

Stephen Hero: An Outline Commentary

Stephen Hero was the earlier form of what became *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. It is frequently wordy and stilted but amazingly vital and merits independent study both for its intrinsic value and for the light that it provides us for the later works.

The work is a fragment and is divided into two parts. The first part, recently discovered comparatively speaking, concerns young Stephen's trip to and stay in Mullingar where he visits his godfather and patron. It ends on page 505. The larger fragment begins with page 519. This is not a large gap but it is sufficient to make the connection between the two parts complete so that they can be considered independently.

The Mullingar fragment opens with an invocation, the relation of which to what follows is obscure. From what survives it appears to be an expression of the lure of Europe for Stephen but it may also be about that and about the demands of nationalism.

Stephen in this book is Stephen Daedalus, the name chosen for the original (and rejected) sketch that formed the basis for both *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In the latter work Joyce changed the name to Dedalus.

He travels by train to Mullingar and the distance is fifty miles from Broadstone, one of the four train terminals of Dublin. (It's the only one no longer in service.) Stephen compares his body odor to that of the peasants. He has a strong, if somewhat irrational, preference for his own. At the Mullingar station Dan meets him with a buggy (trap) and takes him through the countryside to Mr Fulham's house. Miss Howard, Mr Fulham's niece, greets him. Stephen, who has visited Mr Fulham before and already knows Miss Howard, perceives her reserve as more than a personal trait and resolves to uncover its cause. Why Mr Fulham, his godfather, is also his patron is not clear to Stephen but he

learns that Mr Tate, his English professor, has interested Mr Fulham in him. Mr Fulham offers various entertainments to the supercilious Stephen and in the course of them Captain Starkie tells of the primitive response of an old peasant to a description of prehistoric remains. In slightly varied form this reappears in *A Portrait*. Mr Fulham, a very reactionary person, rejects any idea of scorn for the peasant's simplicity. Since scorn is not in question, Mr Fulham's reaction demonstrates the narrowness of his mind.

Stephen, on an errand with Dan to the druggist witnesses two children being terrorized, to the approval of the bystanders, by a lame and demented beggar. From the druggist's emerges Stephen's old enemy, Nash (in *A Portrait* he is one, along with Bolland, of Heron's followers). Stephen condescends to accept him as an acquaintance. Nash tells him of Father Lohan, the parish priest, who is the enemy of all entertainments but who has himself a curious hobby, the collection of girl's hats.

At dinner with Mr Heffernen, a nationalist, Stephen appears more on the side of Mr Fulham, a West Briton, but what Stephen says is ambiguous and only aids his godfather through its ambiguity. There is an irrelevant observation by Stephen on Mr Fulham's reactionaryism.

Through Nash Stephen meets Garvey, editor of a local paper. They josh a barmaid but then set out on a walk. They stop upon discovering a crowd around the body of a woman who had perished in her escape from the asylum. Stephen returns to Mr Fulham's and he encounters Miss Howard. The manuscript ends.

Fulham, it may be assumed where Joyce is concerned, was very probably based on some real person but Joyce's own godfather was Philip McCann, a retired ship's chandler from Dundalk. There is no evidence that he was ever Joyce's patron.

The longer fragment of *Stephen Hero* begins in mid-sentence. With a lapse of two pages the first part continues for a few pages and ends with a notation in red crayon. This reads: "End of First Episode of V." The published version uses brackets for any word that was deleted or changed in the act of producing the fair copy on which the published version is based. Symbols << >> enclose text that Joyce has marked with crayon. Theodore Spencer, editor of all but the Mullingar fragment, saw these crayon marks as indications of passages to be altered or reconsidered.

We first encounter vivid descriptions of a pair of students and a pair of faculty members. A break in the text (two missing pages) interrupts a prolonged passage concerning Father Butt. When the text resumes the author explains why Stephen finds Father Butt's reading of poetry unsatisfactory. Stephen and his brother Maurice read poetry according to Stephen's theories and are mightily pleased.

He takes special pains with his assignments in English composition. Although Father Butt compliments him on these, Stephen is too lofty to be pleased by the mercantile suggestions with which Father Butt accompanies his compliments. Father Butt, kindling a fire, pointedly observes that there are useful as well as fine arts. The scene occurs also in *A Portrait* but has a different resonance.

Father Butt skips the clown's songs in *Twelfth Night* and gives great praise to *Othello* as a moral play. At the same time he refuses the request of two boarders to attend a performance of the play on the grounds that it contains many coarse expressions.

The zeal of Stephen's early religious fervor, hinted at rather than expressed fully, has become a calmativ e as he moves in isolation through an environment that seems more

and more to be his enemy. He walks the streets of Dublin alone, drunk on words and striving to wrest from them their secrets.

Chapter XVI

He reads, he writes. He has near mystical feelings about these activities. He writes against *Othello* but his fellow students laugh at him. He encounters a derisive “countrified student” and the passage is marked with crayon. Change would make the text that follows problematical and removal would leave it unsupported. This kind of situation calls in question the editor’s interpretation and we will later see that the crayon was sometimes used to indicate other purposes than he suggested and, since this was early in the days of Joyce studies, may not have been known.

In a somewhat pointless passage one student blackens the reputation of another and this marks the fault as well as the charm of *Stephen Hero*, the generosity with which it welcomed irrelevance. Stephen and Maurice perambulate and converse. This frequent use of precious language – such as “creature comforts” and “beguiled the journey” – seems inferior to the style of *Dubliners* where this quality is less in evidence. Did Joyce’s own involvement in the fictional Stephen cause this deterioration in style? The coming-of-age novel naturally lacks structure since what happens to the protagonist is simply what happens. To a writer of Joyce’s stature and type such randomness must have been maddening and it is perhaps small wonder that he abandoned the sprawling *Stephen Hero* for the disciplined *A Portrait*.

Stephen begins to write love poetry. It is more or less generic stuff and the submerged theme of *Ulysses*, Stephen’s search for love, is already present in *Stephen Hero*. In *A Portrait* it is treated more obliquely.

Stephen becomes a dilatory student and wanders for hours through the Dublin streets, meditating and observing. Although he is an outcast he enjoys a certain distinction among the more discriminating of his fellow students. Among these is McCann (Skeffington in real life). The use of this name is interesting since, as noted earlier, Philip McCann was Joyce's godfather. In *A Portrait* McCann becomes MacCann (although in the first occurrence of the name in a widely used edition the name appears as McCann).

In many ways what Stephen suffers from has become known as teenage angst. In extreme cases the sufferer embraces suicide but those who survive may succumb instead to a dominating influence. It was Ibsen who assuaged Stephen's adolescent angst. His enthusiasm for Ibsen makes him vulnerable to his fellow students but the watchful restraint that his Jesuit teachers impose upon themselves also restrains the students.

Many of Stephen's characteristics – the pride, the arrogance, the assertion of unaccompanied self – seem difficult to accept at face value. In his background is the difficult father and the progressively deteriorating home, things that could hold him up to the ridicule of others. He covered his lack of ease in society with a boldness that defied ridicule and made him capable of digesting disgrace.

At the home of Mr Daniel he entertains with Elizabethan songs but is aware that there is something suggestive in them that disturbs his audience. The guests amuse themselves with charades, recitations and parlor games. Stephen finds the pleasures of these parties tepid. Only the unpleasantness of his home induces him to visit the Daniels, that and the opportunity to see once more Emma Clery.

Chapter XVII

Stephen's home is indeed unpleasant. His family relies on him and on his success at college to save the family from ruin, an expectation that he finds distasteful. Fearful that Stephen is leading Maurice into frivolous ways, Mr Daedalus restricts association between the brothers. Maurice would rebel against this but Stephen, now preoccupied with his paper on drama and satisfied for now with McCann's society, restrains him. Stephen's principal satisfaction with McCann appears to be the opportunity to make fun of him. To multiply his chances of his seeing Emma, Stephen pretends to his nationalist friend, Madden, that he wants to learn Gaelic.

Stephen and Maurice discuss the retreat that Maurice is attending. Stephen is conscious of how his spiritual terrors of only a year before now appear to be empty and meaningless.

He observes the activities of the Gaelic students and the contradictions inescapable in Irish nationalist aspirations. He twits Madden heavily. His participation in the Gaelic class gives him mixed results: he achieves first name basis with Emma but watches the flirtation between her and the vulgar Father Moran with inner fury. In a wish that expresses Joyce's own masochism, Stephen wants them to consummate their flirtation. The renewal of Stephen's acquaintance with her is unfortunate. She is either not as she was or he was earlier mistaken about her since she is now pert, middle-class and stupid, nothing to him except overwhelmingly attractive physically. On those few occasions when Joyce allows her to speak for herself, however, she does not seem as poor a person as Stephen makes her out to be.

Chapter XVIII

He has two months in which to prepare his paper. He composes as he walks the Dublin streets. His father asks him what he was doing around the Dolphin's Barn area and Stephen gives him an easy, if not truthful answer and Mr Daedalus produces a typical witticism.

On one such walk an old acquaintance accosts Stephen. It is Well's from Clongowes Wood days. Wells is now a seminarian and in his company Stephen visits the seminary where the narrowness of the restricted life oppresses him. Stephen sees Wells as envious of the freedom that Stephen has. This is marked: "End of Second Episode of V."

Chapter XIX

The paper on which he labors is as valuable to him as a means of self-definition as for any other merit. His inability to capitulate to nationalist demands involves him in a construction of an esthetic theory as a compensatory act. From a base of ideas from Aquinas, he constructs a theory of a free art, fully divorced from utility and didacticism. He and Maurice scrutinize it for flaws but otherwise Stephen shows it only to Madden and to his mother.

Madden is unable to see it as a work of intellectual analysis. To him it is a poetic effusion and as such – by implication – easily dismissable. He shows Stephen poems by Hughes – one of which shows up in *Ulysses* (13.46-7) but there ascribed to Louis J. Walsh as the guilty writer. Stephen, too stuffy to see the versification as ludicrous and

possibly miffed at Madden's failure to comprehend his paper, determines to drop from Hughes' Gaelic class and regrets having shown Madden his paper. His mother is more receptive. Although she misses some of the point, her son fails to see how well she grasps the paper in general despite her narrow and difficult life. She reads and enjoys Ibsen. She urges Mr Daedalus to read a play but it does not engage him and he abandons it.

Shortly before Stephen is to give his paper, Madden takes the manuscript and gives it to the society's censor, Father Dillon, president of the college. Whelan, an obnoxious student, tells Stephen that Father Dillon has disapproved the manuscript and that he may not deliver it to the society. Angry, Stephen goes to see Father Dillon. His interview is inconclusive.

Chapter XX

And because it is inconclusive, Stephen acts as if he had permission and proceeds as if there is no obstacle. He reads his paper to stony silence. Whelan, self-appointed orator, gives a thank you speech that is really an attack. McCann seconds Whelan and is kinder to Stephen although he carefully disassociates himself from any position on the question. Several speakers follow, each worse than the one before, but none so bad as Hughes who attacks Stephen for many things, especially for his being insufficiently Irish.

Father Butt, in an exceptional action, speaks in Stephen's defense but it is clumsy and insufficient. The society passes the vote of thanks but without enthusiasm.

Escaped from his ordeal, Stephen joins Madden, Cranly, Temple and O'Neill. They walk and speak Stephen fair but it is some time before he can recover from the

disappointment that he has just suffered. Cranly ends the scene with a typical irrelevance and – by no more than passing from paragraph to another – we are suddenly involved with Stephen's sister Isabel, returned from her convent for health reasons. Mr Daedalus is not happy to have her home, he is not happy with the conflict between his wants and his poverty, he is not happy with a son who appears to pursue other goals than the rescue of the failing family. He is not happy in his choice of a family that he perceives as both inferior and despicable. Stephen distances himself from his abusive father and his suffering mother by seeing their individual and mutual problems as less than real.

At the college McCann is gathering signatures in support of the Tsar. Cranly has signed. Stephen refuses. Cranly and Stephen play ball. Madden comes to watch and tells Stephen that Hughes is his enemy. Later Stephen and Cranly discuss Easter week services. Glynn joins them. Stephen attends the Good Friday services at the Jesuit church on Gardiner Street. It is, he sees, a mummery.

Chapter XXI

Stephen's friendship with Cranly grows and they talk, rather than study as examinations draw near. Joyce describes Cranly (James Francis Byrne) in detail as an odd kind of believer in religious matters and without any cultivated interests. Cranly attempts to rivet Stephen's attention to the plight of Isabel but Stephen sees her as a stranger, not a sister, and refuses to feel as he ought out of obligation.

Cranly begins to take his examination but quickly abandons the project. Mrs Daedalus, concerned for Stephen's spiritual welfare, presses him to perform his Easter duty. She clumsily involves Isabel in her plea, a kind of spiritual blackmail that Stephen

especially resents. The confrontation may reflect accurately that between Joyce and his mother. It doesn't rise to a very high level on either side. Stephen very insensitively eats and drinks everything in sight while he reduces his mother to tears. He seeks out Cranly and encounters Lynch whom Joyce describes. Cranly is inexplicably indifferent to Stephen but finally goes with him. Stephen tells Cranly that he has left the Church, argued with his mother and made her unhappy. Cranly offers prudential comments and concludes that he too had thought of leaving the Church but did not. Stephen's position in these pages has importance since it is the most direct, least manipulated of Joyce's statements about this crisis in Stephen's – and his – life.

One is forced to note that there appears no sophisticated philosophical or ideological reason for Stephen's loss of faith. With his mother he is trivial and petty in his assessment of the Catholic religion and even with Cranly the topics discussed seem peripheral. The pattern of Stephen's lack of devotion to Jesus and his reverence for Mary is interesting. Devotion of this pattern might make the dissolution of faith easier since the fixation on Jesus would be more intellectual and that on Mary emotional or sentimental, qualities easily repudiated by a young intellectual. Stephen sees also that it is impossible for him to observe the Church's restrictions on sexual activity. It is possible that the intensity of Stephen's remorse for his sexual conduct may have burned out certain faculties at a critical time in his life. (I borrow this from *A Portrait*, of course, since *Stephen Hero* does not cover the retreat episode.) The Church, in other words, was not repudiated solely as unbelievable but perhaps more as repressive and irrelevant. That the concern did not entirely ever abate may be the cause of Joyce's preoccupation in his later work with a variety of Christological doctrines, orthodox and otherwise.

Chapter XXII

Stephen has no companion, Cranly having left Dublin to visit his people in Wicklow, and Stephen once more depends on Maurice who has a poor opinion of Cranly, one founded on a realistic assessment of Cranly and not on jealousy of his influence on Stephen. At least, so says the author.

In Stephen's solitary rambles he finds himself scrutinized by heavy police constables. He sees these supporters of English rule as in league with the priests, that other group that battens on the Irish and Irish docility.

Stephen has representative encounters with Glynn who bores him with inept literary chatter and with Moynihan, an opportunist all of whose moves are calculated in terms of his aspirations.

The Daedalus family continues its disreputable downward slide and Mr Daedalus looks for new lodgings and a fresh landlord to defraud. He is unhappy with Stephen who passed his examinations but without distinction. As the niceties of life disappear, Maurice grows surly. All of this – and worry over her apostate son – falls on Mrs Daedalus who has in addition the burden of the dying Isabel.

The death in the Joyce family on which the death of Isabel was based was that of Joyce's brother George. Joyce was very close to his brother. He named his first child after him. Stephen, on the other hand, says truthfully that he hardly knows his sister. Did Joyce need to put distance between himself and this painful event in his life? Joyce, bound to reality as he was, was no stranger to substitution strategies. The male parental

figure in two of the boy stories in *Dubliners* becomes an uncle, an uncle whose name in ‘The Sisters’ is significantly changed from John to Jack.

Stephen falls back on the companionship of Maurice and becomes more intimate with Lynch. One evening he meets Emma and walks her home. She gossips about the Daniels (Sheehys in real life) and thinks that McCann will marry Annie. His conversation with her is bold but there are closed off areas – Father Moran principally – that makes real intimacy impossible.

Lynch advises him to renew his visits to the Daniel home to further his designs on Emma. He does so but much of his thought about Emma is dominated by his liberated ideas about the Church and Ireland. Hughes is at the gathering and so is Father Healy. Because of the part played by Tim Healy in the betrayal of Parnell, Healy is a name of ill omen to Joyce. This Healy dominates the group and reduces everything to flavorless staleness. Stephen amuses himself with thoughts of Dante and an Irish version of the Comedy.

He wanders the city alone and at the end of this chapter he is brooding at the ill-gotten piano in their new – and also ill-gotten – dwelling. His mother enters the room to implore his help. Isabel is dying.

Chapter XXIII

She dies. The family – unlike Joyce’s own family or that of Stephen Dedalus – seems to consist of parents, the two sons and the dead girl. Stephen’s reflections are colored by his nonreligious radicalism.

Those who attend the wake are from Mrs Daedalus' family. The author refers to the forced wedding of one uncle to a woman that he had compromised while they both lived in a boarding house. (See 'The Boarding House.') A police clerk talks about dirty books. Uncle John tells an appropriate anecdote and, although the rest of the company laughs at a cheeky question from Maurice, Uncle John is angry.

At the funeral Joyce describes a scene that he later uses in *Ulysses*. It is scored through with crayon, a sign in other manuscripts of removal for reuse. The chapel service is very like that of the Hades section of *Ulysses*. According to some accounts Joyce used his experience at Matthew Kane's funeral to describe that of Paddy Dignam's in *Ulysses*. Since Kane's funeral was in 1904, the details may have done for Isabel also although George's death, for whom Isabel is the substitute, died in 1902.

The funeral party stops for refreshment at the pub at Dunphy's Corner. Stephen disgraces himself in his father's eye by ordering a pint. Although Mr Daedalus says nothing at the time, he will use it as a reproach on a later occasion.

Stephen begins his second year at the university and is threatened with the end to assistance from his godfather but, since the only source for this threat is his father, he knows that he can ignore it. Stephen takes Italian, partly so that he can read Dante and partly to be different. He has a good relationship with his teacher, Father Artifoni.

He attends a students' society meeting. The careerist Moynihan gives a reactionary inaugural address. Whelan receives a gold medal for oratory and one of Mr Daniel's sons gets a silver one.

Stephen pursues studies independently and finds out of the way authors and books – one of them by Yeats. He gives Lynch an animated account of the Yeats book. In his

reaction from Catholicism he endows Yeat's figures and those of the medieval writers with heroic virtues. He experiences the dangers of the outlaw and perceives that his fellows wait for his collapse into lunacy or some other debility. (Stanislaus contended repeatedly that Joyce's alcoholism was the result of a Jesuit-sponsored conspiracy to make him a drunkard and thus destroy him. Joyce, however, although he drank more than made good sense, does not seem to have been an alcoholic and Stanislaus was easily misled when his very considerable prejudices were involved.)

Chapter XXIV

The Jesuits, to offset accusations of their practicing manipulation of the Royal University (an examining board, not, as the name would seem to imply, a school) establishes a monthly review with McCann as editor. McCann's first edition contains a contribution by Hughes. McCann invites Stephen to contribute something, not too difficult, to the second edition. Stephen determines that the review has a censor and that he will not be paid. He refuses.

Outside the library Stephen sees Emma. As at the seminary (Clonliffe College) he experiences a feeling of pity for the students, young men and women, taking shelter on the library steps from the rain.

He talks to Cranly about an art of gesture. The conversation includes reflections – very interesting ones – on the idea of the modern. He describes the life of his fellow students and of their masters, the Jesuits, as a false life, a stationary march.

In December at the library he meets Emma again. This time he talks to her and walks her home. She is seductive but he doesn't respond. As he walks away, he encounters a prostitute (very like the one that Bloom encounters) to whom he gives money and continues on his way. He thinks of Jesus and of the various intellectual or emotional positions of various thinkers, believers and unbelievers. The choice of subject and the tumultuous way in which he thinks of it indicate clearly how deeply Emma has affected him and how little he wants to think about it.

He tells Lynch that he will no longer see Emma. They talk about women (undergraduate stuff but amusing.) It comes out that Stephen resents Emma because she is a tease.

Stephen studies Italian with Father Artifoni but with little attention as he meditates on school and the Jesuits, one of whom had recommended that Stephen apply for a clerkship at the Guinness brewery. Stephen begs to be excused early from his lesson and runs through the streets until he overtakes Emma whom he had seen from Father Artifoni's window. He comes to the point with little preamble. He wants to spend a night with her. She is reduced to tears by this insult but Stephen can't understand why. They part forever.

XXV

Lynch finds this adventure very amusing.

Stephen is beset by temptations to conform and by apparently active solicitation. As the earliest concrete example Joyce gives us the arguments of Cranly. Stephen is set in

his course as a man of letters, a poet, and finds Cranly's mocking inconsistent with the claims of friendship. He avoids his father who is obsessed with the idea that Stephen become a slave in the cause of rescuing the foundering family. His mother enrages him when she admits that she has consulted her confessor about him. From condemnation of his mother he passes easily to that of Emma and Irish women. The author steps to a distance at this point and half deplors what he describes. (The wobbly nature of authorial stance may be the major problem with *Stephen Hero* and the reason why Joyce decided to transform it into *A Portrait*.) Stephen thinks that his poems can be explained in terms of sexual dualism. He encounters – on Eccles Street interestingly enough – a banal conversation that inspires him to construct his theory regarding epiphanies.

With the epiphany as a springboard Stephen elucidates his theory of esthetics to an indifferent Cranly. He wants an audience for his poems but sees every candidate to be disqualified by concern that he be something other than what he is.

It is examination time and he again gets a low pass. He meets Emma when he is with Cranly. She returns Cranly's greeting but not Stephen's. This is the second time that she has snubbed him.

Stephen's low pass enrages his father. In the course of his rant and the effort of his wife to restrain him, his given name – Simon – appears for the first time. Stephen seeks out Cranly, finds him at the billiard parlor where they watch a game played by three clerks. Stephen perceives them as pathetic and takes Cranly off with him so that he no longer has to watch them.

XXVI

Cranly has once more failed his examinations and is returning to visit his people. Stephen asks for his address but Cranly refuses to give it to him. They encounter a drunken Temple who recites Flanagan's parable of the Apes of Barbary, a satire on Christian sexual ethics.

Stephen and Maurice discuss plans for Stephen's next year at college. Stephen decides to do nothing until his patron lets him know his plans. Mrs Daedalus calls on Father Butt who suggests that Stephen look for a clerkship at the Guinness brewery but even she knows that this will not do and Father Butt asks Stephen to come see him. He offers to enlist Father Dillon to find some slight task for Stephen to help him with his school expenses. Stephen tells his parents that Father Butt had recommended that he do tutoring, an idea that Mr Daedalus applauds. The intransigent Stephen refuses the help offered by the Jesuits. He and Maurice decide that the Jesuits are setting out to buy him. He receives a formal offer from Father Butt and replies with an equally formal refusal.

At the North Bull he and Maurice spend their time sunning themselves or swimming, at least Maurice swims. (Stephen is consistently shown as a total abstainer from water.) Stephen hopes to re-encounter Lucy, apparently the bird-girl of *A Portrait*.

He talks to Lynch who is aghast at his refusal of the Jesuit offer. Stephen, however, speaks eloquently of the immediate here and now and its superiority to the stale mummery and hypocrisy of Catholicism. Stephen tells Lynch that he had recently met Father Healy and they had had a pointlessly trivial conversation. Lynch calls his attention to Emma. She is with Moynihan, McCann and two of the Miss Daniels. Lynch says that

Father Healy will have marrying to attend to soon. Stephen assumes that he means Emma and Moynihan but Lynch means McCann and one of the Daniels. Stephen says that Emma now means nothing to him. Lynch does not believe him.

End of the surviving fragment of *Stephen Hero*. Joyce was not yet an accomplished writer. Throughout much of his life he allowed himself to write when he was not totally involved. This appears very strongly in the so-called critical writings. His involvement in *Stephen Hero* cannot be doubted but he struggled with the miniature essays embedded in but not absorbed by the text.

This said, I would willingly endure more of these callow and undigested effusions to have the entire text. The surviving portion shows that the loss of so much of *Stephen Hero* is a great tragedy. The events are diffuse and there may be overabundance of events described as they actually happened instead of events mediated by artistic perception but what Joyce wrote lives and breathes on a vast scale.