywhere will read these written words?” (*U* 3. 404-405). Still, it is worth looking at the verses Stephen composes because, even though they only appear later on, in the “Aeolus” episode when Stephen thinks about them (*U* 7.522 – 525), in “Proteus” we can follow part of his creative process. To begin with, the vision Stephen has on Sandycove involves a vampire, the protagonist of his poem; this is significant because, just like the bird-girl in *Portrait*, the vampire is another hybrid creature. Moreover, when Stephen thinks about the wings of the vampire, he pictures them as “bat sails bloodying the sea” (*U* 3.397 – 398; *emphasis* added), a metaphor probably suggested to Stephen by the marine setting he finds himself in, but which also precedes the approach of the three-master at the end of the chapter (*U* 3.503 – 505)<sup>9</sup>. Its appearance is also anticipated, towards the middle of the episode, by the sight of the “gunwale of a boat, sunk in sand” (*U* 3.287), lying beside the “carcass of a dog” (*U* 3.286), both of which are clearly evocative of death and

<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, the depiction of sails as wings also recurs in the aforementioned diary entry from the fifth chapter of *Portrait*, where the “tall ships” are “shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth” (*P* 252).

immobility. Undoubtedly, the ambiguous presence of the threemaster further emphasises Stephen's almost complete isolation, which is particularly highlighted in "Proteus". In this episode, in counterpoint to the sounds and smells of the sea and the shore, Stephen's artistic talent is repeatedly put in doubt, thereby further confirming the strong symbolic connection between his development and the maritime dimension, here significantly epitomised in the liminal space of the shoreline.

Stephen's condition of unresolved liminality is indeed accentuated at the end of *Ulysses*. Yet, it has been claimed, notably by Epstein and by Edmundson, that by the end of "Circe" Stephen finally gets rid of the burdens of the past and "throws open the door of creation to himself" (Epstein 1971: 157), "renew[ing] his artistic potential" (Edmundson 2009: 245). In particular, as the scholars maintain, in "Circe" he both resolves the conflict with the (symbolic) father figures (cf. Epstein), and "free[s] himself from [...] his mother's influence over him" (Edmundson 2009: 245). A point that nevertheless seems to be contradicted in "Ithaca", where, in Stephen's last appearance in the novel, the bells of St. George's church remind him of the prayers recited at his mother's deathbed (*U* 17.1230-1231). Even after "Circe," then, the failure of Stephen to become an artist and his constant in-between condition are repeatedly confirmed. Moreover, the recurrence of maritime motifs towards the end of the novel, especially in "Eumaeus," recalls the atmosphere of the "Telemachiad." The men gathered in the cabman's shelter converse about "accidents at sea, ships lost in a fog, collisions with icebergs" (*U* 16.900-201), and the decline of Irish shipping. More importantly though, here Stephen also interacts with D. G. Murphy, the degraded figure of a mariner, who arrives in Dublin on board the threemaster that appears at the end of "Proteus" (*U* 16.450-451). This concurrence of seemingly minor details further confirms what I have aimed at demonstrating: the non-linearity, or indeed fluidity, of Stephen's evolution is denoted, both in *Portrait* and in *Ulysses*, by the recurring reference to a peculiar aquatic and maritime imagery through a carefully and "complexly layered" (Riquelme 2004: 117) language used to describe the crucial moments of Stephen's growth.

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