UNIT 3 STEPHEN'S GROWTH AND PERSONALITY

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

As *A Portrait* is, among other things, a 'novel of formation' and an 'artist-novel', this unit looks at the stages of Stephen's growth from infancy to manhood through a section-by-section 'mapping' covering all the 19 sections that constitute the five chapters. Stephen's aesthetic theory is examined and his relationship with women is looked at too. The thing to note is that Stephen's aesthetic theory is not quite Joyce's aesthetic theory and that his attitude to women cannot and should not be equated with Joyce's attitude to women.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A Portrait concerns itself both with growing up and with the early life of an artist. The novel traces the two together, but you must remember that it also deals implicitly with the relationship between these two. There are certain tensions occasioned by the different demands that growing up and Stephen's stance as an artist make on him. The novel deals with these tensions and constantly takes into account the conflicts between Stephen's drive towards adulthood and his drive towards becoming an artist. Stephen's attempt to resolve the struggle between these two kinds of drives also deserves attention.

3.2 A SECTION-BY-SECTION MAPPING

The five chapters of the novel are divided into nineteen sections in all. Let us take a quick look at what 'happens' in each of them.

The **first section** of Chapter one shows Stephen at home in his infancy. There is a bedtime story and a song. Stephen is 'baby-tuckoo'. There is a reference to bed-wetting and the warm and cold feelings that go with it. His father's hairy face and his mother's smell (nicer than his father's) are catalogued. Uncle Charles and Dante are introduced. Dante's two brushes follow a pattern based on colours. One has a black velvet back. That is for Davitt. The other one with a green velvet back is for Parnell, the Irish Home-rule leader who was betrayed by the church. The Vances are introduced. They are Eileen's father and mother. There is a repetition of the imperative: 'Apologise'.

Section two shows life at Clongowes School. A football game is on. Stephen keeps on the fringe of his line, out of the sight of his prefect, out of the reach of their rude feet. He 'felt his body small and weak'. He is "caught in a whirl of a scrimmage and is fearful of the flashing eyes and muddy boots." One of Stephen's thoughts is that it "was mean of Wells to shoulder him into the square ditch because he would not swoop his little snuff-box for Wells's seasoned backing chestnut." The coldness of the water of the ditch stays with Stephen. A whole series of associations is triggered by the word "suck". Wells' bullying him about whether Stephen kissed his mother before he went to bed brings back memories of the ditch. Then there is a geography lesson. The atmosphere in the Chapel where night prayers were held is evoked. Once again Stephen thinks of smells (these include the smell of old peasants who knelt at the back of the chapel at Sunday Mass.). There is the memory of a train-ride homewards and the welcome received at home. But actually Stephen is sick. On the way to the Infirmary he remembers 'with a vague fear the warm turf-coloured bog water, the warm moist air, the noise of plunge, the smell of the towels like medicines'. He visualises his own dying. The section closes with the news of Parnell's death, an event that serves as a significant recurrent motif in the novel.

The third scene of chapter one is a Christmas Dinner at home. Mr. Casey is a guest. Talk of Parnell leads to a violent quarrel. In the course of the quarrel, Dante says (quite hotly):

> O he'll remember all this when he grows up .... The language he heard against God, and religion and priests in his own home. (p.33)

Mr. Casey's retort (equally hot) is:

> Let him remember him to .... The language with which the priests and the priests's pawns broke Parnell's heart and hounded him into his grave. (p.33)

Stephen's father now says:

> Sons of bitches .... When he was down they turned on him to betray him and send him like rats in a sewer. Low-lived dogs! And they look it. (p.33)

The close association of coldness and whiteness is cemented further in Stephen's mind by another thought:

> Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing tig she had put her hands over his eyes; long and white and then cold and soft. That was ivory, a cold white thing. (p.35)

Stephen's father calls the Irish a "priest-ridden race" and Dante says about Parnell:

> A traitor to his country. ... A traitor; an adulterer! The priests were right to abandon him. (p.38)

Towards the end of the scene, she says of Parnell:

> Devil out of hell! We won! We crushed him to death! Fiend. (p.39)

Mr. Casey cries with a sob of pain:

> Poor Parnell ... My dead king. (p.39)

Stephen's father's eyes are also full of tears.

In the **fourth section** of the first chapter Stephen is unjustly caned by Father Dolan. Stephen's glasses were broken and he was exempted from classwork by Father Arnall. Father Dolan pays no heed to it and goes on to cane Stephen: also calling him "a lazy, idle little loafer." The humiliation Stephen feels is great. He complains to the prefect of studies who is sympathetic. The boys take it as a victory of sorts.

The sound of the cricket bats from the playground goes 'pick-pack -pock-puck, like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in a brimming bowl.' This beautiful simile closes the first chapter.

Section one of the second chapter is again set in Stephen's home at Blackrock. He is also shown in the company of Uncle Charles and accompanying his father and his grand uncle as they took their constitutional:

> Trudging along the road or standing in some grimy way-side public house his elders spoke constantly of the subjects nearer their hearts, of Irish politics, of Munster and of the legends of their own family, to all of which Stephen lent an avid ear. (p.64)

Reading *The Count of Monte Cristo,* Stephen muses on Mercedes. With a boy called Aubrey Mills, he founds a gang of adventurers. The two also take rounds with the milkman. When Stephen's thoughts returned to Mercedes, "a strange unrest crept into his blood".

He felt different from other boys even more than he did at Clongowes. He "wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld." If he managed to meet the image "weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment." (p.67)

Section two of the second chapter begins with the removal to Dublin (another instance of the family being always on the move).

> The sudden flight from the comfort and revery of Blackrock, the passage through the gloomy foggy city. The thought of the bare cheerless house in which they were now to live made his heart heavy....(p.68)

Dublin for Stephen was "a new and complex sensation". The vastness and strangeness of the life suggested to him by the bales of merchandise stocked along the walls or swung aloft out of the holds of steamers wakened again in him the unrest which had sent him wandering in the evening from garden to garden in search of Mercedes. Later, the scene shifts from him to Stephen sitting in the midst of a children's party at Harold's Cross. By now his silent watchful manner had grown upon him. Later Stephen has a tram ride him with Emma:

> She came up to his step many times and went down to hers again between their phrases and once or twice stood close beside him for some moments on the upper step, forgetting to go down and then went down. His heart danced upon her movements like a cork upon a tide. (p.72)

A little later in the same section, there is news of a place for Stephen at Belvedere College. Stephen's father talks to his wife about how Stephen's protest at Clongowes

was laughed at. The rector had told Stephen's father that he and Father Dolan had had a hearty laugh over the protest.

Section three of chapter two describes life at Belvedere. There is to be a play and Stephen has a role in it. He looks forward to Emma being a part of the audience but feels let down when she does not come. A little before this, Stephen's declaring his preference for Byron over Tennyson brings from Heron a bullying reaction. Heron and another boy Boland intimidate Stephen through physical violence and ask him to "admit" that Byron was "no-good". Stephen does not yield. Feeling let down by Emma, Stephen after the play rushes into the city. After the first flush of anger and frustration is over, things clear up a bit:

> He stood still and gazed up at the sombre porch of the morgue and from that to the cobbled laneway at its side. He saw the word "Lotts" on the wall of the lane and breathed slowly and sank heavy air.
>
> That is horse piss and rotted straw, he thought. It is a good odour to breathe. It will calm my heart. My heart is quite calm now. I will go back. (p.91)

In **Section four** of chapter two Stephen visits Cork with his father. There is a train ride and as his father talks of Cork and of scenes of his youth, Stephen listens without sympathy. Later they are at the Victoria Hotel. His father sings a song and

> The consciousness of the warm sunny city outside his window and the tender tremors with which his father's voice festooned the strange sad happy air, drove off all mists of the night's ill humor from Stephen's brain. (pp.93-94)

Father and son visit Queen's College. The sight of the word 'foetus' cut several times in the dark stained wood of a desk in the anatomy theatre has a powerful effect on Stephen. A vision of the life of the absent students of the college springs up before him out of the word cut in the desk. It shocked Stephen 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 father takes him round pubs that he frequented in his youth but the overall effect of the visit is to somehow put a distance between father and son. There is also a stocktaking of sorts on Stephen's part when he thinks of his infancy but the stocktaking only accentuated his apartness.

> An abyss of fortune or of temperament sundered him from them. His mind seemed older than theirs.... No life or youth stirred in him as it had stirred in them. (pp.101-2)

In **Section five** of chapter two Stephen wins a prize and the prize-money leads to short-lived euphoria. He treats his family but soon the euphoria is over as his household returned to its usual way of life. His restlessness persists.

> He returned to his wanderings. The veiled autumnal evenings led him from street to street as they had led him years before along the quiet avenues of Blackrock. (p.105)

Fires of lust wasted Stephen:

> His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down the dark slimy street peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. (p.106)

It is in this state of mind that he finds himself confronted by a prostitute, who detains him and gazes into his face. What weakens his resistance is that her room was 'warm and lightsome':

> Her round arms held him firmly to her and he seeing her face lifted to him in serious calm and feeling the warm calm, rise and fall of her breast, all but burst into hysterical weeping. Tears of joy and relief shone in his delighted eyes. (p.107)

When she asks him to give her a kiss, Stephen's usual resistance to imperatives is there:

> In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself. But his lips would not bend to kiss her. (p.107)

When the resistance finally goes,

> He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark press of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech, and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer then sound or odour.

The first two chapters complete the first major stage in Stephen's growth with his proper initiation into sexuality. The larger part of the following two chapters shows him feeling guilty on this score. There is the brief attraction that Stephen feels for priesthood as a vocation but it is his rejection of this option that opens the way for his embracing his role as an artist.

At the beginning of **Section one** of chapter three, Stephen is still not out of his nocturnal wanderings in the squalid quarter of the brothels. His life at school is listless. Then 'retreat' i.e. a period of withdrawal from worldly activities and of spiritual recollection under discipline, is announced, to be followed by confession. The rector talks to him at some length. As he (the rector) looks keenly at his listeners out of his dark stern eyes, 'Stephen's heart had withered up like a flower of the desert that feels the simoom coming from afar.' (p.116)

Section two of chapter three contains the three sermons given on successive days. The introductory sermon stirs self-disgust in Stephen. That is the first day. On the second day sermons on death and judgement bring the agony of shame. This is temporarily relieved by a day-dream of forgiveness, hand-in-hand with Emma. The third day is the most traumatic for Stephen. Sermons on hell overwhelm him completely.

In **Section three** of chapter three, Stephen returns home in self-disgust and terror. He is physically sick too. He prays and the result of this is:

> His eyes were dimmed with tears and, looking humbly upto heaven, he wept for the innocence he had lost. (p.150)

Then comes confession in a chapel but this is preceded by his walking in the streets as in a daze. When the priest enters the box and two other penitents take their turn at confession, the effect on Stephen is striking:

> His blood began to murmur in his veins, murmuring like a sinful city summoned from its sleep to hear its doom. (p.153)

When Stephen's own turn for confession comes,

> His sins trickled from his lips, one by one, in shameful drops from his soul festering and oozing like a sore, a squalid stream of vice. The last sins oozed forth, sluggish, filthy. There was no more to tell. He bowed his head overcome. (p.156)

Once Stephen is absolved, he finds relief and peace:

> He knelt to say his penance, praying in a corner of the dark lane, and his prayers ascended to heavens, from his purified heart like perfume streaming upwards from a heart of white rose. (p.157)

> The muddy streets were gay. He strode homeward, conscious of an invisible grace, pervading and making light his limbs. In spite of all he had done it. He had confessed and God had pardoned him. His soul was made fair and holy once more, bold and happy. (p.157)

At college he has the sense of 'another life', life of grace and virtue and happiness – made possible by his spiritual experience.

In **Section one** of the fourth chapter there is a change in Stephen's day-to-day life. He follows a rigorous discipline of prayer and self-mortification. He attends mass daily and carries rosary beads in his pocket. On successive days of the week he prays for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit to counter the defilement of the Seven Deadly Sins. Here Joyce shows Stephen drifting further and further away from reality. The whole programme of self-discipline amounts to subordinating the real to the ideal.

In **Section two** of the fourth chapter the Director of Studies summons Stephen for an interview. The possibility of priesthood as a vocation is suggested to him. The director tells him that priesthood is the greatest honour that God can bestow and that its authority surpasses all earthly authority. The effect of the director's words on Stephen is:

> A flame began to flutter again on Stephen's cheek as he heard in this proud address an echo of his own proud musings. How often had he seen himself as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the aweful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence. (p.171)

The temptation exercised by priesthood is however temporary. As he is at the door taking leave of the director four young men stride past, arms linked, singing to a concertina. The contrast between that sight and the mirthless mask of the priest's face stirs in Stephen an instinct of recoiling from the cold orderliness of Jesuit life. The threat to his freedom that such a vocation stands for decides him against it. Stephen realises that (in priesthood) it was "a grave and ordered and passionless life that awaited him, a life without material cares". He wondered "how he would pass the first night in the novitiate and with what dismay he would wake the first morning in the dormitory". He "smelt again the warm moist air which hung in the bath in the Clongowes above the sluggish turf-coloured water". Some instincts waking at those memories, "stronger than education or piety, quickened within him at a very near approach to that life, an instinct subtle and hostile, and armed him against acquiesence. The chill and order of the life repelled him. What fortifies him further in his rejection of priesthood is the awareness that his destiny "was to be elusive of social or religious orders. The wisdom of the priest's appeal did not touch him to the quick. He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn from the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world". The snares of the world were its ways in sin. He would fall. Not to fall was "too hard, too hard."

Back home, after crossing the bridge, over the Tolka, he smiles to think that it was "this disorder, the misrule and confusion of his father's house and the stagnation or vegetable life, which was to win the day in his soul."

Section three of the fourth chapter shows Stephen waiting for his father who was making enquiries for him about a place at the University. That possibility has a strong appeal for Stephen. Turning towards the sea to cross the bridge, to the island called 'The Bull' he meets a group of Christian Brothers coming from the opposite direction.

Meanwhile, we are told that his mother was hostile to the idea of his going to the University. He sees it as her disloyalty and something makes him aware dimly and without regret of "a first noiseless sundering of their lives." The voices of the students bathing nearby are heard. They mock his name. He senses the destiny prophetically represented by Dedalus. Dedalus is a figure from Greek mythology, a craftsman who built the labyrinth of Crete. He also made wings for himself and his son Icarus. The University, in Stephen's eyes, amounted to his having passed beyond the challenge of the sentries who had stood as guardians of his boyhood. So the name is associated with transcendence of sorts.

He takes from his 'treasure' a quotation from Hugh Miller and speaks it softly (and inaccurately) to himself. 'A day of dappled seaborne clouds'. The actual clouds that he sees "voyaging across the deserts of the sky" make him think of Europe. The Europe these clouds had come from "lay out there beyond the Irish Sea, Europe of strange tongues and valleyed and woodlegirt and citadeled and of entrenched and marshalled races".

Later Stephen takes off shoes and stockings and gets down to the sand. He sees a girl wading in midstream staring out to the sea. She has a striking girlish beauty and she looks at him, lingeringly. Her legs and thighs are bare. 'Heavenly God' cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy. This is followed, a little later by 'Her image had passed into his soul forever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. The message is clear: to live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life.' (p.126)

The effect on Stephen's soul is quite remarkable:

> His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under sea, traversed by clouds, shapes and beings. (p.187)

What had made Stephen receptive to this 'experience' is mentioned a couple of pages prior to this climactic experience:

> He was alone. He was unheeded happy and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and wilful and wildhearted. (p.185)

This 'experience' is almost a 'resurrection' for him.

In **Section one** of the fifth chapter, Sephen is first shown having breakfast at home. He is shown fiddling with tickets for the clothes that the family had pawned under false names. As he walks to the University, his morning walk through Dublin carries literary associations evoked by his surroundings. He reaches college late and finds the Dean of Studies trying to light the fire in the Physics theatre. The two talk for some time.

Later there are conversations with MacCann, Temple and Davin. Talk of the nationalist cause makes Stephen talk of Parnell's betrayal by the Church. Stephen sees Father Moran, the instructor, flirting with Emma and this angers him. The unlikely audience that Stephen now finds for expounding his aesthetic theory is Lynch, who does not have much interest in things of this kind. At the end of this section Emma is seen under the library arcade. Brooding on her leads Stephen nowhere.

In **Section two** of chapter five we have from Stephen a poem to Emma that is an artificial product of literary and religious verbalism. **In Section three** we find Stephen standing on the steps of the library watching the birds crying and circling above. When, Emma comes out of the library, in response of Cranly's salutation, she bows to him and ignores Stephen. Stephen starts thinking about Cranly's possible interest in her. Yet the sight of Emma in the failing light makes Stephen stroll away from the group with a kind of inner peace. His reverie as he moves away is first literary then erotic. A kind of severance from Emma is nevertheless made. He comes back to the group and takes Cranly away with him on a walk.

Stephen and Cranly talk about Stephen's mother and his family situation. Stephen's decision to leave is of course final. When Cranly suggests to Stephen the impracticality of his notion of unfettered freedom, Stephen comes out with a clear-cut statement of his new faith:

> 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 defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile and cunning. (p.268-9)

'Cunning' here refers to cultivating craftsmanship and the other two terms ('silence' and 'exile') refer to his not being afraid of being isolated on his quest of the freedom he sees essential for the artist.

Finally in **Section four** of chapter five (the last of the nineteen sections that the novel is built around) we have scraps from Stephen's journal for the time prior to his actual departure from Dublin. Those who figure in these jottings are friends like Cranly and Davin (mainly Cranly), Emma and Stephen's mother. The decision to leave is of course irrevocable. It only gets reaffirmed in a variety of ways. This section shows Stephen poised for the flight.

The overall '*portrait*' that emerges from the novel as a whole is of an extrasensitive, proud, isolated individual who nevertheless has in him what is supposed to go into the making of an 'artist' rather 'the artist'. His continuous search is for warmth, for experience for its own sake, for 'transcendence' of a kind, for getting away and for being 'on the move'. Beauty of a certain kind is also something that he reaches out for. At the same time he would rarely do things under coercion. That is the rebellious streak in him. Squalor bothers him, poverty bothers him, but certain kinds of orderliness bother him still more. He likes to be on his own and prefers learning things first hand. He visualises himself as 'a priest of the imagination' and as some kind of wordsmith and 'maker'

The diary fragments in the closing sections of the novel are seen by some as a kind of comedown. Actually they represent the artist's attempt to grapple with subjective reactions by setting them down. They show the beginning of the creation of an 'objective world' from inner experience. These entries are a way of resisting a regressive decline into subjectivism. They refer to certain life facts that are yet to be elaborated and are left like that. These facts mark a turning point in Joyce's life away from crisis towards the establishment of an identity independent of restrictive locales.

As already noted, Hugh Kenner tells us that the pattern which each chapter of the novel exhibits is one of dream nourished in contempt of reality, put into practice, and dashed by reality. The movement of *A Portrait* in the light of this could be seen as a sort of vicious spiral, since each chapter closes with a synthesis of triumph. That in turn feeds the sausage-machine, set up in the next chapter. In each case the 'synthesis of triumph' can be seen as an approximation to the cry that Stephen finally utters at the end of the book: 'Welcome O life!' Thus the first chapter ends with his

successful appeal against injustice which leaves him feeling 'happy and free' and hearing the sound of cricket bats 'like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl'. The second chapter ends with a new awakening and an image of life. The end of the third chapter reads: Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness. Near the end of the fourth chapter Stephen exclaims, 'To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life.' Thus when at the end of the book Stephen announces that he is going, 'to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience' it is already the fifth in an exhilarating sequence of new starts.

3.3 STEPHEN'S AESTHETIC THEORY

The three main principles of the theory of aesthetics put forward by Stephen are:

i. Art is a stasis brought about by the formal rhythm of beauty;
ii. Art of beauty divorced from good and evil is akin to truth, therefore, if truth can best be approached through intellection, beauty or art is best approached through the three stages of apprehension.
iii. The three qualities of beauty which correspond to the three stages of apprehension are in the terms of Aquinas, integritas (wholeness), consonantia (harmony), and claritas (radiance).

The two main principles of his theory – art as stasis and the separation of beauty and evil are based by Stephen on one sentence by St. Thomas Aquinas, a 13th century saint which he translates 'that is beautiful the apprehension of which pleases'. The significance of the association of beauty with truth, of the stages of apprehension with the qualities of beauty is that it helped Joyce/Stephen to suggest that pure art exists as a delicate balance between the art-object and the one who perceives it. What Joyce does here is to secularize the Thomist insistence on the moral obligations of the artist by demanding instead intellectual or psychological obligations (by 'Thomism' is meant the thought of Thomas Aquinas).

Where the three qualities of beauty are concerned, Stephen's interpretation of 'consonantia' accords generally with the 'due proportion' that Aquinas notes as a characteristic of beauty. Here the important difference to be noted is between Aquinas's concept of form and rhythm as a manifestation of being and Joyce's more mundane mechanistic interpretation. With 'claritas' Stephen sharply diverges from the orthodox interpretations of Saint Thomas. When Stephen is talking of claritas in *A Portrait*, there is a substitution of 'quidditas' for 'claritas'. The purpose seems to be to avoid the spiritual connotation of the latter. In Stephen's scheme of things 'quidditas' means the 'whatness' of a thing. As for 'integritas' Stephen translates it as 'wholeness', but what is nearer to his meaning is 'perfection.'

Stephen consistently secularizes Aquinas. He adheres to Thomist categories but his interpretation of them is suited to his own purposes. One doctrine which he accepts completely is the identification of truth as the conformity of mind and object. He finds it especially useful because it provides him with a justification of absolute, psychological standards for art. It also offers him a defence against the charge that his theory is that of an art for art's sake votary. His major difference with Aquinas is that he sees the art-work as a world in itself, with the appropriate standards of completeness, harmony and clarity, rather than as a fragment or a symbol of a broader, more extensive unity. Aquinas was helpful to Joyce to the extent Joyce could use the scholastic method of logical argument against the vague generalities of the moralists or the dilletantes.

Another important aspect of Stephen's 'theory of art' is his explanation of the three forms of art. The lyrical, the epical and the dramatic. Aquinas does not come in here. This can best be read as simply a commentary on Stephen's (and Joyce's) artistic

development, which is clearly a progression from the lyrical to the dramatic. In a sense, Stephen's aesthetic is made to grow and change as Stephen himself grows and changes. Some parts of the aesthetic, however remain constant.

In essence the theory offered by Stephen is that the beautiful is what can be pleasurable, apprehended by the senses or the mind. Static reception of this pleasure precludes the moral element which, instead of offering satisfaction, stirs feelings of desire or loathing. Truth satisfies the intellect, while beauty satisifies the imagination. The beautiful affects the mind in this respect that the mind is seized by its wholeness, fascinated by its harmony and enchanted by its radiance.

3.4 STEPHEN AND WOMEN

Apart from his mother and Dante, the first person from the opposite sex who figures in Stephen's life is Eileen. It is her white hands and golden hair that first stir his boyish notion about girls. His relationship with Eileen is not shown as amounting to much in the ultimate analysis. Then there are the romantic dreams about Mercedes (a character from the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas. She is the beloved of the novel's hero Edmond Dantes). Stephen pictures himself grandly rejecting her because she had earlier slighted his love. The next person from the opposite sex to figure in Stephen's life is Emma whom he meets at the party at Harold's Cross. Withdrawing from the other children, he relishes his isolation. Emma glances repeatedly and invitingly in his direction. She gives rise to a feverish excitement in him. Together they take the last tram home. They stand on the steps of the tram. He is on a step above hers. As they talk, she keeps coming up to join him on his step. He knows that she is making an advance to him. And yet he is unable to respond in kind. The failure bothers him but all that comes out of it is an attempt to write a poem to Emma.

Two years later, there is a school-play in which Stephen figures. He works himself up into an excited romantic mood anticipating a meeting with Emma after she has seen the play. The whole thing collapses when he does not find Emma in the audience. The sexuality that might have found an outlet through this relationship is diverted elsewhere culminating in his experience with the prostitute. In this experience he is able to find not only relief from the goadings of his lust but a new self-assurance. After a cycle of sin and guilt, the wading girl becomes for him a way out of his dilemma. She becomes the catalytic agent for creativity.

In the final chapter Stephen imagines that Emma flirts with Father Moran. And yet the sight of her near the entrance of the library gives rise to the thought that she may be innocent. There is a surge of emotions but again much does not come out of it. He does write a poem to her and pictures her in remorse. When Emma ignores him outside the library he thinks that she is consciously rebuffing him and that Cranly is pursuing her. The diary jottings at the end tell us that she has been wanting to make contact with him. She wants to know why she sees so little of him and whether he still writes poems. His reply is a rebuff aimed at embarassing her. And yet he cannot fully get over the attraction he feels for her. It is another thing that the call for exiling himself to which his soul responded makes him push her (temporarily) to the back of his mind.

Essentially Stephen's inability to connect fully with girls of his age is tied up with his aloofness from most of his compatriots at school and university. It is partly timidity and partly a feeling of self-importance which prevents him from reaching out to people. His 'notions' about what an 'artist' should be like, also contribute to his isolation. In general, his encounters with girls are awkward and unsatisfactory. The fallout quite often is that he submits to crude sexual fantasies.

Stephen has not only a powerful imagination but an overpowering sensuality. When his sexual yearnings are frustrated, fantasizing takes over quite often. The vaguely idealized notion of a tryst represented by the sentimental fantasy over Mercedes is among the first projections of Stephen's sexuality. This sexuality gets physically transfigured into the idea of Emma. Stephen's enigmatic use of her initials for his poem (even in the poem she remains a vague, distant figure) helps to underline her elusiveness. So while one can grant something of a search for love in Stephen's agonized, agitated yearning (aggravated by the kiss that he wanted, not really materializing), it is lust, not love, which finally gets gratified in the scene with the woman in the brothel. The woman is in many ways, the end of his searching, promising release as well as rest. The encounter also promises a kind of knowledge and with that some amount of certainty.

Regarding Emma's presence in the rest of the novel there is a slight shift towards the end of the novel. There is Stephen's fear that he has misjudged her, that his mind breeds 'vermin' and that she is beyond the images he projects on her. Stephen's sharp recognition, in the closing lines of the novel, of how he had been distorting her is also a recognition, significantly, of patterns of delusion that have clouded his mind from the early parts of the novel. At the same time, we should not overlook the fear that bothers Stephen that Emma would keep his soul at home in a sterile Ireland if he did not abruptly get away from her and from thinking of her.

For the larger part of the novel, Stephen is unable to think of woman except in fixed, polarized terms. Most of the time Stephen is able to come to terms with woman symbolically as a strong maternal figure (even the prostitute, in a sense, mothers him). His clumsy response to Emma towards the end of the novel is a function of a monklike withdrawal into the spiritual-heroic refrigerating apparatus that he has. The preeminence of the virgin/mother model prevents Stephen from approaching woman on more comprehensive and inclusive terms though woman is represented in *A Portrait* in a wide range of figures and images.

We can conclude that, in general terms, 'woman' as image can be seen as having two contradictory (and almost mutually exclusive) sets of meaning. At one level 'woman' is possessive and a kind of stumbling block where Stephen's progress toward freedom and creative art is concerned. His mother largely and Eileen, Mercedes and E.C. partly belong here. At the other level 'woman' is a source of freedom and 'enlightenment'. The wading girl and before her the prostitute belong to this category.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

Stephen's growth into adulthood and his evolution as an artist are captured by Joyce quite competently though the two thrusts are often at variance. Stephen's aesthetic theory is influenced substantially by St. Thomas Aquinas. His attitude to women is inadequate partly on account of his general inability to relate to people in general and partly on account of the virgin/mother fixation that he suffers from. Upto a point, the prostitute is the end of his search because she offers him release, certainty and knowledge in a variety of ways.

3.6 QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the Christmas dinner scene in *A Portrait*? Who are the main participants in the discussion?

2. What effect does Stephen's experience with the prostitute have on him?

3. What is the relationship between Dublin and Stephen especially in the light of his wanderings in the city?

3.7 SUGGESTED READING

As suggested earlier, Harry Levin's *James Joyce : A Critical Introduction* offers a good starting point. You should also read William York Tindall's *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*. For a treatment of Stephen's aesthetic theory, a good place is William T.S. Noon's book *Joyce and Aquinas*. Some idea of Stephen's relationship with women and of Joyce's general treatment of women can be had from Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeles (eds.) *Women in Joyce.*