

Illuminating Darkness of "Araby": A Boy's Self-Discovery

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As each section of the stories in *Dubliners* — stories of childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life — portrays a particular aspect of paralysis, so stories of childhood dramatize the early confrontation of youngsters with their corrupt environment. Frequently, the boy-narrator's rebellion against paralysis takes the form of an adventure or journey as a positive sign of escape. Even if he ends up experiencing deep disillusionment in his effort to get out of Dublin, this romantic endeavour plays a significant role in resisting a corrupt society and thus suggests an alternative mode of life to that of the adults, who have lost the capacity to dream. In "Araby," the last of the *Bildungsroman* trilogy, the narrator-protagonist completes his disturbing initiation into the adult world, which continually discourages individual sensibility and freedom, while forcing young members to accept and internalize an institutionalized code of behaviour. As a meaningful sequel to "An Encounter," in which the theme of sexual initiation turns into a shocking story, the boy-narrator's awakening sexuality is again dramatized in "Araby" through his puppy love for Mangan's sister. This paper will

examine the boy-narrator's ongoing process of self-recognition through his disenchantment with the corrupt commercialism which suffocates any possibility of romantic dream of secape.

From the first, the boy-narrator emphasizes the deadening atmosphere of his neighborhood.

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown impurtable faces.(D 21)

There is no sign of life anywhere, except the sound of the boys when they are "set free" from school. There stands an evacuated house, and the inhabited houses also show no sign of communication to each other, expressing the extreme self-consciousness or self-absorption of their occupants. The faces of the houses are painted in brown, the "patent" color of paralysis.¹⁾ This truly is a description of a ghost town from which there is no exit, because North Richmond Street is a *cul-de-sac*. Another symptom of stagnation is the sharp

1) Stephen in *Stephen Hero* (New York: New Directions Publishing Co., 1944) connects the color of brown with Irish paralysis: "... one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis" (211). In "Eveline," the narrator differentiates between those "brown houses," one of which Eveline's family lives in and "bright brick houses" which an Englishman from Belfast has built in the neighborhood. (D 29)

discrepancy between the appearance and reality of adult sophistication reflected in the narrator's architectural imagination.²⁾ Through the boy-narrator's rhetoric of "extended personification," the architectural features of North Richmond Street are given a symbolic meaning, which Baechler summarizes thus: "being blind" functions as a symbol of both the uninspired lives of the adults and the inherent futility of the boy's romantic quest. On the other hand, "sets the boys free" alludes the freeing of minds imprisoned by empty rhetoric, adding final ironic distortion that "such a freedom can hardly be given in Dublin."³⁾ This is the most remote place from romance, a place where any hint of emotional warmth will be smothered immediately.

Such an atmosphere of decay and lack of life is maintained throughout the narrative. The narrator describes the interior of his house which is odoriferous of death and stagnation: musty air, useless papers in enclosed waste room. A former priest-tenant, it is reported, had died in the back-drawing room. Circumstantial evidence, including the reference to his sister, reminds us of the ungraceful death of Father Flynn in "The Sisters," whose unidentified sin might have deserved, we

2) Chances are that among the residents of this ghost town could be the Dillons of "An Encounter," whose financial and religious complacency is ironically criticized by the narrator when their boys, fierce victors in the mimic warfare, do not join in the expedition of Pigeon House: "His parents went to eight-o'clock mass every morning in Gardener Street and the peaceful odour of Mrs Dillon was prevalent in the hall of the house" (*D* 11).

3) See *JJQ* 28-2 (Winter 1991): 362.

imagine, a punishment of being driven away from Garden of Eden: "The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump" (*D* 21).⁴ We can also connect the "rusty pump" with the snake in ambush, and thus making it a signifier sexually suggestive.⁵

The central action of the story is the boy-narrator's falling in love with Mangan's sister. The symptoms of adolescence become conspicuous as the narrator gradually loses interest in childish games while becoming more sophisticated internally. With a feeling of superiority, he separates himself from his playmates, despising their childishness: "From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct" (*D* 25). Such an "egoistic detachment" naturally results in loneliness, all the more intense because the narrator lives with his uncle. That he loves a girl, slightly older than he is, also flatters his self-complacency. She is depicted by the boy as a girl with a spiritual aura like that of a virgin Mary:

She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door . . . Her dress swung as she moved her body and soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

4) Like Father Flynn in "The Sisters" or the "missing priest" in "Eveline," the deceased priest here is also a gnomonic character who exercises subtle influence on the boy even when he is absent.

5) For another reference to a "bicycle pump," see *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1961), 510.

(D 22)

The aura is, on a naturalistic level, no more than an outline made by the light shining from behind. In this case, her body becomes a "gnomon" — the dark space cut out from the bright parallelogram of the open door. The boy, however, would like to spiritualize the object of his first love. He also deftly recognizes the movement of her body from the swinging of her dress. The female body becomes a significant referent in his awakening desire. Accordingly, the next time he meets her, his voyeuristic scrutiny becomes bold enough to move from the marginal to the genital part of her body, as displaced with metonymic item of her "petticoat." He would like to centralize his desire by moving his voluptuous eyes from "the white curve of her neck" and "the hand upon the railing" to the ultimate tantalization of "white border of a petticoat," because it is "just visible" (D 24). At this point, her body has become his fetishistic object, so much so that all his "foolish blood" makes a quick response as if summoned by her name. Such a spontaneous response of his body is expressed metaphorically, as "tried" as the metaphor may be: "But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon wires." (D 23)⁶ His body, "glowing" from the animal movement of playing in the cold air, has become a potential

6) The metaphoric significance of a harp as a physical signifier will be more evident in "Two Gallants" in which the theme of Irish subjugation by England intertwinds with Corley's exploitation of the slavey. See D 48.

receptacle for her sexual energy.

He, however, feels quite confused about the kind of feeling she evokes in him. It is a "confused adoration," as he calls it. (*D* 23)⁷⁾ His heart is torn between the carnal desire just awakened by an attractive girl and a religious desire to make his love sacred. Alternatively, the overflow of his libido is so powerful that he feels embarrassed, not knowing how to control it. Hence the spiritualization of his desire. Accordingly, the whole narrative of "Araby" turns out to be a clinical report on the ongoing conflict in the heart of the narrator, a conflict between desire and repression, a tension between reality and idealism. The following is the exact description of the boy who has just fallen in love:

My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. (*D* 23)

That it is a one-sided love, and that she is older than he is, makes the situation all the more desperate for him. What he can do is at best to make a religious sublimation of his desire.

7) Such a confused sensation of the boy is quite understandable, considering that it is his first crush on a girl. However, the distracting nature of his love is not unrelated to his final disenchantment. Its impact on his formative psychology will turn out to be significant later on. Eveline in the next story shows a similar response when she confesses that she was "pleasantly confused" at Frank's insinuating songs. (*D* 32)

In other words, he would like to idealize the object of his love to which he cannot gain access. When he is unable to find an outlet for his overflowing emotion, he would like to console himself with the fact that he fell in love with her, regarding it much more significant to him than the object of his love. Henke puts that as follows: "It soon becomes clear that the protagonist is enamoured not of Mangan's sister, but of her sanctified presence as an emblem of his psychic integrity, a figure that mirrors back the boy's own inflated dreams of heroic valor."⁸⁾ Therefore, the image of Mangan's sister delivered to us has already been filtered through the idealizing process of the narrator.

Achieving no rewarding interaction whatsoever, his frustrated love seeks its consolation by describing her with religious metaphor, thus elevating her to his object of homage. Worshipping the icon of his love, the boy at moments dedicates amorous prayers and praises to the "secularized" goddess. Truly her name has become an incantation to him by which he has "voluntarily" victimized himself. Chances are that he may also have been mesmerized by the circling of her bracelet: "While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist" (*D* 23). Finally, he endows his quest for Mangan's sister with mythological overtones, connecting it to the legend of Holy Grail, and thus granting himself the status of a knight:

8) See Henke 20.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. (D 23)

The "chalice" is nothing more than the image of his love that he carries day in and day out. He would like to sublimate his romance by dramatizing himself as a bearer of the chalice among dangerous enemies. Who are they at all? The foes he calls hostile are the ordinary people in the market preoccupied with their jobs, which are no less sacred than his mission. The bustling sound and jostling people are a normal scene in any marketplace in any country. The boy's romantic solipsism, however, leads him to dismiss the "sensation of life," and instead he embraces the imaginary journey he is cherishing. If we recall the reason why the boy accompanies his aunt to this unromantic market, the "chalice" he is carrying becomes nothing more than some packages of groceries. The boy's romantic quest is ironically twisted here. The boy's romantic illusion can be imputed to his temporary preoccupation with what is going on in his mind rather than in the outer world.⁹⁾ If he maintains such a sharp dichotomy between mundance

world of despicable reality and ideal world of romantic imagination, however, it will affect the nature of his experience afterwards.

True, the boy is troubled at the awakening of his heterosexuality, which cannot always be quenched by romantic displacement. When confronted with a similar agony of adolescence — a "riot of blood" — Stephen in *Portrait* bravely plunges himself into the embrace of a Dublin whore, which leads to a routine visit to Nighttown later in *Ulysses*, but the narrator of "Araby" is supposedly younger than Stephen. If he cannot find any other outlet for his sexuality, it is natural that he should resort to masturbation. (Actually, he has witnessed a similar case in the strange behaviour of the pervert in the previous story.) So, he hides himself in the most remote place in the house to satisfy his desire.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that was about to slip

9) He is so wrapped up in his amorous affair that he, we find, cannot concentrate on his schoolwork. He regards his duty of study as trivial, as a child's play to which he no longer feels attracted. Even the serious work of life has become, it seems to him, an obstacle set between him and his desire. (D 24)

from them, I pressed the palms of my hand together until they trembled, murmuring: *O love! O love!* many times. (*D* 23)

If we follow the conventional metaphor of mother earth as a feminine signifier, the sexual implications that lie hidden in the passage can hardly be missed. The passage strongly invites us to elucidate the politics of the adolescent body. The “incessant needles of water playing in sodden beds” express strongly the state of sexual consummation he has reached while listening through a “broken” window to the rain dropping upon the earth. A dark interior not only suffocates the voice of conscience, but guarantees him acute sensational pleasure, because all of the other sensory receptacles are closed. Feeling a poignant sensation of pleasure, he feels totally exhausted, feeling the outside world “distantly.” It can be likened to the momentary “swooning” (*P* 187) Stephen experiences at the sight of a “wading-girl” in *Portrait*. Remarkably, he intentionally tries to repress the reality of his sexual pleasure. He feels “thankful” not for the bodily sensation but for the absence of censorship, because he could see so little. The moment of pleasure being over, the voice of repression raises its head. He would not admit to himself the fact of sexual awakening. Hence his desperate efforts to repress his just awakened phallic consciousness. At the end of the passage, we catch such an ambivalent confession that while his senses seem to desire to “veil” themselves, he is

about to slip from them. It is undeniable that this "veiling process" is closely related to the priest, a representative of the super-ego, who died in "the back drawing room" where the boy masturbates his desire. The ghost of Father Flynn is still haunting the vulnerable mind of the boy-narrator, regulating his thoughts and behaviour.

The "real" quest for the "chalice" starts when Mangan's sister gives the boy a mission to carry out — the journey to "Araby." Enchanted again by her speech, he abruptly promises that he will bring her something, a "trophy," from his adventure. The futility of such a promise is betrayed when he tries afterwards to recall to himself the purpose "why [he] had come" to the bazaar" (*D* 27). He is so enthusiastic about his symbolic journey to Araby that he cannot concentrate on his school-work during the "tedious intervening days" (*D* 24) that he wishes to annihilate. Moreover, he is fascinated by the word "Araby" because he is charmed by its magic sound. Such an obsession with words is a distinct feature of the boy-narrators in the first three stories,¹⁰⁾ together with their longing for romantic alternatives, such as "Persia" in "The Sisters" and the "Wild West" in "An Encounter." As a matter of fact, he does not fully understand what it does mean for him to go to Araby, nor does he realize the futility of his affair with

10) Stephen is also obsessed with words in *Portrait* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1992). He shows a keen interest in the images evoked by the sound of specific words such as "suck" (*P* 8) and "foetus" (*P* 95), which are closely interrelated with the development of a certain theme of the novel.

Mangan's sister. He is possessed by "Eastern enchantment" (*D* 24), and flatters himself with the self-assigned role of a knight who undertakes a romantic quest. We find him totally enclosed within his idealization of himself and his love, even before he starts his expedition of Araby. The more complete his self-absorption, the more terrible will be his disillusionment.

As the narrator admits, Dublin is a place hostile to romance. The anti-romantic nature of Dublin is reflected by the adults who, with their materialistic interests and lack of imagination, cooperate to destroy the complacency of the narrator's Platonic love. Procrastination is, among others, the most frustrating mechanism applied by adults to the boy. On the morning of his adventure, he fails to watch Mangan's sister, because his uncle occupies the hall too long. Adding insult to injury, his "bad mood" is intensified by the "pitilessly raw" (*D* 25) air of the morning on his way to school. In the early evening his aunt, mistaking Araby for "some Freemason affair," advises him not to go because it is the night of "Our Lord" (*D* 25). Her overt discouragement is followed by Mrs Mercer's visit, which prolongs the meal "beyond an hour" (*D* 25). The symbolic function of Mrs Mercer as an ironic embodiment for the deceptive values of the adult world turns out to be all the more poignant when we notice the dubious discrepancy between who she is ("pawnbroker's wife") and what she does ("collecting used-stamps for pious purposes"). She thus underscores the hypocritical as well as the

mercenary character of Dublin society, which she carries in her name.¹¹⁾ An "old garrulous woman," Mrs Mercer reminds us the ghostly sisters of Father Flynn as well as of the moribund sisters in "The Dead."

The boy's departure is delayed until eight o'clock, but he still has one more hour to wait. At nine, his uncle arrives, talking to himself. He immediately interprets the signs of his drunkenness from the sound of the latchkey as well as from the rocking of the hallstand which "received the weight of his overcoat" (*D* 25).¹²⁾ The violence of male-dominated society has been shown to us earlier when we witnessed how the spontaneous playfulness of children was often repressed by the mere presence of adults: "If my uncle was to be seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed." (*D* 22) The wild movement and shrill voices of children, the only sign of life in the atmosphere of deadness, is thus exposed as being vulnerable to the

11) The incapacity of the Irish Catholic Church and its destructive effects on her believers is frequently criticized from "The Sisters" onwards. The blind faith of the narrator's aunt makes her a blank character throughout the narrative, and the hypocritical nature of Mrs Mercer is another indicator of the corrupted religion.

12) The spiritual paralysis of the adults is expressed in the form of drunkenness which temporarily enables them to forget the painful present and take refuge in an alcohol induced numbness. The uncle of the narrator is one of those drunkards whose domestic violence is another expression of frustration in Dublin society. Such routine violence anticipates Mr Hill ("Eveline"), Mr Mooney ("The Boarding House"), and Mr Farrington ("Counterparts"). Mrs Sinico ("A Painful Case") is another victim of alcoholic addiction.

destructive power of adults. The most disappointing thing is that the uncle has forgotten the bazaar, although he was reminded of it in the morning. He thus completely shatters the boy's expectations for Araby. He keeps babbling stock phrases: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" (*D* 26).¹³⁾ When we hear him reciting *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*, we recognize that he obliquely suggests the futility of going to bazaar so late, when people are already "after their first sleep now" (*D* 26). At this point, we can assume that the boy's irritation reaches its height, and his excitement is totally exhausted.

For all his feeling of superiority, the boy embarrassingly finds himself dependent on his vulgar uncle for some money to carry with him to the bazaar. To get at most twenty-four pennies, he has to wait and wait, enduring "the gossip of the table" between the two vacuous women. Holding one florin tightly in his hand, a capitalistic displacement of his chivalric "chalice," he takes his seat in a "third-class carriage" (*D* 26), degradingly unsuitable for his knightly errand. Alone in a "deserted train," he starts his journey, already exhausted. Instead of "throng of foes" in the legend of knight, he finds "crowds of people" who mistake for theirs the "special train for the bazaar" (*D* 26). To make matters worse, the train also

13) The spontaneous playfulness of children as a counterbalance to a corrupt society is also depicted in Dickens's *Hard Times* where Sissy Jupe's action and Sleary's Circus are suggested as alternatives to the utilitarian indoctrination promulgated in the schools of early industrial England.

actively participates in procrastinating his journey by making a "creeping" movement, "after an intolerable delay" (*D* 26). It passes through "ruinous and impoverished houses" and stops at an "impoverished" platform (*D* 26), the remotest setting for romantic adventure to happen. Who could bear such a fantastic combination of postponement and disappointment? The boy must feel exhausted and partially disillusioned by the uncooperative adults, train schedule, and the neighborhood through which he passes. He truly does! He feels so disoriented and distracted that he even has to remind himself "with difficulty" of the purpose of his journey.

He arrives at ten minutes to ten, too late for any adventure to happen! What he encounters at the bazaar is not an exotic fancy but a "weary-looking man" at the entrance. His frustration intensifies when he finds darkness brooding over the place, making a stark contrast with "glaring" lights at Buckingham Street. His romantic prefiguration of himself as a chalice-bearer is ironically twisted when he finds himself too late for the profane mass, the bazaar, walking "timidly" in the silence of a church after service. His romantic quest is totally deflated at this point. He is cast out of the ceremony and is expelled into the darkness, like Judas Iscariot who is evoked by the dealers "counting money on a salver" (*D* 27). A little Jesus in Dublin is betrayed by the corrupt commercialism which suffocates any sign of romance. What he hears beside the *Café Chantant* is the falling sound of the coins, which is a clear indicator of a society which has lost its romantic dream

or spiritual innocence. The degradation of spiritual values by venal materialism is a recurrent motif in "Araby" and is again illuminated in the form of a dramatic epiphany in the following scene of bargaining:

- O, I never said such a thing!
- O, but you did!
- O, but I didn't!
- Didn' she say that?
- Yes. I heard her.
- O, there's a . . . fib! (*D* 27)

If we recall that porcelain vase is frequently employed as a metaphor for female genitalia, we cannot miss the sexual overtones of the argument.¹⁴⁾ The two young men with "English accent" are probably bargaining with the shop-lady for her sexual favors. Chances are they are trying to pay less than the regular price. The three of them may also be enjoying a futile exchange of repartee without any serious intention of purchase: "They began to talk the same subject" (*D* 27). What is interesting here is that the boy listens to what they say, lingering before her stall with "pretended" interest in her wares. Even if he says that he listened *vaguely* to their debate, most of the key signifiers are delivered to us and suggest a meaningful context. Can we not deduce from his

14) For another example, "teapot" is referred to as a metaphor for female genitalia in the "Nighttown" by Bella Cohen (*U* 445), while Molly in her monologue refers to "cochinchina" as a genital symbol. (*U* 770)

embarrassed movement that he has already deciphered with his keen susceptibility what is there to be deciphered? As is often the case with a Joycean text, we must ask whether or not the ellipsis, the absent signifier, has been "imposed" by the narrator on the narrative. If so, it is highly probable that he might have erased the original signifiers as a strategic repression of his sexuality. The redundancy of his behaviour before the stall supports rather than contradicts our deconstructive reading. Such a sexual deduction bears a striking contrast between the commercialized body of the sales woman, her "vase," and the chaste romance of the boy, his "chalice."¹⁵ Confronted with such a commercial exchange of romantic value, he compares the great standing jars to "eastern guards" who can, we imagine, drive away these English advances toward the Irish woman. He should, however, experience another frustration because he can buy on his limited budget neither the literal porcelain nor her symbolic body.¹⁶ He thus reenacts the very commercial image he has witnessed all the way to bazaar: "I allowed the two

15) Bowen suggests that the argument at the bazaar could be a parodic version of the dialogue and relationship between the boy-narrator and Mangan's sister. He points out, as proof, the boy's repetitive phrasing of "the young lady" like an incantatory substitution for Mangan's sister. (263-64) Henke also regards the boy's repetition as an incantatory protection from his discomfort. (368)

16) The narrator's uncle gives him a florin (24 pence). He pays a shilling (12 pence) at the entrance. We know that he has eight pence, because he makes two pennies fall against six pence in his pocket. Then, we can straighten out here how much he paid for round-trip tram fare: $24 - 12 - (2 + 6) = 4$ (pence).

pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket" (*D* 27).

"Araby" is a painful account of a boy who witnesses the sexual awakening of his body, the stark reality of which he cannot handle with complacency. It therefore turns out to be a record of repression of his phallic consciousness as well as a record of his displacement of carnal desire with spiritual value. The tragic point is that he should face either his own incapacity to act upon his pleasure principle or the hostile reality that profanes his romantic idealism. In this sense, the final scene of total darkness completes the epiphany of the narrative, allowing him to take a good look at himself: "a creature driven and derided by vanity" (*D* 28). So far, he was continually irritated and frustrated by external factors, which were carefully prepared by Joyce to bring about the final epiphany of the narrator. The final revelation is significant in that he, for the first time ever, recognizes that it is himself who is to blame. He now clearly realizes not only the bestial culmination of himself, "a creature," but the futility of his own romantic illusion. The derision from the outside was bad enough, the derision from the inside is even worse.¹⁷⁾ What should be deconstructed is not only the Oriental discourse but his own vanity. Therefore, the target of "anger" should be himself rather than his antiromantic society. The "anguish" of

17) Earlier on, he had a minor epiphany about the foolishness of his preoccupation with Mangan's sister which actually prevented him from concentrating on his studies: "What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days" (*D* 24)

awakening to oneself as well as to the environment is always poignant. However, it is a *rite de passage* which the narrator must undergo in order to be a mature member of a society, whether corrupted or not. This is the painful lesson he gets from Araby which has totally shattered his fragile emotional equilibrium as much as his romantic illusion. Hence the enclosed vision of the boy: "The upper part of the hall was now completely dark." (D 27)

The power outage of Araby is, on a communal level, a symbolic referent to the total blindness of Dublin society which has lost its spiritual consensus and has been recurrently criticized throughout the narrative in various imageries and metaphors. It is also, on a personal level, an ironic mockery of his self-indulgence which has imprisoned him in solipsistic self-enclosure as well as in romantic detachment from the harsh realities of life. To break out of it, he needs the epiphanic moment of revelation.¹⁸⁾

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger. (D 27)

As in the case of the narrator in "An Encounter," epiphany makes it possible for the character to see himself and his follies and illusions by deconstructing his false consciousness

18) Atherton mentions the abruptness of the ending: "Then comes the sudden violent reaction, to express which the prose suddenly takes on a forceful rhythm heightened by the alliteration" (Hart 46).

from the inside.¹⁹⁾ This epiphany also brings about a spiritual cleansing by makin him humble himself. The narrator in the previous story feels “penitent” for his feeling of superiority over Mahony, while the narrator of “Araby” bursts into remorseful tears for his vanity. A good crying will wash away his “self-invited” infuriation about himself and soothe his agitated feelings. It will also recuperate his hurt self-esteem and disenchantment about himself. He will start it again with heightened awareness of himself and the decaying society. That is the function of “anger” as a positive signal for the continuation of his struggle for escape.²⁰⁾

In terms of the total darkness at Araby, we should notice that epiphany had already occurred even before he started for Araby. While waiting tediously for the uncle in the evening, the boy-narrator takes a look at the opposite house where his love lives, which he finds “dark” (*D* 25). Why is there no light there? Because Mangan’s sister has left for a retreat in her convent. (*D* 24) Ironically enough, she recommends to the boy-narrator the project of Araby, the origin of Orientalism for him, while she pays homage to orthodox Christianity. Such a contradictoriness betrays the futility of his romantic quest

19) Rice puts a limitation on the self-recognition of the boy-narrator by saying that he, because of his egotism, can at best achieve the pseudo-enlightenment in his limited vision, bringing his narrative to a close in silence, darkness and isolation. See *Style* 25-3 (Fall: 1991): 397.

20) Atherton reads “anger” as a fitting conclusion because “the fact of the anger suggests that the boy’s search for escape will not stop here” (Hart 47).

which he wraps in pagan mythology. He finds too late that he has put too much emphasis on her "causal" saying, making it his self-assigned mission. However, the significance of the "dark house" could not be epiphanized for him, because he was so preoccupied with the "brown-clad figure" in his imagination that he saw "nothing" at that point. (*D* 25)²¹) To be awakened from blind self-absorption, he needs to undergo a painful process of self-recognition, culminating in "anguish and anger." In this sense, the current epiphany turns out to be a foreshadowing revelation offered by Joyce to his readers, especially the perceptive ones.

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21) The pursuit for "brown-clad figure" by the boy-narrator is to be continued in *Portrait* as Stephen seeks the image of Emma Clery throughout the narrative.

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