

AP English Notes
13 December 2004

PREPARATION FOR FLIGHT

The rest of Chapter Five describes Stephen's continued progress toward his goal of separation. A flurry of swallows heralds his own flight. Are they signs of good or evil? Stephen is reminded of Thoth, the Egyptian god of writers, who has the head of a bird, and, again, of the hawk-like Daedalus. (Note that he has abandoned Catholic gods in favor of non-Christian ones.) The swallows also remind him of some lines from a play. They, too, seem prophetic of his coming break with Ireland.

NOTE: The lines that begin, "Bend down your faces..." are from W. B. Yeats' play The Countess Cathleen, which drew the wrath of the Irish when it first opened. In it, Cathleen sells her soul to the devil in exchange for bread for her starving people. Both nationalists and Catholics protested the play, but Stephen defended it- as did the young Joyce in real life.

When Stephen sees Emma next, she stirs up his senses once more. Now he is jealous of his friend Cranly because of a glance Emma gives him. When Stephen catches a louse on his own neck, he is reminded of his poverty. In his mind, he relinquishes the girl to a clean, hairy-chested athlete who washes daily, unlike the louse-ridden poet that Stephen is. He resents the well-heeled Irish upper class who live in their stately homes, begetting an "ignoble" race. If you feel that Stephen's sense of social inferiority fuels his aloofness, this passage is good evidence.

The students he joins gossip, and banter about science, religion, and history. Their jesting talk reflects the accents and manners of student types. Joyce may be showing us how trivial the Irish students seem to Stephen, and why he can leave them without regret. But much as Joyce may seem to scorn them, he sketches them crisply. Their dialogue enlivens the chapter.

Stephen unburdens himself to Cranly, who has played the role of confessor for him before. Now Stephen is troubled by a quarrel with his mother. He has made her weep because he refuses to do his Easter duty- to go to Mass at Easter and receive Communion. You may have had similar pangs when taking a stand against your parents on an issue that matters to them.

NOTE: To receive Communion at Easter is an important rule of the Catholic Church. But it would be a mortal sin to do it without first going to confession.

"I will not serve," Stephen tells Cranly, who in this scene stands for a reasonable conformity. The phrase is attributed to Lucifer- Satan- at the time of his fall. The retreat master used these same words in Chapter Three. Stephen has now aligned himself with Lucifer, the Fallen Angel (as he did in the villanelle). His talk with Cranly reveals that Stephen no longer believes in the Catholic faith, but still respects Church tradition. He does not disbelieve enough to commit a sacrilege- to take Communion without confession.

Questioned by Cranly, Stephen admits he doesn't have the capacity for love. He may never have

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loved anyone, not even his mother. He feels only tolerant contempt for his father, "a praiser of his own past." He himself has tried to love God but failed. If you tend to view Stephen as a thorough egotist, these admissions will prove your point.

Stephen is now convinced he must go away to achieve the "unfettered freedom" his spirit craves. His credo: "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...." He will use the weapons of "silence, exile, and cunning"- silence on nationalistic Irish issues, exile to the freer atmosphere of the Continent, cunning (skill) of the writer. He is pridefully defiant, like Lucifer.

"You poor poet!" Cranly exclaims. In a moment of truth, Cranly reveals his own fear of loneliness. There is a suggestion that Cranly seems to be offering to Stephen more than a normal friendship- a masked reference to homosexuality.

Stephen's diary entries for the five weeks before he leaves form an epilogue that looks back to the prelude of the novel. The style of the entries has a new freedom like Stephen's childish thoughts. They are written in brief snatches of disconnected phrases and thoughts, a sample of the extended interior monologues that Joyce later used in *Ulysses*.

The diary form permits Joyce to tie together loose ends and bring together themes and symbols. Stephen's soul is now free, as is his fancy. He has escaped from the nets that restrained him. He casts off Cranly, who has acted as his priest. When his father suggests that he join a rowing club or study law, he only pretends to listen. As for Emma, he treats her coolly, though on the last day he sees her, he realizes that he likes her- a sign, perhaps, that as he matures he's becoming able to accept women not just as virgins or temptresses, but as people. As he gets ready to leave, his mother tells him she hopes he will learn "what the heart is and what it feels." Do you think Stephen recognizes his incapacity to love as a defect? Or does he consider it another form of restraint?

The next to the last entry is one of the most famous paragraphs of modern prose. "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."

As an artist, a word-craftsman, Stephen will forge (create with words) out of his personal experience the consciousness (conscience) of his race (Ireland and all mankind). His own experiences will be transformed into a universal message.

Do you feel that this promise is a brave and noble one? Or is it the ultimate statement of Stephen's arrogance and pretentiousness? Joyce was able to hammer the raw material of his youth- Ireland, his family, the Church, and his education- into works that relate to all humanity. Do you think Stephen will be able to do the same?

Portrait of the Artist ends with a beginning. Stephen is ready to emerge as a poet. In the last diary

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entry, Stephen appeals to his mythical father, Daedalus, who has taken the place of his real father in the prelude. The Irish "moocow" has yielded to the universal myth. Once again, you have to ask yourself, will Stephen become the Daedalus or the Icarus of the myth? Will he fly or drown? If Stephen Dedalus is identified with the young James Joyce, then there are many who would say that he succeeded. But there are also those who would claim the opposite. And, there are others who would say both- that Joyce flew with Ulysses and drowned in *Finnegans Wake*.

A final judgment on Stephen/James is unlikely. For more on the subject, proceed to *Ulysses* where Stephen returns to Dublin in search of a new father.

Begin Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw

A heavy late-night (11:15 pm) summer thunderstorm opens the play. Caught in the unexpected downpour, passersby from distinct strata of the London streets are forced to seek shelter together under the portico of St Paul's church in Covent Garden. The son is forced by his demanding sister and mother to go out into the rain to find a taxi even though there is none to be found. In his hurry, he knocks over the basket of a common Flower Girl who says to him, "Nah then, Freddy: look wh' y' gowin, deah." After Freddy leaves, the mother gives the Flower Girl money to ask how she knew her son's name, only to learn that "Freddy" is a common by-word the Flower Girl would have used to address anyone.

An elder gentleman enters to get out of the rain, and the Flower Girl tries to sell him a flower. He gives her some change, but a bystander tells her to be careful, for it looks like there is a police informer taking copious notes on her activities. This leads to hysterical protestations on her part, that she is only a poor girl who has done no wrong. The crowd gathers around the Flower Girl and the Note Taker with considerable hostility towards the latter, whom they believe to be an undercover cop. However, each time someone speaks up, this mysterious man has the amusing ability to determine where the person came from, simply by listening to that person's speech, which turns him into something of a sideshow.

_____The rain clears, leaving few other people than the Flower Girl, the Note Taker, and the Gentleman. In response to a question from the Gentleman, the Note Taker answers that his talent comes from "simply phonetics...the science of speech." He goes on to brag that he can use phonetics to make a duchess out of the Flower Girl. Through further questioning, the Note Taker and the Gentleman reveal that they are Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering who both study dialects who have been wanting to visit with each other. They decide to go for a supper, but not until Higgins has been convinced by the flower girl give her some change. He generously throws her a half-crown, some florins, and a half-sovereign. This allows the delighted girl to take a taxi home, the same taxi that Freddy has brought back, only to find that his impatient mother and sister have left without him.

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