

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES JOYCE

Portrait of the Artist is largely autobiographical: Stephen's life corresponds in most details to Joyce's. Like Stephen, he was born in Dublin to a merry, profligate father and devout Catholic mother, the eldest of ten surviving children; like his fictional counterpart, he attended Clongowes Wood College, Belvedere College, and University College Dublin. During college, Joyce began to publish literary reviews, poems, and plays. After graduating in 1902 he briefly studied medicine in Paris; he returned to Dublin some months later to attend his mother's funeral. At this time, he tried unsuccessfully to publish shorter, earlier versions of *Portrait* under the names of *Portrait of the Artist* and *Stephen Hero*. In 1904 he met Nora Barnacle, who he married and who served as an inspiration and a model for many aspects of Joyce's fiction. The couple spent many years wandering around Europe in near-poverty, settling eventually in Zurich and Paris.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Portrait takes place during one of the most turbulent and eventful periods of Irish history. A significant issue during this period was Irish nationalism and separatism. Since the Norman invasion in the 12th century, large parts of Ireland had been held under British rule, and in 1801 Ireland became part of the United Kingdom. Throughout the 19th century, and especially after the great potato famines of the 1840s, many Irish people felt growing dissatisfaction with British rule and dreamed of becoming a sovereign nation. Irish separatists splintered into two major groups: Fenians, who favored the use of brute force, and constitutional reformists, who chose to follow a more moderate path within the confines of international law. Michael Davitt and Charles Parnell were famous separatist leaders of the 1870s and 80s. Under Parnell's leadership, and with the support of the British prime minister, the Irish people hoped to finally establish home rule; but when it came out in 1891 that Parnell had been engaging in an extramarital affair with Kitty O'Shea, the wife of a member of the Irish Parliament, the Catholic Church denounced Parnell and he fell from power. He died only a year later, and the Irish separatist movement lost direction – until erupting in the 1919 War of Independence.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Joyce's novel arrived at the pinnacle of the profoundly significant literary movement known as modernism. *Portrait* pioneered many modernist literary techniques, including

stream of consciousness, nonlinear narrative structure, and wildly imaginative wordplay. He brought these techniques to an even greater degree of polish in the longer, more enigmatic novel *Ulysses*, which brought him universal renown (as well as scathing criticism). *Portrait* is also famous for its use of the epiphany, an ecstatic moment of understanding. Joyce's modernist cohort included such writers as Virginia Woolf, Franz Kafka, Andrey Bely, Marcel Proust, and his student Italo Svevo. He also had strong ties to such Irish writers as W. B. Yeats.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
- **When Written:** 1905 and 1914
- **Where Written:** Dublin and Trieste
- **When Published:** 1916
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** *Kunstlerroman*, a narrative of an artist's youth and maturation.
- **Setting:** Dublin, Ireland, in the late 19th century.
- **Climax:** Stephen looks ecstatically at a bird-like girl wading in the river, and feels clearly that he is destined to become a writer.
- **Antagonist:** As Stephen moves from school to school, his antagonists vary. It can also be argued that the antagonists that remain constant are the humiliations of poverty and the aesthetic/philosophical restrictions of nationality and religion.
- **Point of View:** Third-person limited omniscient.

EXTRA CREDIT

Life Mirrors Art. Like Stephen, Joyce was chosen to lead the sodality of the Virgin Mary at Belvedere; he, too, broke away from religion at the age of sixteen.

Serial. *A Portrait of the Artist* was first published in serial form in a magazine called *The Egoist* in 1914 and 1915.



PLOT SUMMARY

The novel's first scene shows an infant Stephen listening to his father's nonsense fairy tale. Stephen's thoughts and memories careen wildly – from a woman that sells candy on the street, to his mother's warm smell, to his governess Dante's brushes, to his neighbor Eileen. In the next scene, an older Stephen is in his first year of school at Clongowes; he is playing outside with the

other boys and longing for the warmth and peace of study hall. He wakes up with a cold the next day and spends some time in the infirmary, where he hears that the Irish nationalist Parnell has died.

A few months later, Stephen comes home for the winter holidays. He listens to his family having a bitter argument about Parnell and the Catholic Church. When he returns to school, he finds out to his bewilderment that two of his classmates were caught doing something sexual with upperclassmen. A boy had broken his glasses, and a teacher beats him unjustly during one of his classes for sitting out. Stephen complains to the rector, who takes Stephen's side, and Stephen is cheered by his schoolmates.

We rejoin Stephen some years later. He spends a summer in Blackrock, exploring the neighborhood with his friend Aubrey, reading *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and restlessly wandering the streets. Soon, due to financial troubles, Stephen's family moves to Dublin, where Stephen becomes infatuated with a girl named Emma Clery. They take the tram home together after a birthday party, and Stephen writes her a love poem.

The book leaps over a few years once again; now, Stephen is a high-achieving student at Belvedere, where he is known for his seriousness and studiousness. He has been getting into a bit of trouble with teachers and friends for his faintly heretical essays. He quibbles with his friends and plays the role of a pedantic teacher in a school play. Some time later, Stephen takes a melancholy trip to his father's hometown of Cork, during which he worries about his sexual longings, his cold indifference to others, and the end of his innocence. At the end of the year he is awarded a large sum of money for excellent academic performance, which brings him brief contentment. After he spends the money on friends and family, he becomes restless and unhappy once again. He becomes more and more sexually frustrated; despite great fear and shame, he begins to have sex with prostitutes.

Stephen's class participates in a three-day religious retreat, composed mainly of fire-and-brimstone lectures about sin, hell, and suffering. The vivid lectures render Stephen's guilt unbearable, and he decides to confess his sins and live purely and piously from now on. Soon, though, Stephen's resolve begins to weaken, and he is beset by doubts. Just then, the director of Belvedere tells Stephen in a private meeting that he might be well-suited for the priesthood. The director's flattering suggestion forces Stephen to make a decision: Stephen realizes suddenly that he finds a priest's life repulsive and boring, and turns joyfully away from the religious life. Instead, he applies for admission to the University of Dublin. One day, as he walks on the shore, he realizes that his true calling is that of a writer; he looks at a lovely girl standing in the water and feels overcome with joy.

In the next scene, Stephen is a confident, well-respected student at the university. He skips many of his classes and

spends most of his time walking around with his friends and holding forth about aesthetics. Only his friend Cranly can out-talk him, and only Cranly seems immune to the musty charm of Stephen's strident theories. Stephen writes another poem for Emma, who still consumes his thoughts. In the book's final pages, which take the form of diary entries, Stephen writes joyfully about leaving Ireland to find his destiny as a writer.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Stephen Dedalus – An intelligent, sensitive, anxious, and ill-tempered boy growing up in an increasingly impoverished Catholic household in Dublin. In his long student years, Stephen passes through many discrete stages. He matures from a shy, frail child with a magically keen eye (and ear and nose) for sensory detail to a studious, moody teenager filled with vague longing for love, fame, and worldly beauty. When he comes physically of age, he is anguished to discover that he cannot reconcile his austere Catholic upbringing with his intense erotic desire. His shame becomes so great that he turns wholeheartedly to religion in search of spiritual peace. But despite his many years of religious observance, he comes to find the religious life and worldview profoundly unsatisfying: shallow, illogical, and boring. Stephen seems to find peace, or something like it, only when he discovers his vocation and ambition as a writer.

Emma Clery – A young woman about whom very little is revealed. Stephen becomes infatuated with her after a party sometime during his summer at Blackrock; he writes her a poem that night, and another poem ten years later. Throughout the book she is his beloved object, his feminine ideal. Stephen's feelings for Emma are tender and romantic, so the memory of her serves as a constant reproach to his lust.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Simon Dedalus – Stephen's father, a joker and merrymaker from Cork who supports the Irish nationalist Parnell and distrusts the church. He has held a string of different jobs in his lifetime; as time goes on, he finds it more and more difficult to support his large family.

Mary Dedalus – Stephen's mother, a modest and retiring woman who struggles to keep the family afloat when they begin to struggle financially. She is a devout Catholic. She disapproves of Stephen's studies at the university, and does her best to convince Stephen to be a good Catholic despite his artistic ambitions.

The Dedalus Children – Stephen's nine younger siblings, who appear most often sitting around the kitchen table chatting and drinking tea. It is implied that most of them do not receive the same advantages as Stephen.

Dante (Mrs. Riordan) – Stephen’s governess, and a friend of the family. Dante is a devout Catholic who fights bitterly with Simon and Mr. Casey about Parnell and the role of the Catholic church, favoring the Church.

Mr. John Casey – A friend of Simon’s who shares Simon’s pro-Parnell nationalist politics.

Uncle Charles – Stephen’s great uncle. Stephen spends a large part of his summer at Blackrock listening to Uncle Charles’ stories.

Wells – A boy at Clongowes who pushes Stephen into a ditch.

Simon Moonan and Tusker Boyle – Two boys in Stephen’s year at Clongowes who get caught engaging in some sexual activity with two older boys.

Athy – A boy at Clongowes who asks Stephen riddles in the infirmary.

Brother Michael – A kind and gentle priest who tends to Stephen in the infirmary.

Father Arnall – An ill-tempered Latin teacher at Clongowes. He gives guest lectures at Belvedere during the religious retreat, which inspire in Stephen terrible guilt and fear.

Father Dolan – A head teacher at Clongowes who gives Stephen an unjust beating for laziness.

Father Conmee – The kindly rector of Clongowes who takes Stephen’s side in his dispute with Father Dolan.

Mike Flynn – A retired athletic trainer and a friend of Simon’s, who coaches Stephen in running during his summer in Blackrock.

Aubrey Mills – Stephen’s friend during his summer in Blackrock.

Vincent Heron – Stephen’s closest friend at Belvedere, a rowdy, clever bully.

Cranly – Stephen’s closest friend at university, an intelligent medical student who is in equal part sincere and scornful. Stephen thinks of Cranly as a sort of secular confessor.

Davin – One of Stephen’s close friends at university. Davin comes from the Irish countryside; he is single-mindedly devoted to his country. In Stephen’s life, he is the voice of Irish patriotism.

Temple – An intellectually ambitious but awkward student at the university. Other students constantly mock him for his half-baked ideas.

McCann – A politically engaged student who tries to convince Stephen to sign a petition for world peace.

Lynch – A philandering friend of Stephen’s with a particularly crude sense of humor. Stephen lectures him on aesthetic philosophy.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



SOUL AND BODY

The gap between soul and body means a great deal to Stephen during childhood and adolescence. As a child, Stephen notes countless particular sights, sounds, and smells, and interprets them with great tenderness and seriousness: they seem to lead him deep into his memories and his understanding of the world. In this way, body and soul are naturally connected for Stephen as a child. But Stephen also shies away from many social activities, preferring to keep to himself and attend to his thoughts and daydreams: he distinguishes between extroverted activity, in which his body interacts with others, and introverted activity, in which his soul communes with itself.

Stephen’s religious education reinforces the soul-body split. He has been taught since early childhood that premarital sex is a grave and shameful sin, so he perceives his adolescent sexual longing as a sort of insubordination of body against soul – an appalling perversion he must keep hidden at any cost. His secret lust, vague ambition, and keen poetic vision create a strange and weighty inner world that does not often correspond to the shrill, dirty, practical world of city, school, and family. Though he often feels burdened by this ghostly inner life, he seeks to protect it from dogmatic external influences: when he tries to control his body and elevate his soul through meticulous religious practice, the formulaic religious teaching ultimately fails to leave any permanent mark on his inner life.

The culmination of his religious crisis seems to mark the reunion of soul and body: the *senses*, “the call of life to his soul,” turn Stephen away from the priesthood, fuel his artistic ambitions, and restore his inner world – the senses of the body, the same senses that fuel his lust. But when Stephen arrives to university, he carries the split into his rather antiquated aesthetic theories. He brags that he will “try to fly by [the] nets” of nationality, language, religion; but before he can become truly free, before he can repair the antagonism between soul and body, Stephen must create an aesthetics of his own. This new aesthetics, embodied by *Portrait* itself, will be one that does not privilege unity over dispersion, thought over feeling, or purity over reality.



INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

Ideas of innocence and experience, of change and maturation, are central to every *Künstlerroman* (a novel that narrates an artist's growth and development), of which *Portrait* is one. In Joyce's novel, the theme of innocence and experience structures the remaining four themes, because in each case the novel traces the child-to-adult arc of Stephen's shifting perspective. That is to say, when we talk about *Portrait* we are always talking about the evolution from innocence to experience.

Stephen's own idea of innocence is deeply influenced by Christian notions of purity and sin. Throughout the book, he identifies innocence as a sexless, lustless existence – the life of a child or a celibate; experience, on the other hand, is a fallen condition, filled with doubt and shame. For example, he imagines that Emma was innocent as a young girl, but after her sexual awakening she is “humbled and saddened by the dark shame of womanhood.” Innocence, for Stephen, also denotes a kind of simple, hearty, direct relationship to the surrounding world. Stephen's adolescence is marked by growing isolation, a spiritual alienation from friends and family. When he recalls the sensory vividness and immediacy of his childhood, and when he listens to stories of easy companionship from his father's youth, he feels that his innocence has disappeared – that the child Stephen has died.

The two notions of innocence are closely connected, because to a large extent it is Stephen's sexual shame that drives him away from others: to hide his shame, he retreats into a secretive inner world. Shame of the body also complicates and disturbs Stephen's relationship to sensory experience. By the end of the novel, though, Stephen's religious anxieties start to diminish, and his sensory life seems to grow brighter once again. Innocence usually gives way to experience; in Stephen's case, experience also gives way to innocence: “his soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood.”



LITERATURE AND LIFE

Since earliest childhood, novels and poems help Stephen make sense of the world around him. From the very first scene of the novel, in which infant Stephen creates a little rhyme from Dante's threat that “eagles will come and pull out his eyes,” words shape and brighten Stephen's experience. The sounds of words puzzle and enlighten him, and novels like *The Count of Monte Cristo* help him shape his adolescent identity. At times, beautiful phrases from poems thrill him as much as real romantic experiences.

Yet, though Stephen's inner experience melds art and life, Stephen the young poet and aesthete believes there must exist a great distance between them: he imagines art as the vapory spirit soaring high over the city of the real. Drawing on the philosophy of Aristotle and Saint Thomas Aquinas, Stephen

decides that art must inspire only philosophical abstractions about emotions, “ideal pity or terror,” but not real emotions themselves – he thinks passions like love and anger are too lowly for art. In his own poetry, he omits random or unsavory detail in favor of high romantic abstraction. “Excrement or a child or a louse” finds no place in his art. Joyce's novel itself, of course, includes everything Stephen omits: passion, crudeness, dirt, randomness, contradiction. The novel itself gently mocks and refutes Stephen's youthful theories – theories that once belonged, perhaps, to the young Joyce himself.



ORDER AND THE SENSES

During his childhood, Stephen lives by his senses: he understands the people and things around him only by the way they look, sound, smell, or feel. The novel suggests that to child Stephen, his mother *is* her good smell, and nighttime *is* the chill of the sheets. His attention always veers toward detail: when he learns that Simon Moonan did something forbidden and homosexual with some other boys, he can only understand the news by thinking of Simon's nice clothes and fancy candy. He has trouble with abstractions and categories; he does not clearly understand the meaning of the York-Lancaster competition in his math class, but he thinks intently of the colors of the handkerchiefs and award cards. When he tries to think of the idea of god or the organization of the planet during study hall, “it made him feel tired,” and he focuses instead on the colors of the map.

In his adolescence, Stephen remains preoccupied with sensory detail, but his relationship to it becomes much more troubled. As he develops abstract thinking, he begins to ask himself large questions like: Are priests always good? What is sin? What is greatness? What is Ireland? The questions force him to try to order and interpret his experience, which reveals puzzling contradiction and unintelligible variety. At this point in his maturation, his talent for observation surpasses his interpretative abilities. In other words, he sees and hears and smells a great deal but he can't quite make sense of it. For relief, he first turns to old novels and poetry, which present a somewhat simplified and romantic picture of love and honor; then he turns to religion, with its rigid and reliable rules; and finally to academia and aesthetics, which also provide frameworks for understanding. None of these is quite faithful to Stephen's actual experience, which always exceeds the frameworks with intense, mysterious sensory and emotional detail. By the end of the novel, Stephen is ready to leave behind the mistakes of his adolescence and to create a new framework, “to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience.”



RELIGION, NATIONALITY, AND FREEDOM

Stephen grows up in an atmosphere of political and

religious controversy. The late 19th century was a turbulent time in Ireland. The beloved separatist leader Parnell, exposed as an adulterer and condemned by the Catholic Church in 1891, divided the nation just as he divided the Dedalus Christmas dinner in the novel. Throughout his childhood and adolescence Stephen feels the pull of worldly causes, hears a chorus of voices instructing him to join this group or that. But as he becomes more and more absorbed into his elaborate inner life, he determines to ignore the voices and pursue his own thoughts. Though religious piety briefly gives him respite from shame and confusion, he finds it impossible to confine himself to the narrow religious perspective. When he turns away from religion, he feels a soaring sense of freedom. Similarly, he turns away from conventional Irish nationalism and other popular political causes, intuiting that they will constrict his intellectual and emotional life. Yet, though the 'fenianism' of his compatriots does not appeal to him, he aspires to express with his writing another, subtler sort of Irishness, "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race."



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



MUSIC

Stephen often evokes music to describe the intuitive, mysterious loveliness of certain

experiences: the sound of the gas pipes at Clongowes is a song, the wheels of the train to Cork beat out a rhythmic music, the words in poems sound out melodies, memory itself is like music. Music also signals moments of transition and discovery; a simple melody turns Stephen away from the priesthood and reminds him of his artistic ambitions. More generally, music represents a loosening of boundaries: "the music passed in an instant, as the first bars of sudden music always did, over the fantastic fabrics of his mind, dissolving them painlessly and noiselessly as a sudden wave dissolves the sandbuilt turrets of children." Stephen responds strongly and intuitively to music, and it helps restore his childlike, artistic connection to the world around him.



BATS

Bats seem, to Stephen, to represent something essential about the conflicted, dark, mysterious

Ireland of his childhood. He does not make the comparison entirely clear, yet he refers to it several times, with strong feeling: "he felt the thoughts and desires of the race to which he belonged flitting like bats across the dark country lanes," he

writes in one place; and "she was a figure of the womanhood of her country, a bat-like soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness." At the turn of nineteenth century, Ireland was emerging from many centuries of British domination to a strong sense of national pride and dreams of independence. Stephen feels that Irish identity and self-awareness is still very young and uncertain, like a blind bat flying in the dark; it is also secretive and elusive, unlike the raucous Fenian celebrations in the streets. It is his artistic ambition to capture this identity and bring it to light.






QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the St. Martin's Press edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* published in 1993.

Chapter 1, Part 2 Quotes

☞ The fire rose and fell on the wall. It was like waves. Someone had put coal on and he heard voices. They were talking. It was the noise of the waves. Or the waves were talking among themselves as they rose and fell.

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 36

Explanation and Analysis

Stephen has fallen ill at Clongowes, and Brother Michael has just put him to bed. Stephen plans to return home the following day.

Here we see Joyce's talent for exposing the dreamlike and free-associative thought processes of a child's mind. The rising and falling of fire on a wall spurs Stephen to associate its rhythmic ebbing to the motion of ocean waves. Human voices that might be occurring out of sight suddenly become blended with the waves in Stephen's sight--waves which are, "in reality," the flowing shadows of the fire. But, it seems as if in this child's mind--in Stephen's mind--what counts as "real" is constantly morphing.

Though Stephen initially begins by seeing fire on the wall, this first impression does not stand out as a baseline of reality for his future thoughts to be measured against. Rather, the appearance of the fire shifts into the appearance of waves; voices (supposedly human) are heard; the voices become the natural noise of the waves; then, finally, it seems possible to Stephen that the waves--half fire, half

ocean--*have* voices and are communicating.

This scene provides an early taste for the often dreamlike textures and free-associative chains of thought which will really come to the fore in certain sections of the novel--even when Stephen is a young adult.

☛ He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how: but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis


As his summer back at home comes to a close and September arrives, Stephen's new gang of friends disbands and he's left to wander alone. As he's passing a group of other children playing, he becomes irritated by the noises they make and their "silly voices," remarking that they reinforce his sense of being different from others.

At a young age, Stephen already has a uniquely vibrant life of the mind. Instead of wanting to engage in the triviality and simpleness of children's play, he's bent on pursuing an intensely spiritual ambition--to find in the external world something that mirrors the most private and internal, "unsubstantial image" which his soul always beholds. He wants to attach the intangible and inexplicable passion of his soul to a real object in life, for this would not only support and satisfy that passion, but it would also give that passion a real, objective existence which he could observe in the outer world.

From the way this passage is narrated, we may reason that Stephen wouldn't actually be thinking in these abstract spiritual or philosophical terms, but rather that the narration is working to explain Steven's unconscious thought processes and motivations. For we read that Steven does "not know where [or how] to seek" the image of his soul's deep longing, but rather that an elusive, instinctual "premonition" leads him--almost unconsciously and beyond his control--towards something in life that will become a mirror to his soul.

☛ He was angry with himself for being young and the prey of restless foolish impulses, angry also with the change of fortune which was reshaping the world about him into a vision of squalor and insincerity. Yet his anger lent nothing to his vision. He chronicled with patience what he saw, detaching himself from it and testing its mortifying flavor in secret.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 68

Explanation and Analysis

Having recently moved to Dublin due to his family's financial complications, Stephen is beginning to see some of his idealistic thinking about life being challenged by his changing circumstances.



Angry with his youthfulness and sense of powerlessness at the hands of his "foolish impulses," Stephen is embittered by the way his new environment has altered his previous view of the world. He seems angry at the sheer fact that his circumstances have radically changed, but also that he didn't anticipate beforehand that such change might occur. For Stephen, the youthful sense that what's good in life is somehow guaranteed to last has been shattered. He's left disappointed, paradoxically, in both the way he thinks and for how the world has forced his thought to change. Essentially, he's troubled by how his external circumstances are able to shape his internal life, which he likes to view as pristine and unchangeable.

Yet Stephen is committed to objectively "chronicling" his "vision." Despite his youthful disappointment, he still displays a certain emotional intelligence: the desire to detach himself from his visceral anger and objectively observe his surroundings.

Chapter 2, Part 3 Quotes

☛ While his mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms and turning in irresolution from such pursuit he had heard about him the constant voices of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic above all things. ... And it was the din of all these hollowsounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 82

Explanation and Analysis

After Doyle--the stage manager of the play in the gymnasium at Belvedere--sends for Stephen to get ready for his appearance on stage, Heron remarks that Doyle is an underclassman and therefore has no right to give Stephen an order. This passage explores Stephen's reaction to such claims to authority and hierarchy.

The spiritual and poetic yearnings of Stephen's thought are constantly checked by his schoolmasters, who say that being a "gentleman" and a "good catholic" are the highest pursuits of the mind. The voices of his teachers--always speaking from a position of authority about what is worthy and unworthy, right and wrong--become "hollowsounding" to Stephen, as they invoke qualities such as gentlemanliness as if they were universal, as if their meaning didn't vary per person, place, and time. His masters, invoking such meaningless pursuits with such seriousness, seem aloof from the much realer and more intense passion which fuels Stephen's mind towards its "phantoms." Contrasted with Stephen's vivid inner life and the severe persistence of his involvement in poetic and spiritual striving, his masters' and Heron's reliance on authority and social hierarchy to forge meaning in their lives seems to Stephen to be vapid and lacking substance.

a panic attack.

This is a very interesting, but odd and complicated scene. The inscription "Foetus" makes something in the back of Stephen's mind spring to the foreground of his consciousness; he becomes incredibly close to himself in a way that is highly uncomfortable. Stephen discovers something in the external world that he had until that point "deemed [an] individual malady of his own mind." But now that "individual malady" (his own repressed sexuality and "sinful" thoughts) has manifested in the external world, right before his eyes. It's as if part of himself--a part that repulses him--has been ripped out from inside him and thrown into his face, such that he cannot avoid or run from it anymore.

"Foetus," envisioned as haphazardly scratched on a school desk, is a particularly morbid image--and it seems perverse that someone would feel inclined to scrawl it out like graffiti. Perhaps Stephen sees his own perversity in the inscription: he sees his own perversity as outside and in the world, and, therefore, as real--and not simply an isolated event in his mind. (The idea of the foetus also calls forward to Stephen's later ideas about "giving birth" to a work of art.)

In a way, this scene echoes back to the previous quote (the second) in which Stephen desires to find the "unsubstantial image" of his soul. It seems that Stephen has found something that might resemble the intensity of that image, here, in the word "Foetus" scrawled before him--but it's an infernal, anxiety-provoking image that brings terror, not transcendent euphoria.

●● 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. His recent monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They too had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words. ... The letters cut in the stained wood of the desk stared upon him, mocking his bodily weakness and futile enthusiasms and making him loathe himself for his own mad and filthy orgies.

●● By his monstrous way of life he seemed to have put himself beyond the limits of reality. Nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him. He could respond to no earthly or human appeal, dumb and insensible to the call of summer and gladness and companionship, wearied and dejected by his father's voice.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

Stephen and his father, while visiting Queen's College, go to the anatomy theatre, where his father looks for his old initials on one of the desks. Upon seeing the word "Foetus" scratched onto one of the desks, Stephen has something like

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs shortly after Stephen panics upon seeing the word "Foetus" in the anatomy theatre at Queen's College. Stephen and his father have left the theatre and are roaming the area around the campus.

Stephen's vision in the anatomy theatre revealed to him the severity of his way of thinking; it unmasked the intense extent to which repressed desire, dreaming and imagination--spurred by his spiritual longing and growing sexuality--have overtaken his thought processes. By "his monstrous way of life"--his extreme, desire-centered way of thinking about and viewing the world--he has lost touch with everyday reality. Nothing intrigues him or grabs his attention from the real world unless it directly reflects the "infuriated cries" within him, like the inscription "Foetus" did. He has lost his ability to tarry with and feel connected to the everyday world, which rarely, if ever, expresses the intensity and imagination of Stephen's mind.

●● He had not died but he had faded out like a film in the sun. He had been lost or had wandered out of existence for he no longer existed.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs shortly after the previous one. Stephen is roaming the area around Queen's College with his father; he's just had a severe bout of panic after seeing the word "Foetus" scratched on a desk in the anatomy theatre.



Stephen enters an extremely dissociated state after his panic. Walking with his father, his mind stops functioning normally: he can barely read any of the shop signs around them, and he can "scarcely recognise as his his own thoughts." He begins obsessively repeating to himself his name, where he is, and what he is doing. It's as if Stephen's concept of himself has been destroyed; the way he understands himself and his relationship to the external world has been disrupted, and therefore his control over his own thoughts seems to be slipping. By repeating his thoughts and reassuring himself about who and where he is, he hopes to regain stability. (This also echoes a scene from his childhood, where Stephen listed his position in the universe in ever expanding terms.)

Stephen's self-concept has, therefore, died, in a sense. "He had not died," in a physical sense, "but he faded out." Here, Stephen experiences a traumatic moment of detachment, of getting outside of himself. He feels as if he's been erased to a sheeny film upon the surface of the sun. It's as if he no

longer exists, for his old way of comprehending his relation to the world has been swept out from under him; he's "lost" and cannot regain his footing. His existence in the social world around him has been erased. Alone with the vastness of the world and no longer tethered to the realm of human reality, it's as if Stephen doesn't exist at all.

●● He had known neither the pleasure of companionship with others nor the vigour of rude male health nor filial piety. Nothing stirred within his soul but a cold and cruel and loveless lust. His childhood was dead or lost and with it his soul capable of simple joys, and he was drifting amid life like the barren shell of the moon.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

The passage occurs after--upon observing his father drink with his friends--Stephen realizes that he has never experienced such camaraderie or a sense of social bond as the men around him display.



Nothing of the conventional mannerisms and behaviors of the male social world--nothing of the "vigour of rude male health"--inspires and intrigues Stephen. Only a deep, internal and private "lust" that is "cold" and "cruel" in its intensity and isolation from the everyday, outer world--only this mysterious longing animates his psyche.

The nostalgia of Stephen's childhood has withered entirely--and with that, his capacity for "simple joys" that do not invoke the most intimate passions of his soul. His thought is not soothed or relaxed by the trivialities and rehearsed performances of everyday social life; the social world of stereotypical, masculine indelicacy offers nothing to Stephen. His soul, therefore, is something that drifts from one social scene to the next, never at home in a particular place--like the moon which never stays in one place, and revolves around a center it can never touch (also an echo of Shelley's phrase describing the moon as "wandering companionless"--a verse Stephen will frequently think of).

Chapter 2, Part 5 Quotes

☞ He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless. From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 94

Explanation and Analysis

After winning money in an academic competition, Stephen embarks on a highly indulgent spending spree. After he's squandered all his earnings, we read this quote.

Stephen's excessive spending was an attempt to achieve an ordered, constant experience of pleasure, satisfaction and psychological stability over and against the extreme lust and inner passions which force him to desire and think in ways that detach him from the everyday social world.

This attempt proves futile. The "mole" or tide-barrier he tries to build crumbles; the tides of his obscure passions are reinvigorated and once again take up their place in his psychic life. There's a sense that Stephen's soul is fated to express itself in such an extreme, tidal form.

suddenly move to a page of Stephen's "scribbler," where an equation he's writing is growing larger and larger.

The fact that "it"--the equation--"was his own soul going forth to experience" suggests the immediacy Stephen feels the equation has with his psyche. Stephen sees the trajectory, rhythm, and psychological patterning of his own desire as symbolically unfolding in the structure of the equation. The equation goes forth towards experience: its variables are given input values, then it unfolds itself, being solved and simplified.

The movement of the equation has a notably sexual, phallic structure, which says something about the movement of Stephen's soul or--the same thing--how his desire unfolds. Steven's desire goes forth into experience, expands with the particular values of the world, then reaches an apex where his soul and the external world meet--like when an equation (the soul) is solved given particular input values (external stimuli from the outer world)--and then folds back upon itself and "fades" into a simplified form.

Further, the passage that precedes this quote is so abstract and dreamlike, and intermingled with references other than mathematics--such as a peacock's tail expanding, the "cycle of starry life," music, the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley--that we might understand this scene to be not depicting a concrete event (i.e., Stephen writing an equation), but rather symbolizing some deep structure common to the different, "real" moments of Stephen's life.

Chapter 3, Part 1 Quotes

☞ It was his own soul going forth to experience, unfolding itself sin by sin, spreading abroad the balefire of its burning stars and folding back on itself, fading slowly, quenching its own lights and fires. They were quenched: and the cold darkness filled chaos.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs when we read that Stephen is planning to visit an area where prostitutes typically work. He has recently had sex for the first time (with a prostitute), and now he again wants to visit the prostitutes' quarter of town. After the brief passage where these plans are narrated, we

☞ A cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul. At his first violent sin he had felt a wave of vitality pass out of him and had feared to find his body or his soul maimed by the excess. Instead the vital wave had carried him on its bosom out of himself and back again when it receded: and no part of body or soul had been maimed but a dark peace had been established between them.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 97

Explanation and Analysis

This occurs shortly after the last quote, just after we read about the equation in Stephen's "scribbler."

Stephen had expected his "first violent sin"--his first time having sex--to lure part of his innermost being and soul out of him and into the physical world, to the extent that his soul would be injured by over-stretching itself ("maimed by the



excess"). In the sense of sex, this would be the physical exertion of an internal energy and desire, or "wave of vitality." Stephen had anticipated that this would overextend the contours of his soul, but finds instead that he's left with a "cold lucid indifference." For, instead of expanding within the boundaries of Stephen's soul, the sinful expenditure of the wave of vitality carried him "out of himself and back again when it receded."

This journey out of, and back into, himself, could therefore only leave behind an "indifference," not a pain--for it did not over-flex the borders of his soul, therefore avoiding injury, but also bringing with it no true joy or enlightenment.

Chapter 3, Part 2 Quotes

☝☝ And remember, my dear boys, that we have been sent into this world for one thing and for one thing alone: to do God's holy will and to save our immortal souls. All else is worthless. One thing alone is needful, the salvation of one's soul. What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world if he suffer the loss of his immortal soul?

Related Characters: Father Arnall (speaker), Father Arnall

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is spoken by Father Arnall, when he explains the schedule for and religious purpose behind the retreat in celebration of St. Francis Xavier.

This is a relatively placid statement compared to the horror he will preach in his following two sermons on hell. This declaration by Father Arnall emphasizes the immense priority which Stephen's religious upbringing places on sacrificing oneself to God's will and to purifying one's soul. Absolutely nothing else in life has any kind of comparable value.

The following two sermons--on the physical and spiritual tortures of hell--will throw Stephen into a life-changing panic. In response, Stephen will adopt a lifestyle that adheres to the emphasis Arnall places on sacrifice and purity. However, though Stephen will eventually move on from his religion, he will still retain a belief and connection to the power of the soul. While it won't be a soul that sacrifices itself to the Holy Spirit in order to gain purchase on an entrance to heaven, it will be a soul that Stephen tries to ecstatically fill with the reality of life, of external experience, in order to plant within him seeds which will

grow into authentic, poetic thought. This openness to external reality will require a different kind of sacrifice: Stephen's willingness to put aside the continuity and stability of his identity in order to fill himself with the foreign realities of the world. Such a sacrifice is not made in virtue of a higher God, but of an ecstatic process of creation which Stephen comes to hold in as equally high a regard.

Chapter 3, Part 3 Quotes

☝☝ But does that part of the body understand or what? The serpent, the most subtle beast of the field. ... Who made it to be like that, a bestial part of the body able to understand bestially and desire bestially? 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 shaky life feeding itself out of the tender marrow of his life and fattening upon the slime of lust.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 126

Explanation and Analysis

This passage narrates Stephen's thoughts as he walks to the chapel to confess that he's committed sin (fornication).

Here, Stephen is fundamentally questioning the nature of his relationship to his own sexuality. The serpent, serving as a phallic metaphor for the male sex organ, gives an image to the base, earthly, "bestial" quality which Stephen associates with his sexuality. "But what does that part of the body understand," the narrator asks--underscoring the divide between Stephen's physical body and soul--for the physical mechanism of the male sex organ seems to operate separately from the psyche/soul, separately from conscious control.

Stephen wonders, therefore, how he is related to that sexual mechanism which is separate from what he identifies as "himself." "Was that then he" or something "inhuman" moved by a separate, "lower" soul? Stephen is disgusted by this thought--that another source of life, fundamentally different than him, is attached to his body in an almost parasitic fashion, siphoning Stephen's energy for its own foreign, sexual means, and "fattening upon the slime of lust."

Instead of considering the autonomy of his sexual organs to be controlled by unconscious, physiological functions that are instinctual and morally neutral, Stephen assigns the genitalia an infernal quality.

Chapter 4, Part 1 Quotes

☞ The world for all its substance and complexity no longer existed for his soul save as a theorem of divine power and love and universality.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs after Stephen has confessed his sins and begun to adopt an extraordinarily pious lifestyle. He feels that he has changed his life and worldview altogether in fully embracing Christianity and giving up his lustful desires.

The world has ceased to exist *for* Stephen's soul, for the purposes and intentions of his own life, but rather stands before him as something abstractly divine and expressive of a reality greater than that of his own, particular and human perceptions of reality. The world exists for him only as a "theorem," as something outside of him, an omnipresent, higher reality which exists for his never-ending contemplation.

Here, the traces of Stephen's earlier perversions of thought and desire seem erased. It would seem that he's whittled his own, internal sense of imagination and desire down to the bone, to be left facing the vast expanse of an external reality more enduring and real than the unstable, tidal fluctuations of his former desires. This doesn't last for long, however. After disciplining his senses (by forcing himself to endure putrid odors, to sleep in painful positions, fasting, and other means), Stephen finds new things to be guilty about, such as his feelings of annoyance and anger. Eventually, his old sense of guilt returns to keep him constant company, though in a new, religiously-oriented light.

☞ It was a grave and ordered and passionless life that awaited him, a life without material cares. ... At once from every part of his being unrest began to irradiate. A feverish quickening of his pulses followed and a din of meaningless words drove his reasoned thoughts hither and thither confusedly. ... Some instinct, waking at these memories, stronger than education or piety, quickened within him at every near approach to that life, an instinct subtle and hostile, and armed him against acquiescence. The chill and order of the life repelled him.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 143

Explanation and Analysis


Having devoted himself to a highly restrained and pious lifestyle, Stephen has been so exemplary in his religious studies that he has caught the attention of the director at Belvedere. This passage occurs after Stephen has been encouraged to join the priesthood.

When faced with the reality of becoming a priest, however, Stephen recoils. He has obsessively submitted himself to his faith and found a kind of peace, distancing himself from his sinful and guilt-ridden past, but the prospect of taking his new way of living to the next level--to the "grave and ordered and passionless life" of being a priest--suddenly unsettles him.

The narrator describes a profound "instinct" in Stephen that is "stronger than education or piety"--that's not a direct product of his religious education--and which propels him to decline any future as a priest. This instinct seems to be something that stems purely from Stephen's psyche or soul--an instinct that isn't mediated by the wishes or concerns of others. It seems that the appearance and heeding of this instinct is the first instance of Stephen's mature independence as a thinker and creative artist.

☞ His destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders. ... He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 144

Explanation and Analysis

Occurring shortly after the previous quote and reinforcing the "instinct" mentioned in the latter, this quote reveals the radical independence and intellectual freedom integral to Stephen's own sense of destiny.

Here, the instinct Stephen felt that was "beyond education or piety"--that was unique to Stephen's own desire, and the heeding of which was perhaps the first moment of Stephen's maturity--has unfurled into the shape and meaning of his destiny: to remain outside of established social and religious orders. Stephen's heeding of that

instinct--supposedly unique to him and not mediated by external influence--has set the stage for the rest of his life (or so he feels, at least--the melodramatic nature of his thought process here is also gently mocked by Joyce). Instead of joining the priesthood, he must learn his own wisdom and continue to learn it in his own way, or from others he intersects with on his own unique, independent path--but not out of thoughtless submission to figures of authority.

Chapter 4, Part 3 Quotes

☛☛ Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose?

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

Brimming with independence and possibility after declining his offer to become a priest--and growing impatient after waiting an hour for his father to return from a meeting with a tutor at Trinity College--Stephen sets off for a walk, at which point this quote occurs.

Thinking of the phrase "A day of dappled seaborne clouds," Stephen delights in how it harmonizes with the day and the scene he is observing. He then wonders what, exactly, it is about words that delights him so much. Having moved on from his strict religious lifestyle, this is one of the first purely artistic and poetic considerations with which we see Stephen engage.

Does he enjoy the pure rhythm of words, or the metaphorical meanings generated by their "associations of legend and colour?" Or does he not care at all about language in either sense--both of which value words as things that represent *external* phenomena of the world? (In these senses words would do this by reflecting the "glowing sensible world through the prism of language," by either creating an effect which resembles the cyclic time and pacing of the external world--rhythm--or by associating

different elements of the external world in order to metaphorically create meaning.) Does he derive less pleasure from these activities of words--which reflect the external world in language--than from using words to explore "an inner world of individual emotions?"

Whatever the answer is, we see Stephen grappling here, jovially but seriously, for the first time, with a purely aesthetic inquiry, and moving towards his artistic epiphany.

☛☛ Was [the flying form] a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable being? ... His soul was soaring in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude and made radiant and commingled with the element of the spirit.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

Occurring shortly after the last quote, and on the same walk born out of Stephen's impatience for his father, this passage describes a breathtaking moment in the relationship between Stephen's body and soul.

Upon seeing a "winged form flying above the waves," Stephen asks what symbolic meaning it might have for his life. Here, we see Steven beginning to read his environment as if it were a work of literature--as if it were a book about his involvement, his destiny, in the greater scheme of life.

His initial question about the symbolic significance of the flying form turns into a series of questions which leads him to an epiphanic moment of ecstasy: having aligned his own sense of purpose and destiny with an external event in life (the flying form), Stephen achieves a sense of oneness that propels his soul forth into a flight beyond the sensible world. The body, left behind, becomes "purified" and infiltrated with the "element of spirit." It's as if Stephen's body, devoid of the soul which usually weighs it down and inhabits it, is emptied only to be filled with whatever remains after the soul is displaced: a spirit that expunges all of Stephen's incertitude about the rapidly unfurling manifestation of his destiny, about the unity of his internal vision with the external symbol of the flying form.

Going back to one of the first quotes in this selection (#2), we can see here that Stephen's desire for the "unsubstantial

image" of his soul to be reflected in a real object in life has been achieved (and indeed, the "flying form" reflects the mythical figure of Daedalus, Stephen's namesake). The result is a poetic ecstasy that verifies what was formerly merely an instinct of Stephen's--his decision to leave the church and pursue an artistic path.

☛ This was the call of life to his soul, not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar. An instant of wild flight had delivered him and the cry of triumph which his lips withheld cleft his brain.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 150

Explanation and Analysis



Following shortly after the previous quote, this passage occurs after Stephen's epiphany about Daedalus and the sight of the winged flying form.

For the first time in his life, Stephen has seemingly pierced through the veil of external social influences ("the dull gross voice of the world of duties") and forged his own unique relationship with life. The "call of life" beckons his soul in this epiphany--and not the mere hollow, "inhuman" and lifelessly authoritative voice that had encouraged him to become a priest.

Stephen is reborn as something independent of religion, nationality, and family. Acceding in a moment of ecstasy--in "an instant of wild flight" out of himself--to the individual connection he has with the world around him, he realizes the capacity for his creativity, for his soul's inborn relationship with external reality and his ensuing ability to, with an artistic authenticity, speak about it.

☛ The soul is born, [Stephen] said vaguely, first in those moments I told you of. It has a slow and dark birth, more mysterious than the birth of the body. When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 177

Explanation and Analysis

Stephen, Temple, and Cranly, after leaving a conversation with MacAlister, MacCann, and Moynihan, arrive in an alley where other students are playing cricket. Running into Davin there and beginning a conversation with him, Stephen speaks this quote in response to Davin's request that he act more like an Irishman.

Here, Stephen echoes his newly discovered independence and freedom--the sense that "his destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders." He declares that the birth of the soul is an extremely mysterious event, but that, when a soul is born in Ireland, the profound mystery of that birth is covered--the independence and uniqueness of a soul's flight from its own mysterious origins is netted in the dull, meaningless conventions of nationality, language, and religion. Stephen wants to avoid getting caught in these traps at all costs.

While Stephen feels that he is being true to himself, his artistic vision, and his theory of aesthetics, at the same time, of course, he is also being rather insufferable here, and discounting others' experiences for not adhering to his own ideal.

☛ The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis

Walking and conversing with Lynch, Stephen here offers his opinions on aesthetic philosophy.

Proper art, for Stephen, does not get caught up in the binaries of desire vs. loathing, or attraction-to vs. repulsion-from. These, being "kinetic emotions," are improper because they fail to fundamentally change and "arrest" the viewing mind, to send the mind beyond the simplicity of binary thinking into a more transcendent state of reflection.



Higher, proper art, does just that (according to Stephen's theory). Because this latter kind of art doesn't inspire a movement-towards or a springing-back in the viewing mind, but rather leads the mind to be "raised above desire and loathing," above forwardness and backwardness, it's called "static." The static arts keep the mind in one place, but simultaneously change its point of view--inspiring a feeling that can only be brought about by pure artistic beauty.

Here, Stephen's new fascination with aesthetic philosophy shines through in his relationship to his peers. The topic of the relation between the mind and the work of art is incredibly important to him. It's not just an empty, intellectual topic for him, but something incredibly real. In a way, all his life he has been concerned with the the mind and art, or the mind and something beautiful outside of it. This fascination dates back to the visceral desire of his childhood to find the "unsubstantial image" of his soul reflected in the external world. Most recently, we see this fascination grip him when he challenges himself to be open to the "flying winged form" as an external symbol of his destiny--an openness which results in a transcendent ecstasy proper to the power of "static" art.

As is usual in *Portrait*, however, stepping outside of Stephen's consciousness is necessary to fully appreciate the work. While Joyce presents this as one valid aesthetic theory, it is also one he pokes fun at (through the very nature of Stephen's pretentious lecturing) and that he clearly doesn't always adhere to himself. While Stephen seeks to create art that is entirely removed from both that which is appealing and that which is repulsive, in his Modernist approach to revealing life in all its aspects, Joyce embraces the "pornographic," the "didactic," and the purely "proper" art of Stephen's "aesthetic arrest."

... though the same object may not seem beautiful to all people, all people who admire a beautiful object find in it certain relations which satisfy and coincide with the stages themselves of all esthetic apprehension. These relations of the sensible, visible to you through one form and to me through another, must be therefore the necessary qualities of beauty.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 182

Explanation and Analysis

Following shortly after the previous quote, Stephen says


this in continued conversation with Lynch.

Here, Stephen's studious involvement with aesthetic philosophy is further revealed. Stephen is defending a philosophical view which claims that beauty can be defined universally, or, in other words, that such a thing as "absolute" or "pure" beauty is real, and that its reality or existence is not contradicted by the fact that two or more individuals can disagree about whether the same piece of artwork is beautiful or not. Just because two individuals may view the same work of art differently--one finding it beautiful and the other not--does not contradict the possibility that absolute beauty exists. For, as Stephen's reasoning implies, whenever anyone views something as beautiful, though one person views beauty in form X and the other in form Y, "beauty" has nonetheless appeared equally to the two people, despite the different material forms in which it appeared.

That Stephen has come to understand beauty in this abstract sense--its definition removed from the particular forms of art, but dependent instead upon the quality of an individual's relationship to an artwork--suggests the potential complexity and richness of his new mental life as an artist. Further, it displays his (still adolescent and rather selfish) desire to remain detached from established social orders; by defining beauty as something which is not definable in terms of individual taste, he refuses to align himself with a rigid school of thought or artistic order that defines beauty in terms of concrete particulars, but instead insists on his own individual, independent theory.

I will not serve that in which I no longer believe whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 213

Explanation and Analysis

Stephen, out on a walk with Cranly, offers this response when Cranly asks if he would ever deflower a virgin.

Dodging the question, and thereby avoiding having to admit his prior sins of sexual impurity, Stephen nonetheless replies with a kind of roundabout truth and dignity. Growing tired of Cranly's meticulous, particular questions about what he believes and what sins he would or would not commit--as if

these were sufficient to unmask the whole of his character-- Stephen gives this reply. He doesn't say what he would or wouldn't do in terms of concrete particulars, but rather in terms of principle. Stephen will no longer abide by belief systems and authorities with which he disagrees-- regardless if they claim to be integral to his heritage. Further, he will dedicate himself to artistically expressing himself as freely as possible, using only his wits to defend his vision.

Having assumed the role of an artist--with its principled yet open and broad manner of thinking--Stephen shapes his response in a way that preserves the mystique of his character. Although Stephen, almost immediately after, admits to Cranly: "you made me confess to you," he never confirms in straightforward language what, exactly, he's confessed. Stephen may be interpreted as 1. either silently nodding to Cranly in the affirmative (that yes, he would deflower a virgin--but would never explicitly say it), 2. as mocking the efficacy of Cranly's interrogation process, since all that Steven explicitly confessed were his general principles of living, or 3. as admitting that his various principles of living (which include such often "negative" ideas as "exile" and "cunning") constitute a kind of confession.

Chapter 5, Part 4 Quotes

☝ Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.

Related Characters: Stephen Dedalus (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 218

Explanation and Analysis

This is the second-to-last entry of the diary which makes up the last section of the novel, and the famous finale to Joyce's first masterpiece.

Here, Stephen courageously welcomes forth the force of life and reality to which (he believes) he must wholly submit his soul in order to create, within himself, the "uncreated conscience" of his race (that is, the Irish). This is an incredible declaration. Stephen approaches reality and external experience as if it is to impregnate him with the seeds of his creation; further, this creation is to serve the needs of his people, of his "race." He must create the "uncreated conscience"--whether this means moral or aesthetic--that Ireland lacks, even as he physically exiles himself from Ireland itself.

Stephen invokes the "old artificer"--referencing Daedalus, the ingenious craftsmen of Greek mythology who is also, seemingly, Stephen's namesake--as a power that can give him strength to fulfill his task. There's almost a sense that Stephen is going to war with his creation--as if he's bracing himself for the brunt of the reality to which he must submit himself in order to bring his art into existence. The symbol of the "old artificer" provides a certain armor for Stephen's thinking--by envisioning himself as a masterful craftsman, and also as being prophetically linked to the mythological character, Stephen bolsters his sense of destiny and purpose, and therefore his approach to the reality which he must ingest and transmute into art.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1, PART 1

Simon Dedalus tells his toddler son Stephen a story about a cow who meets a boy named baby tuckoo. Stephen imagines that he is the boy named tuckoo, and that the cow is walking along a neighboring road, where a woman named Betty always sells candy and sings an old **song**. Stephen's mind drifts to the song, which reminds him of the sensations and smells of bedwetting; thinking of the bad smell reminds him of his mother's good smell.

Next, Stephen remembers dancing for Uncle Charles and Dante, his Catholic governess; Dante carries brushes that symbolize people named Michael Davitt and Charles Parnell.

At some point, young Stephen tells everyone that he wants to marry the girl next door, a Protestant girl named Eileen Vance. Stephen's Catholic family is shocked, and Dante tells him that eagles will eat his eyes if he doesn't apologize for his accidental profanity. Stephen makes a little **song** out of the threatening words.

As a toddler, Stephen perceives the world mostly through wide associative leaps. He is just as likely to pay attention to the people and sights in front of him as he is to follow the trail of a memory, often inspired by sounds and smells. The novel follows Stephen's imagination, so it proceeds not in a straight narrative line but in wild zigzags.



Dante's brushes show her support for Davitt and Parnell, two nationalist Irish leaders who headed the Irish separatist cause in the 1870s and 80s, an effort to gain Ireland self-rule from England.



In the late 19th century, when this story takes place, Ireland was a predominantly Catholic country. The small Protestant minority was by and large loyal to the British Empire and received many special privileges. The tension between Catholics and Protestants was both spiritual and political.



CHAPTER 1, PART 2

The next scene takes place in Clongowes Wood College, where a slightly older Stephen has recently begun his schooling. Stephen plays football (soccer) on the playground with the other boys, feeling cold, weak, and shy. The other boys seem rough and strong. One of them mocks Stephen's name and his father's job. The boys' roughness makes Stephen think of his kindly mother and father. He is tired of running around in the cold, and he thinks of reading cozily in study hall.

The cold of the day reminds Stephen that a classmate pushed him into a cold wet ditch the day before. The cold also reminds him of his mother's warm fireplace and of Dante's interesting stories. Now the schoolboys are called inside. One boy calls a classmate named Simon Moonan a 'suck,' a teacher's pet, and the word reminds Stephen of the eerie sound of a flushing toilet. The memory of cold and hot water pipes in the bathroom makes him feel first cold and then hot, which he finds very strange.

From the very beginning of his life at school, Stephen feels isolated from other children. Their easy camaraderie makes him uncomfortable; he prefers solitary reading to group games. We also notice, here, that Stephen's family is not upper-class, though it seems comfortable enough financially.



A slightly older Stephen still follows the trail of associations wherever it takes him. As with good smells and bad smells in the first section, Stephen connects experiences that are similar and those that are opposites: cold reminds him of cold, but also of warmth. We also notice Stephen's sensitivity to the sounds of words, not only to their meanings.



Stephen walks to his arithmetic class. The class is divided into two teams, York and Lancaster. The boys on York wear badges with white roses, and the boys in Lancaster wear badges with red roses. Students that solve problems correctly win points for their respective teams. Stephen wants to do his best for York, but his academic rival Jack Lawton solves the problem first. Suddenly, he feels disinterested in the game and thinks intently of the beautiful colors of the silk roses and the prize cards.

After class, Stephen files with his classmates into the dining room. The food and the atmosphere are so bleak that he can't bring himself to eat anything, though he does drink some tea. He notices dampness and colors everywhere he looks. The other boys are too different for him to understand them, and he feels homesick – a feeling he imagines as a sickness of the heart. He escapes from the unpleasant loud noise of the dining room by thinking of the pleasant sounds of a train.

Later, Stephen plays dominoes halfheartedly in the playroom and tries to hear the hissing of the gas pipes. In study hall, a globe that a boy named Fleming had colored green and purple reminds Stephen of Dante's brushes. Stephen tries to study geography but becomes distracted by all the different names of the countries, and by the confusing vastness of the world. It's odd, he thinks, that there exist many names for god but only one god. He remembers that Dante had torn the green from the Parnell brush recently because she decided that Parnell was a bad person. He understands that his family is divided along political lines, but he doesn't know why.

The next morning, Stephen wakes up with a fever and stays in bed while the other boys dress. Wells, thinking he caused Stephen's illness by throwing him in the ditch, apologizes and makes Stephen promise not to tell on him. A teacher comes to feel Stephen's head, but the teacher's cold hand makes Stephen think of the rats in the ditch. The teacher takes Stephen to the infirmary, where he thinks about death and his own funeral.

A kindly teacher named Brother Michael helps him get settled in, and a boy named Athy talks to him about political arguments at home and asks him to solve a silly riddle. Stephen thinks the reflections of the fire on the wall resemble waves, and he thinks the voices in the background might be the sound of waves. Suddenly he hears Brother Michael announce to a crowd of people that Parnell has died. The crowd begins to cry, and Stephen imagines Dante walking indifferently by.

The math teacher tries to motivate the students by splitting them up into teams named after the Wars of the Roses, a 15th century dynastic battle between the York and Lancaster families for the British throne. Stephen is in York, the losing side, which Ireland itself joined at a late stage. But Stephen is interested in neither competition nor politics – he would rather think of the colors themselves.



Stephen has trouble eating because he is on the verge of a bad cold, but also because he is painfully sensitive to both beauty and ugliness in his surroundings. It's almost as though he exchanges dinner for sights and sounds – exchanges sustenance of the body for sustenance of the soul, as an older, pedantic Stephen might put it.



Stephen has difficulty paying attention to geography, a flat and factual description of the world, and thinks instead about the textures of names and about the relationship between names and the things they represent. Stephen notes that there is something strange about the fact that there are many names for god: it means that the English name is not absolute, not perfect. But god is supposed to be absolute and perfect. Therefore, there is a significant inconsistency between god and the word for god, the object and the name. Yet he is not aware of the political happenings of the day regarding Parnell.



The teachers at Clongowes are sometimes kind but usually neither effective nor comforting. Although the priest that comes to take Stephen to the infirmary is there to help him, his actual task is less vivid to Stephen than his sensory association with rats. As always, Stephen is deep in his own mind.



Parnell, the important separatist leader, died a year after his fall from power and from grace, which can be traced directly to the public exposure of his long-term affair with a woman named Katherine O'Shea, the wife of a Parliament member. Ireland's Catholic Church bitterly denounced Parnell for his moral transgression, but his death was a cause of grief for many.



CHAPTER 1, PART 3

Stephen is home for the winter holidays. Uncle Charles, Dante, his father Simon Dedalus, Simon's friend Mr. Casey, and Stephen sit by the fire waiting for Christmas dinner. Simon and Mr. Casey have just come home from a walk, and the two of them have a drink of whiskey. Finally dinner is served, and Stephen says grace. The food is fragrant and beautiful. It's the first year that Stephen is old enough to stay up or sit with the adults.

Simon offers Dante (also called Mrs. Riordan) some sauce, but she refuses curtly. The adults argue for a while about the Catholic Church's denunciation of Parnell as an adulterer. Dante believes the church was right to make a statement, but Simon and Mr. Casey think politics should be kept out of church. Mrs. Dedalus tries to keep the conversation civil, but tempers rise. Dante thinks the men sin when they criticize the behavior of the priests, but Simon and Mr. Casey think the priests betrayed Parnell and behaved despicably.

Stephen listens to the conversation with confusion; who is right? He knows that Dante, Mr. Casey, and his father all love Ireland, so why do they disagree? Mr. Casey and Simon are against the priests, who, they believe, have harmed Ireland, but Dante thinks priests are sacred. Dante values God and religion above all else, but the men would choose Ireland over religion. Dante storms out, screaming insults. Stephen watches as his father cries for Parnell.

CHAPTER 1, PART 4

In the next scene, Stephen is back at school. He overhears his classmates talking on the playground about some older boys that had been punished for some mysterious offense. Wells thinks the boys stole some wine from the sacristy, but Athy tells them that the older boys had been caught doing something sexual ("smuggling") with Simon Moonan and Tusker Boyle.

The happy, comfortable scene shows that the Dedalus family is still very comfortable financially. Stephen loves sitting up with the adults and looks forward to listening to their conversations. As the child of a religious family, he is expected to say grace.



The party is bitterly divided about Parnell's death. Simon and Mr. Casey are loyal to Parnell despite his adultery because he was a devoted leader who accomplished a great deal for Ireland: he laid the groundwork for Irish independence, though he did not live to see it. Dante believes that Parnell must have been a bad man despite his accomplishments, because the Church denounced him.



Stephen watches most of his adult world splinter into two groups, like the children in his math class. The division confuses the youthful Stephen, to whom such fierce, myopic loyalties seem fascinating but incomprehensible. The pull of country and religion on his own loyalties later in life can be traced partially to this scene.



It's important to note that what seems to be Stephen's first encounter with sexuality immediately links sexuality with punishment and sin. One might say, also, that the encounter construes sex as something separate from women, which helps to explain Stephen's lonely, introverted sexuality as a teen.



Soon, the boys are called back to the classroom. Stephen sits idly during the writing lesson, thinking about the beauty of the word 'wine' and of the rector's unpleasant winy breath. The day before, a boy had knocked Stephen down and broken his glasses, so everything looks small and far away. Father Arnall comes in to teach the Latin lesson and shouts at some of the boys for their poor performance; Stephen wonders if the priest's empty anger is a sin. Father Dolan, a head teacher, comes in holding a pandybat (a stiff leather strap) and flogs Fleming on the hands for being lazy. He flogs Stephen as well, though Stephen had been excused from his work until his new glasses arrived. Just before he leaves, Father Dolan threatens to come back every day to 'pandy' lazy boys.

Stephen realizes that Father Dolan has acted very unfairly and unkindly, even though he is a priest. When he mentions this to the other boys, they back him up and encourage him to complain to the rector (the head of the school). Stephen thinks of men in antiquity who had been wrongly punished and imagines a picture from a book about Greece and Rome. He feels anxious and uncertain, but he remembers that his name, unlike the plain "Dolan," resembles the names of great men, so he finally makes his way to the rector's office. The kindly rector promises to speak to Father Dolan and excuses Stephen from his studies for a few days. When he gets outside, the boys cheer for him and his victory. He listens to the noises of the cricket bats.

CHAPTER 2, PART 1

Stephen spends the summer at his family's house in Blackrock, a suburb of Dublin. He spends most of his time with Uncle Charles (actually his great-uncle), who has a penchant for strong, ill-smelling tobacco and minor shoplifting (he lets Stephen grab handfuls of fruit from a local store). After running daily errands each morning, Stephen and Uncle Charles go to the park to meet Mike Flynn, a retired athletic trainer and a friend of Stephen's father. Mike teaches Stephen running techniques and makes him do laps around the park. Stephen enjoys running, but feels put off by the aging trainer's appearance. On the way home, he and Uncle Charles usually stop by the chapel to pray.

On Sundays, Stephen, his father, and Uncle Charles go for long walks around the neighborhood. Stephen listens eagerly as the men talk about politics and family, and looks forward to a time when he can truly take part in the world they describe. In the evenings he reads *The Count of Monte Cristo*, imagining himself as the wiser, older count who eventually rebuffs his once-beloved lover, Mercedes.

This scene suggests that seeing, for Stephen, is not quite as important as the other senses – perhaps because it is slightly less inward facing. Stephen is happy to be freed from the responsibilities of communal class activity to spend his time daydreaming instead. He thinks once again about the connections and disconnects between the sounds of words and the things they represent. In this scene, Stephen also begins to question the goodness of the priests; he starts to discern that the mantle of religion does not immunize the wearer from sin.



After thinking so often about names, Stephen turns his attention to his own name – especially its mythological dimensions. The ancient Greek figure named Daedalus is most famous for two accomplishments: building a labyrinth to house the half-man, half-bull Minotaur, and fathering Icarus, the foolish boy who flew too close to the sun on wings his father made for him. The ancient Greek word 'daidala,' after which Daedalus was named, refers to finely crafted sculptures. Stephen suddenly feels linked to his mythic name; its literary heritage gives him the courage to stand up to the cruel priest, and in doing so achieve a victory celebrated by the other boys—a true triumph for an introverted boy like Stephen.



A significant aspect of Stephen's maturation is his growing disenchantment with and even disgust for adult figures he had once revered. The priests at school suddenly seem spiritually flawed and physically repellent. Mike Flynn's aged body also repels Stephen, and inspires a mixture of pity and contempt. At the same time, Stephen's new confidence and growing powers of scrutiny cost him a generalized warmth and kindness.

Stephen feels that the world of adults is defined by various political and familial loyalties. He understands that such an adult world is his future but he can't participate in it at all, for now. He feels much more connected to the imagined world of his novel.



Stephen and a boy named Aubrey Mills become friends and form an adventurers' club; they explore and fight imaginary battles. Stephen decides to make his costume very simple, like Napoleon's. Sometimes they go with the milkman to the cow fields in the summer and the cow yards in the fall – the latter sadden and disgust Stephen.

Aubrey goes to school in the fall, but Stephen does not return to Clongowes: his family has been experiencing financial troubles. He imagines living the pleasant life of the milkman, but his vague sense of ambition does not let him dwell on it. His ambition takes the form of a confused, gloomy restlessness. He wanders around his neighborhood, feeling acutely that he is separated in some way from everyone else, and dreams of finding in the world something that resembles his soul.

Just as he briefly identified with Daedalus, Stephen tries on the costume of Napoleon, the classic symbol of megalomania. Stephen begins to yearn for a certain kind of confidence and power associated with historical Great Men.



Stephen spends more time thinking, observing, and constructing ideas about the world; in a way, he builds his own, separate imaginary world from his observations and emotions. This imaginary world is partly wishful thinking: it is a more intense, more exalted, more orderly version of reality. The gap between imagination and the more disappointing reality pains Stephen.



CHAPTER 2, PART 2

One morning that fall, Stephen watches as workmen carry away most of the furniture in his home to prepare for his family's move to Dublin. The cold, bare house that evening is very sad. The family is moving because of their increasing money troubles, and Stephen understands that his father has been financially irresponsible.

In Dublin, Stephen has the time and freedom to wander around at will – the same vague restlessness still consumes him. The world seems beautifully varied to him, but at the same time it seems dirty and empty.

One day, Stephen goes with his mother to visit his aunt. Her family is gathered looking at the picture of a pretty actress when a very old woman appears, probably another relative. Another day, he attends a children's party which annoys and bores him when is forced to partake, but which he enjoys observing from a distance. Afterwards, a girl named E___ C___ (also referred to as 'Emma') walks with Stephen to the tram. They talk on their way home, and Stephen admires the girl's eyes and clothes. He thinks he might kiss her, but he doesn't.

The next day Stephen tries to write a poem for her; he strips the poem of every specific circumstance and leaves only soft romantic images – moon, wind, and silence. A few days later, Stephen finds out he'll be attending a new school; his younger brother Maurice will come with him.

Stephen's dreamy, thoughtful adolescence is often jarred by earthbound practical concerns like money. For his family, too, he feels a mixture of pity and condescension; it seems like even family-feeling is too mundane and earthly for the haughty young artist.



Though Stephen is learning to love abstract thought, he remains attentive to the acute sensory impressions he has collected since childhood. The two are very different modes of experiencing and seeing the world.



Stephen is going through quite a rough period. His family repels him, other children bore and confuse him. His only pleasures are literature and his new romantic attachment. He had roamed the streets longing for some sort of romantic mystery, and his feelings for E___ C___ satisfy that longing – though it's the sort of satisfaction that creates more longing in its wake. Note also how it is an imaginary kind of attachment, almost dependent on nothing actually happening between them so that his romantic dream of E___ C___ can remain pure.



Though Stephen's real experience with E___ C___ was full of particular and quite unromantic details, like scattered tickets and horse sounds, when he transforms the experience into art he simplifies and smoothes it.



CHAPTER 2, PART 3

Stephen, now sixteen years old, is a student at Belvedere, a Jesuit school. It is the end of his second year, and he is the second-best student in his class. He has been cast in a school play, taking the role of a stern and foolish teacher because of his height and serious manners. He is waiting for his turn backstage amidst the general clutter and tumult, which begins to annoy him, so he walks out of the school into the garden and watches the muffled noise and lights of the theatre from a comfortable distance. From afar, the **music** perfectly expresses his confused feeling, and he feels his emotions flow outward from him.

A little ways away, a few of Stephen's friends stand smoking cigarettes. Heron, Stephen's closest friend, mentions that he saw Stephen's father walking in to the school with a pretty girl, who the boys assume is Stephen's girlfriend. Stephen thinks it must be E___ C___, the girl he almost kissed in the tram two years earlier, and feels angry at his friends for making light of an incident that was so meaningful for him. He has recently been thinking about her and about the poem he wrote for her.

Soon enough, though, Stephen begins joking with his friends. "Admit!", Heron says, to get Stephen to confess his secret relationship with the girl (which has not actually taken place). The word calls up for Stephen a memory from the previous year, when he got into an argument with Heron and a few other boys about their favorite writers. Stephen insisted that Byron was the greatest poet but the other boys objected that Byron was a heretic. Half-jokingly, the other boys pinned Stephen down to force him to admit that Byron wasn't good as a poet or as a man. Stephen wrestled free and ran away; somehow, he notes, he does not hold a grudge for this humiliation. That same day, a teacher had accused Stephen of writing heretical thoughts in an essay. Stephen had written that people can never come closer to god, but with the teacher's prompting corrects himself to say that people can never reach god.

A boy comes to call Stephen back to the theatre, because it's almost time for him to go onstage. Heron thinks the summons is rude, but Stephen doesn't care, and he notes to himself his indifference to such customs. He feels many different voices around him instructing him to be many different things: a gentleman, a catholic, a nationalist, a savior of the family. But he wants only to ignore these voices and to attune himself to his ghostly thoughts and feelings.

Stephen continues to endure his social life in much same way as at the children's party in Blackrock: though he apparently participates, he experiences a steady mixture of alienation, boredom, and contempt. He can only enjoy the tumult from afar, as an observer. There, he can transform experience into description. Music seems to connect the spheres of his inner and outer life by calling his emotion out into the world.



Stephen feels alienated from others partly because he constantly forces himself to conceal his real feelings, which he judges as shameful or unsuitable. To his mind, the world he lives in has no room for the sort of high, romantic ambitions that consume him. Therefore, as a defensive mechanism, he conceals and disguises much of his inner life.



Despite Stephen's high academic standing and apparent good behavior, several incidents indicate his deviation from the religious mold. His intellectual strength and curiosity have led him into opinions that are somewhat unorthodox, both in his conversations with his friends and in his school assignments. Something about his recent romantic angst and general intellectual reshuffling has put him slightly at odds with his highly religious environment. We note, also, that even his irreverent friendships seem to be modeled in some instances on clerical relationships, like that between a priest and a confessor.



The scene crystallizes Stephen's immersion in inner life and estrangement from worldly life – two aspects of his existence that he often designates as "soul" and "body" (since the body, unlike the hidden, immaterial soul, is inevitably a part of worldly life). Stephen doesn't want to attach his soul to any external, communal cause.



Backstage, a man paints Stephen's face to make him look middle-aged, but the thought of the girl waiting for him in the audience makes him feel truly young for once. He goes onstage and plays his part with ease. Afterwards, he takes off his costume and rushes outside, but no girl is waiting for him. He storms off in painful disappointment, leaving his family behind. He looks at a morgue across the street and breathes in the smells of horse urine and decay; somehow, the smell calms him down.

Though Stephen is only sixteen, his estrangement from others makes him feel much older. The joke, here, is that he happens to feel young only when he is disguised to look old. Though teenage Stephen thinks that he loves beautiful things, we come to notice slowly that he loves hideous things as well. Strong sensory impressions of any kind restore his sense of reality.



CHAPTER 2, PART 4

Stephen and his father are taking the night train to Cork, Simon's hometown, so that Simon can sell some property at auction. The passage of the train reminds Stephen of his youthful excitement at Clongowes, so different from his present disillusionment. He listens indifferently to his father's drawn-out sentimental stories about his friends and youth in Cork. He falls asleep, and when he wakes up at dawn he feels disturbed by the sight of all the sleepers on the train. He tries to pray, but finds he can't pray to any god, and his prayer takes on the **music** and rhythm of the train wheels.

Though Stephen is still very young, he feels that his capacity for wonder has disappeared. Even the romantic and evocative experience of a train at night leaves him cold. However, these are not the reader's conclusions: they are Stephen's. His real disillusionment is not more important than his self-conscious diagnosis of disillusionment. He is enchanted despite himself by the sound of train wheels.



In the morning, they sleep in a hotel. Over breakfast, his father chats with the waiter and the porter to find out which of his old friends are still alive. They then walk around his father's old college and look at the inscriptions on the desks. The word 'foetus' cut into the wood startles Stephen and gives him a vivid image of the student life of his father's time – more vivid than any of his father's jolly stories. The word 'foetus' haunts him and reminds him of his own impure thoughts. He is shocked to feel the outer world express his inner darkness.

The single word 'foetus', its particular sound and trail of implications, affects Stephen more than straightforward stories: his imagination is fickle, persuaded only by mysterious signs and coincidences. He will pursue poetry and fiction, rather than some other more straightforward mode of experiencing and understanding the world, to appease his imagination's whims.



His father interrupts his weary, painful thoughts with pleasant stories and fatuous advice about having fun and being gentlemanly. Stephen realizes that nothing in the external world matters to him unless it resembles his inner life somehow; he feels that he is cut off from reality and its easy pleasures. He thinks that he is losing himself, and tells himself his name, location, and various factual details of the day. Of his childhood, he can remember only names and facts, not feelings. He feels that his childhood self has died, or gradually disappeared.

In this transitional moment of his maturation, Stephen feels very acutely the gap between soul and body, between thought and observation, his conception of the world and its various realities. He is focused on an intellectual ordering of the world but feels confused by his sensory impressions. He also begins to feel completely removed from his childhood self, which lived only by the senses.



After Simon sells his property, he drags Stephen from bar to bar. Stephen is embarrassed by his father's sentimentality, excessive drinking, and smarmy friends. He feels very distant from the men and their reminiscences, as though he were older than they. He thinks that he has forgotten how to feel happiness, and that his one true emotion is lust. He remembers lines from a Shelley poem that describes a similar feeling, and the poem distracts and consoles him.

Here, again, it is important to note the disparities between Stephen's actual experience and his understanding of it. Though Stephen, from his abstracted, conflicted point of view, feels incapable of emotion, we have often observed Stephen experience joy and anger. Why does he forget or repress these feelings? Perhaps because they both shame and sustain him.



CHAPTER 2, PART 5

Stephen receives a large monetary prize—thirty-three pounds—for excellent academic performance, and he spends the money quickly and generously on friends and family. He buys expensive food, theatre tickets, and presents. The money gives a fleeting order to his life, but when the money runs out the order falls apart. He feels foolish—inner and outer disorder overwhelm him once again, and he feels more alienated than ever from his family.

In this part of the novel, Stephen's longing for order and even respectability becomes very clear. His sudden capacity to control his circumstances, the material life of the body, almost reconciles him to the outer world. But the reconciliation is very brief, and leaves no trace.



Stephen's physical longings overwhelm him, and he starts wandering the city streets again. He remembers the Count of Monte Cristo's lover Mercedes, but his memories of boyhood seem much purer and sweeter than his present condition. He is tormented by lust and strange visions. One night, he finds himself in the prostitutes' quarter. He ends up following one of the brightly dressed women into her room and they end up having sex. It is his first time. The world completely disappears for a little while.

Stephen is tortured by and ashamed of his lust because he has been taught over and over again throughout his Christian education that sex without marriage is a terrible sin. Even lustful thoughts, without action, were considered very sinful. His lust and shame, therefore, are at the root of his conflict between soul and body: the soul tries to abstain, but the body wants satisfaction.



CHAPTER 3, PART 1

Stephen sits in class on a December evening, thinking about dinner and about the nightly adventures that will follow: his wanderings through the prostitutes' quarter. He remembers that the sights and sounds of the streets grate on his senses until the moment his lust is satisfied. Afterwards, he always feels cold and emptied. He was worried at first that his illicit sexual experiences would cause him physical and spiritual harm, but it seems to him that they have only brought his body and soul closer together. He knows that his actions are sinful and he worries about going to hell, but he can't stop himself. He won't pray, partly out of a strange sort of pride, partly because he thinks prayer and atonement can't mitigate such a grave sin. At church on Sundays, he feels like a hypocrite.

A little later in the novel, Stephen thinks that the soul wants to be pure and worthy of god's love, but the body wants sin: the two are irreparably at odds. If this were true, Stephen's sexual experiences would tear soul and body apart. But in reality, they bring soul and body together. It's a mystery Stephen is not quite ready to explore, but it does indicate that the model of exalted soul / lowly body is flawed, in his case. We also note that his sexual experience is closely allied to the senses: as his lust grows, his senses sharpen.



Stephen thinks of the scroll on his wall that indicates his role as leader of a religious group devoted to the Virgin Mary. On Saturday mornings, he leads a group of younger students in a special set of prayers in honor of the Virgin Mary. Though he does not feel the piety he pretends to, he is charmed by Mary's religious symbolism. Her motherly image makes him long for spiritual purity.

Class ends, and Stephen walks outside with Heron and a few other boys. They go to listen to the rector speak. As they wait for him, Stephen thinks that the sin of lust has led him to all the other deadly sins – pride, envy, greed, gluttony, anger, and sloth. Then he coldly considers scriptural minutiae, almost poking logical holes in scripture. The rector comes in and announces that the entire school will be attending a three-day religious retreat in honor of Saint Xavier, the patron of the college.

CHAPTER 3, PART 2

Father Arnall has come to give the students a guest lecture about the upcoming retreat. He tells them that the retreat is meant to take them away from the practical matters of daily life so that they can examine their souls and think deeply about religion. The subjects of his lectures will be death, judgment, hell, and heaven. He tells the boys that life on earth is meaningless compared to the afterlife – that nothing is more important than the salvation of the soul.

After the lecture, Stephen walks home and eats dinner. The grease on his lips makes him feel like a dirty animal, and he is filled with a confused fear. The following day's lecture on death affects Stephen profoundly: he imagines his own death with terrifying clarity, and he imagines god sending his soul to hell. He imagines the end of the world and the day of judgment, when the sinners repent too late of their sins and are banished from the kingdom of heaven. Father Arnall tells the students that righteous people think of death all the time, but do not fear it.

Stephen feels as though the speech is addressed to him directly; he thinks that the words are rousing his soul from its dirt. On his way home, a girl's laughter makes him ashamed of his lustful thoughts, which have soiled the memory of E____ C____. He remembers the details of his his sins with disgust. Salvation seems impossible, but he imagines standing with E____ C____ in front of the Virgin Mary, who forgives them.

As Stephen grows more distant from religion, he tries to reattach himself to it in various ways. He directs his passion for literature at the deep and mysterious symbols with which Christianity abounds: he can appreciate their beauty and ambiguity just as he appreciates Byron.



Stephen's conflict is not really between body and soul, as one (including him) might expect, but between his aesthetic and logical faculties and his thorough religious indoctrination – between beauty and boredom, between reason and belief. At this moment, Stephen is split in two: he cannot choose a side.



Father Arnall emphasizes above all that the boys will be expected to focus on their souls by absorbing ancient religious teachings. If we consider Stephen's feeling that the soul is private and ghostly, separate from communal, external influences, Father Arnall's announcement seems paradoxical.



Stephen is deeply moved by the lecture because Father Arnall is a skilled, evocative speaker. He describes death precisely in order to make the boys imagine it, to experience it secondhand. The irony is quite pointed: Stephen feels sincere religious devotion only via his senses, which religion generally seeks to quell.



Father Arnall's lecture fills Stephen with shame and self-disgust, but also makes him feel that his soul is a separate and separable entity from his body that is capable of purity. The lecture also seems to confirm Stephen's feeling that his lust is absolutely different from his unfulfilled romantic feelings for E____ C____.



It is raining when Stephen walks to the chapel the following day, and he imagines that the great flood has come again to drown the world. Father Arnall talks that day about the fallen angel Lucifer, the temptation of Eve, and Christ's redemption of man's sins. He goes on to describe hell in minute sensory detail: the darkness, the stench, the heat, the swears and screams. Every one of the five senses is in great pain. All earthly laws are overturned, and sinners are forced to exist in the company of devils.

Stephen walks out of the chapel profoundly shaken. He feels as though he has already died and gone to hell; he can almost feel the heat and pain. The sounds of his friends' voices remind him that he is not really dead yet – that he still has time to save his soul. He resolves to confess to a priest, but not at the school chapel.

In the next sermon, later that evening, Father Arnall describes hell's spiritual torments. Sin, he says, turns sinners away from their higher natures and towards their animal natures. In hell, the most intense spiritual suffering is the pain of losing god; the second sort of suffering is the pain of a guilty conscience; the third is the pain of intensity; and the fourth is the pain of eternity. These are impossible to imagine, but the Father does his best to make it all as vivid as possible. Finally, the boys recite the words of contrition, indicating that they've repented of their sins.

CHAPTER 3, PART 3

After the sermon is over, Stephen goes up to his room to pray and think about his soul. He feels cold and confused, and he thinks in horror of his many sins. He tries not to hear or see anything, but he is struck with a disgusting vision of hell, full of demons and excrement. He goes to the window to pray and mourns his lost innocence.

Stephen leaves the house, thinking with confusion about his animal nature – its demands and stupidities. His animal nature seems to him an awful second soul of a lower order, which lives inside him like a parasite. He resolves to confess his sins, and finds a chapel on one of the streets he frequents. Inside, he feels the foretaste of humiliation but resolves to live purely under god from now on. He enters the confessional for the first time in eight months, and he describes his sins to the priest. The priest implores him to abandon his habits and absolves him. Stephen is moved to tears, and he walks home with a beautiful sense of purity and cleanliness. Even his kitchen seems full of peace and glory.

Stephen seems to be experiencing something akin to a nervous breakdown. The fire-and-brimstone lectures have distorted his perceptions so that he sees doom everywhere he looks. Father Arnall's lecture is once again focused on shocking and stimulating the senses. Stephen's bout of religious piety is similar to a case of hypnosis.



At this point, Stephen seems to have yielded entirely to his religious terror: his thoughts and actions seem less deliberate and willful than they are ordinarily. He is not entirely in control of himself.



Father Arnall clearly articulates the identity structure that underpins the lectures: the soul tends to good, the body tends to evil, so human nature is deeply divided. In hell, spiritual suffering is the absence of god and the presence of emptiness (infinity and eternity): in a way, hell is the pain of eternally losing one's soul. The soul is profoundly important to Stephen, so the threat of its loss works very powerfully on him.



When Stephen tries to consider his soul, he is invaded by the awful scenes described in the lectures, with an emphasis on filth and excrement. The lectures that were meant to bring Stephen closer to his soul seem to block his access to it.



Stephen decides to identify with his 'purer' soul and not his animal soul. He thinks his real soul is almost lost, like a tiny flicker, and he goes to confession to regain it. His thoughts, in this section, sound like a childish version of the sermon – his own unique voice has disappeared. In trying to regain his soul according to the priest's instructions, he begins to lose what we might call the secular soul – the idiosyncrasy of his thoughts and ideas. We might say that his joy after confession is the joy of being free from his self.



CHAPTER 4, PART 1

Stephen now orders his life according to a strict regimen of prayer – a holy person or idea for every day of the week. Every day is also divided into different sorts of prayers and devotions. He feels himself growing closer to god, and he thinks of all his prayers as a growing sum of money in a divine account.

Stephen carries many rosaries in his pockets, and they seem to him to have no name, color, or smell. He prays for redemption constantly. He prefers to think of the imagery associated with god, like wind and birds, because the plain fact of god's love is difficult for him to comprehend. Similarly, it is difficult for him to relate to the love and hate described "solemnly" in sermons and plays.

The entire world has come to seem to Stephen like an expression of god's love, and reality seems to disappear behind this vision. To keep himself grounded, he tries to discipline each of his five senses; he looks at the ground when he walks, he endures unpleasant noises and smells (especially the smell of fish), he fasts often, and he places himself in uncomfortable or painful positions. At first he is not tempted to sin lustfully, but he finds it difficult to control minor angers and irritations. Slowly, prayer ceases to be a comfort. He is tempted to sin once again, but holds himself back. He begins to feel guilty almost constantly, and wonders whether his virtuous way of life has succeeded in bettering his soul.

CHAPTER 4, PART 2

After the end of the winter vacation, Stephen is called to meet with the director of the Jesuit college. The priest begins by discussing the inconvenience of the long capuchin robes worn by a sect of the Franciscan order. He compares the robes to skirts, which makes Stephen blush inwardly and think of women. Stephen has always admired and respected the Jesuit priests of the college for their intelligence and good humor, but lately he has been feeling something akin to disillusionment.

Stephen has chosen to control his sinful impulses by rigidly ordering his days. His routine suppresses not only his sexual longing but also a great deal of his ordinary inner experience. He feels that his actions are connected to the abstraction of heaven rather than to the details of earth.



His orderly life drains objects like rosaries of sensory detail. But his resolve to choose soul over body, holy abstraction over detail, slowly weakens: he finds that he can't understand god as a concept and focuses instead on Biblical details and symbols, which are closer to his artistic disposition.



The relationship between religion, order, and the senses is clearest in this section of the book. Stephen has learned that he must repress his senses in order to feel close to god; as a result, the sensory experience through which he knows the world fades and disappears, and reality seems to disappear as well. In a way, he forces himself to exist as though he were already disembodied: worldly concerns and experiences disappear, and only god's love remains. But the world forces itself back in, and his method stops working.



As Stephen grows older, he begins (like most teenagers) to doubt the authority figures that surround him at school. Stephen's slightly skeptical and even condescending attitude toward the director of the college signals his diminishing religious piety and growing confidence and individualism.



After he finishes with the preliminaries, the priest suggests to Stephen that he might be well-suited for a career in the clergy. Stephen listens to this praise with pride, imagining himself wielding the great power of a priest. He thinks that the many religious rituals he would perform would connect him more closely with reality and would allow him to express his emotions freely. As the priest explains his invitation, Stephen feels as though he is being offered a great deal of knowledge and power. He would know the dark sinful secrets of women, because they would come to confess to him, but he himself would be immune to sin.

When Stephen gets up to leave, the priest urges him to consider the matter very carefully. As they shake hands, Stephen hears a lovely snatch of **melody** from outside; suddenly, the priest's face looks lifeless and bleak. After he has left, he imagines the "ordered and passionless life" of a priest, its familiar schoolboy smells and sounds. Suddenly, he feels restless and rebellious: some wild instinct tells him that he does not want this life. He sees himself middle-aged, red-faced, and dull, and the vision appalls him.

Stephen wonders at how little his life of religious devotion has affected him, in the end. He decides that he will never become a part of any kind of institution or order, that he will not receive his wisdom secondhand but gather it himself. And he knows that he will sin again, many times over, as part of his search for wisdom.

Stephen then thinks lovingly of his father's messy, lively house. He comes home a little while later to find his siblings sitting together after tea, among crumbs and spills. His sister tells him that their parents are out looking at a house, because they will soon be evicted from their current home. They all begin singing a **song** together, as they often do, and Stephen joins them. He notes how the children's voices sound prematurely tired.

CHAPTER 4, PART 3

Stephen waits anxiously in the street while his father speaks to a tutor about his admission to the university. His mother does not approve, fearing bad influences, but Stephen feels deeply elated at the prospect – he feels that it signals his entrance into independent adult life. He does, however, feel guilty for having refused the priesthood when he sees a line of clergymen pass him. For comfort, he thinks of a phrase he likes: "a day of dappled seaborne clouds." He wonders whether he loves words for their rhythms or for their meanings, for their capacity to reflect the outer world or the inner.

Stephen's response to the priest's suggestion is wonderfully illustrative of his state of mind. It shows, for one thing, that he longs to regain his sense of reality and his freedom of emotion. It also shows that he lusts after women, despite his careful abstention. Moreover, he has been so muddled by his experiment in piety that he does not recognize the situation's irony. He interprets the rector's suggestion as though it were the serpent's offer to Eve: a tantalizing but corrupting gift of knowledge and power.



The music causes Stephen to have an epiphany, a sudden and striking insight. The liveliness and beauty of the music turns Stephen to his animal soul, as it were—it restores his intuitive, sensory, multifaceted experience of the world. Suddenly, he sees the life of a priest not as a lofty, orderly abstraction but as a series of ugly sensory experiences.



Stephen realizes that though his religious education was aimed at his soul, it has left his soul basically unaffected and unchanged. To act on his soul, he must take a more circuitous route. He was taught that sin would harm or destroy his soul, but he realizes it will only enrich it. For him, body and soul are no longer at odds.



As soon as Stephen renounces the attractive but stifling order of religion, he turns affectionately to various kinds of disorder: he begins to accept disorder as a part of the life he loves. Similarly, he incorporates the sadness and vague disappointment of his siblings into his worldview – sadness he had not seemed to notice before.



Stephen has rapidly moved past his religious ambitions and has transferred his focus onto academia. He has become absorbed once again in the sounds and pleasures of words: he is beginning to experience aspects of life through poetic phrases like seaborne clouds. He has noticed that words can describe both his inner and outer world, and therefore serve as emissaries between the two.



As he walks, Stephen looks at Dublin in delight, and feels memories overwhelm him like lovely **music**. Suddenly, he hears his friends calling his name. They have been swimming in the chilly sea, and their nakedness saddens and embarrasses Stephen. His own name on their lips sounds immortal, and he feels himself somewhere beyond time and space. When the boys call his name he thinks of Daedalus, the craftsman of the famous labyrinth in Crete and the father of Icarus.

He thinks he sees a flying shape over the city, and he thinks it represents the artist who creates “a new soaring impalpable imperishable being” out of his experience. He himself is soaring in spirit; he feels that his body has been purified and connected with his soul. He has felt “the call of life,” and he feels finally free from the tedium of life and the boredom of the clergy. He knows now that he will be an artist.

He takes off his shoes and wades in the sea. He rejoices in his youth and loneliness and in the wild sensory variety of the world around him. He notices a birdlike girl standing in the water some distance away. In Stephen’s eyes, she is wonderfully beautiful. She feels his eyes on her and turns to look at him for a moment. Stephen yells out to the sky and walks away, full of joy. He falls asleep on the beach, feeling himself pass into a different world. When he wakes up in the evening, he is still overcome with joy.

CHAPTER 5, PART 1

In the time that has passed between chapters, Stephen’s family has become increasingly impoverished. Stephen drinks tea and looks at the pawn tickets indicating the many items the Dedalus family has had to sell to survive. The objects that remain are old and broken, like the clock that is always running fast. Stephen’s mother washes his ears and neck before he goes to class, grumbling about the university’s bad influence on his character. His parents’ bad-tempered words and the screams of a nun in a neighboring insane asylum have ruined Stephen’s mood a little, but the damp autumn smells of the street cheer him up.

At this point, Stephen seems to veer between a sensory, detail-oriented, unbiased perspective and an abstract, overarching perspective. Though earlier he listened with pleasure to his siblings’ sad, strange singing, he shies away from his friends’ sad, strange nakedness and thinks instead of myth and abstraction.



Stephen feels like Daedalus, the father of the boy who flew on man-made feathered wings, because he feels like the creator of art, which also soars on man-made wings. Identifying as an artist helps Stephen feel that soul and body are connected. But he is somewhat shortsighted in turning away from the “tedium of life,” since it is his true material, the true essence of life.



Here is the great epiphany of the novel. The pretty girl, like the lovely music a few sections earlier, fills Stephen with irrepressible joy because she seems to symbolize all that he loves and seeks in the world: beauty, nature, instinct, chance – the sort of understanding that comes either before or after thought, that is not influenced by thought directly.



Stephen continues to struggle with the sordid, difficult realities of his life at home – his life as a body that eats, sleeps, washes, uses objects, and must pay attention to the time. He feels that this life distracts him from his exalted daydreams about the life of an artist and his highly abstract and overly systematic aesthetic speculations. His family life and the life of the city seem beside the point, to some extent. He can only pay attention wholeheartedly to vague and suggestive things like autumn smells.



Different stretches of his walk to school remind Stephen of different authors: Hauptmann, Newman, Cavalcanti (a friend of Dante's), and Ibsen. He spends most of his time studying the aesthetics (theories on art and beauty) of Aristotle and Aquinas, but for pleasure he reads Elizabethan poems (rhymed verse from the 16th century). He spends his time searching for insight in old texts, and when he finds it he feels both intense pleasure and complete withdrawal from the world. When some clock tolls eleven, he realizes that he missed his English and French lectures and decides to wander around til his physics lecture at one.

The thought of class makes Stephen bored and restless. He thinks of the face of Cranly, his closest friend, and decides that he looks a bit like a priest. The memory of his bored friend somehow drains all the street signs of meaning, and he feels surrounded by nonsense language. He makes up a nonsense rhyme about ivy, which he dismisses scornfully, but the word 'ivy' sets off a lovely chain of associations and memories. He recalls a Latin phrase that means "the orator summarizes, the poet-prophets transform," and thinks fondly of his old edition of Horace.

Stephen comes across a statue of Thomas Moore, the national poet of Ireland, which he looks at with some contempt because of Moore's sentimentality and his immigration to London. He thinks Moore is a "Firbolg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian" – in the language of Irish national stereotypes, a crude-minded peasant masquerading as a true artist. The statue reminds him of his friend Davin, a somewhat simple-minded student from the countryside. Davin is seen at the college as a "fenian," a radical Irish nationalist devoted to Irish heritage and hostile to European influences.

Stephen recalls a story Davin once told him. One October night, Davin was walking home to his village through the countryside. The walk was long and lonely, so he knocked on the door of a strange house to ask for a glass of water. A woman in her nightgown invited him to stay the night, but he couldn't bring himself to come in. As Stephen remembers this story, a flowergirl stops him and begs him to buy some of her wares, but after a moment he begins to find her revolting. He walks by a monument to Wolfe Tone, an Irish revolutionary hero, and remembers its noisy construction with aversion. The smell of wet trees and earth seems to Stephen to be the soul of the city.

As a child, Stephen understood the world through his senses. During his experiment in piety, he understood it via the austere rulebook of Catholicism. After his epiphany, he returned briefly and triumphantly to his senses (pun intended). Now he seems to understand the world through literature (as during his reading of the Count of Monte Cristo, but more so). These days, life reminds him of art – art being the more comprehensible and real of the two. This is yet another way of ordering the senses.



Stephen's relationship to the written word is fraught, almost stormy: words either fill and define his experience or abruptly transform into nonsense. We could say that art and life do battle in his imagination – that the memory of Cranly is so vivid that words grow pale. But it might be more precise to say that they have equal standing in his imagination and braid together, each looping in and out of view.



Stephen's childhood confusion about politics has blossomed into a full-fledged indifference tinged with contempt. He seems to associate Irish nationalism with naiveté and provincialism. Art that embodies Irish national myth – incidentally, a movement championed by the poet W.B. Yeats in the first two decades of the twentieth century – does not seem to Stephen to be true or important art.



As usual, Stephen's true feelings are more complicated and conflicted than his superficial attitudes. Stephen does feel very strongly about some kind of Irishness: the mysterious, opaque, mythical Ireland of the strange woman at the door, the momentarily appealing blue eyes of the flower girl, the particular and moving smell of earth. But Stephen seems to push these feelings away and focus on his contempt for the noisy, simple-minded nationalism of the Wolfe Tone monument. He does not know how to accept the disorderly contradiction of the two feelings.



Stephen walks to his physics classroom, where he finds the dean of studies struggling to light a fire. The man seems pathetic to Stephen – old, servile, and withered, but not at all enlightened. The dean stands up from his task and questions Stephen about his definition of beauty. Stephen quotes Aquinas, who says that the beautiful is that which pleases and that which is desired, and emphasizes that he only gives credence to ideas that are useful to him. The conversation fizzles out a little. Stephen continues thinking with pity of the dean's cold and thankless life. They exchange a few vague pronouncements about similarities between truth and light; Stephen's condescension is palpable. The smell of the candles and the sound of the dean's voice mingles in Stephen's mind with the meaning of the words.

They continue their conversation, which trips awkwardly over linguistic confusions and distinctions. Stephen uses the word 'tundish,' an Irish word for 'funnel' that the English priest doesn't recognize, and Stephen thinks with irritation that they are speaking a language that belongs to the priest but not entirely to Stephen: that it is a language from which he is forever alienated. To conclude, the dean advises Stephen to do what he must in order to graduate.

Soon the physics professor comes in and takes attendance, which finds Cranly absent. The lecture begins and Stephen dutifully copies down complex and puzzling formulas. Meanwhile, a student named Moynihan makes crude and irritating jokes in Stephen's ear. Stephen has a brief vision of his professors as a stampede of variously shaped animals. The professor drones on gravely, and class soon ends.

Next to the classroom door, a student named McCann sits at a table collecting signatures for Czar Nicholas II's petition for universal peace. Cranly has been waiting outside, and he has already contributed his signature. Stephen thinks the Czar looks like an insane Christ. The friends complain to each other about Moynihan, but Cranly's thuggish manner of speech depresses Stephen. McCann notices Stephen and pressures him to sign the petition, but Stephen proudly refuses. McCann accuses him of callousness and snobbery, but Stephen laughs him off. A student named Temple, an awkward aspiring intellectual who inspires everyone's collective contempt, takes Stephen's side. He follows the friends outside, where a larger group of friends is loitering.

Similarly, Stephen seems to simplify and exaggerate his interaction with the dean of studies. His apathy about his classes indicates that Stephen has developed an indifference and contempt for his formal education. He has decided against academia, so he must reinforce and prove his decision by reacting to the dean exclusively with aversion and contempt. To make matters worse, the dean is a Jesuit priest, so he represents two lifestyles Stephen has rejected: religious and academic. But Stephen's sensory distraction somehow softens and disorders his condescension.



We see clearly here that Stephen's frustration with Irish nationalism has a great deal to do with his artistic ambitions. Stephen wants to add to the illustrious history of literature in the English language, but he feels that his Irishness, with its colloquialisms, brogues, and distortions, partially disqualifies him from this great task.



Stephen feels comfortable in only a very narrow sliver of mental space – the high romantic abstractions of art. The dullness of academia, the crudeness of young men, and the general dirt and squalor of Dublin feel like intrusions upon this ideal, clean, perfect realm of abstractions.



When Stephen compares the Czar's face to the savior's, he is implicitly comparing blind religious devotion to blind political fanaticism. We can infer that the group mentality of the crowd of signers repels Stephen as well, like the group mentality of the Irish nationalists at the Wolfe Tone monument. Stephen is too proud initially to state clearly his reasons for refusing to sign, as though such a direct confrontation with politics would tarnish him with the dullness and practicality of real life.



It turns out that everyone has signed the petition except Stephen. Davin asks whether Stephen considers himself an Irishman; Stephen explains that he does not want to be bound by “nationality, language, religion,” but Davin does not understand.

When the other boys begin to play a game, Stephen and a student named Lynch walk away, talking. Stephen tells Lynch his ideas about pity and terror: pity, he says, connects the observer with the person suffering, and terror connects the observer with the root of suffering. He goes on to say that real art is static, because it raises the mind above human passions, and bad art is kinetic, because it plunges the mind into passion. The passions, he argues, are not aesthetic, because they are merely physical, like reflexes. Real art, in contrast, inspires not passions but “an ideal pity or an ideal terror.” Lynch mocks these ideas affectionately.

Stephen pays little attention to Lynch and continues his dry disquisition. Art, he says, is drawn out from the sensory prison of the human body. The beautiful and the true both create a sort of exalted mental paralysis; beauty is a particular combination of the sensible (that which can be perceived by the senses), and truth is a particular combination of the intelligible (that which can be understood). To understand beauty, one must understand the structure of the imagination.

Lynch, unsatisfied by these high-minded definitions, persists in asking about the nature of beauty. Stephen sighs inwardly and gives an example. Why do we find women beautiful, he asks? One answer holds that we are subconsciously attracted to their reproductive capacities, because we want to survive as a species. Stephen finds this answer depressing. He favors another theory, which holds that all beautiful entities share some universal aspects of beauty.

They run into a plump student named Donovan and talk briefly with him about exam results and dinner; Stephen quietly mocks his mundane interests. They resume their conversation after he walks away. Stephen refers again to Aquinas, who believes that the three components of beauty are wholeness, harmony, and radiance. To see a basket, he says, you have to separate the basket from the rest of the world and understand it in isolation; then you must consider its structure; then you can see its radiance – the universal qualities of its beauty, as well as that which makes it unique. Stephen thinks with self-satisfaction that his words have cast an enchantment over his listener.

Here, Stephen expresses clearly that political and religious affiliations are, for him, a form of unfreedom. It is less clear what he means by including language on the list – perhaps he is alluding to Irish as a language that stops him from being able to interact with the broader world.



During his pious period, Stephen felt that his pious higher soul was distinct from his lower animal soul, consumed by bodily passions. Though at this point he has rejected the religious life and worldview, he has carried the implausible division between higher soul and lower soul into his aesthetic theories. He thinks that passions like love and hate belong to the lower soul, and are therefore unworthy of artistic attention. He sees the emotions of the higher soul as being outside place and time.



Stephen's attitude toward the senses is quite contradictory. On one hand, he believes the senses muddle and restrict artistic creation, which is high and separate like the ghostly shape flying high over the dirty city. On the other hand, he thinks (following Aristotle and Aquinas) that beauty in art is a combination of sensory impressions, and therefore only an extension of the senses.



Stephen's notions of beauty echo his contempt for and dissatisfaction with the body. Our ideas of beauty do not derive merely from physical needs and reflexes like Darwin's self-preservation instinct, he says; we exist apart from and above our bodies, and our love for beauty derives from that soul space.



After expressing this theory, it is only appropriate that Stephen belittle a student for his interest in food (though we have seen Stephen himself daydream about dinner instead of paying attention in class!). In general, Stephen's ideas about art clash, comically and poignantly, with his own experience. As he speaks his theory about separating the perceived object from all else, we can't help but remember that Stephen understands each thing only by relating it to dozens of other objects and memories.



Next, Stephen divides art into three forms: the lyric, which is centered on the artist; the epic, which is centered somewhere between the artist and the external world; and the dramatic, which is centered so completely on the external world (or rather its image) that the artist disappears behind the artwork. He mentions some aesthetic questions he likes to ask himself, related to the rules he has set out. “Can excrement or a child or a louse be a work of art?” Lynch thinks that these ideas are out of place on a miserable rainy afternoon, in a muddled and violent country.

Lynch sees E___ C___ standing on the steps of the Irish academy. She had been flirting with a priest last time Stephen saw her, so he looks at her with spite. Other students talk dully about medical salaries in different parts of the country. Stephen looks at the girl again and wonders whether her life is beautiful, unconscious, and simple.

CHAPTER 5, PART 2

Stephen wakes up in a romantic, “enchanted” mood, probably because he dreamed about E___ C___. His feeling of inspiration seems to come from a confused jumble of circumstances. He writes a few stanzas of a poem that seems to be addressed both to E___ C___ and to the Virgin Mary. The poem is a villanelle (a minutely structured, repetitive poetic form) in which he implores the addressee to give up earthly love.

Stephen remembers talking to E___ C___ at a party; she had asked him to play piano and **sing**, which he did gladly, but afterwards he negated the charm of the songs with sarcasm. In his imagination, she seems to be dancing. But he remembers that she had flirted with a priest, and is overcome by irrational anger, and his inspiration disappears. The image of E___ C___ in his mind becomes fragmented and colored by images of many other girls. It seems to Stephen that E___ C___ represents “the womanhood of her country.”

Stephen’s inspiration returns, and he writes a few elevated and abstract stanzas. He remembers the poem he wrote for her ten years earlier, after they took the train home together. He is angered again when he imagines her showing his poem to a mocking family, but then his mood is softened by the thought of her girlish innocence and her mysterious womanly shame. Suddenly he is struck by desire; he quickly finishes the poem.

Stephen himself tends to exclude random or unromantic details from his art – his personal answer seems to be: no, none of those three things (excrement, children, or lice) is art. Yet these three things do appear in the novel, in the art that James Joyce is creating: excrement in Stephen’s fantasy of hell, the children in the first sections, and the louse in Chapter 5, Part 3. When Joyce wrote this autobiographical novel many years later—in which Stephen is a stand-in for himself—his ideas were very different from Stephen’s.



Stephen becomes ashamed of his petty anger and his tendency to over-analyze. Though he can speak very grandly and calmly about art, his inner life is neither grand nor calm. He wonders whether E___ C___’s inner life is like the art he wants to create.



It seems that Stephen’s shame about his sexual impulses is as strong as ever, despite his professed indifference to religious teaching. He can only understand his feelings for E___ C___ (as distinct from his lust) by conflating her image with the image of the Virgin Mary.



This part of the novel serves to debunk Stephen’s ideas about art. Though Stephen believes art is allied with pure, static emotions, his own poem comes from the ‘impure’ passions – love and anger. Though he thinks the object of perception must be isolated from all else, he sees E___ C___ as part of a blurry web of other girls. He explains this to himself by elevating her to another abstraction – the soul of Ireland.



Stephen’s final inspiration comes from the most bodily passion of all – desire. Once again, shame drives a wedge between Stephen’s life and his tightly-laced interpretation of his life. He understands everything as he thinks it should be, not as it is. The adult ‘Stephen’ (i.e. James Joyce) who narrates the story, though, has overcome this shame enough to describe it.



CHAPTER 5, PART 3

Stephen stands outside the library staring at a flock of birds. As he focuses on their shapes and noises, grasping for symbolic meaning, he gradually forgets a fight he's just had with his mother. Everything around him reminds him of literature and philosophy; he thinks of Thoth, the god of writers, and feels some lingering anxiety about his decision to abandon religion for art. Then his anxiety is replaced by eagerness for departure, and lovely memories of birds flying over water at dusk mingle with the impressions of words and sounds flying and overlapping.

He briefly remembers a night at the theatre at the opening of a W. B. Yeats play, *The Countess Cathleen*, which many people found offensive and unpatriotic. Then Stephen goes into the library to find Cranly, who is discussing a chess problem with another medical student. After a mysterious encounter with a "captain" who has some sort of physical deformity, they leave the library. Outside, a group of students are gathered around Temple, who is gossiping about a priest's extramarital affair. When Stephen and Cranly approach Temple, he tries to impress them with apparently arbitrary genealogical facts. Cranly expresses his contempt for Temple by picking fig seeds from his teeth. The other boys joke crudely, but Temple doggedly tries to engage Stephen in an intellectual discussion about heredity and death.

Cranly greets E___ C___ as she walks out of the library, and Stephen suspects that Cranly likes her too, thinking nervously of his past "confessions" to him. He thinks of a line from a poem that nicely describes the approaching dusk – "Darkness falls from the air" – and feels a sudden burst of joy; is it the girl that caused it, he wonders, or the line? He walks away from the other students to be alone with his thoughts and contemplate Elizabethan poets. Most of his thoughts and impressions are colored by imperfect recollections from literature, but they don't help him understand E___ C___. Suddenly, he feels as though he can smell her, and the feeling overwhelms him. He scratches a louse from his neck, and the thought of lice makes him change the line to "Brightness falls from the air," which is the correct original.

Stephen calls Cranly away to speak to him in private. Stephen looks at a ritzy hotel across the street and resents its air of complacent Irish-English wealth, wondering how he might sting its owners with his writing, how he might bring them closer to the **bat**-like imagination of his country.

Once again, Stephen tries to avoid the unromantic problems of actual life by thinking abstractly of literature and philosophy. The birds he stares at aimlessly come to seem like symbols of his departure – both because they fly lightly from place to place and because they remind him of his vision of art as an ephemeral flying being.



Temple is quite a mysterious figure. He seems to be relatively well-informed about the political and philosophical issues he discusses, despite some factual inaccuracies here and there; in any case, it does not seem likely that the clownish boys who mock him for his naiveté are better informed than he. So why is he the scapegoat? Perhaps because he is awkward and over-eager. The book mentions the olive color of his skin, so it's possible that the boys' derision is an expression of the xenophobia that sometimes accompanies extreme nationalism.



When Stephen lets down his guard, when he is not lecturing on aesthetics, art and life mingle peacefully in his consciousness: the poem line and the girl exist side by side in his imagination, so that it is difficult to tell which of the two inspired his joy. When he walks away, he notices that literature fails to encompass his feeling for E___ C___ –but somehow the imagined smell of her describes her perfectly and very vividly. He wobbles back and forth between literature and the senses as means of understanding. It's funny that a louse inspires Stephen to make such a high-flown, abstract change to his line (especially when earlier he stated that a louse cannot be art).



Despite Stephen's distaste for political causes, it's clear that he does have strong feelings about Ireland and Irishness – but it's something more mysterious, to him, than crowds and monuments.



Stephen tells Cranly that he has had a fight with his mother earlier that evening. His mother wants him to take his Easter duty – to receive the Eucharist – but Stephen refuses to participate in a ritual in which he no longer believes. At Cranly's prompting, Stephen clarifies that he “neither believe[s] in it nor disbelieve[s] in it.” Cranly asks whether Stephen loves his mother, and Stephen responds that he does not understand love. He admits that he has failed to love god. Cranly wonders whether Stephen's mother has had a happy life, and prompts Stephen to admit that she must have suffered a great deal. If he does not believe in the ritual, why not go through with it in order to spare her additional suffering? A mother's love, Cranly says, is more real than any ideas.

Stephen recalls several religious figures (including Christ himself) who would not touch their mothers or treated them badly, but Cranly rudely dismisses these points. Cranly suggests that Christ was perhaps a “hypocrite” and a “blackguard.” If Stephen does not believe in religion, he asks, why should the idea shock him? Stephen admits to some uncertainty, but clarifies that he fears worship of false symbols more than the punishment of a vindictive god. Just then, the young men hear a servant woman singing an old Irish **song**, and Cranly says in Latin: “a woman sings.” The beauty of the words moves Stephen more than the music or the woman they describe, and the servant woman seems to him like the religious ideal of woman.

Stephen feels that his friendship with Cranly is coming to an end. He tells his friend that he will leave Ireland soon – not because he wishes to escape the constraints of moral law, but because he wants to be free to live and create as he chooses. He realizes that he has been confessing to Cranly all this time.

CHAPTER 5, PART 4

The last part of the novel takes the form of a diary chronicling the following spring. In the first entry, Stephen mentions his long conversation with Cranly, but rather than dwell on its substance he speculates idly on Cranly's parents and family life. Many of the entries are short and enigmatic notes on religious symbolism and the idea of freedom. He also mentions that E___ C___ has probably been sick, and that he has gone out chasing girls with Lynch. A few entries later he mentions another religious argument with his mother, this time about the Virgin Mary; she accused him of reading too much and losing his faith, and he refused to repent.

From this conversation, we note that Cranly seems to be Stephen's intellectual equal – only he does not display it as Stephen does. Cranly's questioning is clever and logical, and succeeds in discrediting Stephen's actions. He forces Stephen to admit that he has failed to understand love, and therefore to admit a basic flaw in both his personal and artistic makeup – what kind of artist doesn't understand love? Stephen must come to terms with the fact that his overemphasis on ideas and his squeamish fear of emotion is detrimental to his art.



It seems that Joyce is once again having a little fun at Stephen's expense (at his younger self's expense). Just after Stephen expresses a fear of worshipping false symbols, he goes ahead and converts a servant woman into a highly abstract and dubious symbol. Why does he need to transform the woman into something so lofty in order to enjoy her singing? To put it somewhat crudely, Stephen can understand women either as prostitutes or as mothers (Virgin Marys), but not as real-life people. He relies on false symbols a great deal.



Stephen has been talking a great deal about freedom – from religion, from nationalist politics, etc. His conversation with Cranly has shown that he remains unfree in a significant way. He is trapped in overly abstract, antiquated notions of art and beauty.



Stephen uses his affinity for poetic symbolism to keep religion in some way in his life: his relationship to religion is still somewhat troubled and confused, despite his blithe, jaunty style. He seems to have compromised by reading the Bible not as spiritual guide but as literature. Despite Cranly's warning, Stephen will not soften his opinion on religious matters for his mother's sake. He seems to forswear family obligations along with politics and religion in order to protect his freedom.



In one entry, Stephen describes two disturbing dreams. In the first, he is standing in a castle crowded with statues of kings, who seem to stare at human sin and folly. In the second, transparent people emerge from a cave and stare at Stephen without speaking.

In other entries, he mocks empty logical problems and mentions seeing E___ C___ in a café. Late spring brings him happiness; he thinks he can sense the future. In another entry, he finally talks to E___ C___. She asks why he no longer comes to classes at the university, and he responds by telling her of his many artistic plans. On April 27th he finally leaves Ireland to go elsewhere, full of joy and fervor.

The dreams seem to convey Stephen's latent unease and uncertainty about the idea of sin. He is not religious, yet he feels some secular notion of sin hanging over him.



Despite the book's many implied critiques of Stephen's behavior and beliefs, the end of the novel is profoundly hopeful. Stephen might not yet be free from false ideas, residual religious guilt, and youthful hubris, but the future seems bright, as he leaves Ireland, which seems to him restrictive, to practice and build his art in the wider world.





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