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The City, Modernism, and Aesthetic Theory in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

GARRY LEONARD

*Amid the deafening traffic of the town,
Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,
A woman passed, raising, with dignity
In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown*

Baudelaire, "To a Passer-by" (qtd. in Benjamin 45)

—But we are just now in a mental world, Stephen continued. The desire and loathing excited by improper esthetic means are really unesthetic emotions not only because they are kinetic in character but also because they are not more than physical. Our flesh shrinks from what it dreads and responds to the stimulus of what it desires by a purely reflex action of the nervous system. Our eyelid closes before we are aware that the fly is about to enter our eye.

—Not always, said Lynch critically.

(Joyce, *Portrait* 206)

I. Aesthetic Theory and Self-Surveillance

The experience of modernity is fostered by the rise of the modern city, and works of modernism do not so much convey this experience as they betray the strain of surviving it and detail their various strategies for doing so. Thus modernism might be regarded less as a representation of modernity and more as a symptom of it. "What are the dangers of the forest and the prairie compared with the daily shocks and conflicts of civilization?" Charles Baudelaire asks (qtd. in Benjamin 39). Indeed, the city is a forest, one rendered all the more dangerous because it appears to be the final triumph over nature. The *flâneur*, as Walter Benjamin describes him, is a latter day Natty Bumppo, wending his way over highways and through byways, his eye always alert for the easily overlooked detail that, in one instance, might warn him to take cover, or, in another, invite him to take charge.¹ His ability to be unerring in his distinction between these two instances is the measure of his status as a hero to those who depend on him. But unlike the forests in the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, where women are important

¹ As Benjamin points out, rather startlingly, Baudelaire frequently acknowledged Cooper's influence on his depiction of the man in the modern city as a sort of pioneer. Set down in the midst of apparent chaos, both learn to discern patterns by noting the meaningful juxtaposition of seemingly insignificant details: "The poetry of terror of which the American woods with their hostile tribes on the warpath encountering each other are so full—this poetry which stood Cooper in such good stead attaches in the same way to the smallest details of Parisian life. The pedestrians, the shops, the hired coaches, or a man leaning against a window—all this was of the same burning interest to the members of Peyrade's bodyguard as a tree stump, a beaver's den, a rock, a buffalo skin, an immobile canoe, or a floating leaf was to the reader of a novel by Cooper" (42).

only in as much as their helplessness underwrites the ability of the male hero, women move through the modern city unescorted and with their own agenda. Far from occasioning male heroism, they now appear to threaten it, most obviously in the peculiarly modern incarnation of the woman as a “femme fatale.”² If Natty Bumppo could take for granted the truly helpless status of the woman clinging to him, and thereupon devote all his attention to whatever was posing a threat to her, modern detectives such as Sherlock Holmes, Philip Marlowe, and Sam Spade—the urban equivalent of the pioneer—find they must investigate the damsel at the same time they try and alleviate her distress. As I intend to demonstrate, this enigmatic woman comes to stand in as a figure for the modern metropolis itself, alluring, and yet treacherous.³ At the outset, I will simply suggest that Stephen’s relentless attempt to outlaw arousal as a legitimate component of aesthetic contemplation must be understood within the psychological, historical, and sociological context of modernity and in relation to the modern metropolis.

With the rise of mass media and the advent of commodity culture, modernist aesthetics come under a peculiar form of cultural pressure, because commodities insisted on being enjoyed. This attraction alters the subject who perceives, from one of inviolable interiority, to one alarmingly permeable to its milieu of signs and symbols: “capitalism and the body are connected in so far as stimulating the nerves is a way of stimulating exchange.... The reader’s [or observer’s] body becomes a machine hooked into the circuit of production and consumption, rather than a disinterested entity floating above economic exigencies in search of aesthetic or moral truth” (Cvetkovitch 20). Desire divided into “perverse” and “normal,” representation divided into the aesthetic and the pornographic, and culture divided into high and low serve as entry points for social policy and the constitution of various configurations of privilege and power. Perhaps this explains the current (academic) interest in pornography. As Jennifer Wicke notes, “behind the complexities of the arguments about pornography often lies a philosophical discourse about representation and education, seeing and knowing” (63).

Michel Foucault has argued that when overt punishment turns into an apparently benign form of discipline, the coercive power of a police state gives way to a need for self-surveillance. In her analysis of the social construction of feelings,

² The idea of the vamp or femme fatale in literature, art, and cinema is linked, I would argue, to the affect of the modern metropolis on the construction of masculine subjectivity. For an overview of the genesis of the “femme fatale,” see Baden. For a discussion within the context of the history of cinema, see Doane. For a look at the popularity of this figure in salon paintings of the time, see Dijkstra and also Allen. None of these works, however, explore the connection between the femme fatale and the exhilarating/draining experience of modernity for the metropolitan man. For a reading of Gerty MacDowell and Leopold Bloom in this context, see Leonard, “Those Lovely Seaside Girls.”

³ In her anthology *Gender and Modernism*, Scott has assembled a group of works by women writers that distinguishes their experience of modernity from that of their male counterparts. While Scott’s collection does not focus on the kind of urban encounter I am elaborating, it is fair to speculate that the female equivalent of the *flâneur* moved through the city much less randomly. Mrs. Dalloway, for example, declares at the outset of Woolf’s novel, “she would buy the flowers herself” (3). And this is precisely what she proceeds to do. Likewise, Miss Kilman enters a department store to buy petticoats and, though full of thoughts about herself and her relationship to Clarissa, arrives at the correct section (guided by Elizabeth) virtually unaware of her surroundings. Rhys’s characters, to offer another example, exhibit none of Stephen’s wanderlust, and regard the city as a public space that must be carefully mapped out and precisely navigated: “I have been here five days. I have decided on a place to eat in at midday, a place to eat in at night, a place to have my drink in after dinner. I have arranged my little life” (347). In contrast to Benjamin’s concept of the *flâneur*, we can expect women in public spaces to have a place to go and a plan to get them there.

Ann Cvetkovitch draws on Foucault's basic thesis to emphasize how "[d]isciplinary power is different from punishment because its effectiveness depends on its ability to mask itself and to appear in the guise of love or self-expression" (41). Pursuing this analysis still further, D.A. Miller writes:

[The] machinery of surveillance is set up to monitor ... the elaborate regulation (timetables, exercises, and so on) that discipline simultaneously deploys to occupy its subjects. The aim of such regulation is to enforce not so much a norm as the normality of normativeness itself. Rather than in rendering all its subjects uniformly "normal," discipline is interested in putting in place a perceptual grid in which a division between the normal and the deviant inherently imposes itself. (18)

Stephen's aesthetic theory, set in deliberate opposition to the pornographic, also creates a category of normativeness, not by declaring what is normal, however, but by categorizing and regulating affect. He strives for a perceptual grid that will allow the subject to watch him or herself watching and stand ready to condemn or discipline with increasing severity whatever such self-surveillance experiences as an "abnormal" response. Although Stephen strives for such a system, he also seeks relief from it, declaring all responses illegitimate except for a state he calls "esthetic stasis."

In the opening of Book IV of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen uses the readily available taxonomic system of the Catholic Church to carry this state over into the everyday: "Sunday was dedicated to the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Monday to the Holy Ghost, Tuesday to the Guardian Angels," and so on through the rest of the week (147). But this is still too general to provide minute-to-minute protection, and so he must watch himself even more closely: "His day began with an heroic offering of its every moment of thought or action" (132). Here Stephen generates pleasure through intense self-surveillance, just as he formerly (in Book III) generated pleasure for himself in a completely contrary manner, by *refusing* to see himself as anything but a sensual animal randomly wandering the city in search of sensation: "It would be a gloomy secret night.... He would follow a devious course up and down the streets.... waiting for a sudden movement of his own will or a sudden call to his sinloving soul" (102). Though he sees himself as completely open to the call of the city, we should not forget the pleasures of the city are something for which Stephen has to pay.

He figures the refusal of surveillance for purposes of sensation as a profligate and obscene form of spending, and the apposite pleasure of reveling in self-surveillance as a purchase. The difference between grace and sin is simply that one is a result of monitoring feelings, while the other is purchased as a result of letting them run riot. Appropriately, the nexus of the exchange is not a prostitute in nighttown but "a great cash register in heaven":

Every part of his day, divided by what he regarded now as the duties of his station in life, circled about its own centre of spiritual energy ... every thought, word and deed, every instant of consciousness could be made to revibrate radiantly in heaven: and at times his sense of such immediate repercussion was so lively that he seemed

to feel his soul in devotion pressing like fingers the keyboard of a great cash register and to see the amount of his purchase start forth immediately in heaven. (148)

If aesthetic theory was once envisioned as a system of thought explaining the "natural" category of "beauty," Stephen's theory may be used to analyze the social construction of that category. Only then can modernist aesthetic theory be understood as the cornerstone of the normative hegemonic discourses that make the *fictional* category of "the artistic" an excuse to organize and make accessible to discipline all the chaotic responses of which the body is capable. I do not want to regard aesthetic theory as a philosophical endpoint but to expose it as a dynamic of self-discipline, one that resolves sexual ambivalence within an acceptable category of "beauty." What aesthetic theory consequently suppresses is that both logical reflection *and* physical arousal, both objective harmony *and* disconcerting fantasy, are necessary components in the apprehension of beauty. Put more succinctly, creativity, like interpretation, *is* desire, and not coincidentally any theory of aesthetics interrogates desire. Thus we can regard Stephen's search for "the beautiful" as a process that views the body as a contested site of meaning and attempts to colonize its sensory apparatus in the service of an historically, culturally, and economically specific subjectivity which can then be called "human nature." Father Arnall's hell sermon initiates an orgy of punitive self-surveillance in Stephen, by means of which he systematically tries to destroy his ability to experience pleasure by overloading his senses with unpleasant stimuli. "Each of his senses," we are told, "was brought under a rigorous discipline" (150). But in a commodity culture, becoming a pleasure anorexic and starving yourself of images can feel good. This was especially so at the turn of the century when the modern city was virtually uncatalogued and even such a tawdry Bazaar as Joyce's *Araby* might bring on disorienting euphoria and nearly unbearable depression.

When the nature of feelings was beyond debate, the subject was open to the "rigours of discipline," disguised as benevolent guidance and education, within individual systems of self-surveillance. As a result, the system of self-surveillance not only became as personal as one's feelings themselves, it was also indistinguishable from those feelings. The method by which meanings were assigned to such feelings is what Cvetkovitch has termed a "politics of affect." In this way, feelings that are experienced as germinating from within the dominant ideology become privileged as evidence of a core self, which leads to their further reification as normative ideals, or "the way anybody would feel." Thus something so presumably private and unavailable to mediation as feeling helps map out "within" the subject an imaginary body in reference to which self-surveillance can operate.

Using the anthropological work of Mary Douglas, John Fiske describes aesthetic theory as performing a purification ritual: "[D]irt is matter out of place, and the terror it invokes in the respectable bourgeoisie derives from its power to demonstrate the fragility of the conceptual categories by which semiotic and social control are exercised over unruliness and the forces of deception" (98). Commodity culture is pornographic in the sense that it is anti-aesthetic; it generates sensation indifferent to the politics of affect based on self-surveillance. For

Stephen, the aesthetic is a relief from the pornographic, but the pornographic is also a relief from the aesthetic. The pornographic generates pleasure by transgressing, the aesthetic by conforming. Pornography might be called truly "obscene" in the sense that it takes one behind the scenes of his own sensuality and shocks him with an aesthetics unsanctioned by the dominant discourse of pleasure. We censor pornography, I am suggesting, because it disturbs a system of self-surveillance on which we have come to know our very selves by means of feelings which appear to be impulsive, dangerous, and perhaps not even ours at all. Indeed, Stephen experiences physical arousal as a foreign body snaking its way into his body, which comes close to Father Arnall's basic description of Satan's goal. Banished from aesthetic theory, sexual arousal returns to call into question Western culture's foundational assumption that there is a sovereign ruler of thought, feeling, and desire.

II. Modernity and the Ideology of the Encounter

As Jean Gagnon argues, the city itself is pornographic in the non-pejorative sense that the city organizes space in a manner that permits it to be eroticized for the purposes of commerce: "The city draws the look of residents and visitors alike, offering itself to be deciphered and read. It is an urban landscape which, unlike the countryside, becomes a cultural reservoir where individuals draw the representations that they more or less consciously incorporate into their lives and value-systems" (25). Oscar Wilde, in his essay "The Decay of Lying," also implies that the city alters the nature of subjectivity by replacing a supposedly innate nature with something like that which Gagnon calls a cultural reservoir: "Nature has good intentions, of course, but, as Aristotle once said, she cannot carry them out.... If Nature had been comfortable, mankind would never have invented architecture.... Egotism itself, which is so necessary to a proper sense of human dignity, is entirely the result of indoor life" (970). The system of fictional imagery in the urban landscape, according to Gagnon, generates a particularly urban fantasy he, too, from yet another perspective, designates as an ideology of the encounter: "Whether individuals attempt to escape or embrace our solitude, the city envelopes us in a web of expectation of possible encounters.... This highly paradoxical world of encounters bases itself on absence and develops through the practice of consumerism" (35). Or, as the narrator of "Araby" more succinctly puts it: "If I go [shopping] I will bring you something" (32).

In addition to the obvious case of the narrator in Joyce's story entitled "An Encounter," Stephen's persistent fantasy while wandering around the city is that he will somehow meet somebody. Sometimes he imagines that he will sin with this person in a manner predictably debasing and bestial (99). Wildhaired and lecherous-eyed women of the sort the narrator of "An Encounter" remembers from the covers of pulp detective magazines also appear to haunt the edges of Stephen's urban fantasy. At other times, he anticipates an encounter with what amounts to the antidote of this prurient image: a girl innocent and demure whom the Virgin Mary herself joins with him in sinless satisfaction: "Take hands, Stephen and Emma. It is a beautiful evening now in heaven. You have erred but

you are always my children" (*Portrait* 116). Stephen's fantasy of this encounter is neatly split between the kinetics of the pornographic city and the stasis achieved by aesthetic distance from it. On the one hand, the wanton woman is the femme fatale of commodity culture, never weary of her ardent ways (as Stephen's Villanelle laments), merciless, vampirish, sucking his blood, forcing him to "spend" again and again. The other girl, the flip side of his projection of Emma, is partially contained in the figure of Mercedes, before whom Stephen becomes a pleasure anorexic ("Madam, I never eat Muscatel grapes"), with both his flesh and his appetites beyond the call of all entreaties. In his discussion of the city in early German cinema, James Donald contends that "its mysteries were imagined as feminine through the figure of the prostitute" (88). Indeed, Stephen's habit of coupling his visits to nighttown with visits to church might be read as his oscillation between the enigmatic figuration of the city as opaque and dangerous, and the Virgin Mary's reassuring refiguration of the city as "a wide land under a tender lucid evening sky, a cloud drifting westward amid a pale green sea of heaven" (116).

For the poet Baudelaire and the sociologist Georg Simmel, the defining experience of modernity was that of living in a modern metropolis, and the most remarked upon feature of this life was the nearly unmanageable assault of noise, illogical juxtaposition, relentless unpredictability, and enigmatic epiphanies, all made publicly available to anyone of all classes, in a manner that was as fascinating as it was frustrating. What is so different about this experience—why it gives rise to modernism—is that it demands delimitation. In the case of Stephen, one such strategy is the protected space of aesthetic contemplation, a space that he defines as home to human nature. Joyce's theory of the epiphany might be seen as a similar reaction to and product of a kaleidoscopic urban environment. If it is true, as Wilde claims, that there was no fog in London until poets and painters aestheticized it ("people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them" [Wilde 986]), it might also be argued that there were no intense moments of miraculous yet bewildering clarity to experience until Joyce's idea of the epiphany became commonplace. Another way to periodize this theoretical construct is to think of Joyce's concept of the epiphany as the urbanization of William Wordsworth's concept of the "spot of time." Indeed, Joyce transforms the Wordsworthian "moment" of oceanic connection to "something evermore about to be" into something much more like a snapshot of a world permanently in flux—which unexpectedly offers itself long enough to be sensed but not nearly long enough to be contemplated and analyzed.

For Baudelaire, modern urban experience is unique in the history of subjectivity, because the very experience that engenders a profound sense of loneliness also promises to alleviate that condition. Benjamin compares the phenomenon of wandering through crowds hoping for an ideal encounter to drug addiction, with its cyclical pattern of exhilaration, dejection, and the need for exhilaration. Just so, the individual plunges himself into the crowd, frantically scanning the faces accessible to his gaze and yet emotionally impervious to him. This failure to make a connection drives him to experience ever more deeply the corrosive loneliness he is striving to alleviate. As Benjamin remarks, "The crowd is ... the

latest narcotic for those abandoned" (55). With the help of Baudelaire, Simmel, Benjamin, and many others, we might see this moment as one where the modern city presented an unprecedented challenge to subjectivity, and the delimiting strategies of modernism were not yet available. As a result, it seems safe to say, urban experience was both more excruciating and more exhilarating than it is today. Joyce's ironic distance from Stephen was arguably created by the fact that he had begun to deal with the experience of modernity by taking on the task of representing a city in literature. He portrays Stephen as still merely living in it, threatened by its institutionalized anonymity and therefore dependent upon its apparently boundless possibilities for self-affirmation.

The compensatory strategy for loneliness in the midst of a crowd is anticipation of the chance encounter, beginning with a glance, leading from there to casual conversation, and escalating into an inarticulate but passionate union. Such an encounter takes many forms; it may be found in Leopold Bloom's attempt to glimpse the white stocking of a woman about to raise her skirt boarding a tram, an unexpected encounter unexpectedly denied to him when another tram blocks his view at the crucial moment. Significantly, the experience generates an ache of disappointment that persists through the day and for which he consciously seeks compensation at later points, most notably when Gerty MacDowell shows him considerably more than her ankle. On the other hand, such an encounter might be a more or less permanent state of mind; the young Stephen Dedalus walks about the city never ceasing to hope for a "holy encounter ... at which weakness and timidity and inexperience were to fall from him" (99).

Nor is it arbitrary that Joyce uses a religious term to describe the prototypical modern experience; what makes sacred the chance encounter "Amid the deafening traffic of the town." While the glimpse of the divine is brief enough to torment ("A flash ... then night!"), the certainty that it can neither be reproduced nor marketed, makes it eternally precious ("I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance"). If Wordsworth's spot of time seemed to promise "something evermore about to be," the urban encounter guarantees "something *nevermore* about to be." The encounter is memorable to the extent it failed to take place; "The delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first sight as love at last sight," Benjamin remarks (45). It is important to note the vital role that disappointment plays in the flâneur's construction of pleasure: "What makes his body twitch spasmodically is not the excitement of a man in whom an image has taken possession of every fibre of his being; it partakes more of the shock with which an imperious desire suddenly overcomes a lonely man" (Benjamin 46). In this sense, the activity of shopping benefits from the compensatory fantasy of the chance meeting, and, indeed, caters to it, by constructing a controlled urban environment where "chance encounters" are offered in a carefully organized manner (clearly marked departments, goods on shelves, in display cases, hanging from the ceiling, fixed to the wall).

To those who can afford to purchase them, the indulgence of an "imperious desire" which "suddenly overcomes a lonely man" can be displaced onto the modern form of shopping we now call "impulse buying." When the going gets tough—that is to say, when the delirious frustration of missed encounters

becomes unbearable—the tough go shopping and, as compensation, engage in preordained, easily consummated chance encounters. A Baudelaire could celebrate the fact that “Like a roving soul in search of a body, [the poet] enters another person whenever he wishes. For him alone, all is open; if certain places seem closed to him, it is because in his view they are not worth inspecting” (qtd. in Benjamin 55). Seeing the situation with modernist irony, however, Benjamin understands that “the commodity itself is the speaker here.” According to Benjamin, the poet’s power is that of the class of people who seek and find compensation in commodities: “yes, the last words give a rather accurate idea of what the commodity whispers to a poor wretch who passes a shop-window containing beautiful and expensive things. These objects are not interested in this person; they do not empathize with him” (55). Walking past commodities is akin to walking past the prostitutes of nighttown; they will respond with encouragement or contempt depending on one’s capacity to purchase them.

For an even more accurate idea of what a world of commodities can do to its inhabitants, we might turn to the famous epiphany that concludes Joyce’s short story “Araby.” Here, a young boy in love with a girl he has only spoken to once finds himself too poor to buy her anything at the Bazaar. He feels, most particularly, a shame induced by the object’s indomitable disinterest:

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything.... I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

—No, thank you.

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases.... I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless.... I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket.... Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger. (Dubliners 35, emphasis added)

It is the vase itself, its peculiarly female combination of desirability and humiliating indifference to his existence, that causes him to stand before it in futile homage, only to turn away at last, a driven “creature.”

If we look back to the beginning of the story for what draws the protagonist to such objects in the first place, we find that the frustration of “chance encounters” lies at the root of it: “Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door.... When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped.... [w]hen we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her”(30). When she does speak to him, we see how easily the frustration of a sexual encounter turns into the compensatory desire to shop for the one thing that might complete us: “At last she spoke to me.... She asked me was I going to Araby.... —If I go, I said, I will bring you something. What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening!” (31–32). The urban experience is nothing if not exhausting.

And yet the experience is addictive. Baudelaire suggests the meaning of such exhaustion in his offhanded disgust at being in a rural town with “[n]o shopwindows. Strolling, something that nations with imagination love, is not possible in Brussels. There is nothing to see, and the streets are unusable” (qtd. in Benjamin 50). Stuck in a place insufficiently metropolitan to intoxicate him, Baudelaire is like a man suffering from withdrawal. Sociologists, from Simmel at the turn of the century to Pierre Bourdieu, argue that the modernist aesthetic, with its emphasis on observing the object from a safe remove, resembles the distancing strategy employed by the consumer with money to spend. For Simmel, as David Frisby tells us, “money transactions ... appear to create that distance which is a necessary prerequisite for aesthetic judgment.... Does not ‘the beautiful illusion’ that is art and the aesthetic realm have its counterpart in the seemingly autonomous realm of the circulation and exchange of commodities?... [There is] an ‘elective affinity’ between the aesthetic domain and the domain of the circulation and exchange of commodities” (140). It is precisely this sociological dimension of aesthetic contemplation that Stephen’s theory seeks to repress.

In accounting for what he characterizes as the “disquiet provoked by urban space,” James Donald contends that “the city that people experience, a labyrinthine reality.... In the recesses and margins of urban space, people invest places with meaning, memory and desire” works against the “enlightenment aspiration to render the city transparent” (78). Against the many attempts to organize and survey the city, the labyrinthine city persisted. I have suggested that Joyce’s concept of the epiphany and Stephen’s modernist aesthetics should be viewed within the urban context which gave rise to them; Donald makes a similar case for Freud’s theory of “the uncanny”:

The disquieting slippage between a place where we should feel at home and the sense that it is, at some level, definitively unhomey provided the starting point for Freud’s idea that the uncanny ... is rooted in the familiar.... That suggests why it is necessary to make sense of the individual in the metropolis not only in terms of identity, community and civic association, but also in terms of a dramaturgy of desire, fascination and terror. This uncanny city is not out there in the streets. It defines the architecture of our apparently most secret selves. (81)

I am willing to argue, moreover, that in changing his hero’s name from Stephen Hero to Stephen Dedalus, Joyce revises an aesthetic strategy that sought distanciation from the city and formulates one that seeks out the uncanny experience in the many winding roads and unexpected sites, or suppressed elements, of the modern city. Where the world-weary Edmund Dantes was immune to such experience, Stephen Dedalus is not: “He had wandered into a maze of narrow and dirty streets.... A trembling seized him and his eyes grew dim.... He was in another world: he had awakened from a slumber of centuries” (100). We might recall that Freud’s idea of the uncanny developed out of his experience of getting lost in the city, but getting lost in such a way that his experience was rooted in and constituted by a sense of the familiar.

This is certainly the experience of Stephen Dedalus when he comes upon the word *foetus* carved in a desk: "It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind" (90, emphasis added). Following closely upon this uncanny coupling of an experience of unexpected invasion from without, and the discovery of a hitherto unimagined relation to that experience within, Stephen feels the difference between his presumably autonomous interior and a presumably indifferent object collapse: "His very brain was sick and powerless. He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shops.... He could scarcely recognise as his his own thoughts" (92). Here is the sudden reversal that gives rise to the uncanny: Stephen is suddenly estranged from what should be most familiar—his own thoughts—while the anonymous scrawl of graffiti becomes terrifyingly familiar.

Graffiti is the very kind of thing Stephen seeks to eliminate when he banishes the "kinetic" and the "pornographic" to the realm of what he calls, without further explanation, "improper art." Having created this category to house the sort of aesthetic response he does not understand, he privileges the equivalent of a well-lit, frequently patrolled square. His aesthetic theory legitimates a response that is defined in opposition to those invoked by "pornographic" and "kinetic" experiences. He calls this response "the esthetic emotion." The feeling is "static," and, being so, thereby inaugurates an entire state of being—"esthetic stasis"—where "the mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing" (179). We might think of Stephen ducking into a museum to calm himself much as we do of Clark Kent ducking into a phone booth. Both emerge as the urban *übermensch*, as the saying goes, "more powerful than a locomotive and able to leap tall buildings at a single bound." Stephen wants the aesthetic moment to be a transparent and carefully mapped out response to the uncanny experience characteristic of life in a modern metropolis. But the modern experience haunts the edges of Stephen's aesthetic theory and even smuggles itself into the heart of it by means of the irrepressible Lynch: "If I am to listen to your esthetic philosophy give me at least another cigarette. I don't care about it.... Damn you and damn everything. I want a job of five hundred a year. You can't get me one" (207). Lynch might be willing to visit Stephen's rarefied aesthetic perch, but he never fails to remind Stephen that one cannot live there, any more than he can live in a perpetual state of grace. If it is a commercial free zone that serves as a refuge from the city, it is also a place where you can neither earn money nor spend it, neither desire nor express this desire. Lynch may admire the engineering that has gone into Stephen's moment of "esthetic stasis" (it has "the true scholastic stink"), but he feels bound to point out that dwelling within it is neither pleasant nor profitable.

In discussing Simmel's essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Donald identifies Simmel's "modern metropolitan man" as having "two main aspects to his personality. One is defensive: the blasé intellectualising self that provides some protection against the shock of exorbitant stimuli. The other aspect is more expressive, but again in a specifically modern way: it identifies a form of conduct, or an exercise of liberty, that manifests itself in an aesthetics of self-creation" (81). What interests me about the walk Stephen and Lynch take together is their

perfect correspondence to the two halves of this modern metropolitan man. Stephen, of course, is the intellectualising self. Lynch, on the other hand, is the expressive aspect: eating dung, writing his name on the buttocks of statues, demanding cigarettes and yearning for a well paying job, the better to secure his fantasy of the man about town. It is not only in their mannerisms that Stephen and Lynch appear to be two aspects of one personality, but also in the counterpoint that organizes their dialogue: "But what is beauty? asked Lynch impatiently. Out with another definition. Something we see and like! Is that the best you and Aquinas can do? —Let us take woman, said Stephen. —Let us take her! said Lynch fervently" (208). The blasé intellectual, indifferently strolling past the idea of "woman," walks beside the active girl watcher.

III. A Catholic in the Modern City

Another social reality to be factored into a cultural reading of Stephen's aesthetic theory is the urban experience most particular to him: that of being raised an Irish Catholic in the rapidly modernizing city of Dublin. An additional reason for Stephen's fear of the physical, kinetic world is his fear of Father Arnall's hell. "He was in mortal sin," he reflects, and adds, significantly to my reading, "it could happen *in an instant*. But how so quickly?" (139, emphasis added). Here Stephen appears to be in complete agreement with Lynch. The fly enters the eye—desire enters the I—before one can blink; or, rather, the desire to sin is stimulated by something seen before one can decide to look away. The Catholic concept of mortal sin, that condemns one for thinking sinful thoughts, is badly out of touch with the visual reality of the modern city, with its commercialized and eroticized space, all bent on entering the eye in such a way as to reconfigure the I. For a modern Catholic boy accountable to his God *for sinning in thought* as well as by deed, the urban landscape is a hellhole of stimulation that the Catholic Church could not have anticipated.

Stephen's answer to the question of how it happens "in an instant" and "so quickly" is explicitly rendered as something entering his eye before he blinks: "But how so quickly? By seeing or by thinking of seeing. The eyes see the thing, without having wished first to see. Then in an instant it happens. But does that part of the body understand or what?" (139). According to the analogy, sudden stimulation from the object of desire—Baudelaire's imperious desire—convulses the "I" much as a fly would the eye. Stephen, in his penitent moments, experiences such stimulation as the unexpected and unwelcome invasion of a foreign body that lives in his body, feeding off it like a parasite, but remaining somehow distinct: "Was that then he or an inhuman thing moved by a lower soul than his soul? His soul sickened at the thought of a torpid snaky life feeding itself out of the tender marrow of his life and fattening upon the slime of lust" (140). Stephen sees his own desire as a vampire sucking away at his life's blood, fattening itself with the slimy by-product of his lustful thoughts. Vampire imagery is an important metaphor for the experience of commodity culture, this suggests, because the modern city, exciting a disorienting mixture of pleasure and terror in its half-willing victim, opens his purse, and feeds on the life force contained there.

Despite the evident amount of pleasure Stephen receives, the guilt that follows hard upon this experience is succinctly summed up by Father Arnall: "How [the damned] will rage and fume, to think that they have lost the bliss of heaven for the dross of earth ... *for a tingling of the nerves*" (129, emphasis added). The urban landscape is a pornographic one to the wandering Stephen, helpless in the face of its power to reshape his subjectivity; "Dublin" itself becomes the antithesis of what "Araby" represented: "The letters of the name of Dublin lay heavily upon his mind, pushing one another surlily hither and thither with slow boorish insistence.... The body that was his stood, listless and dishonoured, gazing out of darkened eyes, helpless" (111). Both the narrator of "Araby" and Stephen Dedalus thrill to the many siren calls of the city, but their object of desire inflames them only because it is a *missed* encounter, love at *last* glance. What seemed at last to represent freedom from loneliness turns into a despised signifier of exhausted hopes and futile enthusiasms.

But let us try to embed modernist experience further within a Catholic context. Mortal sin, if we were to translate it into what Stephen might call the language of the marketplace, is desiring without being able to buy; sinning in thought but not in deed is the essence of commodity culture. The state of unrest Stephen alternately laments and wallows in is the experience of a turn-of-the-century adolescent wandering though an eroticized space conducive to the consumption of goods. Intensifying the experience of the city for Stephen is the fact that he began his life outside of Dublin, in an environment so rural that he imagines himself as Baby Tuckoo residing not beside a bustling city street, but one traveled by a moocow. Stephen's development is figured in quite a few ways in *Portrait*, but one of the major engines of change is the combination of shock, consternation, and delight he experiences upon encountering the modern city. Indeed, Dublin is described not in geographical terms at all, but only as "a new and complex sensation." This sensation—aroused by the city and embodied within—is so new and complex that he approaches it like the labyrinth designed by his namesake, Dedalus: "In the beginning he contented himself with circling timidly round the neighbouring square" (66). The biblical overture, "in the beginning," tells us that the urban experience is all before Stephen. Only at this point does he begin to show signs of the modern consumer, an urban wanderer lost yet mesmerized in a constellation of signs, signs alerting him to inarticulate feelings of discontentment and, at the same time, in a manner indistinguishable from this discontentment, inaugurating the hope of a chance encounter: "A vague dissatisfaction grew up within him as he looked on the quays and on the river and on the lowering skies and yet he continued to wander up and down day after day as if he really sought someone that eluded him" (66).

What we have here is a portrait of Baudelaire's *flâneur* as a young man recently brought to the city. His sense of some ultimate encounter just around the corner, maybe in the next shop window, predictably turns into sullen disappointment: "though they passed a jovial array of shops lit up and adorned for Christmas, his mood of embittered silence did not leave him.... The causes of his embitterment were many, remote and near. He was angry with himself for being young and prey of restless foolish impulses" (67). Before this moment, Stephen

fabricated the cave of Monte Cristo on his kitchen table and imagined himself as the calm, methodical avenger, Edmund Dante. Once infused with the eroticized atmosphere of the urban landscape, however, his desires become at once so numerous, so diffuse and so intangible, that

inarticulate cries and the unspoken brutal words rushed forth from his brain to force a passage. His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down [the city streets]. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with another of his kind.... He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness.... He stretched out his arms in the street to hold fast the frail swooning form that eluded him and incited him. (99–100)

Never has a character in literature so badly needed to go shopping. But Stephen knows nothing of this, any more than his religious instructors do. Their insistence that desiring things in thought is a mortal sin, a disgusting tingling of the nerves, in payment for which each of his five senses will be ingeniously and forever tortured, has caused this would-be *flâneur* to experience the dawning of the commodity age as self-induced psychosis.

Indeed, running through Father Arnall's description of hell is a curious theme: devils torment sinners by reciting all their inadequacies, detailing all their failures, chronicling missed opportunities, amplifying self-doubt, and magnifying imperfections. In the cruel democracy of commodity culture, poverty does not disqualify you from seeing all that is unavailable to you. Accordingly, the only times Stephen is at peace in *Portrait*, the only times he is free from the inarticulate longing that changes him into a baffled beast prowling the streets, are those times immediately after confession when he has purged himself of all the sinful urges elicited by the city ("How simple and beautiful was life after all!"); those times immediately after visiting a prostitute and wallowing in the fantasy of the chance encounter ("In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself"); or that unique moment when he finds himself flush with his essay prize money of thirty-three pounds ("For a swift season of merrymaking the money of his prizes ran through Stephen's fingers"). It is important to note that his ability to pay at once eclipses his obligation to pray and grants him pardon from the fantasy of the chance encounter: "Great parcels of groceries and delicacies and dried fruits arrived from the city.... [H]is trousers' pockets bulged with masses of silver and copper coins.... He ... wrote out resolutions ... pored upon all kinds of price lists. When he could do no more he drove up and down the city in trams" (97–98). Riding the trams is of course the best and swiftest way to visit and revisit every point of commercial interest in the city. Riding the trams replaces his previous use of idle time, wandering the streets. Where he was sinning, and then praying, he is now buying, and then paying. When the money runs out, we learn that "the season of pleasure came to an end" (98). Joyce represents Stephen's spending spree as a change of seasons. Predictably, then, as soon as Stephen's money dwindles, the "wasting fires" return: "He burned to appease the fierce longings of his heart before which everything else was idle and alien" (98). As in "Araby," the desire to consume consumes the everyday, in order to

fuel a longed-for apotheosis of complete satisfaction. At the same time, he continues to court the fantasy of an innocent encounter in deliberate opposition to this consuming desire:

Only at times, in the pauses of his desire, when the luxury that was wasting him gave room to a softer languor, the image of Mercedes traversed the background of his memory.... A tender premonition touched him of the tryst he had then looked forward to and in spite of the horrible reality which lay between his hope of then and now, of the holy encounter he had then imagined at which weakness and timidity and inexperience were to fall from him. Such moments passed. (99)

The image of Mercedes always accompanies a fantasy of control, of taking no more than he needs, of being self-sufficient, neither spending nor in debt, neither guilty nor full of longing. To put this fantasy in economic terms, we might say it offers a world based on use value, a system where everything costs what it is actually worth. In psychoanalytic terms, it is a fantasy of indomitable wholeness based upon and signified by, calm and resolute refusal in the face of the desired object: "Madam, I never eat muscatel grapes." It is worth noting, too, that Dublin becomes "sunny Marseilles" when this fantasy is ascendant, complete with a simple village path running past Mercedes: "a small whitewashed house in the garden of which grew many rosebushes" (63).

In dramatizing Stephen's formulation of an aesthetic theory, Joyce reveals that theory is a means of monitoring subjectivity, criminalizing "perversion" and, in the guise of a neutral exploration of "the beautiful," providing the entry point for the policing of desire. Aesthetic theory must be designated as asexual in order that it might also pose as ahistorical. By showing Stephen Dedalus in the throes of inventing a modernist aesthetics, Joyce also shows him compulsively vacuuming out the dirt of eroticism from such a theory, thereby creating a sanctioned space free of the seductions and importunities one encounters in an urban landscape. It is a sanctioned space similar to the one which the Church affords a priest. If being a priest allows one to enjoy the confessions of women and yet remain immune from sin and desire, then Stephen feels he may have a vocation. In other words, the figure of the artist as "a priest of the eternal imagination" is not just another clever metaphor; explaining his aesthetic theory to Lynch is less an attempt to understand the artist than to achieve what Stephen calls a "magical immunity" to the calls of a kinetically charged cityscape. Indeed, the studied indifference Stephen achieves while explaining his aesthetic theory is routed in an instant, not by the clamoring city, which that theory is designed to keep at bay, but by Lynch's remark, "Your beloved is here" (215). Because Stephen has seen her flirt with a real priest rather than confess to him, this announcement triggers a "lapse" rather than the theorized moment of epiphany: "She had no priest to flirt with ... remembering how he had seen her last. Lynch was right. His mind, emptied of theory and courage, lapsed back into a listless peace" (216).

It is tempting to characterize this collapse of the difference between art world and marketplace in term of what W.F. Haug calls "Commodity Aesthetics."

Under such circumstances, “beauty” is still understood in the classical sense as an appearance that appeals to the senses. However, that sensory appeal has been

developed in the service of the realization of exchange-value, whereby commodities are designed to stimulate in the onlooker the desire to possess and the impulse to buy.... The transformation of the world of useful objects into commodities triggers instinctual responses, and is the functional means by which not only the world of sensual objects but also human sensuality itself is remoulded again and again. (8)

According to Jean Baudrillard, the kind of use-value Stephen identifies with true beauty is no more than nostalgia and, as such, an alibi for exchange-value. Mercedes and the Virgin Mary, not to mention the affect of confession itself, are the aesthetic equivalents of use value: innocent and holy encounters, they take place in a commercial free zone, where everything is only what it appears to be.⁴ Commodity aesthetics turn this same “tender tryst” into an encounter with the femme fatale, which consequently becomes a figure for both the city itself and commodity culture in general: “A figure that seemed to him by day demure and innocent came towards him by night through the winding darkness of sleep, her face transfigured by a lecherous cunning, her eyes bright with brutish joy” (99). This movement from innocence to depravity is reminiscent of the vampire, which I have described as a trope for the experience of modernity.

Vampirism is also the trope Marx turns to when searching for a way to describe how capital, the undead, mesmerizes its victims by transforming innocent use-value—if there ever was such a thing—into the alternately heavenly and hellish world of attractions spawned by exchange value: “Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (342). Stephen finds himself in nighttown in *Portrait*, not because he has been searching for the kind of gratification he imagines as Mercedes waiting for him in her little house, but because he wants the much more delirious sensation he associates with exchange-value: “He would pass by them calmly (the prostitutes) waiting for a sudden movement of his own will or a sudden call to his sinloving soul from their soft perfumed flesh.... [H]e prowled in quest of that call” (102). This sensation must be regarded as an historically specific technocracy of sensuality. We are invited to witness what commodity aesthetics does to human sensuality, and how a continuously changing prospect of satisfaction alters human need and instinct. “Being natural is a pose,” says Wilde’s Lord Henry, “and it’s the most irritating pose I know” (20). With the rise of commodity culture and the subordination of use value to exchange value, being natural becomes a difficult pose indeed.

What Stephen describes as “prowling in search of a call” is the quest for a sexual encounter that approximates the transformation promised by the fantasy of

⁴ Baudrillard is of particular importance to my attempt to “urbanise” the theories and practices of modernism because of his frank recognition—already nascent in Stephen Hero’s theory of the epiphany—that it is the object that rules over the subject. He abandons a metaphysics of the subject, and argues instead for the subject as the affect of a metaphysics of the object. I am also indebted to de Certeau’s more even-handed look at how the subject reacts to the social relations implicit, yet denied, in the modern object world (xix). For an overview about the theorized relationship between the subject and object in commodity culture, see my introduction to the special issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly* on the topic “Joyce and Advertising.”

exchange-value. Earlier, he envisioned an encounter with Mercedes as one where “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” (65). Such a transformation finally takes place, paradoxically, when his “sinloving flesh” is “called” by a prostitute: “In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself” (101). Later, after confession, he achieves a similar moment, as the pressure of the communion wafer on his tongue generates a state of well-being identical to that generated by the pressure of the prostitute’s tongue in his mouth. Whether in sin or in a state of grace, Stephen craves the same thing: an ideal encounter with the commodity. The communion wafer, as Bloom notes when he pops into Mass, is the longest selling and most successful product in the world (Leonard, *New*). In this regard, the only difference between going shopping, “buying” a prostitute, or going to confession is that shopping and sex are guilt-free so long as you have money.

IV. Aesthetic Theory and Marketing Strategies

Stephen delivers his theory while walking through the noisy streets of Dublin apparently indifferent to interruptions constantly pressing in on him on all sides: “A long dray laden with old iron came round the corner ... covering the end of Stephen’s speech with the harsh roar of jangled and rattling metal. Lynch closed his ears and gave out oath after oath till the dray had passed” (209). Stephen, however, waits patiently for the noise to subside and continues without a break in his line of reasoning. His ability to resume, as though no tram had interrupted his thought, identifies his aesthetic posture with the strategy of distantiation featured in the sociology of the city from Simmel to Bourdieu. If, as Simmel claims, “the particular form of intellectuality appropriate to metropolitan existence is one which reacts with indifference to external shocks and a whole field of possible interactions,” then the privileged position of aesthetic contemplation is also a fantasy of immunity from the addictive effects of the big city (Frisby 115). Appropriately, then, Bourdieu describes the modernist aesthetic as “the rationalization of an ethos: pure pleasure, pleasure totally purified of all sensuous or sensible interest, perfectly free of all social or fashionable interest, as remote from concupiscence as it is from conspicuous consumption” (493). Such statements point to the question implicit in the question, “what is Stephen’s aesthetic theory?”—namely, the sociological question of modernism’s emphasis on aesthetic theory.

Put another way, if Stephen fancies himself an artist, why doesn’t he create instead of pontificate? Why the necessity for aesthetic theory? Why the urgency to explain it to a bemused and inattentive friend as they walk through the city together? Everyone from teachers to students they happen to pass on the street seems to know that Stephen is planning a work of aesthetic theory, and Lynch makes it clear this particular oration is only the latest of a series. For Stephen, theorizing about aesthetics is not so much a work of scholarship in progress as a way of life, a means of coping, and a fantasy of immunity from the experience of

modernity. Of course, Stephen's "social standing" has steadily slipped since the opening of the novel. One answer to the question of why Stephen produces an aesthetic theory with such personal urgency, why he insists on telling it to people passing on the street, is that he feels increasingly destabilized by his declining social and economic status. His aesthetic point of view is the only position of social superiority he can afford. The futility of so denying material circumstances is evident at the outset, when "Stephen took a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and offered it to his companion. —I know you are poor, he said. —Damn your yellow insolence, answered Lynch" (204). Far from being flush, Stephen wanders through the noisy streets of Dublin expounding his theory because he cannot afford to go shopping. Indeed, far from offering relief, shop windows press home his poverty and its attendant helplessness: "Stephen looked at his thinly clad mother and remembered that a few days before he had seen a mantle priced at twenty guineas in the window of Barnardo's" (97).

The modernist aesthetic allows one to experience what Bourdieu terms a "pure pleasure" which is, at the same time, "a pleasure totally purified of all sensuous or sensible interest." The fantasy is one that allows the shopper to enjoy the pleasure of advertisements inducing consumption, while remaining immune to the longing that accompanies such pleasure. This immunity is *necessarily* a fantasy, because the sense of loss and consequent longing actually constitutes this kind of aesthetic pleasure. As Benjamin observed of Baudelaire's city poetry, in "the high point of the encounter ... the poet's passion seems to be frustrated but in reality bursts out of him like a flame" (45).

In response to the question of why the category of the aesthetic was so intricately elaborated in modernism, Terry Eagleton explains that it offers "an isolated enclave within which the dominant social order can find an idealized refuge from its own actual values of competitiveness, exploitation and material possessiveness" (9). This is accurate as far as it goes. I am suggesting that the relationship between the modern city and modernist aesthetics is a two-way street, and those who have been dispossessed of the material means necessary to dwell within "the dominant social order," still may *appear* qualified to do so if they can occupy the "idealized refuge" of art. Stephen turns compulsively to aesthetic contemplation not, as Eagleton suggests, because he is a member of the dominant class, but because he no longer is. In a way, Stephen is pursuing the same class strategy his father began when he first found himself drifting towards bankruptcy. He sent his son to Clongowes where magistrates send their children and gave the boy the cultural capital required of an artist. Certainly by the time he goes to Cork, it has occurred to Stephen that this is the only legacy he can expect. Indeed, the source of Stephen's aesthetic is not Aristotle or Aquinas, as he would have Lynch think, so much as the humiliating trip he took with his father to Cork. This was to be a homecoming trip where Simon would offer his eldest son as proof to his old schoolmates he has prospered in Dublin. The real purpose of Simon's visit, however, is to sell off the land that once underwrote his family's claim to a secure position within the Irish Catholic middle class. Furthermore, no one in Cork, however much they may humor Simon, appears to be in any doubt about this. Stephen is in the thankless position of supplying the proof of his fa-

ther's prosperity, on a trip whose true purpose will diminish his own financial future.

The self-containment strategy Stephen builds into his aesthetic theory is both dependent on and based upon a naturalized binarism between the pornographic and the kinetic, on the one hand, and the aesthetic and the static on the other. This particular polarity is so charged, because the experience of modernity is so schismatic: one is either lost within it or flying above it. What Joyce gives us in *Portrait* is a sense of what it felt like to be a part of modernity well before modernism had rendered the modern city culturally intelligible and therefore something that could be negotiated with a bit more nuance. The peculiar task of modernist aesthetics, then, is how to repress the similarity between the object of desire (the commodity) and the object of beauty (the work of art). Or, to put it another way, how to shore up the line between high and low culture by ruling out physical response as a proper response to sensory stimuli. Such similarity must be repressed in order for aesthetic theory to preserve the natural and perverse as enforceably oppositional categories and, by so doing, constitute a universal subject position accountable to Church and state.

What Stephen presents as the essential basis of any aesthetic discussion—separating works of art from commodities—is precisely what he fails to do when he finally gets down to describing the “proper” aesthetic relationship between the observing subject and the object of contemplation. In fact, with suspiciously uncharacteristic generosity, Stephen credits Aquinas as the source of his terminology so excessively that we must conclude he needs to convince himself his words are carefully selected from the “literary tradition.” In fact, even as he strives to shore up the line between high and low culture, his description of the pure aesthetic gaze conflates the universal observer of the aesthetic object with the consumer in the modern marketplace. Far from describing a moment of suspended contemplation, his description of the aesthetic moment actually describes the consumer mesmerized by the advertised commodity. Stephen's hypothetical aesthetic observer must first achieve emotional stasis in order to witness “the soul of the commonest object” as it “leaps out” and becomes “radiant.” The requirements Stephen insists must be met before an object might be regarded as “artistic” are the same requirements a commodity must meet before it can be considered marketable.

So, too, is Stephen's description of such an object similar not only to what Haug has termed “commodity aesthetics,” but also to Benjamin's definition of objects that have an “aura.” Moreover, as it moves toward the moment of epiphany in *Portrait*, the object goes through a sequence of changes that resemble its transformations in such fantasies as Bloom's scripted by advertising:

What were habitually his final meditations?

Of some sole unique advertisement to cause passers to stop in wonder, a poster novelty [First we recognize that the object is “one integral thing”], with all extraneous accretions excluded [then we recognize that it is an organized composite structure], reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms [the parts are adjusted to the “special point”] not exceeding the span of casual vision [Its

soul "leaps to us"] and congruous with the velocity of modern life [The commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, "seems to us radiant"]. (Ulysses 592)

Rather than its antithesis, I am insisting, Stephen's moment of aesthetic stasis is analogous to the moment when the consumer is prompted to buy. This is the moment when modern urban man experiences the uncanny sense that the never-before-seen corresponds to what he has not yet thought but nonetheless knows. The prostitute's kiss that made Stephen feel "strong and fearless and sure of himself," resembles the moment when an advertisement designed "to cause passers to stop in wonder" achieves radiance for Bloom. Like a prostitute's lips, Bloom's "sole unique advertisement" "pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech" (96). If Stephen's perfect work of art resembles not only a perfect kiss or a perfect confession but also Bloom's perfect advertisement, then the theorist of high culture and theorist of low culture have more in common than we tend to think.

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