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## JOYCE AND BALZAC: PORTRAITS OF THE ARTIST IN THE AGE OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

DAVID SPURR

*Abstract:* This essay presents Balzac and Joyce respectively as chroniclers of the fate of artistic autonomy in the modern world of bourgeois commercial capitalism. Both writers created the fictional character of an aspiring young writer who represents a version of the author himself at an early stage of his career. Both of these characters represent the purity and egoism of the artist—qualities surviving from a more traditional, aristocratic world—as confronted with the capitalist world of commercial literary production. In his efforts to obtain fortune and social position in addition to critical acclaim, Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré is drawn into an intrigue that leads to his self-destruction. Joyce has his own vision of literary production, but has in common with Balzac an absence of illusion concerning literature as an activity profoundly marked by the social and economic conditions of its production.

Let me begin with the repetition of an improbable name: Paul de Kock. In Balzac's novel *Illusions Perdues* (1837-43),<sup>1</sup> the impoverished journalist Etienne Lousteau, needing a new pair of gloves for the evening, sells his review copies of a number of new novels, including one by de Kock, a newcomer to the literary scene. The pages of de Kock's novel are still uncut, and Lousteau will write the review without reading the book so as to be able to resell it.<sup>2</sup> A few pages later, Lousteau's editor tells him to write the review so as to compare de Kock favourably to Victor Ducange, an

1. The three parts of the novel were at first published separately: *Illusions Perdues*, later titled *Les Deux Poètes*, 1837; *Un Grand Homme de province à Paris*, 1838; and *Eve et David*, later *Les Souffrances d'un inventeur*, 1843. The parts were published together as *Illusions Perdues* in vol. VIII of Charles Furne's 1843 edition of *La Comédie humaine*.

2. *Lost Illusions* trans. H.J. Hunt, (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1986), p. 255 (Honoré de Balzac, *Illusions Perdues* [Paris: Gallimard Folio, 1974], p. 267).

established writer of lucrative popular novels, because the editor has just struck a deal with a bookseller who has acquired two hundred copies of the novel, and who wants to “make a new author in the same style” as Ducange.<sup>3</sup> Although Lousteau and his editor Finot are fictional characters, Ducange and de Kock are historical personages, both of them best-selling writers who found their audience among the emerging class of petit-bourgeois readers produced by the introduction of public education after the French Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Their audience was the concierge, the valet, the cook and, one might add, the bored housewife.<sup>5</sup> Joyce shows us one of these readers in the fourth episode of *Ulysses*, where Molly Bloom, reading in bed in the morning, asks her husband to borrow another novel from the Capel Street library: “Get another of Paul de Kock’s. Nice name he has” (*U* 4.358).<sup>6</sup> Molly’s taste in fiction is in keeping with the Blooms’ taste in visual art; over the bed hangs a picture entitled *Bath of the Nymph*, “splendid masterpiece in art colours” given away with the Easter number of the (real) magazine *Photo Bits* (*U* 4.370).

These passing references to a minor but commercially successful writer are evidence of a debt that Joyce owes to Balzac, if only indirectly. In the two dozen novels that Balzac grouped together as *Scènes de la vie parisienne*, he invented the modern urban novel. He was the first to produce work whose ambition was to fully comprehend the conditions of survival in the contemporary urban setting, in which the private ambitions of fictional characters are subjected to the larger social and economic forces of modernity. These forces are made visible in Balzac not just from the panoramic view that takes in everyone from the shopkeeper to the cabinet minister; they are also objectified in the most precise detail: we know the street addresses of Balzac’s characters. We can follow their movements across a map of Paris as readers of Joyce do with a map of Dublin.

3. *Lost Illusions*, p. 267 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 278)

4. As a preamble to the Constitution of 1793, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* had guaranteed universal public education, although progress in creating public schools was sporadic until the 1830s. Two sources of documentation on this subject are René Grevet, *L’Avènement de l’école contemporaine en France, 1789-1835* (Villeneuve d’Ascq : Presses univ. Septentrion, 2001), Ch. 7: “La Recherche ardue de l’efficacité pédagogique”; and Martyn Lyons, *Readers and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* (London : Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), Ch. 1 : “The New Readers of Nineteenth-Century France .”

5. Eugène de Mirecourt, *Paul de Kock* (Paris: G. Havard, 1856), p. 37.

6. Lyons’s chapter (5) on women readers of popular fiction in nineteenth century France helps us to put Molly’s reading habits in historical context. For a woman of her class, her taste for Paul de Kock was entirely in keeping with her fellow female readers in France, although her husband’s complicity in procuring this sort of reading for her would have been exceptional.

The references to de Kock, however, have to do with a specific aspect of this modern urban universe: the place of literature as a cultural phenomenon, a profession, and a form of economic productivity. No writer of fiction is more authoritative and more ruthlessly analytical of literary activity in this context than Balzac, who charts every aspect of the process of literary production from the writer's inspiration to the making of paper, the working of presses, and the complex businesses of publishing, reviewing, advertising, and bookselling.<sup>7</sup> De Kock, who lived out his days in a comfortable suburban villa, is a signal example of how to succeed in this world. By contrast, Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré, like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, is a model of how not to succeed. Balzac's project, however, is not just to provide a detailed exposition of the process of literary production. Rather, as Georg Lukács has shown, Balzac chronicles the "capitalisation of literature" and of the spirit that produces it.<sup>8</sup> In Balzac, literature and even lyrical sensation are transformed into merchandise by the forces of capital that transform every aspect of modern life. This is not the least of Balzac's legacy for later writers such as Joyce. Allowing for differences in historical and geographical setting, Joyce's own fictional artists essentially find themselves confronted with the conditions of modern capital first defined by Balzac, and they must therefore make, or fail to make, their own pacts with it. The particular interest of reading Joyce in the context of Balzac lies in the way such an exercise can clarify Joyce's own approach to the question of artistic autonomy in a capitalized and politicized social universe.

The subject of artistic autonomy as a social phenomenon has been most systematically analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu, whose theory deserves a brief summary here. In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu locates the emergence of the literary field as an autonomous realm in the middle of the nineteenth century, particularly with the publication of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). Bourdieu's thesis is that, from this moment onward, the field was governed by a set of rules that existed independently of, or in outright opposition to, the economic and political forces to which the field as a whole was subject. Artists in general began to be recognized as a new social entity distinct from the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Within the literary field, however, distinctions of

7. Christopher Prendergast has observed that in *Illusions Perdues* and its sequel, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1847), everything is for sale, including ideas, thoughts, and opinions, and that "doing deals" is what keeps most of the characters going. Christopher Prendergast, *The Order of Mimesis: Balzac, Stendhal, Nerval, Flaubert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 87-88.

8. Georg Lukács, *Balzac et le réalisme français*, trans. Paul Lavau (Paris: François Maspero, 1967), p. 51.

power and prestige continued to be made among writers themselves: given works or genres were devalued according to the degree to which they were subject to the laws of the marketplace or the political regime rather than to the laws of art itself. Thus, by the end of the century, journalism, theatrical pieces, and pot-boiler novels published in instalments (*feuilletons*) were relegated to the lower ranks of literature, whereas symbolist poetry and the novels of Flaubert were consecrated as approaching the ideal of “pure art.”<sup>9</sup> For Flaubert himself, a necessary measure for establishing his own autonomy was to distance himself from the omnipresent de Kock, whose realism, in Bourdieu’s words, “flatter[ed] the public by reflecting back its own image in the form of a hero with a psychology directly transcribed from the daily life of the petite bourgeoisie.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, according to Flaubert there were two dangers in writing a novel like *Madame Bovary*, with its characters drawn from the mediocrity and sentimentality of provincial life: one could fall either into the banality of de Kock, or into the mode of a “chateaubrianized Balzac” a romanticized version of provincial life in the manner of Chateaubriand.<sup>11</sup> Flaubert states the problem quite frankly:

What I am currently writing risks being like Paul de Kock’s work if I do not give it a deep literary form. But how to render trivial dialogue that is well-written?<sup>12</sup>

Flaubert’s solution was to take the form of a double refusal of both realism and romanticism, a solution devoted precisely to “write the mediocre well.”<sup>13</sup> to write mediocrity well in the ironic mode that constitutes the originality of his first great novel.

What is the relevance of Flaubert to a reading of Joyce in relation to Balzac? The answer is that on the one hand, Joyce faces a problem similar to Flaubert’s: in producing characters, like Leopold and Molly Bloom, whose psychology is directly transcribed from the daily life of the petit bourgeoisie, he risks falling into the mode of de Kock unless he can assert his artistic autonomy by writing mediocrity well. On the other hand, the problem of artistic autonomy and the internal distinctions of the literary field have already been defined in a profoundly objective way by Balzac, nearly two decades before the publication of *Madame Bovary*. Balzac has

9. Bourdieu quotes a letter written by Baudelaire to Flaubert in 1862: “How could you have failed to guess that [the name] Baudelaire meant: Auguste Barbier, Théophile Gautier, Banville, Flaubert, Leconte de Lisle, in short, *pure literature*?” Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (London: Polity Press, 1996), p. 63.

10. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 90.

11. Quoted in Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 93.

12. Quoted in Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 93.

13. Quoted in Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 94.

already foreseen the sacrifices and the multiple refusals that a person like Stephen Dedalus will have to choose to make in order to call himself an artist.

*Illusions Perdues* is set in the Bourbon Restoration years of the 1820s. Among the host of printers, publishers, booksellers, journalists, theatre managers, novelists and poets whose transactions with one another constitute the literary field in this setting, two figures emerge as emblematic of the struggle between art as an autonomous realm and the economic forces to which it is subject. The first of these, and the one around whom the narrative is constructed, is Lucien de Rubempré, a penniless young poet from the provinces who arrives in Paris determined to have his talent recognised, to make his fortune, and to claim a place in the aristocratic society of the capital. The title that Balzac gives to this episode, “Un grand homme de province à Paris,” reflects the irony with which Lucien is received when he seeks a publisher for his volume of poems and his historical novel written in imitation of Walter Scott. Making the rounds of booksellers and publishers, Lucien meets with indifference and outright contempt; he is quickly disabused of the notion that literary merit matters in this world; what the booksellers need is a quick return on their investment. Lousteau, a young writer who has already lost his own illusions concerning the literary world, explains to Lucien that for booksellers, “a book is merely a capital risk. The finer it is, the less chance it has of selling.”<sup>14</sup>

Frustrated in his literary aspirations, Lucien tries his hand at journalism, which he at first considers only as a means to literary success. “Could I not take to journalism in order to sell my book of poems and my novel, and then give it up immediately?”<sup>15</sup> The answer is no. Once launched in his new career, Lucien cannot resist the temptations laid in his way by the power, however minor, that he wields as a reviewer. Seeking revenge against the publisher Dauriat for having refused his collection of poems, he pans a new novel Dauriat has brought out by a writer of real merit. The publisher has to buy Lucien’s poems in order to protect himself against further reprisals, but never bothers actually to print them. Lucien, however, becomes himself the victim of machinations from a more powerful quarter. Lured by the promise of a noble title, he abandons the liberal, republican press for the royalist camp. Having thus made mortal enemies of his former allies, he is now repudiated by the royalists as well in revenge for his earlier attacks on them. Humiliated, friendless, and penniless once more, he flees from Paris in disgrace.

14. *Lost Illusions*, p. 277 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 287).

15. *Lost Illusions*, p. 229 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 243).

In Balzac's exposition of the literary field during the Restoration, the other important figure in this novel is Daniel d'Arthez, the brightest star of a cénacle of writers who, a generation before Flaubert and Baudelaire, have already declared their independence from the bourgeois social order. Living in poverty, D'Arthez devotes his days to the study of literature and philosophy, and to the writing of a novel undertaken entirely in order "to explore the resources of language."<sup>16</sup> D'Arthez's function in the novel is to represent the position of artistic autonomy within the literary field, and to act as the noble example of self-sacrifice which Lucien has neither the courage nor the patience to follow. Having read the manuscript of Lucien's historical novel, he encourages Lucien to rewrite it: "If you don't want to ape Walter Scott you must invent a different manner for yourself, whereas you have imitated him."<sup>17</sup> He sees a bright future for the young writer, but only at the cost of total dedication to his art: "After ten years of persistent effort, fame and fortune will be yours."<sup>18</sup> D'Arthez, having a nature "unconsciously sublime" and possessing "virtue without emphasis," gives a moral dimension to the ideal of artistic independence. To represent d'Arthez as an *artist* of noble character writing a *novel* is important for Balzac's project of habilitating the novelistic form as a legitimate art, given that the novel was still considered a mercantile form of literature associated with journalism by its publication in the form of the *feuilleton*.<sup>19</sup>

Granted this habilitating function in the greater project of Balzac's life work, there remains the question of how d'Arthez fits into the system of material relations revealed by the Balzacian novel itself. D'Arthez wants to opt out of this system, which nonetheless "needs every last man as a customer," as Theodor Adorno remarks.<sup>20</sup> Adorno has also written that one of the lost illusions in Balzac is the one that sees the individual as an independent self who is influenced by social forces only from the outside. Rather, Balzac's characters are motivated by their interests—in career and income, for example—which arise from a combination of private psychology and social origin, and which are conditioned by varying effects of "feudal-hierarchical status and bourgeois-capitalist manipulation."<sup>21</sup> Adorno's point is not one of vulgar social determinism. Rather, it is that in Balzac "the divergence between human destiny and social roles becomes

16. *Lost Illusions*, p. 214 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 229).

17. *Lost Illusions*, p. 213 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 227).

18. *Lost Illusions*, p. 214 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 229).

19. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p. 114.

20. Theodor Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, vol. I, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 122.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

something unknowable.”<sup>22</sup> This turns out to be just as true of the noble-spirited d’Arthez as of the ambitious Lucien. A fervent royalist, d’Arthez belongs to an artistic tradition inherited from an aristocratic order which has traditionally disdained the marketplace in favour of a cultivated coterie, of which his cenacle is a surviving form. But he is not without worldly ambitions. If d’Arthez can promise Lucien fame and fortune in ten years’ time, he is also making the same long-term investment for himself. When he turns up elsewhere in the *Comédie humaine*, notably in *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan* (1839), d’Arthez has emerged from the July Revolution of 1830 as a famous writer with a noble title and a place in the Chambre des Députés.<sup>23</sup> He has even a beautiful princess in love with him. If d’Arthez is Balzac’s idealized self-portrait as an artist, he also represents Balzac’s fantasy of having it all: genius, recognition, wealth, power, social status, and love. In Bourdieu’s more sober terms, he has successfully made the transition from the dominant faction of a dominated field (literature), to the dominant faction of the dominant field (politics and the parvenu aristocracy), while maintaining the reputation of a writer of genius. His long-term investment has paid off.

In the years before writing *Illusions Perdues* Balzac occupied most of the positions in the literary field which the novel delineates with such authority. During the Restoration he was a printer, a playwright, a journalist and reviewer, a writer of pot-boilers under improbable pseudonyms like Lord R’hoon and Horace de Saint-Aubin, a producer of the popular genre known as *physiologies*, and a truly serious writer only beginning with the publication of *Les Chouans* in 1829. The knowledge gained from this experience is reflected in Balzac’s mature fiction. In Balzac’s world it is not just that there are two distinct “systems”<sup>24</sup> in journalism and the literary cenacle, respectively. Rather, Balzac shows how the literary cenacle, while dominant within the restricted field of literature for its ability to impose its own standards of aesthetic value, is subordinated to the journalistic system in the larger field of cultural production. As the publisher Dauriat explains in *Illusions Perdues*, “I’m a speculator in literature [...] I use the power I have and the articles I pay for to launch a thousand franc venture rather than a volume in which only two thousand francs are invested.”<sup>25</sup> Literary success thus depends on good reviews, which themselves can be obtained by a powerful publisher like Dauriat. Balzac provides a series of historical examples whereby a single article in a newspaper such as the *Journal des*

22. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

23. Honoré de Balzac, *Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan*, Vol. 11 of *La Comédie humaine*. (Paris : Furne, 1844).

24. *Lost Illusions*, p. 252 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 264).

25. *Lost Illusions*, p. 273 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 284).



*Débats* could launch the sales of a book hitherto neglected on the shelves of bookshops. The journalist, however, is just as subject to the forces of the system as the artist, according to Lousteau: “the key to success in literature is not to work oneself, but to exploit others’ work. Newspaper-proprietors are contractors; we [journalists] are their masons.”<sup>26</sup> As Marx would say, real power lies not in production, but in ownership of the means of production.

The genius of Balzac, however, lies not so much in the analysis of power relations in the abstract, but in the staging of those relations in scenes of the everyday life of the capital. His exposition of the book trade, for example, brings to life the teeming activity at the Galeries de Bois, the commercial arcade that during the Restoration became the center of business for the *librairies des nouveautés* -- bookshops catering, like other *magasins de nouveautés*, to the latest fashion in consumer products. From Balzac’s lively evocation of this milieu, where a fictional novice like Lucien can cross the path of a famous writer like Benjamin Constant, I wish to underline just two features. The first is the presence of *affiches* or advertising posters designed to capture the public’s attention through colourful graphics and images so original that “one of the maniacs known as *collectors* owns a complete set of Parisian posters.”<sup>27</sup> As Balzac tells us, this means of publicity has been invented by the publishers to reach the public directly, thereby circumventing the costs of advertising space or of favourable reviews in the newspapers. Anticipating Joyce, Balzac reproduces the actual texts of these advertisements while describing their designs as “new and original creations” which catch Lucien’s envious eye:

*Léonide*, by Victor Ducange. 5 vols printed on fine paper.

Price, 12 francs.<sup>28</sup>

Balzac, for whom these advertisements represent a “new and original creation,”<sup>29</sup> would have understood Leopold Bloom’s desire to create “a poster novelty [...] reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life” (*U* 17.1771-73).

The other feature of the Galeries de Bois worth noting here is the presence of prostitution. Balzac points out that the Galeries de Bois were adjacent to the Palais-Royal, then the site of the stock exchange. In search of clients, prostitutes were able to pass effortlessly from the exchange to the arcades, thus making the real and symbolic connection between capital, merchandise, and prostitution. In *Illusions Perdues* Lucien and Lousteau

26. *Illusions Perdues*, p. 262 (*Lost Illusions*, p. 249).

27. *Illusions Perdues*, p. 368 (*Lost Illusions*, p. 363).

28. *Illusions Perdues*, p. 215 (*Lost Illusions*, p. 199).

29. *Illusions Perdues*, p. 215 (*Lost Illusions*, p. 199).

fall in naturally with courtesans like Coralie and Florine. But beyond this metonymic relation between writers and prostitutes, Balzac adds a metaphorical dimension through comparisons of the writer's trade to prostitution under the conditions imposed by the capitalist system. Thus, the cynical Lousteau tells Lucien that vulgar commercial works are like "the poor girl freezing on the street corner"; literature of the second rank corresponds to the kept woman; as for *littérature heureuse* (literature of the first rank), it is like a brilliant but insolent courtesan who mistreats the gentlemen who pay her bills. These comparisons may be more Lousteau's than Balzac's, but they nonetheless have their place in the sweeping, penetrating vision of the literary economy that Balzac has set forth for the subsequent history of modern literature.

Joyce has his own vision of literary production in the modern world, but like Balzac's, it entails an analysis of literature's relation, as a purely artistic endeavour, to other forms of writing such as journalism and advertising, as well as to political power and even prostitution. Above all, Joyce has in common with Balzac an absence of illusion concerning literature as an activity profoundly marked by the social and economic conditions of its production. This awareness is nowhere more apparent than in Joyce's first portrait of an artist.<sup>30</sup> In the story "A Little Cloud," the Balzacian opposition between journalism and literature is re-staged in the dialogue between Ignatius Gallaher, a loud-mannered newspaperman, and Little Chandler, a soft-spoken office-clerk with literary aspirations. In worldly terms, Gallaher is much the more powerful figure, with his position in the London press, his knowledge of Paris, and his robust if ostentatious charm. However, according to the standards of sensibility which Little Chandler considers necessary for art, the timid office-clerk senses his own superiority: "There was something vulgar in his friend which he had not observed before" (*D* 77). In Bourdieu's scheme of things, Little Chandler occupies, at least in his fantasies of becoming a writer, a dominant position within the dominated field of cultural production, whereas Gallaher as a journalist represents the dominant capitalist order to which literary production is subject. Little Chandler's ambivalent feelings toward his old friend, whose "vagrant and triumphant life" momentarily upsets the equipoise of Chandler's own sensitive nature, reflects the tensions inherent in the two men's respective positions in the field of cultural production. In the manner of Balzac, Joyce provides a perfect example of how individual interests emerge out of an unpredictable but real combination of private psychology and social forces.

30. First, that is, in the order of the stories as they appear in published form. "A Little Cloud" was written in 1906. A chronologically earlier portrait of an artist is that of Joe Hynes in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," written in 1905.

From the story's beginning, Little Chandler experiences the artist's characteristic loathing of an environment he finds hostile to his aspirations. As he moves toward his meeting with Gallaher at Corless's restaurant, "his soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street" (*D* 73), and the "poor stunted houses" he sees from Grattan Bridge reflect his own conditions of poverty and confinement. Still, he wonders if he could write something original, and "the thought that a poetic moment had touched him took life within him like an infant hope" (*D* 73). His future as an artist begins to take shape in his imagination:

He would never be popular: he saw that. He could not sway the crowd but he might appeal to a little circle of kindred minds. The English critics, perhaps, would recognise him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems. (*D* 74)

Condensed in these lines is an entire complex of relations between literature and its conditions of possibility. In the manner of Balzac's d'Arthez, Little Chandler first distances himself from the "popular" writer able to sway the crowd. He then aligns himself in fantasy with a cénacle of kindred minds devoted, presumably, to the principle of literary autonomy. His final thought, however, is specific to the condition of the Irish writer at the beginning of the twentieth century. He is sophisticated enough to understand that a small circle of kindred minds in Ireland has no importance in the literary field unless recognised by the English critics, and that the most likely way of gaining their attention is by conforming to the English idea of what Irish writing is: they "would recognise him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems" (*D* 74). In other words, Little Chandler's dream of artistic independence is severely limited: even if as a writer he were to succeed in gaining a degree of independence from the pressures of the market, he would still be subject to the political forces exercised by the capital, London, on the literary scene of provincial Dublin.

In any case, Little Chandler's dreams of a literary life prove to be no more than idle fantasy. Returning home after his drink with Gallaher, he opens a volume of Byron as if to prolong the illusion of his freedom. This moment will not last, as his child's wailing forcefully calls him back to the reality of his domestic situation: "It was useless, useless! He was a prisoner for life" (*D* 84). But when Little Chandler's wife returns in a fury, even the possibility of private protest is taken from him. The tears of remorse that fill his eyes show that an inner subjection to his condition makes his imprisonment complete.

The life of the petit-bourgeois Dubliner led by Little Chandler is one of the traps that Stephen Dedalus seeks to avoid in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. As a *Künstlerroman*, this work has in common with Balzac's

novel the story of a young poet's struggle to find his way in the world, even if the Dublin of 1900 presents a different set of obstacles from the Paris of 1824. Nonetheless, Joyce addresses in his way the essential preoccupation of Balzac's novel: the question of how a certain idea of art can be put into practice in a modern world dominated by institutions hostile to that idea. We shall see that Stephen's manner of negotiating with the institutions of his time and place is at least partly made up of elements we have already seen in Balzac's young literary figures.

Stephen's youthful devotion to the figures of Byron and Shelley resembles Lucien's worship of the poetry of André Chénier, when Lucien is still a printer's apprentice in the provincial town of Angoulême. Both young men see in their poetic avatars a deliverance from the spiritual poverty of their surroundings. Lucien's poetic temperament is equally estranged from the mediocrity of the provincial aristocracy as from the drudgery of the print shop where he works. Invited to recite at one of Mme de Bargeton's soirées, he reads from Chénier, but his performance is met with mockery and boredom. "A very good recital... But I prefer whist."<sup>31</sup> Much of Stephen's experience is analogous to Lucien's, as when he finds himself defending Byron's reputation against the taunts of his dull-witted schoolfellows (*P* 86). Later, we find Stephen dreamily reciting a fragment from Shelley that speaks to his solitude and his estrangement from his father's world, with its consolations of companionship and "rude male health" (*P* 102).

In Lucien's case, the real deliverance from the dreariness and imbecility of provincial life presents itself in the traditional form of emigration to Paris, which Mme de Bargeton represents to him as the only place where his talents can be justly appreciated. "tell me what fine works have been produced in the provinces!" she ironizes, while urging him earnestly: "Must you not hasten to take your place in the constellation which rises in each generation?"<sup>32</sup> Presented to him in this way, the prospect of literary success in the capital strikes Lucien as a revelation. In Angoulême he lived like a frog under a rock in a swamp, but in Paris, which smiles on genius, "He would receive a fraternal accolade from illustrious men."<sup>33</sup>

As we learn at the end of Joyce's novel, emigration, equally time-honoured in Ireland as in the provinces of France, is Stephen's best hope for finding his way as an artist. As Angoulême is to Paris, so Dublin will be to wherever Stephen plans to go.<sup>34</sup> A few days before his intended departure the peasant student Davin asks him if it was true that he was going away

31. *Lost Illusions*, p. 88 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 108).

32. *Lost Illusions*, p. 141 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 160).

33. *Lost Illusions*, p. 142 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 160).

34. In *A Portrait*, Stephen's actual destination is not named.

and why. Stephen records his reply in his diary: “Told him the shortest way to Tara was *via* Holyhead” (*P* 273), the port of entry to the island of Great Britain. Here we might see, after all, an important difference between the literary ambitions of Stephen and those of Lucien. On one hand, Stephen’s ironic juxtaposition of the commercial British port with the mythic capital of ancient Ireland makes mild fun of the peasant student’s worship of “the sorrowful legend of Ireland” and his rejection of all things English (195). On the other hand, the idea of Tara as Stephen’s ideal destination is consistent with his self-definition as an Irish artist in spite of everything, one dedicated to redeeming his race from its condition of spiritual darkness. Whereas Lucien, once he leaves Angoulême, does not look back, one senses that no matter where Stephen wanders, he will not be able to forget the problem he put to himself when he gazed from Kildare Street into the windows of Maple’s hotel, where he imagined the patricians of Ireland “housed in calm”:

How could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own? (*P* 259)

However deluded this might be in terms of the real effects of literary work, the emancipatory import of Stephen’s discourse is repeated elsewhere in the novel, as in the famous concluding lines, where he goes forth to forge the “uncreated conscience” of his race (*P* 276).<sup>35</sup> It would therefore be a mistake to confuse Stephen’s ideas with the aesthetic of art for art’s sake, even though they insist on the freedom and autonomy of the artist.

This idealism, which in itself has little in common with Lucien’s worldly ambitions, is closer to the spirit of Daniel d’Arthez, who is learning all he can from the riches of ancient and modern philosophy because: “He wanted to be a profound philosopher, like Molière before he ever wrote a comedy.”<sup>36</sup> On the level of actual practice, however, Stephen’s affinity with d’Arthez lies in his systematic refusal of every aspect of life that cannot contribute to his artistic ambitions. D’Arthez ekes out his daily existence by

35. In *Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel*, Pericles Lewis makes the case for a “nationalist” Stephen who, unlike Lucien de Rubempré, sees himself as the redeemer of his nation. In this reading, the conscience of the Irish race is “uncreated” in the same sense that God is, i.e. always already in being: “[Stephen] will see in the values he has learned from his nation, rather than in a universal God, the first cause that has called his soul into existence from nothingness”. Pericles Lewis, *Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 39.

36. *Lost Illusions*, p. 214 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 229). This is a thinly veiled allusion to Balzac’s own *Comédie humaine*.

writing conscientious but ill-paid articles for biographical dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and works in the natural sciences. He writes neither more nor less than what he needs in order to live and to pursue his thinking.<sup>37</sup> A multiple set of refusals must follow from this mode of existence: unlike Lucien, d'Arthez protects his independence by rejecting the commercial world of best-selling novels, bookshops, publishers, and newspapers, as well as the social world of aristocratic salons. In *A Portrait*, Stephen makes his own series of refusals, different from these only because the social and political order of Dublin at the end of the nineteenth century is differently structured from that of Paris earlier in the century.

When Stephen tells his college friend Cranly that he will not serve that in which he does not believe whether it call itself "my home, my fatherland, or my church," he does so in the name of personal and artistic autonomy: such refusals are a condition for being able "to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can" (*P* 268-69). The three institutions named here constitute the principal forces of the social order with which Stephen has to contend. As for home or family, we have seen examples of Stephen's estrangement from his father who, wanting his son to associate with "fellows of the right kidney" (*P* 97) asks why he does not join a rowing club (*P* 273). There is more evidence of this estrangement in Stephen's exhaustive description of his father's occupations:

A medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a taxgatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past. (*P* 262)

A place should have been reserved for Simon Dedalus in one of Balzac's novels, given his capacity to occupy a whole series of minor places within the social, economic, and political order of his day. But Stephen's irony in reciting his father's *curriculum vitae* shows the extent to which he rejects his own shabby-genteel origins.<sup>38</sup> As for Ireland, it is clear that Stephen has little patience for the nationalist movement in literature, language, and politics. He considers that even Davin, the best of the movement's representatives in Stephen's world, exhibits the gross intelligence, the blunt feeling, and the "dull stare of terror" in the eyes of a peasant from a village which still feared the nightly curfew (*P* 195). "A race of clodhoppers!"

37. *Lost Illusions*, p. 214 (*Illusions Perdues*, p. 229).

38. Wyndham Lewis was the first to describe Joyce as shabby-genteel in "The Revolutionary Simpleton," *The Enemy* I (January 1927), pp. 95-130, later incorporated into *Time and Western Man*, 1927. Lewis is quoted in Robert H. Deming, *Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, vol. 1: 1907-27 (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 364.

Stephen will write in his diary. It is Davin's insistence that he learn Irish that once again incites Stephen to declare his independence, refusing to pay in his own life for the "debts" his ancestors incurred when they threw off their own language and took another in allowing a handful of foreigners to subject them (*P* 220).

The most important refusal that Stephen makes is that of the church, which functions in *Portrait* in the same way that the press functions in Balzac: both constitute the institutions of power, in Paris and Dublin respectively, from which the artist must declare his independence in order to assert his social and symbolic independence. However, the two authors solve this problem through different forms of narrative construction. Balzac provides two aspiring young writers, one (Lucien) who surrenders to the temptations of the press, and the other (d'Arthez) who remains aloof in his Olympian sureness of purpose. Joyce's solution is rather more complex than this simple object lesson in moral weakness versus strength: Stephen will refuse the function of the church while transforming its symbolic content to his own purposes. As a calling, the church comes close to answering Stephen's Promethean temperament: "How often he had seen himself as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence!" (*P* 171). The prospect of that power and the realization that he must refuse it are what enable him to answer the call of art as his true destiny. However, his conception of what it means to be an artist remains strongly inflected by the function of the priesthood. The climactic scene at the seashore which affirms Stephen's artistic vocation, for example, is heavily charged with religious language and imagery, from his cry of "Heavenly God!" to the vision of the girl on the beach as "the angel of mortal youth and beauty" (*P* 186). Even if Stephen's destiny is to be free of social or religious orders, his way of conceiving that freedom still relies on the symbolic terms of those orders, as "a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (*P* 240).

Having chosen his calling, Stephen is still faced, like the young writers in Balzac, with the question of his relation to the existing literary field. We recall that for Lucien and d'Arthez, it was a matter of avoiding both the popular mode of de Kock and the historical novel in the style of Scott. In *Portrait*, Scott again figures as a dubious model, judging by the manner in which one of his readers is presented in the library scene, where a man of "dwarfish stature," rumoured to be of noble but incestuous lineage, declares, "I love old Scott [...] I think he writes something lovely" (247). It is as if Scott's own standing among young writers like Stephen had shrunken to the stature of his deformed admirer. However, in Stephen's own time and place a more dominant figure in the literary field is W.B.

Yeats. By the time Stephen is ready to enter the University, Yeats's third book of poems has been published in London and New York, and he has founded the Irish National Theatre with Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn. To put it roughly, Yeats is to Stephen what Scott is to Lucien: the young writer must resist the temptation to imitate the great writer of the previous generation, and must instead attempt to create in a different manner. Stephen's consciousness of this problem is revealed in a diary entry. Naming the implied speaker in Yeats's poem "He Remembers Forgotten Beauty," (1899) Stephen writes,

Michael Robartes remembers forgotten beauty and, when his arms wrap her round, he presses in his arms the loveliness that has long faded from the world. Not this. Not at all. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world. (*P* 273)

This is admittedly rather vague as an aesthetic programme. But in terms of defining Stephen's position it has the merit of extending the series of Stephen's refusals (of home, fatherland, church) to the literary scene of his own country. Refusing even the refuge of a cenacle, Stephen will make a party unto himself.

In *Ulysses*, we find Stephen having returned home from Paris, having made no more progress in his literary career than Lucien de Rubempré did in the same city 80 fictional years earlier. The question of Stephen's place, or lack of a place in the literary field is most directly addressed in the library episode, where he is called upon to match wits with several historical personages of the day: Thomas Lyster, director of the National Library of Ireland; John Eglinton (real name William Kirkpatrick Magee), essayist and editor of the monthly review *Dana*; the writer George Russell ("A.E."); and Richard Best, a Celtic scholar then assistant director of the library. Together, these four men represent an important part of the Dublin literary establishment; as a group, they join the realm of literary production to those of publication and institutional public access to literary work. From this perspective, Stephen's exposition of his theory concerning the autobiographical origins of *Hamlet* is less important for what it says about Shakespeare than for what it shows about Stephen's position in relation to the institutional power held by his listeners. Despite Stephen's brilliance, that position is quickly revealed to be marginal, if not one of outright exclusion. The key moment occurs when, midway through Stephen's exposition, Russell gets up to leave for a meeting at the *Irish Homestead*, the newspaper whose editorship he would take over the following year (and which would publish Joyce's "The Sisters" later in 1904). As he is leaving, Eglinton reminds him of a literary soirée to be held later that day at the home of George Moore. Given the persons invited to this gathering, it constitutes, on both the fictional and historical levels, a portrait of early



twentieth century literary Dublin, with all its self-congratulation and provincial complacency. As such, it stands in striking contrast to d'Arthez's cenacle in *Illusions Perdues*.

Stephen's exclusion from this group is demonstrated in a number of ways: not only does he lack an invitation to the literary evening, but the conversation looking forward to it takes place in his presence as if there were no way he could be concerned with it, despite the fact that he has already contributed to Eglinton's *Dana*. In addition, Lyster mentions that Russell is "gathering together a sheaf of our younger poets' verses" which is to include Padraic Colum and James Starkey, and for which is planned a campaign worthy of Balzac in joining literary production to the forces of commercial publishing and journalistic publicity: "George Roberts is doing the commercial part. Longworth will give it a good puff in the *Express*" (*U* 9.301-2). Again Stephen is not to be included, though he is far from being indifferent to these proceedings. "See this. Remember," (*U* 9.294) he says to himself. Later in this episode, we learn of a possible reason for his exclusion. On the way out of the library, Mulligan gleefully tells Stephen that there are repercussions to an unfavourable review Stephen has written of a work by Lady Gregory, Yeats's patron: "Longworth is awfully sick [...] after what you wrote about that old hake Gregory. [...] She gets you a job on the paper and then you go and slate her drivel to Jaysus. Couldn't you do the Yeats touch?" (*U* 9.1158-61). The reference is to Ernest Longworth, editor of the Dublin *Daily Express*, the very person who is to puff Eglinton's volume of verses by younger poets.

The story has a historical counterpart: In the *Daily Express* of March 26, 1903, Joyce wrote a mocking review of Lady Gregory's *Poets and Dreamers*. According to Joyce's brother Stanislaus, the review appeared over Joyce's initials because Longworth wanted to disclaim personal responsibility for it (*CW* 102). Longworth's fictional displeasure with Stephen therefore has a precedent in his real displeasure with Joyce, and for the same reason. As for Russell's volume of younger poets, it was in fact published a year after the Lady Gregory review, in April, 1904, under the title *New Songs*, and without a contribution by Joyce. In the fictional version of these events, Joyce does not insist on a causal relation between Stephen's offense to Irish literary pieties and his exclusion from the volume of poets, but by linking the two incidents with the name of Longworth, he allows it to stand as a possibility. For Stephen's literary ambitions to be thwarted in revenge for an act of journalistic hubris would of course perfectly correspond to the fate of Lucien de Rubempré, who ruins his prospects of literary success by writing royalist articles against the politically liberal alliance of journalists and book publishers. The difference between Stephen and Lucien, however, is that Stephen is writing out of

aesthetic conviction, whereas Lucien is writing to curry favour with the aristocracy. On another level, there is a difference between Joyce and Balzac in the way incidents and circumstances are related to one another. In Balzac everything is connected within a systemic economy of incidents motivated by greed, passion, revenge, jealousy, and ambition, so that nothing happens outside of the totalising logic of the system. In Joyce, by contrast, things can happen independently of one another, without a determined relation between them beyond the time and space in which they occur. It is for this reason that Joyce does not insist on a necessary connection between Stephen's actions and his subsequent reverses: any relation of cause and effect between the *Daily Express* review and Stephen's exclusion from the Russell-Moore cenacle must remain undecidable. It is nonetheless clear that both incidents are consistent with Stephen's marginal position with respect to the literary field of Irish writing, a position that is self-willed to the extent that he refuses to "do the Yeats touch," in addition to his other refusals.

Joyce's own marginal position in this field is the subject of his satirical poem "The Holy Office," written about two months before he left Dublin for the continent in October, 1904. The poem is a savage attack on what Joyce sees as the hypocritical compromises and inanities of the literary figures mentioned in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*: Yeats, Lady Gregory, George Russell, Oliver St. John Gogarty, Padraic Colum, John Eglinton, George Roberts, James Starkey. As for Joyce himself, his function is to act as the "Katharthis-Purgative," or "sewer of their clique." In order "[t]hat they may dream their dreamy dreams / I carry off their filthy streams" (CW 151). In other words, the complacent pieties of the literary revival are made possible by the presence of a reprobate figure whose damnation is the necessary condition for the others' redemption. On the point of leaving Dublin, Joyce thus confirms his position as "[u]nfellowed, friendless, and alone," while yet asserting his own proud defiance:

And though they spurn me from their door  
My soul shall spurn them evermore. (CW 152)

Joyce's position in the field of literary production thus corresponds to Stephen's, just as Balzac's corresponds, at least in an ideal sense, to that of Daniel d'Arthez.

In both *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, Joyce suggests that a writer of Stephen's sensibility and artistic ideals has no place in the modern world of literary production. His departure from the narrative in episode 17 ("Ithaca") would seem to confirm his marginal, if potentially exalted status: his destination unknown, he walks off into the night to the rich if enigmatic sound of "the double reverberation of retreating feet on the heavenborn earth, the double vibration of a jews' harp in the resonant lane"

(*U* 17.1243-44). He is thus a figure of literal retreat, but also of symbolic unity—between heaven and earth, between Jew and Irishman (the name of the Jew's harp linking the Jew to the emblematic harp of Ireland), and between art and the world, as signified by the “vibrations” of music in the concrete space of the “resonant lane.”<sup>39</sup> The suggestion here is that if the artist has no place in the world of literary production, he nonetheless has a place in the larger world; his task, if we could follow him beyond the story Joyce tells, would be to recreate the conditions of that world in the critical and distanced form of the art work, as *Ulysses* does. Balzac has already done so in his way: he “attacks the world all the more the farther he moves away from it by creating it.”<sup>40</sup> But there is a final difference between Joyce and Balzac that cannot be ignored. In Balzac's *Comédie humaine* the artistic recreation of the urban social universe acquires the form of an extensive totality, a functional complex in which everything is connected, and nothing, not even the work of Daniel d'Arthez, is ultimately left out of the system. With a kind of exhaustive relentlessness, Balzac pursues what Adorno calls “the reification of all relationships between individuals, which transforms their human qualities into lubricating oil for the smooth running of the machinery, the universal alienation and self-alienation.”<sup>41</sup> Joyce follows Balzac, but only halfway down this road. He too creates a fictional universe in which incidents and personages keep recurring from one work to the next as if in a fully comprehensive vision of the human comedy. But unlike Balzac's world, Joyce's remains a great assemblage of fragments, of incidents between which any causal relation remains undecidable—as such things remain, mostly, in life. Finally, as if recognising the futility of any totalising system, he leaves each of his works open-ended enough to allow for the ultimate “open work,”<sup>42</sup> *Finnegans Wake*.

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39. For a full discussion of this passage, see Guillemette Bolens, *Le Style des Gestes : Corporéité et kinésie dans le récit littéraire* (Lausanne: Editions BHMS, 2008), pp. 35-48.

40. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, p. 25.

41. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*, p. 32.

42. The reference is to Umberto Eco's notion of the *opera aperta* in his essay of that title. Umberto Eco *Opera Aperta* (Milano: Bompiani, 2000).