

## The Psychological Transformation of “Araby”

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### Abstract

*This study will first discuss the effect of the psychological shift among the age group with reference to Araby story which written by James Joyce. The story has drawn attention to innocence of the childhood and how he encounters the real world (adulthood) in this society. As Mandel (1976, 236) explains: “The boy discovers not that Araby is worldly and impure but that he is. His vision is not about the world but about himself-and us.”. The young protagonist has tried to revolt against all forms of darkness, deterioration, and restrictions that surround his society through illusions and the desire to gain love. Unfortunately, he soon realizes that there is no way out from North Richmond street where he lives. The young boy ends up being disillusioned, which sheds light on his new insight to the reality of his environment. The psychological shift can be analyzed from three points of view; unreciprocated love, loneliness and the disillusionment. The writer used qualitative research method by analyzing quotation form the story as well as other writer views. The significance of understanding the psychological effects in the transition between ages, these changes will be discussed in terms of the character's behaviors, life, hope and attitudes toward the reality of the society.*

**Key words:** The Psychological Shift, Araby, James Joyce, Childhood, Adulthood, Unreciprocated Love, Loneliness, Disillusionment

### INTRODUCTION

James Joyce (1882-1941) was an Irish modernist writer who is viewed as one of the most influential authors of the twentieth century. In

1914 Joyce published *Dubliners*, a collection of fifteen short stories, including *Araby*. The short story of *Araby* portrays the transition of a young protagonist from childhood into adolescence. The psychological shift of the main character is mainly perceived through his passion for and infatuation with Mangan’s sister. In order to win her heart, the protagonist departs for a chivalric mission to the Araby bazaar to bring her a token of remembrance. However, the high expectations that the main character has for his love and his mission to the fair has tragically collapsed by the end of the story. *Araby* is a story of the defeat of innocence and romance by the hardship of reality and society as depicted through the description of scenery, the unreciprocated love, and the final disillusionment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The story opens with the narrator (the protagonist)’s disenchanting description of a gloomy and dismal atmosphere that surrounds the neighborhood where he resides with his uncle and aunt. North Richmond Streets, in Dublin, where the young boy’s house is located, was personified as “being blind”; perhaps this can be considered as foreshadowing to project that there is no outlet for any romantic feelings for the boy in this street with locked ending, as Collins (1967, 85) remarks, “Any quest in Dublin will lead to a dead-end, an impasse.”. In the neighborhood, houses face each other with “brown imperturbable faces” which reflects the monotonous and joyless living condition of the inhabitants where there is no beauty or romance in such a place as it appears in the story. The narrator implies a paradoxical description of the school in the following phrase, “Except at the hour when the Christian Brothers’ school set the boys free” which illustrates that the Catholic Church is viewed as a form of prison that restricts people’s freedom with its didactic rules. The description of students’ feeling of freedom while exiting the school symbolizes the revolt of young generation against the Catholic teachings or any form of dictation that controls their way of living. This imagery aligns with the description of the “black dark room” where the priest died ( he symbolizes death of religion); therefore, pages from his books are decayed and become “yellow” and “damp” which signifies that people are no longer enthusiastically and blindly following the old and imposing religious values that restrict their

ambitions and dreams. Additionally, the air coming from the priest's room is “Musty” and spreads in all rooms of the boy's house, constantly reminding him of the dreary atmosphere that characterizes his social environment which he is so eager to escape and confront through romance and illusions. Moreover, even when he plays with his friends his excitement with games cannot make him forget the dull and misery atmosphere in his surroundings. His eyes are fixed on the images of desolation that are everywhere; “the dark muddy lanes”, the “dark dripping gardens”, “the dark odourous stables” and the smell of “odours arose from the ashpits”. In the midst of such decaying environment, he finds a sign of hope through his affection for his friend's sister, as “her figure defined by light” stands in contrast with the darkness that challenges the boy's aspirations. The story combines images of decomposition and somberness to describe how the main character suffocates and feels frustrated in his society which he tries to overcome by finding love.

The young protagonist tries to replace the hardship and the darkness that frames the realm of his society through his unreciprocated love to Mangan's sister. The girl's love represents lightness that can shine up his dreary life and replaces sadness with romance and hopes. According to Mamdel, The boy's “Enfance ends with the introduction of the heroine” (234), a psychological shift is perceived as the boy experiences new strange feelings that he could not understand, as he himself expresses: “My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why)”. Additionally, the boy's transition from childhood has also changed his habits; he stops playing with his friends, and now he considers their games as a childish and trivial act. The protagonist's infatuation with and adoration for Mangan's sister is eagerly and obsessively described with many tender expressions, such as “Her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood”. The boy, however, is too shy to declare his love to the girl, so instead, every morning he watches her door hoping that he could have a glimpse of her. Mangan's sister is unaware of his impulsive affection; he tries to follow her “morning after morning” without letting her notice him. Perhaps, the young boy cannot reveal his true feelings to anyone as he knows that love and romance will be frowned upon in a strict Catholic society; thus, he tries to hide his love from everyone. The girl's image hunts his mind wherever he goes; in school or “even in places the most hostile to romance”. When the boy goes to

the crowded and noisy market with his aunt, he is completely subsided in his ideal fantasies that he seems not to be affected by the corruption and entanglement that delineates the reality of the adult world such as “drunken men”, “the curses of labourers”. The young boy is now mentally and emotionally driven by his unconstrained passion toward the girl, and he is unable to get her out of his thoughts. Mangan’s sister is more than a beloved; the boy views her as a deity as he devotedly murmurs her name in his prayers like a religious hymn “O love! O love! Many times”. Finally, the boy’s wish is fulfilled, and he speaks to her; however, he still cannot confess to her of his true feelings. Thus, like a medieval knight, the young protagonist proposes to go to the Araby bazaar to get her a present as she cannot go, hoping that by doing that he will win her love. Therefore, all his attention and obsession are now directed to the magical place “Araby”.

The young protagonist departs for his chivalric mission to the fair in pursuit of the gift which symbolizes the key to his beloved’s heart; however, his mission unfortunately turns out in a disillusionment. Prior to his departure to the fair, the boy is full of hope and excitement, having positive expectations for his trip. The boy finds new goal, new ideal, a place that can make him forget the darkness that characterizes his world. In Ehrlich’s view (2020, 10), “The immense, sprawling, noisy Arabic bazaar ...seem paradoxically to contrast with the small, dark, quiet charity sale that the boy depicts in the story”. From the beginning, he starts to challenge all the difficulties that might prevent him from achieving his goal such as the time and money that are at the control of his neglectful uncle. After he finally makes it to the train station, he still has to bear with the late train, and during his journey to the bazaar the boy sees pictures of darkness and “ruinous houses” which can be considered as a foreshadowing to the failure of his gallantry mission. The young boy is like a hero who bravely fights against all odds in order to fulfil his promise to Mangan’s sister. Nevertheless, he arrives very late at the bazaar that is almost about to close, except for the few shops that are still open. The protagonist feels deceived and speechless as Araby looks totally different from the ideal picture that he had in his mind. The marvelous fair turns out to be full of darkness, chaos, and silence just like his neighborhood. He finds himself trapped in a place where adults are interested in counting money and in flirtation. LeBlanc

(1999, 232) points that, “The boy has been struck by the sudden realization that his idealized, imagined romance is nothing more than a trivial and lust flirtation.”. The young boy is traumatized as he comes to grasps that he ends up from where he started; he crosses all the impervious walls to reach the place, yet he cannot fulfill his promise to the girl due to his poverty. Suddenly, his innocence and dreams are all smashed, with the hardships and troubles that he finds in the adult world to which he now also belongs to. The young boy is in an extreme state of anger and disillusionment as he realizes that he is now the victim of his own phantasms, leading him to express how “I saw myself as a creature driven and derived by vanity”. Ehrlich (2020, 327) concludes that, “Readers can concur in the boy’s admission that vanity has been the cause of his youthful infatuation, his folly of undertaking the mission of attempting to impress the girl by buying her a keepsake, and his consequent denial of reality through flights of imagination.”. Eventually, as the Araby bazaar’s lights turns off the boy realizes that in the real world there is no way out for romance and idealized fantasies, hence his overwhelming epiphany is manifested through his final distress and “anger”.

To conclude, “Araby” captures a number of contrasting themes: the innocence of childhood versus the bleak world of adulthood; purity versus profanity; fantasy versus reality; light versus darkness; the hope of love and companionship versus loneliness and emptiness; wealth versus poverty; the old religious order versus the promise of modernism; the dream of freedom versus the constraints of a conservative society. The Araby bazaar in the boy’s imagination is the hope of a better life in which his aspirations will be fulfilled when he enters adulthood. It represents the means by which he will find love as a symbolic escape from his strict religious upbringing to enter the modern world. There is however nothing magical about the Araby bazaar. It is consumed in materialism where he could hear “the fall of the coins,” and in debauchery where the Irish woman is “laughing with two young gentlemen” with English accents. It is implied that he was too poor to afford anything for Megan’s sister and realizing his “stay is useless,” he knew he was confounded to a harsh life, in which he would not be able to find love and enjoy the vain desires of this world. The realization that in adulthood he will not be able to fulfill any of his childhood dreams and escape North Richmond street where he lives leads him to accept that like the rest of the people in his

surroundings he will be confined to a miserable life. This disillusionment is the reason why his "eyes burned with anguish and anger." He has symbolically left the garden of Eden which was dominated by his childhood and innocence to fall into this cruel and sinful world.

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