

MODULE -1

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JAMES JOYCE : ARABY

CONTENT STRUCTURE:

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1.1 : James Joyce (1882-1941)

James Joyce was born in Dublin of Irish Catholic lower middle-class stock, his father being a rate collector and the family background being similar to that of the 'Dedalus' in his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. He was educated at Jesuit College and at University College, Dublin. Joyce was early marked out for priesthood but he passed through a religious crisis and left Ireland in 1902 as a self-consciously blasphemous atheist. For the rest of his life he remained a citizen of that world like his eighteenth century compatriot, Goldsmith. After leaving Ireland in 1902 he studied medicine for a while in Paris, where he met Synge and was the first person to read *Riders to the Sea* which was later to translate into Italian language. From 1904 to 1915 he was a teacher of language in Trieste, later living in Zurich and again in Paris.

Chamber Music (1907) was his first publication: "a snite of songs," as he described them to one of his composers, "and if I were a musician I suppose I should have set them to music myself." These were followed by *Dubliners* a book of fifteen short sketches or stories begun in 1904, rejected by forty publishers and finally published in 1914. Each one of the stories cries out against the frustration and squalor of the priest-ridden pub-besotted culturally decomposing urban lower middle-classes living it depicts an aims at exhaling – so Joyce declared – "the odour of ash-pits and old weed and offal." The best story in *Dubliners* is the last and longest. 'The Dead' with its symbolism of the snow is the finest story ever to come out of Ireland.

In 1916 came Joyce's first masterpiece *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, first printed in serial form in *The Egoist*. Praised by both H. G. Wells and Mrs. Virginia Woolf in point of style it forms a

transitional stage between the realism of *Dubliners* and the symbolism of *Ulysses*. *The Portrait of the Artist* belongs to a kind of which there have been many examples; the subjective novel with little external action, having as its theme the spiritual development of a hero whose personality is founded on the author's Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* is the prototype. In Joyce's own time there was Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. A *Portrait* is a study of adolescence. It is the story of how Stephen Dedalus looks for an order and significance in life and the muddle and disorder of his father's house; how he resists the temptation to find that order in the Roman priesthood; and how he eventually discovers his vocation to be a priest of art. All the author's skill is used to convey the inwardness of the experiences which moulded Stephen. Where *Dubliners* had been severely objective *the portrait* is subjective. But it avoids the sprawling carelessness of most subjective fiction. The consciousness of Stephen through which we learn his story, is carefully dramatized and controlled. One marked feature of the *Portrait* is Stephen's passionate interest in words. This was Joyce's own passion and obsession and it distinguishes him as a characteristically modern writer.

Ulysses Joyce's great work of epic proportions was published in 1922 (the same year as Eliot's *The Waste Land* was published) in Paris. Originally conceived as a short story for *Dubliners*, *Ulysses* in its final form was a volume of seven hundred and eleven large pages.

The extraordinariness of *Finnegans Wake* is of a different kind. The 'night language' in which it is written might be described as Lewis Carroll's original vocabulary. At the heart of the book is the family situation of a Dublin publican, a respectable man, like Bloom, who occasionally lapses. On the night of the *Wake* his dreams are troubled by one particular lapse. The dream personality of hero, everybody and the book records, is a cosmic myth of fall and renewal.

Joyce had also tried his hand at drama, *Exiles* in 1918 is interesting to students of Joyce's life and character, but it is so closely modeled on Ibsen as to suggest parody. And there may be a deeper reason for the failure of *exiles*. Joyce's imagination was not really a dramatic one. Conflict was not part of his essential vision.

1.2: Araby : Realism & Symbolism

Araby, the third story of Joyce's collection of short stories, *Dubliners* gives the impression like the other stories of a state of moral and intellectual stagnation, the impression of the "paralysis" of the mind and the body which one can experience in any big and busy middle-class city such as Dublin. Many authors, particularly young authors, have fallen back their own experiences for the themes, the plots and the characters of their works. For example, in the modern period we have the cases of Dickens, of Conrad, of Lawrence, of Hardy and of course James Joyce. Other writers may be able to create fictional situations either independent or partially dependent upon their own lives and experiences. Joyce, however, although reacting to the philistinism and the materialism of Dublin, he kept returning in all his poems and his fiction (even in his only play *The Exiles*), to the nightmarish and repulsive memories of Dublin. In this story, as with Joyce's other stories in the collection of *Dubliners*, as Joyce himself confesses, there is always the pervasive odor of old weeds, ash-pits and offal. There is a *cul-de-sac*, North Richmond Street, the blind and perhaps symbolizing the inevitable frustration of any quest or aspirations in such discouraging circumstances. This impression is strengthened by the description of waste room behind the kitchen, littered with scraps of paper and old books. There is also the wild and overgrown garden, containing a central apple tree and a few struggling bushes with a rusty bicycle pump buried under one of them. Even in the muddy lanes

and the “tough” or wild neighborhood, Joyce has presented the story of a nameless boy and his first misadventures in love. The boy in his characteristically juvenile sense of well-being and the *esprit-de-coeurs*, is still not fully aware of the unwilling morass around him. For the precautious and sensitive hero, a means of self-forgetfulness comes out of the love that he feels for the sister of his friend Mangan. The other boys are blissfully unaware either of the stagnation or of the attractions of the opposite sex, that the nameless boy-hero resents and experiences. The life of the boy is filled with the first glimmering of individuality. The camaraderie and the sense of oneness of early adolescence and boyhood is now suppressed by the individuality of early manhood (although he classifies *Araby* as a story of “childhood”). Breaking away from the rough and the unruly gang sports, the boy-hero becomes conscious of and develops an individual identity. The sense that he is on his own perhaps entirely responsible for whatever happens to him. The world of the protagonist is solipsistic and Platonic, the comedy and the bacchanalian procession of puberty being succeeded by the tragedy and the emotional isolation of the early adolescence. A paradigm of the poetic creative experience emerges in this ability of this budding poet to think himself haloed and living within a charmed circle surrounded on all sides by the ugly and frightful realities. The boy is repulsive of the harsh realities of drunken men, bargaining women, cursing laborers and shrill shop-boys, who all present the philistinism and the spiritual stagnation and sterility of his circumstances. With his transforming poetic imagination and his desire of transcendence to a higher plane of being, the boy latches on to the image of the girl that he has constructed unilaterally and privately. The boy, like all adolescents, suffers from sudden, inexplicable and unpredictable changes of mood, alternately feeling emotional or lyrical or cynical and critical. The boy watches the girl unobserved through the window blinds, when she emerges every morning from her house on the other side of the street. Again, the protagonist often discovers himself uttering or offering up strange “prayers” and “praises”. At times his eyes fill up with tears, at other times he retires into himself and closely scrutinizing the characters and the situation, the object and the thoughts that he expresses, criticizes or analyses them. The boy watches through the broken panes of the back of the drawing room, the rain falling on the earth and its drops being lighted up by some lamp from a distance. He can also minutely observe (and analyse and resent) the indifference and tyrannical behavior of his besotted uncle.

1.3 : Autobiographical Elements in *Araby*

The presentation of the boy, (as with all the other literature produced by Joyce), may in one sense be considered autobiographical being a recreation of a blessed or cursed moments from the writer's own boyhood. Like Dickens, Joyce, too found his parents, not exactly agreeable or worth boasting about. As with Dickens' novel Joyce, too, avenges his real life embarrassment with his parents by relegating them to a foster capacity in this story. The realism of the Dublin life further confirms this impression. The “confused adoration” that the nameless boy-hero feels for his beloved, his representative as well as reflective of the real confusion experienced by human beings passing through a liminal stage in their lives. Then again, the voluptuous girl has become the source of the natural result of the first stirring of sexuality in the heart and the mind of an adolescent. The white curve of the girl's neck, her braided hair hanging down one side of it, the white border of her petticoat, the soft rope of her hair – such details in the story of an adolescent would seem rather curious if not altogether perverse, unless they are taken into account the autobiographical nature of the writing, representing as it does, the peculiar conflicts and complexities encountered by a sensitive and precautious mind, even in adolescence. His beloved's small talk, indulged into pass

the time is construed by the ardent boy's heart as imperative and obligatory. With the thoughtless generosity of adolescence, he gushes out with the promise of bringing her a gift from Araby. The boy's apparent attraction is the girl's purity, but her real charm, as he half confesses, is of a more sensual nature. Like all human beings passing through a transitional stage in their life, the boy is too confused to be able to articulate all his feelings in so many words. He pursues his uncle and aunt of his need to make the journey to the bazaar. On Saturday morning when the uncle was about to go out to his work, the boy reminded him of his intended visit to Araby in the evening. The afternoon passed, and even till late in the evening the uncle had still not returned. After hours of restless pacing up and down, the boy had just given up looking anxiously at the clock and was first sinking into hopelessness when the uncle finally arrived.

Like all of Joyce's creations *Araby* is autobiographical and representative or realistic only up to a certain point. Unique among modern writers for his ability of blending autobiography with realism Joyce can be seen doing this almost effortlessly from the little of the story itself. *Araby* combines within it both the eastern enchantment associated with the arid west, the reference to the deserts of Arabia. *Araby* is both a particular charity of fate, organized at a particular point of time in Dublin and an eternal symbol, with its association with the exotic and far off land of Arabia (which is referred to in the poem recited by the drunken uncle). Thus, like any good and effective symbol *Araby* both particularizes and universalizes.

1.4 : Conclusion

Joyce erected even more barriers to keep out the common reader than Marcel Proust. But Joyce was not really an aristocratic esoteric writer like Proust. What is saddening about his life and art is that something made him despise and reject people with whom apart from his genius, he had everything in common, the will to live, a longing for the beautiful doubt and faith, hope, love, disillusionment and restoration. As a representative of the golden age of Paradise or Heaven and finally of man's primordial spirituality, purity and innocence. Joyce attaches the values probably to the Chalice, which is a recurrent metaphor in his stories for instance, in the first story of the *Dubliners*, a priest has broken the secret vessel in his church and Joyce uses this as an emblem of his fall from innocence and spiritual purity. In *Araby* the boy-hero thinks of his Platonic love for Mangan's sister as something as secret as the chalice in a church. In the case of the boy-hero he nearly loses sight or forgets about his own "chalice". In other words the idealism of childhood and early adolescence is on the verge of being lost in the story.

1.5 : Bibliography and referene

- [*Chamber Music*](#) (poems, 1907)
- [*Dubliners*](#) (short-story collection, 1914)
- [*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*](#) (novel, 1916)
- [*Exiles*](#) (play, 1918)
- [*Ulysses*](#) (novel, 1922)
- [*Pomes Penyeach*](#) (poems, 1927)

- *Collected Poems* (poems, 1936, which includes *Chamber Music*, *Pomes Penyeach* and other previously published works)
- [*Finnegans Wake*](#) (novel, 1939)

Posthumous publications

- [*Stephen Hero*](#) (precursor to *A Portrait*; written 1904–06, published 1944)
- [*Giacomo Joyce*](#) (written 1907, published 1968)
- *Letters of James Joyce Vol. 1* (Ed. Stuart Gilbert, 1957)
- *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (Eds. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, 1959)
- *The Cat and the Devil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965)
- *Letters of James Joyce Vol. 2* (Ed. Richard Ellmann, 1966)
- *Letters of James Joyce Vol. 3* (Ed. Richard Ellman, 1966)
- *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (Ed. Richard Ellmann, 1975)
- [*The Cats of Copenhagen*](#) (Ithys Press, 2012)
- [*Finn's Hotel*](#) (Ithys Press, 2013)

1.6 : Questions

1. What does "Araby" symbolize to the boy, and how is the conflict of the story resolved when he goes there?

2. Show how Joyce blends the real and the symbolical in *Araby*?

3. Bring out the autobiographical elements in the story *Araby* . Can this story be described as wholly autobiographical?

4. What is the central claim of Joyce's *Araby*? ARABY

5. Why does Joyce spend so much time developing the various settings in *Araby*?

vt to a higher plane of being , the boy latches on to the image of the girl that he has constructed unilaterally and privately. The boy, like all adolescents, suffers from sudden , inexplicable and unpredictable changes of mood, alternately feeling emotional or lyrical or cynical and critical.