

Analyse faults presentation of stephens mental state

[Literature](#)



Sebastian Faulks presents Stephen Wraysford's mental state in a variety of different ways, these different notions to Stephen's psyche in part one of the novel gives the reader a deeper understanding of his character later in the novel and how his mental state changes. Stephen is an visitor from England that has been sent to France to gather information on the textile industry in France. He speaks fluent French and is very well mannered (as most British men in that era) and this is shown throughout the start of the novel.

Stephen shows these polite manners as he first greets the family in a very formal way. " He took her hand and bowed his head briefly". The first character we are introduced to is Stephen and within the first chapter it is plain to see that he has a clear definition of what is right and wrong which gives of the idea that he is strong-minded and if challenged on something he believed to be right then he would fight for what he believed in indomitably.

This idea of Stephen being a strong willed and moral young man is installed in the reader at the start from his body language, for example " the angle of his body that of a youthful indifference cultivated by willpower and necessity", this conjures up the image of a man who is confident and youthful yet has a fairly realistic and level headed side to him.

As the chapter moves on Stephen is alone in his bedroom and he starts to write in his diary, now the fact that he has a diary shows that he is thoughtful and that he has to have a place to keep these thoughts however Stephen rights this " log book" in a secretive code, which therefore leads the reader to the conclusion that Stephen has " spy" like features to his character, " he laughs softly to himself as he wrote.

This sense of secrecy was something he had to cultivate in order to overcome a natural openness and quick temper". We also learn in this passage that Stephen has a fairly "quick temper" and therefore it could be seen that his "spy" like qualities are there to compensate for his temper. Faulks presentation of Stephen's mental state in this small section of part one can be seen as fairly negative and he makes Stephen's personality seem unappealing to the reader.

The main content of part one is the raging love affair between Stephen and Isabelle, Madame Azairé is beaten by René Azairé, her husband, Stephen comforts her but one thing leads to another and they end up having a physical affair in Mr Azairé's house. At the start of the relationship Stephen is polite (as always) and he is courteous towards her, "Madame Azairé has not fully addressed Stephen's eye, in return he avoids hers, as though waiting to be addressed. However his manners slowly start to get worse as lust takes over and his primal urges take the better of him, for example "without meaning to sound ingratiating" this shows his normal social norms are being blown away by this one woman, and this infatuation with Madame Azairé influences him greatly later in the novel.

As the affair continues through part one Isabelle and Stephen's physical and intense relationship starts to develop in a more emotional sense, Isabelle seems to become more and more vulnerable, "there was too much danger in her feeling" and Stephen becomes gradually more courageous and bold, "he seemed sure of what was right".

Madame Azaire then starts to share her emotions with Stephen and she starts to trust in him, for example " She felt she might avoid the fallibility of her own judgement by depending on his" and this is all in the gradual climax where Isabelle tells Azaire she has betrayed him and that she was having the affair, " It was me", after this revelation Rene Azaire turns unbelievably towards Stephen, Stephen now makes the psychological choice to protect his lover, " you must hate me not her" this is a vital change in Stephen's mental state because before he met the Azaire's he was a solitary and introverted young man but this is almost him fully entering manhood by taking the responsibility for the one that he loves, " he hardened his heart".

As Stephen and Isabelle start to travel away together, Stephen is in a state of pure elation, " there was the deeper happiness of being with this woman", however Madame Azaire had taken the leaving of her family hard and Stephen was now starting to become very anxious about her mental state, he wanted her to be happy with the situation however he understood the gravity of the weeks events, " Stephen was endlessly curious". In their new lodgings in a town called " St-Remy-De-Provence" they are attempting to settle down and Stephen has taken a job as an " assistant to a furniture maker" and this is a job that is monotonous and not challenging for Stephen so therefore Stephen is mentally not being stimulated however he reassures himself that he doesn't mind the " tedium that awaited him in his work" because he can go home to the woman he loves and he is perfectly complacent with that.

He is in a peaceful and pleasant mental state where he does not think about his childhood and he doesn't give "a backward thought" about his old job, all he cares about is "the moment and the next day and the capsule of existence in which he and Isabelle lived" he is momentarily in a happy and healthy state of mind. Towards the end of Part one Stephen is out walking with Isabelle and a pigeon swoops down near them, Stephen makes "a fuss" and he admits his fear of birds to Isabelle, he states that there is "something cruel, prehistoric about them" this coupled with a traumatic event in his childhood leads Stephen to be shaking and "trembling" at the sight of a "fat pigeon".

This is significant because before this moment Stephen has been seen as a strong and fearless man and this is the first sign of weakness, this is a large contrast to later in the novel where he self-criticises about his leadership skills and this therefore emphasises the point that before the war there were strong and powerful young men and then war changes them to weakened and fearful men.

The end of Part One consists of Isabelle leaving Stephen because of her pregnancy and therefore Stephen is left distraught and alone. Stephen seems to be in shock of her departure and therefore goes to work as usual and carries on as if nothing has happened, "showed no sign that anything had changed", he does this because he sub-consciously can't accept that the love of his life has left him, he can't face the reality of his desperately sad situation.

When he came home he drank to excess to try and drink away the horrors and sadness of his situation, he is mentally devastated and the only thing he can do is let " himself grow cold. ". This mortifying and overwhelming event is what caused Stephen to join the army and fight in the war, this furthermore gives us a more in depth understanding of the way Stephen acts in the war to possible friends and the way he treats himself.

Faulkner's presents Stephen's mental state in a variety of different ways, he goes from being in a blissful state of mind to being in a state of turmoil and Faulkner presents these psychological states perfectly so that we as readers grow along emotionally with Stephen, feel joy with Stephen but most of all empathise with his pain and desolation.