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Author(s): Harry Stone

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"Araby" and the Writings of James Joyce

By HARRY STONE

Love came to us in time gone by
When one at twilight shyly played
And one in fear was standing nigh—
For Love at first is all afraid.

We were grave lovers. Love is past
That had his sweet hours many a one;
Welcome to us now at the last
The ways that we shall go upon.

—*Chamber Music*, XXX (written in 1904
or earlier).

And still you hold our longing gaze
With languorous look and lavish limb!
Are you not weary of ardent ways?
Tell no more of enchanted days.

—*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
(1904-14).

Lust, thou shalt not commix idolatry.
—*Finnegans Wake* (1922-39).

■ "We walk through ourselves," says Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*. Stephen is trying to show how Shakespeare, or for that matter how any artist (creator of "Dane or Dubliner"), forever turns to the

HARRY STONE, Associate Professor of English at San Fernando Valley State College in California, has published widely in the leading literary reviews and journals of this country and of Europe. He has just finished an edition of the *Uncollected Writings of Charles Dickens: Household Words* and is completing a book entitled *Dickens and the Fairy Tale*.

themes which agitate him, endlessly bodying forth the few crucial events of his life. "Every life is many days, day after day," says Stephen. "We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves." Stephen's theory may be an ingenious *jeu d'esprit*—though Joyce himself was heavily committed to such views. But whether or not Stephen's words are appropriate to Shakespeare, they are exactly appropriate to Joyce. In his writings, Joyce was always meeting himself—in ways which must at times have been beyond his conscious ordinance—and the pages of "Araby" are witness to that fact.

For "Araby" preserves a central episode in Joyce's life, an episode he will endlessly recapitulate. The boy in "Araby," like the youthful Joyce himself, must begin to free himself from the nets and trammels of society. That beginning involves painful farewells and disturbing dislocations. The boy must dream "no more of enchanted days." He must forego the shimmering mirage of childhood, begin to see things as they really are. But to see things as they really are is only a prelude. Far in the distance lies his appointed (but as yet unimagined) task: to encounter the reality of experience and forge the uncreated conscience of his race. The whole of that struggle, of course, is set forth in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. "Araby" is the identical struggle at an earlier stage; "Araby" is a portrait of the artist as a young boy.

II

The autobiographical nexus of "Araby" is not confined to the struggle raging in the boy's mind, though that conflict—an epitome of Joyce's first painful effort to see—is central and controls all else. Many of the details of the story are also rooted in Joyce's life. The narrator of "Araby"—the narrator is the boy of the story now grown up—lived, like Joyce, on North Richmond Street. North Richmond Street is blind, with a detached two-story house at the blind end, and down the street, as the opening paragraph informs us, the Christian Brothers' school. Like Joyce, the boy attended this school, and again like Joyce he found it dull and stultifying. Furthermore, the boy's surrogate parents, his aunt and uncle, are a version of Joyce's parents: the aunt, with her forbearance and her unexamined piety, is like his

mother; the uncle, with his irregular hours, his irresponsibility, his love of recitation, and his drunkenness, is like his father.

The title and the central action of the story are also autobiographical. From May fourteenth to nineteenth, 1894, while the Joyce family was living on North Richmond Street and Joyce was twelve, Araby came to Dublin. Araby was a bazaar, and the program of the bazaar, advertising the fair as a "Grand Oriental Fête," featured the name "Araby" in huge exotic letters, while the design as well as the detail of the program conveyed an ill-assorted blend of pseudo-Eastern romanticism and blatant commercialism. For one shilling, as the program put it, one could visit "Araby in Dublin" and at the same time aid the Jervis Street Hospital.

But the art of "Araby" goes beyond its autobiographical matrix. The autobiographical strands soon entwine themselves about more literary patterns and enter the fiction in dozens of unsuspected ways. For instance, embedded in "Araby" is a story, "Our Lady of the Hills," from a book that Joyce knew well, *The Celtic Twilight* (1893) by William Butler Yeats. "Our Lady of the Hills" tells how a pretty young Protestant girl walking through the mountains near Lough Gill was taken for the Virgin Mary by a group of Irish Catholic children. The children refused to accept her denials of divinity; to them she was "the great Queen of Heaven come to walk upon the mountain and be kind to them." After they had parted and she had walked on for half a mile, one of the children, a boy, jumped down into her path and said that he would believe she were mortal if she had a petticoat under her dress like other ladies. The girl showed the boy her two skirts, and the boy's dream of a saintly epiphany vanished into the mountain air. In his anguish, he cried out angrily, "Dad's a divil, mum's a divil, and I'm a divil, and you are only an ordinary lady." Then he "ran away sobbing."

Probably reverberating in "Araby" also are chords from one of Thomas De Quincey's most famous works, "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow." In "Levana," Our Lady of Tears (she bears the additional title, "Madonna") speaks about the child who is destined to suffer and to see, a type of the inchoate artist:

"Lo! here is he whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become

idoltrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolater, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs!"

He who is chosen by the Ladies of Sorrow will suffer and be cursed; he will "see the things that ought *not* to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable," but he will also be able to read the great truths of the universe, and he will "rise again *before* he dies." In this manner, says Our Lady of Tears, we accomplish the commission we had from God: "to plague [the chosen one's] heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit."

The ideas and images of "Levana" (witness the parody in *Ulysses*) had sunk deep into Joyce's imagination. His imagination had always sought out, always vibrated to, the Levanaesque constellation—a constellation that fuses religion, sexuality, idolatry, darkness, ascension, and art. "Araby," both in its central idea and its characteristic imagery—in the image of Mangan's sister, in the boy's blind idolatry, and in the boy's ultimate insight and dawning ascension—is cognate with "Levana."

Other literary prototypes also contribute to "Araby." In "Araby" as in Joyce's life, Mangan is an important name. In life Mangan was one of Joyce's favorite Romantic poets, a little-known Irish poet who pretended that many of his poems were translations from the Arabic although he was totally ignorant of that language. Joyce championed him in a paper delivered as a Pateresque twenty-year-old before the Literary and Historical Society of University College, Dublin, and championed him again five years later, in a lecture at the Università Popolare in Trieste, as "the most significant poet of the modern Celtic world, and one of the most inspired singers that ever used the lyric form in any country." In "Araby" Mangan is the boy's friend, but, what is more important, Mangan's sister is the adored girl. In each lecture Joyce discussed Mangan's poetry in words which could serve as an epigraph for the boy's mute, chivalric love for Mangan's sister and for his subsequent disillusionment and self-disdain. In the latter lecture, Joyce described the female persona that Mangan is constantly adoring:

This figure which he adores recalls the spiritual yearnings and the imaginary loves of the Middle Ages, and Mangan has placed his lady in a

world full of melody, of lights and perfumes, a world that grows fatally to frame every face that the eyes of a poet have gazed on with love. There is only one chivalrous idea, only one male devotion, that lights up the faces of Vittoria Colonna, Laura, and Beatrice, just as the bitter disillusion and the self-disdain that end the chapter are one and the same.

And one of Joyce's favorite poems by Mangan—a poem whose influence recurs in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*—is "Dark Rosaleen," a love paean to a girl who represents Ireland (Dark Rosaleen is a poetic name for Ireland), physical love, and romantic adoration. In "Araby" Joyce took Mangan's idealized girl as an embodiment of the artist's, especially the Irish artist's, relationship to his beloved, and then, combining the image of the girl with other resonating literary associations, wrote his own story of dawning, worshipful love.

III

It is easy to follow the external events of the story. A young boy becomes fascinated with his boyfriend's sister, begins to dwell on her soft presence, and eventually adores her with an ecstasy of secret love. One day the girl speaks to him—it is one of the few times they have ever exchanged a word—and asks him if he is going to Araby. She herself cannot go, she tells him, for she must participate in a retreat. The boy says if he goes he will bring her a gift. When he finally visits the bazaar he is disillusioned by its tawdriness and by a banal conversation he overhears, and he buys no gift. Instead he feels "driven and derided by vanity" and his eyes burn with "anguish and anger."

"Driven and derided," "anguish and anger"—these reactions seem far too strong. Indeed they seem pretentious when compared to the trivial disillusionment which caused them. And they are pretentious, certainly they are inappropriate, if related only to their immediate external causes. But the boy is reacting to much more than a banal fair and a broken promise. He is reacting to sudden and deeply disturbing insights. These insights are shared by the attentive reader, for by the end of "Araby" the reader has been presented with all that he needs in order to resolve the story's intricate harmony into its component motifs.

Most of those motifs, both personal and public, are sounded at once. The former tenant of the boy's house, a house stale with the

smell of mustiness and decay, had been a priest who had died in the back drawing room. In a litter of old papers in a waste room behind the kitchen the boy has found a few damp-stained volumes: "*The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant*, and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*." The only additional information Joyce gives us about these books is that the boy liked the last volume best because "its leaves were yellow." The musty books and the boy's response to them are doubly and trebly meaningful. Joyce chose works that would objectify the themes of "Araby," works that would exemplify in the most blatant (yet unexpressed) manner the very confusions, veilings, and failures he was depicting in the priest and the boy. The books and their lurking incongruities help us arraign the priest and understand the boy. That the priest should leave a romance by Scott with a religious title that obscures the fact that it is the secular celebration of a worldly queen, Mary Queen of Scots, a queen enshrined in history as saint and harlot; a book of rules, meditations, anthems, and prayers for Holy Week by a Protestant clergyman named Abednego Seller, a clergyman who had written tracts against "Popish Priests," engaged in published controversy with a Jesuit divine, and was eventually relieved of his office; and a volume of lurid and often sexually suggestive memoirs by a notorious imposter, master of disguise, archcriminal, and police official—all this is a commentary on the priest and the religion he is supposed to represent. At the same time this literary debris objectifies the boy's confusions.

That Scott's unblemished romantic heroine, an idolized Catholic queen by the name of Mary, should also be (though not to Scott) a "harlot queen," a passionate thrice-married woman who was regarded by many of her contemporaries as the "Whore of Babylon," as a murderess who murdered to satisfy her lust—this strange dissonance, muted and obscured by Scott's presentation, is a version of the boy's strikingly similar and equally muted dissonances. That the dead priest's book of devotions is a Protestant manual by a man bearing the significant name, Abednego Seller—a name which combines in equal parts ancient religious associations (in particular associations of refusing to worship a golden image and of a faith strong enough to withstand a fiery furnace) with an ironically incongruous modern surname that has to do with selling and commercialism—this juxta-

position, also, is appropriate to the boy: it typifies one of his fundamental confusions.

That Vidocq should escape from a prison hospital disguised in the stolen habit of a nun, a veil over his face; that he should then assist a good-natured curé in celebrating mass, pretending to make the signs and genuflections prescribed for a nun—this is a version of what the boy will do. That *The Memoirs* should also contain the history of a beauty "who seemed to have been created as a model for the divine Madonnas which sprang from the imagination of Raphael," whose eyes "gave expression to all the gentleness of her soul," and who had a "heavenly forehead" and an "ethereal elegance"—but who, from the age of fourteen, had been a debauched prostitute who was ultimately caught by the police because, in the midst of committing a robbery, she and her accomplice became utterly engrossed in fornicating with one another—this, also, is a version, a grotesque extension, of the boy's confusions. The boy does not know, can not face, what he is. He gazes upon the things that attract or repel him, but they are blurred and veiled by clouds of romantic obfuscation: he likes *The Memoirs of Vidocq* best not because of what it is, a volume of exciting quasi-blasphemous criminal and sexual adventures, but because he finds its outward appearance, its yellowing leaves, romantically appealing. The boy, like the priest, or Vidocq's characters, or disguise-mad Vidocq himself, is, in effect, an imposter—only the boy is unaware of why he feels and acts as he does; the boy is an imposter through self-deception.

Joyce, in accordance with his practice throughout *Dubliners* (and for that matter, in accordance with his method throughout his writings) included these books so that we would make such generalizations about the priest and the boy. This is clear, not merely from his habitual usage in such matters or from the ironic significance of the books themselves, but from the highly directive import of the sentences which immediately follow these details. These sentences tell us that behind the boy's house was a "wild garden" containing a "central apple-tree"—images which strongly suggest a ruined Eden and Eden's forbidden central apple tree, a tree which has to do with man's downfall and his knowledge of good and evil: fundamental themes in "Araby." The last of the sentences is artfully inconclusive.

"He had," concludes the narrator, "been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister." Joyce's ambiguity suggests that the priest's charity may have been as double-edged as other details in the opening paragraphs. Yet the possibility of an incongruity here never occurs to the boy. As usual he fails to examine beneath the veneer of outward appearances; he fails to allow for the possibility of a less public, more cynical interpretation of the priest's charity. If this worldly priest had been so "very charitable" why, at his death, was he able to donate "all his money" to institutions? His charity, so far as we know about it, began at his death.

These and other ambiguously worded ironies had already been sounded by the three opening sentences of "Araby." Joyce begins by telling us that North Richmond Street is blind. That North Richmond Street is a dead end is a simple statement of fact; but that the street is blind, especially since this feature is given significant emphasis in the opening phrases of the story, suggests that blindness plays a role thematically. It suggests, as we later come to understand, that the boy also is blind, that he has reached a dead end in his life. Finally, we are told that the houses of North Richmond Street "conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." These words, too, are ironic. For the boy will shortly discover that his own consciousness of a decent life within has been a mirage; the imperturbable surface of North Richmond Street (and of the boy's life) will soon be perturbed.

In these opening paragraphs Joyce touches all the themes he will later develop: self-deluding blindness, self-inflating romanticism, decayed religion, mammonism, the coming into man's inheritance, and the gulf between appearance and reality. But these paragraphs do more: they link what could have been the idiosyncratic story of the boy, his problems and distortions, to the problems and distortions of Catholicism and of Ireland as a whole. In other words, the opening paragraphs (and one or two other sections) prevent us from believing that the fault is solely in the boy and not, to some extent at least, in the world that surrounds him, and still more fundamentally, in the nature of man himself.

IV

The boy, of course, contributes intricately to his own deception. His growing fascination for Mangan's sister is made to convey his blindness and his warring consciousness. Joyce suggests these confusions by the most artful images, symbolisms, and parallelisms. The picture of Mangan's sister which first sinks unforgettably into the boy's receptive mind is of the girl calling and waiting at her doorstep in the dusk, "her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door," while he plays in the twilight and then stands "by the railings looking at her." "Her dress," he remembered, "swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side."

This highly evocative, carefully staged, and carefully lit scene—it will recur throughout the story with slight but significant variations—gathers meaning as its many details take on definition and thematic importance. That importance was central to Joyce, and versions of the scene occur often in his writings. As his Mangan essay (1902) indicates, he had early chosen the adored female as an emblem of man's vanity, an emblem of false vision and self-delusion followed by insight and self-disdain. The female who appears in "Araby" (she appears again and again in his other writings) is such an emblem. The prototypical situation in all these appearances is of a male gazing at a female in a dim, veiled light. There are other features: the male usually looks up at the female; he often finds her standing half obscured near the top of some stairs and by a railing; he frequently notices her hair, her skirts, and her underclothes. But though the scene varies from appearance to appearance, the consequences are always the same. The male superimposes his own idealized vision upon this shadowy figure, only to have disillusioning reality (which has been there unregarded all the time) assert itself and devastate him. Joyce found this scene—with its shifting aureola of religious adoration, sexual beckoning, and blurred vision—infinately suggestive, and he utilized it for major effects.

The prototypical scene occurs in Joyce's writings before "Araby" (1905). Around 1904, in *Chamber Music*, XXX, he depicted first-love as a "time gone by when one at twilight shyly played and one in fear was standing nigh," and then added punningly that "we were grave lovers" and "love is past." Later (around 1907), in "The Dead," he drew another ambiguous lover. Gabriel Conroy stands in

a dark hall at the foot of a dark staircase and gazes up through the gloom at a listening woman. His eyes linger on her shadowy skirt and shadowy form. The woman (who proves to be his wife, Gretta) is leaning on the stair railings. He is entranced by the grace and mystery of her attitude, "as if she were a symbol of something." But what, he asks, is a listening woman, standing on the stairs in the shadow, a symbol of? Then, with a blindness that will later be filled with terrible irony, he thinks how he would paint her if he were a painter: he would capture her in that attitude—leaning on the railings on the dark staircase—and he would feature her hair and her skirt. He would call the picture *Distant Music*. Gabriel's title is as deceptive as Gretta's pose. But insight and disillusionment are not far off. Gabriel will soon find out what distant music really means to his wife and to himself, and his life will never again be the same.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1904-14) the prototypical scene is conveyed through two girls. Stephen sees Emma, his beloved, standing under a grey "veiled sky" on the stairs of the library. He already doubts her constancy, and he takes "his place silently on the step below . . . turning his eyes towards her from time to time." While he gazes at her, she and her friends stand posing their umbrellas seductively and "holding their skirts demurely." Some days later Stephen is again standing on the steps of the library. The light has waned and he can hardly see. Suddenly his beloved is before him. He watches as she descends the steps of the library and bows to his supplanter, Cranly. "She had passed through the dusk. And therefore the air was silent save for one soft hiss that fell. . . . Darkness was falling." But though Stephen feels Emma betrays him, he uses her shadowy image to create the "Villanelle of the Temptress"—the only work of art he produces in *A Portrait*, and a poem which dwells on lures, fallen seraphim, chalices, longing gazes, lavish limbs, and the end of enchanted days.

These moments or vignettes from a fall, a fall which leads to insight and creation, are juxtaposed to an earlier episode in *A Portrait*. In the earlier scene, as Stephen strolls on the seashore, he hears the symbolic call to his destiny, the summons to become an artist. At this moment, in the "veiled grey sunlight," he sees a fair-haired bird-like girl wading in the sea, her slateblue skirts raised about her thighs, her soft-hued flesh girded by the "white fringes of her

drawers.” She feels the “worship of his eyes,” and suffers his gaze, bending her eyes towards the stream. “Heavenly God!” cries Stephen to himself. In the “holy silence of his ecstasy,” while “her image” passes “into his soul for ever,” he commits himself “to live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!” But the ecstatic epiphany of the wading girl is soon deflated—not merely by the wasted sky and the grey sand which end the scene, but by the cold reality of its cognate, Emma’s betrayal, to which the epiphany is juxtaposed. Paradoxically, the annunciatory visit of the birdgirl heralds only a hope; it is deflation, the beginning of betrayal, which stimulates creation.

Joyce’s rejection of the romantic vision of the wading girl—and his continued interest in the voyeuristic scene of a male gazing at a shadowy female—is carried even further in the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses* (1914-21) where he parodies this recurring scene with merciless brilliance. As the “Nausicaa” episode opens, dusk is falling. Bloom is sitting on Sandymount strand while a Benediction service (celebrated before a men’s retreat) is going on in a nearby church. Bloom, too, is a celebrant; he is engaged in fervent devotions. He is gazing at Gerty MacDowell, “literally worshipping at her shrine.” Gerty is eighteen and a virgin. From the nearby church, hymns of veneration ascend for the Host, for the Body, canticles of praise for Our Lady, for the Virgin Mary. Bloom concentrates on Gerty, who is enpedestaled on a rock by the water’s edge. As he watches her settle her hair, swing her legs, and lift her skirts, his excitement grows. From the nearby Mirus bazaar (that is, “Wonderful” or “Perfumed” bazaar) which is raising funds for Mercer’s hospital, a display of fireworks begins. Gerty uses the excuse of the fireworks to tempt Bloom, leaning back farther and farther, lifting her skirts higher and higher, and allowing him to see her thighs and her drawers. At almost the same moment, a hymn of adoration swells from the church; the priest kneels and looks up at the Blessed Sacrament, glorified now in the round ray-begirt opening of the monstrance, and displayed on high for all the venerating men to see. At this point Bloom’s private service of veneration (like the one in the church) is coming to its conclusion. While Gerty lifts her skirts and displays herself, he masturbates to a climax. But having induced one deflation, he is about to undergo another. He realizes that Gerty is not

what she seemed to be; she is a cripple, a lame, limping version of his self-inflated dream. And there are further abasements. Bloom's mind constantly circles back to the humiliating (yet strangely exciting) event of that afternoon: how Molly, his wife, displayed her lavish body before Blazes Boylan and brought that ardent lover to a more intimate climax. "Think you're escaping," muses Bloom, "and run into yourself." But now the distant music, the sacred incense, and the rapturous words "holy Mary holy virgin of virgins" have faded on the darkening air. The clock on the mantel of the priest's house concludes the deflation by uttering Shakespeare's absurd "word of fear."

Cuckoo.

Cuckoo.

Cuckoo.

After the publication of *Ulysses*, Joyce explained that his method of writing in the "Nausicaa" episode was tumescence and detumescence; that the colors associated with the scene were blue (the color of the Virgin Mary—Gerty, a virgin who favors blue, is a parodic form of the Virgin Mary) and grey (the color of dusk); that the symbol of the chapter was the Virgin; that the organs involved in the episode were the nose (perfume and incense abound in the scene) and the eye (voyeurism); and that the art included in the section was painting.

V

"Araby" is a version—perhaps the most primordial version in Joyce—of this obsessively repeated scene. For in "Araby" the image of the worshipped girl is coterminous with, is a metaphor of, the entire story. The boy in "Araby," like Gabriel, will soon see that the portrait he has created—a romantic portrait that one might call *Young Adoration*—is a mockery, and his life will never again be the same. In "Araby" that portrait is of a girl in the dusk at her doorstep calling and waiting at her half-opened door, her figure defined by the light behind her. The picture is also of a boy standing by the railings looking up at her worshipfully. The suggestions evoked by the scene are of two utterly opposed sorts. On the one hand the image calls up associations of religious worship and spiritual adoration—

the boy at the altar railing venerating a softly lit statue of the Virgin Mary—associations which will soon be powerfully underlined and elaborated. On the other hand, the image also suggests a seductive girl, even a harlot, calling and waiting at her half-opened door—the boy stares at her outlined figure, her swaying dress, her moving body, and her softly swinging hair—and these suggestions, too, will soon be underlined and elaborated. Lastly the image suggests Ireland, a country traditionally personified in Irish literature as a beautiful girl who is worshipped with mystical fervor. The two most famous literary embodiments of this personification are Cathleen ni Houlihan and Dark Rosaleen, the latter given its definitive popular form in "Dark Rosaleen," the poem by Mangan that Joyce knew so well. In "Araby" Mangan's sister is adored and worshipped as Dark Rosaleen is in Mangan's poem, a parallel which many Irish readers would note at once, and a parallel which helps suggest that Mangan's sister is an embodiment of Ireland, is a new and more equivocal Dark Rosaleen. In "Araby" the girl is known only as Mangan's sister, an awkward and unaccountable substitute for a name (Mangan, the boy, is of no importance in the story) until one realizes that the circumlocution is designed to catch the reader's attention and direct his associations. Once the Mangan—"Dark Rosaleen" associations are called up, the parallels become charged with meaning. For Mangan's poem contains the same blend of physical love and religious adoration that Joyce makes the boy show for Mangan's sister. Dark Rosaleen has "holy, delicate white hands," is "my virgin flower, my flower of flowers," and can make the lover "kneel all night in prayer." Dark Rosaleen's name is like "lightning in my blood"; Mangan's sister's name is "like a summons to all my foolish blood." The poem exactly depicts the boy's unrest, his obsessive focus on the girl, his fusion of queen and saint, and his strange holy ardor:

All day long, in unrest,
 To and fro, do I move.
 The very soul within my breast
 Is wasted for you, love!
 The heart in my bosom faints
 To think of you, my Queen,
 My life of life, my saint of saints,
 My Dark Rosaleen!
 My own Rosaleen!

To hear your sweet and sad complaints,
 My life, my love, my saint of saints,
 My Dark Rosaleen!

Joyce begins, then, with a subtly evocative blend of spirituality, sexuality, and nationality; he immediately goes on to develop each motif in concert with the others. The boy remembers Mangan's sister as a "brown figure," and every morning, in an unvarying ritual, he actually prostrates himself before her image, lying on the floor in the front parlor and waiting for her to emerge so that he can follow her. This ritualistic abasement and prostration is appropriate to the boy's rapidly developing obsession. Like De Quincey's young boy, he has had his heart stolen away; he, too, has become idolatrous; through this girl, "by languishing desires," he has, all unknown to himself, "worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave."

For the boy has begun to worship Mangan's dark sister as all that is spiritual and holy and romantic; he has begun to utilize her idolatrously as an interceding saint, as a charm against the commercialism and materialism of the market place. When on Saturday evenings the boy accompanies his aunt in her marketing, the "image" of Mangan's sister is always with him. The language of the passage suggests that unconsciously, from the boy's point of view, two warring services are being conducted in the market place: the world's materialistic service in worship of mammon, and the boy's holy service in worship of his mild madonna. The "flaring streets" are filled with their proper votaries: drunken men, bargaining women, and cursing laborers; they are also filled with an appropriate liturgical music: the "shrill litanies" of shopboys, the "nasal chanting" of street singers. In this materialistic world, so hostile to all that the boy imagines he believes in, he keeps himself inviolate by invoking his own secret service of worship. That service transmutes the stubborn commonplaces of everyday life into holy artifacts, holy strivings, and holy deeds of chivalry. The image of Mangan's sister becomes his sacred chalice; he guards it as he makes his way through the alien market place. "I imagined," he says, as he walks one Saturday evening through the market place, his mind fixed on the holy "image" of Mangan's sister, "that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes." This religious imagery continues to clothe and veil his impulses. He soon finds himself venerating his lady in "strange

prayers and praises." His eyes often fill with tears, emotion floods from his heart; he wonders how he could ever tell her of his "confused adoration."

One evening, while in this excited state of sensual religiosity, the boy enters the back drawing room in which the priest had died. Thus begins the first of two vigils the boy will keep for Mangan's sister. The boy is about to lose himself in an ecstasy of devotion, and Joyce wants us to see that the boy is tenanted the same rooms and worshipping at the same shrines as the dead priest; that is, that the boy, like the priest, has begun to mix devotion with profanation, spirituality with materialism. The evening is dark and rainy. Through a broken pane the boy hears "the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds." The collocation of images is part of a cluster that Joyce used throughout his writings to suggest earthiness and bodily appetites (just before Mangan's sister's first appearance Joyce associated the boy with "dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, [and] the dark odorous stables") and now, watching the rain and the earth and the sodden beds through his broken window, the boy again begins his confused adorations. Below him gleams "some distant lamp or lighted window"—Joyce continues to light his special scenes in ways equally suggestive of a sanctuary or a brothel—and then the blind boy, living on his blind street, looking through his broken window, says with deepest irony: "I was thankful that I could see so little."

In a moment the boy will be invoking love incarnate; senses veiled, swooning in self-delusion, palms pressed together in devotion, he will murmur his fervent prayers. Joyce conveys this tremulous sublimation—how the boy veils his sensual responses in the garment of religious ritual—by the most artfully directive language. "All my senses," says the boy, "seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times." Every phrase is loaded with ironic meaning. The boy does not realize how truly his senses are veiling themselves (or for that matter, in what manner they are being veiled), nor does he understand, in the context, the religious connotations of the word "veil," or the physical connotations of the word "desire"; and slipping from

his senses is what he emphatically is not doing as he tremblingly invokes Love.

The next sentence in the story, one which begins a new paragraph, is short and disconcerting: "At last she spoke to me." The abrupt transitionless juxtaposition of the boy's swooning invocation of Love, palms pressed prayerfully together, and the girl's sudden apparition is purposely ambiguous. Without saying so—without, that is, introducing the supernatural by having the girl materialize before him upon his prayerful invocation (for the remainder of the passage makes it clear that the girl did not speak to him that night), Joyce suggests, at least he gains the effect, that a visitation, an epiphany, has indeed occurred as a result of the boy's invocation. But whom has the boy invoked? Love? The Virgin? His Lady? Ireland? Levana? A harlot? He is too confused to know. The girl's first words to him—"Are you going to Araby?"—confound him. It will be a "splendid bazaar," she tells him; she would "love" to go, but she must attend a retreat in her convent. The boy is "so confused" he does "not know what to answer." His confusion is understandable. For here in epitome are correlatives of the very things that have confused and will continue to confuse him: materialism (the splendid bazaar), sensuality (love), and spirituality (the convent retreat).

As Mangan's sister speaks to him, she turns a "silver bracelet round and round her wrist." The boy stands "alone at the railings," gazing at this Madonna of the Silver Bracelet. "She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease."

This wonderfully evocative scene strikes the chords of commingled spirituality, sensuality, and materialism with increasing force. That commingling is central to "Araby"; it is also central to Joyce's life. As the story of his life makes clear, Joyce was a materialist, a man of almost paranoiac cupidity and selfishness. He was also a person strongly attracted to the spiritual and the sensual. He told his brother, Stanislaus, that his chief reason for not becoming a priest was that he could not remain chaste. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we learn of the dark ways and dark ladies that so early

summoned his “foolish blood.” When Stephen enters Nighttown for his first visit to a prostitute, he is seized by a trembling, his eyes grow dim, the yellow flares of gas burn “as if before an altar,” and the people near the doors and in the lighted halls seem “arrayed as for some rite.” That Joyce should render the loss of virginity as a religious rite is consonant with his outlook and his method. In his writings we are constantly privy to the perverse warfare of sacred and profane love, to the clamorous intermixings of doctrine and experience. In *Ulysses*, when Stephen sets off for Nighttown and the bawdyhouses, he thinks, “We . . . will seek the kips where shady Mary is.” And in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce was fond of introducing such meldings as “Merryvirgin,” “marrimount,” “Hollymerry,” “fingringmaries,” and “hellmuirries.”

One of the memorable scenes in *A Portrait*—it is a scene which dwells on the blasphemous conjoining of sacred and profane love—is that in which Stephen, fresh from the stews and with the savor of a harlot’s kisses on his lips, kneels reverently at the altar to lead his sodality in their Saturday morning devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Her eyes seemed to regard him with mild pity; her holiness, a strange light glowing faintly upon her frail flesh . . . The impulse that moved him was the wish to be her knight. If ever his soul, re-entering her dwelling shyly after the frenzy of his body’s lust had spent itself, was turned towards her whose emblem is the morning star, “bright and musical, telling of heaven and infusing peace,” it was when her names were murmured softly by lips whereon there still lingered foul and shameful words, the savour itself of a lewd kiss.

This deceptive fusion of knightly chivalry, spiritual devotion, and desecrating lust (all carefully lit)—it is Joyce’s recurrent fusion, the fusion which reaches its culmination in the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses*—had occurred even earlier in yet another evocation (in this case a striking premonition rather than a later extrapolation) of Mangan’s shadowy sister. Between 1900 and 1903, that is, a few years before writing “Araby,” Joyce added to his slender collection of *Epiphanies* a scene in which the pose, the lighting, the physical features, the language, the connotations (the madonna allusion, and the conjoining of ape and martyrs’ legends, for example)—all prefigure “Araby.” Here is the epiphany in its entirety:

She stands, her book held lightly at her breast, reading the lesson. Against the dark stuff of her dress her face, mild-featured with downcast eyes, rises softly outlined in light; and from a folded cap, set carelessly forward, a tassel falls along her brown ringletted hair . . .

What is the lesson that she reads—of apes, of strange inventions, or the legends of martyrs? Who knows how deeply meditative, how reminiscent is this comeliness of Raffaello?

These recurrent comminglings help us establish the meaning of “Araby”; they show us that these fusions are intentional, that the aura of worship and desire, romanticism and corruption that Joyce casts over Mangan’s sister is at the heart of “Araby.”

VI

All women, for Joyce, are Eves: they tempt and they betray. He constantly fashions his women, fictional and real—Mangan’s sister, Gretta, Mary Sheehy, Emma, Nora, Molly—into exemplars of this idea. By the same token, men, in their yearning to worship, contrive (perhaps even desire) their own betrayal and insure their own disillusionment. This paradox, which embodies Joyce’s personal needs and experiences, is at the center of *Exiles*. It also helps shape *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*. In the latter work the notion is universalized and multiplied. One of the primal forms of woman in *Finnegans Wake* is woman as temptress. She is portrayed most clearly as Isabel, the daughter of HCE and Anna Livia, and as the Maggies or Magdalenes (who appear in dozens of permutations: maudelenian, Margareena, Marie Maudlin, etc.), the two girls who tempted HCE to his fall in Phoenix Park, and who are often merged with Isabel. This archetypal temptress and goddess, blending and changing in a flux of protean metamorphoses (she is also Issy, Issis, Ishtar, Isolde—as Isolde of Ireland, an embodiment of Ireland) is frequently referred to as “Ysold,” “I sold,” “Issabil,” “eyesoult,” and “eyesalt.” As her godlike role and legendary names imply, she combines worshipful love and sexual appeal (Isolde), with inevitable commercialism and betrayal (I sold), with bitter grief and disillusionment (eyesalt)—the combination and progression we also find in “Araby.”

What Joyce is saying in “Araby” becomes more precise as the details accumulate and fall into patterns. This second evocation of

the carefully lit figure of Mangan’s sister, now in the guise of the Madonna of the Silver Bracelet, is worth examining once more, this time in the context of what we have just been tracing:

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. . . . I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

This second evocation of Mangan’s sister is again filled with strange harmonies. On the one hand the passage calls up Mary Magdalene and the Blessed Virgin Mary (both were present at the crucifixion) and soft overtones of a tender and dolorous *pietà*; one easily extracts and then extrapolates the appropriate images—the patient hand on the cruel spike, the gentle head bowed submissively, the mild neck arched in grief. But a coequal and co-ordinate pattern in the scene is the harlotry associations of Mary Magdalene, who, in Catholic liturgy, is specifically associated with exotic Near Eastern imagery, bracelets, and crossing the city in search of her love—all strong elements in “Araby”; while on the more personal level the name “Mary” is also the name of the girl Joyce regarded as his original “temptress” and “betrayer”—Mary Sheehy; and perhaps, at the same time, this “shady Mary” pattern is connected with the harlotry associations of still another Mary, the “harlot queen,” Mary Queen of Scots, the heroine of the dead priest’s book, *The Abbot*, who was executed in her petticoat. In any case, the negative pattern incorporated in the shadowy image of Mangan’s sister combines hints of commercialism and sensuality with connotations of sexuality and betrayal—the turning and turning of the silver bracelet, the head bowing toward the boy, the white curve of the bare neck, the soft hair glowing in the light, the side of the dress accentuated by the dim glow, the white border of the petticoat just visible beneath the dress (one recalls the dream-shattering petticoat of the false Protestant madonna in “Our Lady of the Hills”), and the whole figure standing at ease in the dusk.

The boy now makes his pledge. “If I go,” he says, “I will bring you something.” The consequences of his pledge are immediately apparent. “What innumerable follies,” writes the narrator in the very

next sentence, "laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening!" The shadowy "image" of Mangan's sister constantly comes between him and everything he undertakes; his schoolmaster, puzzled and then exasperated, hopes that he is "not beginning to idle"—a phrase which again, now punningly, underlines that the boy, like De Quincey's young boy, has indeed begun to worship false idols, that he is well on his way to Araby.

Araby—the very word connotes the nature of the boy's confusion. It is a word redolent of the lush East, of distant lands, Levantine riches, romantic entertainments, mysterious magic, "Grand Oriental Fêtes." The boy immerses himself in this incense-filled dream world. He tells us that "the syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me." That enchantment, or to put it another way, Near Eastern imagery (usually in conjunction with female opulence or romantic wish fulfillment), always excited Joyce. It reappears strongly in *Ulysses* in a highly intricate counterpoint, which is sometimes serious (Molly's Moorish attributes) and sometimes mocking (Bloom's dream of a Messianic Near Eastern oasis). But the boy in "Araby" always interprets these associations, no matter how disparate or how ambiguous they are, in one way: as correlatives of a baroquely beatific way of living. Yet the real, brick-and-mortar Araby in the boy's life is a bazaar, a market, a place where money and goods are exchanged. The boy is blind to this reality lurking beneath his enchanted dream. To the boy, his lady's silver bracelet is only part of her Eastern finery; his journey to a bazaar to buy her an offering is part of a romantic quest. But from this point on in the story the masquerading pretenses of the boy—and of his church, his land, his rulers, and his love—are rapidly underlined and brought into a conjunction which will pierce his perfervid dream world and put an end to "enchanted days."

The boy has arranged with his aunt and uncle that he will go to the bazaar on Saturday evening, that is, on the evening of the day specially set aside for veneration of the Virgin Mary. Saturday evening arrives but the boy's uncle is late from work and the boy wanders at loose ends through the empty upper reaches of his house. In the "high cold empty gloomy rooms" he begins his second vigil. Off by himself he feels liberated. He goes from room to room singing.

Hidden, he watches his companions play and listens to their weakened, indistinct cries. Then he leans his forehead against a cool window pane and looks over at the “dark house” where Mangan’s sister lives. “I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.”

When he goes downstairs again he is brought back from the isolated world of his imagination to the ordinary world of his everyday life. He finds Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. “She was an old garrulous woman, a pawnbroker’s widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose.” The sentence is packed with ironic meaning. The old lady’s name—Mercer, that is, merchandise, wares, a small-ware dealer—links her to the commercial focus of the story. That her husband was a pawnbroker sharpens this focus, introducing as it does commercialism in its most abhorrent form from the church’s point of view—commercialism as usury. But that the church accepts, even lives on, this same commercialism is also made clear: for garrulous old Mrs. Mercer (another embodiment of Ireland) is a pious woman with pious purposes; ironically, she expresses her piety in good works that depend upon empty mechanical acquisitiveness: she collects used stamps. (One recalls, in this connection, the “pious purpose” of the actual Araby bazaar—to collect money for a hospital; and one also recalls that the “Wonderful” or “Perfumed” bazaar in *Ulysses*—the bazaar that allowed Bloom to gaze worshipfully under Gerty’s skirts while a choir celebrated the Host and hymned the Virgin Mary—was an attempt to collect money for another “pious purpose,” for a hospital named “Mercer’s.”) Joyce is saying, in effect, that everyday religion and piety in Ireland are based upon self-deluding and mindless materialism. When Mrs. Mercer’s unexamined commercial religion is remembered in conjunction with the boy’s and then the dead priest’s (one recalls that the priest’s book of heretical devotions was by a man named “Seller”)—we get some idea of how insidiously mammonistic is Ireland’s religious bankruptcy.

The boy will soon have some insight into this and other bankruptcies, but at the moment he is taut with frustrated anticipation. “I am afraid,” says his aunt, when his uncle still fails to appear, “you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord”—counterpoint-

ing “bazaar” and “Our Lord,” money and religion. Then, at nine o’clock, the uncle finally returns, tipsy and talking to himself. He has forgotten the bazaar, and he tries to put the boy off, but the aunt insists that he give the boy money for the bazaar, and he finally agrees, after the boy tells him twice that he is going to Araby. The word “Araby” sets the uncle’s mind working. He asks the boy if he knows *The Arab’s Farewell to His Steed*, and as the boy leaves the room, the uncle is about to recite the opening lines of the poem to his wife. Those lines never appear in the story, but they are fraught with thematic significance:

My beautiful, my beautiful! that standeth meekly by,
 With thy proudly-arched and glossy neck, and dark and fiery eye!
 Fret not to roam the desert now with all thy wingèd speed;
 I may not mount on thee again!—thou’rt sold, my Arab steed!

The notion of betrayal, of something loved and beautiful being sold for money, of something cherished and depended upon being lost forever, is central to what has already happened in “Araby” and what is about to take place. But the poem goes on with even greater cogency:

The stranger hath thy bridle-rein, thy master hath his gold;—
 Fleet-limbed and beautiful, farewell!—thou’rt sold, my steed, thou’rt sold!

This cogency—turning the bridle reins over to a foreign master for money, saying farewell to a beautiful part of the past—has another and even more startling appropriateness. For the poem is by Caroline Norton, a great beauty and a member of a famous Irish family (her grandfather was Richard Brinsley Sheridan), who was sued for divorce by her husband, the Hon. George Chapple Norton, on the grounds that she had committed adultery with Lord Melbourne, then Home Secretary but at the time of the suit in 1836 prime minister of Great Britain. As Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne had been the minister responsible for Ireland, and in 1833, while still Home Secretary, he had supported the Coercion Bill, a bill of great severity aimed at Irish nationalists. The trial which ensued—one of the most notorious in the nineteenth century—was used by Dickens in the breach-of-promise suit in *Pickwick*, by Thackeray in the Lord Steyne-Becky Sharp relationship in *Vanity Fair*, and by Meredith in some of the climactic scenes of *Diana of the Crossways*. The jury

found for the defendants, but chiefly on grounds other than Caroline Norton's constancy. The defendants won after conclusive testimony was introduced showing that Norton had been the chief advocate of his wife's liaison with Lord Melbourne, that he had initiated and perpetuated the liaison as a means of advancing himself, and that he had brought suit only after he had suffered reverses in that advancement.

That an Irish woman as beautiful as Caroline Norton should have been sold by her husband for English preferments; that she should have been sold to the man who, in effect, was the English ruler of Ireland; that she, in turn, should have been party to such a sale; that this very woman, writing desperately for money, should compose a sentimental poem celebrating the traitorous sale of a beautiful and supposedly loved creature; and that this poem should later be cherished by the Irish (the uncle's recitation is in character, the poem was a popular recitation piece, it appears in almost every anthology of Irish poetry)—all this is patently and ironically appropriate to what Joyce is saying.

So also is the next scene in “Araby.” The boy leaves his house on the way to Araby with a florin, a piece of silver money, clutched tightly in his hand. That Joyce, out of all the coins and combinations of coins available to him, chose to have the boy clutch a florin is doubly meaningful. The original florin, the prototype of all future coins bearing that name, was a gold coin, famed for its purity, minted in Florence in 1252. It received its name, “florin,” that is, “flower,” because, like many of its progeny, it bore a lily, the flower of Florence and of the Virgin Mary, on one side. On the other side it bore the figure of Saint John the Baptist in religious regalia, a man who gave his life rather than betray his religion. The florin the boy clutches, however, is a silver coin minted by the English with a head of Queen Victoria on one side and the Queen's coat of arms (including the conquered harp of Ireland) on the other. Owing to the fact that the customary “*Dei Gratia, F.D.*” (“by the grace of God, defender of the faith”) was omitted from the coin when originally issued in 1847, it became infamous as the “Godless and Graceless Florin” and aroused such a popular outcry that it had to be called in before the year was out. As a result, the Master of the Mint, a Roman Catholic, was dismissed, and a few years later a new but almost

identical florin was issued with the usual motto. The malodorous genesis of the English coin, its association with a Catholic scapegoat, and the restitution of a motto which, from an Irish Catholic point of view, made the coin as idolatrous and offensive as the Godless version—all this is ideally suited to Joyce's purpose.

For the duped boy is now acting out his betrayal in the most emblematic way. We recall the intricate liturgy of his self-delusion. Despising the market place, he had summoned and protected the image of Mangan's sister as a holy chalice antithetical to all such worldly commerce; mistaking his impulses, he had transformed his sexual desires into prayers and praises for the Virgin, into worshipful Catholic devotions. That the boy who immersed himself in such ceremonious self-deception should be hastening to buy at a bazaar (where, incidentally, he will meet his English masters) and that he should be clutching an English florin, an alien and notorious silver coin sans Virgin's lily and sans Catholic saint but bearing instead symbols of his and Ireland's servitude and betrayal, is, of course, supremely ironic.

That irony continues and expands in what follows. It is Saturday night. The boy tells us that "the sight of streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey." The flaring streets "thronged with buyers" and the clutched silver coin call to the reader's mind a purpose far different from that which the boy thinks he is pursuing. The sights, the words, the Saturday evening, the silver florin, also recall that the last time the boy went into the flaring streets shopping through throngs of buyers on a Saturday night, he had said, speaking particularly of those buyers, "I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes." They recall also that Saturday is the day most particularly devoted to veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We now see clearly what the boy bears through a throng of foes, what his chalice is: it is not the image of a mild spiritual madonna, it is money, the alien florin of betrayal—betrayal of his religion, his nation, his dream of supernal love; he, like his country, has betrayed himself for the symbolic piece of alien silver he clutches in his hand as he hurries on to Araby. We also begin to get a better notion of who the shadowy madonna is that he worships with such febrile spirituality. We recall that he is rushing headlong to a bazaar to buy his lady a token (he, too, is one of the throng

of buyers), and then we recall how his madonna—could she be a false, sensual, materialistic madonna, a projection of his own complicated self-betrayal?—“turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist.”

The boy at last arrives at the large building which displays “the magical name” of *Araby*. In his haste to get into the closing bazaar, he passes through a shilling rather than a sixpenny entrance, handing the gatekeeper his silver coin as he goes through the turnstile. The interior of the building is like a church. The great central hall, circled at half its height by a gallery, contains dark stalls, dim lights, and curtained, jar-flanked sanctuaries. Joyce wants us to regard this temple of commerce as a place of worship. “I recognised a silence,” says the boy as he stands in the middle of the hall, “like that which pervades a church after a service.” The service is, of course, the worship of mammon, and Joyce, by his use of religious imagery here and throughout the story, lets us see both that the money-changers are in the temple (if one looks at the bazaar as a correlative of the church), and that the really devout worship which goes on in Ireland now, goes on in the market place: the streets thronged with buyers, the shrill litanies of shopboys, the silver-braceleted madonnas, the churchlike bazaars. Even he who imagined that he bore his chalice safely through a throng of foes finds himself in the temple of the money-changers ready to buy. Shocked, and with growing awareness, the boy begins to realize where he is and what he is doing. In the half-dark hall, as the bazaar closes and the remaining lights begin to go out, he watches as two men work before a curtain lit overhead by a series of colored lamps upon which a commercial inscription is emblazoned. The two men “were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.” The boy also has fallen. We recall the “wild garden” with its “central apple-tree,” that the words “falling” and “fell” are crucial to the description of Mangan’s sister during her epiphany before the boy, and that the word “fall” again recurs—again in connection with money—when the boy, in his penultimate action, an action reminiscent of how Judas let the silver of betrayal fall upon the ground after his contrition, allows “two pennies to fall against the sixpence” in his pocket as he finally turns to leave the bazaar. But right now the fallen boy is witnessing the counting of the collection before the sanctuary of this church of

mammon (the curtain, the salver, the lamps, the inscription all suggest simultaneously the sanctuary of a Catholic church); he is listening to the music of this service of mammon, the clink of falling coins. The boy is so stupified that he can remember only "with difficulty why [he] had come."

His shock and his disillusionment are not yet over. He sees a young saleslady standing at the door of one of the dark stalls. The reader, like the boy, instantly feels that he has viewed this scene before: the girl standing in the doorway, the dim lighting, the churchlike atmosphere. Then, suddenly, the reader realizes that the scene enforces a crucial juxtaposition; the waiting salesgirl is a parody of the boy's obsessive image of female felicity, she is a counterpart (an everyday, commercial counterpart) of Mangan's tenebrous sister. The boy looks steadily at this vulgar avatar of his longings; and then his other vision—his vision of a comely waiting presence, of a heavenly dolorous lady—dissolves and finally evaporates. The boy, at last, glimpses reality unadorned; he no longer deceives himself with his usual romanticizing. For the moment, at least, he truly sees. There before him stands a dull, drab, vacuous salesgirl; she is no mild Irish madonna, no pensive *pietà*, no mutely beckoning angel. He listens as she talks and laughs with two young gentlemen; the three of them have English accents:

"O, I never said such a thing!"

"O, but you did!"

"O, but I didn't!"

"Didn't she say that?"

"Yes, I heard her."

"O, there's a . . . fib!"

This snippet of banal conversation is Joyce's, the boy's, and now the reader's epiphany—the word "epiphany" used here in Joyce's special literary sense of "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself"—and the conversation the boy overhears bears an unmistakable resemblance to a well-defined type of epiphany which Joyce recorded (bald exchanges of fatuous, almost incoherent conversation), several examples of which have survived. But what we have here is the epiphany surrounded by all that is needed to give it significance; the private *quidditas* has been transformed into a public

showing forth; the artist, the priest of the eternal imagination, has transmuted (to paraphrase another of Joyce's religious metaphors) the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving art.

For what the boy now sees, and what we now know he sees, is that his worshipped madonna is only a girl, like the ordinary girl who stands before him, that his interest in his madonna is akin to the gentlemen's interest in the young lady before them, and that their pedestrian conversation about fibbing—the very word is a euphemism for "lying"—is only a banal version of his own intricate euphemisms, his own gorgeous lying to himself. Like the Catholic boy in Yeats' "Our Lady of the Hills," who sobs in anguish because his vision of a palpable madonna must give way to the reality of an ordinary Protestant girl, the boy in "Araby" can now also cry out angrily, "I'm a divil, and you are only an ordinary lady."

That this ordinary lady is an English lady is another shattering part of the boy's painful epiphany. The English accents are the accents of the ruling race, the foreign conquerors—Joyce makes much of this notion in *A Portrait* and more in *Ulysses*—and now the boy begins to understand that England, this nation which rules over him, is quintessentially vulgar, the servant par excellence of mammon. England is one with Ireland and Ireland's church, and the boy is one with all of these. He has felt the first stirrings of desire and converted them into masquerading religiosity; he has wanted to go shopping at a bazaar and has told himself that he is making an enchanted journey to fetch a chivalric token; he has been exposed to the debased vulgarities of *The Memoirs of Vidocq* and has admitted only that he liked its yellow pages. Yet he is no worse than the rest of Ireland—its dead priests (part of a dying church), its Mrs. Mercers, its faithless drunken surrogate fathers—and for that matter, no worse than Ireland's rulers. Ireland and Ireland's church, once appropriately imaged as a romantic lady or a sorrowful madonna, has now become cuckquean and harlot—she is sold and sells for silver.

Joyce returned to this theme again and again, often with startling repetitions of details and symbols. In *Ulysses*, for example, Ireland appears personified not as a young girl, but as an old milkwoman. She enters and leaves *Ulysses* in a page or two, yet within that cramped space, and despite the vast difference, on the realistic level, between the role she must play in *Ulysses* and the roles of those who

appear in "Araby," Joyce manages to associate her with many of the idiosyncratic features that characterize Ireland and Ireland's betrayal in "Araby." In *Ulysses* the old milkwoman is depicted as "an immortal serving her conqueror [Haines, the Englishman] and her gay betrayer [Mulligan, the Irishman], their common cuckquean." Mulligan sings a song about her "hissing up her petticoats"; she tells him she is ashamed she must speak in foreign accents; she is depicted "slipping the ring of the milkcan on her forearm" (the silver bracelet again); and she is paid by Mulligan with a silver florin.

VII

Other elements in "Araby" are also connected to patterns that transcend the immediate action. The two most crucial events in the story, the two vigils, harmonize with specific occasions in the Roman Catholic liturgy. The first vigil—the one in which Mangan's sister appears after the boy's invocation, "*O love! O love!*"—suggests the Vigil of the Epiphany. The most striking passage in that Vigil tells how "in those childish days of ours we toiled away at the schoolroom tasks which the world gave us, till the appointed time came"—a passage which is exactly appropriate to how the boy, after his first visitation or epiphany (that is, after Mangan's sister has appeared to him and directed him to Araby—just as in the original Epiphany an angel appeared to Joseph directing him to go from Egypt to Israel) feels about the schoolroom tasks ("child's play, ugly monotonous child's play") while he waits for the time of his journey to Araby. But the "appointed time" spoken of in the Vigil is the time of the journey to Israel and of the coming of the spirit of Jesus, not of a trip to Araby; it is the time when the spirit of Jesus cries out to a child, "Abba, Father," and he becomes no longer a child, a slave, but a son of God, entitled to "the son's right of inheritance." For the boy in "Araby" that cry and that inheritance turn out to be far different from what he believed them to be—he comes into a majority, but it is the disillusioning majority of the flesh, of all the sons of Adam, not of the spirit; he makes his journey, but it is a journey to Egypt, to Araby, to the market place, not back to the Holy Land.

These reverberating liturgical harmonies are continued in the boy's second vigil—the one he keeps during his long evening wait, and then during his journey to and sojourn in Araby. The connec-

tions here are with Holy Week (especially the Passion) and with Holy Saturday (the night before Easter Sunday). In "Araby" the trip to the bazaar takes place on a Saturday night; the boy's aunt refers to the Saturday night in question as "this night of Our Lord," an expression which can be applied to any Saturday (or Sabbath) night, but which calls up most particularly the pre-eminent Saturday "night of Our Lord," that is, Holy Saturday. The service appointed for this occasion is the Mass of Holy Saturday. This Mass, owing to its great beauty, and especially to the rich symbolism of the *Tenebrae*, haunted Joyce. (The whole of Book IV of *Finnegans Wake*, for example, takes place in the instant between Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.) The Mass of Holy Saturday was the only Mass Joyce regularly tried to witness later in life, always leaving, however, before communion. Central to this Mass is the imagery of light and darkness, the extinguishing of the old lights and then the rekindling of new lights from new fire. On the other hand, prominent in the Passion is the notion of betrayal: Peter's lying threefold denial of Jesus, and Judas' selling of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The idea of profound betrayal, then the adumbration of awakening and rising, all combined with imagery of light and dark, and the whole counterpointed with liturgical overtones, informs the conclusion of "Araby."

The boy, for instance, comes to Araby with silver in his hand (with the idolatrous successor to the Godless Florin, it will be remembered); and he watches as the money of betrayal (his and his nation's) falls clinking on the salver. Like Peter's lying threefold denial of Jesus, the banal conversation about lying that the boy overhears also involves a threefold denial (the girl denies three times that she said what she is accused of saying). The foreign English accents continue the parallel, for Peter, like the English, is a foreigner, and his denials involve his accent. "Even thy speech betrays thee," he is told. When Peter recognized his betrayal (at the crowing of the cock) he "wept bitterly"; when the boy recognized his (at the call that the light was out) his "eyes burned with anguish and anger." In the service for Holy Saturday the lights are extinguished and then relit; in the service the boy witnesses there is no rekindling, the boy merely gazes "up into the darkness." And yet, of course, here too a new light is lit; for though an old faith is extinguished, we witness a dawning.

These liturgical and religious parallels and disparities (one could list other much more subterranean ones: the story of Abednego is told *in extenso* in the Holy Saturday Mass, and Abednego Seller's heretical *Devout Communicant* is a manual for Holy Week), these parallels lie unobtrusively in the background. They are not meant to be strictly or allegorically interpreted; they are meant to suggest, to hint, perhaps to condition. Unconsciously they tinge our associations and responses; they also harmonize with the more explicit motifs of the story.

The boy standing in front of the young lady's shadowy booth, listening to her bantering inanities, perceives all these significances only dimly. He is shocked, hurt, angered; but he intuitively feels, and will later understand, what the reader already comprehends. Yet even in his dim awareness he is ready to make one decision. While still at the "dark entrance" of the young lady's stall, he tells her he is no longer interested in "her wares." He lets the two pennies fall against the sixpence in his pocket; he has come to buy, but he has not bought. Someone calls that the light is out. The light is indeed out. Like De Quincey's young boy, the boy in "Araby" has been excluded from light, has worshipped the "lovely darkness" of the grave; he has (in the words of *Chamber Music*, XXX) been a "grave lover." But again like De Quincey's young boy, at last he has seen. He has risen again *before* he has died; he has begun to unfold "the capacities of his spirit." As *Chamber Music*, XXX, has it, he welcomes now "the ways that [he] shall go upon." For the boy has caught a glimpse of himself as he really is—a huddled, warring, confused paradox of romantic dreams, mistaken adorations, and mute fleshly cravings—and one portion of his life, his innocent, self-deluding childhood, is now behind him. In his pride and arrogance, and, yes, in his purity and innocence too, he had imagined that he bore his chalice safely through a throng of foes; instead, he had rushed headlong toward that which he thought he most despised. In a land of betrayers, he had betrayed himself. But now he understands some of this; and now, raising his eyes up into the blackness, but totally blind no more—the Christlike fusion here of ascent, of sight, and of agony is all-important—he can say, "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger."

VIII

Joyce has succeeded, here, in taking the raw, rather humdrum, unpromising facts of his own life and transforming them into abiding patterns of beauty and illumination. He has taken a universal experience—a more or less ordinary experience of insight, disillusionment, and growth—and given it an extraordinary application and import. The experience becomes a criticism of a nation, a religion, a civilization, a way of existing; it becomes a grappling hook with which we can scale our own well-guarded citadels of self-delusion. Joyce does all this in six or seven pages. He manages this feat by endowing the simple phrases and actions of "Araby" with multiple meanings that deepen and enlarge what he is saying.

The image of Mangan's sister is a case in point. Joyce takes this shadowy image, this dark scene which fascinated and obsessed him and which he returned to again and again, and shapes it to his purposes. He projects this image so carefully, touches it so delicately and skillfully with directive associations and connotations, that it conveys simultaneously, in one simple seamless whole, all the warring meanings he wishes it to hold—all the warring meanings it held for him. The pose of the harlot is also the pose of the Virgin; the revered Lady of Romance (kin to Vittoria Colonna, Laura, Beatrice, Levana, Dark Rosaleen, and the beloved of any artist) is also Ireland and at the same time a vulgar English shopgirl. One need not belabor the point. These meanings are conveyed not merely by the juxtapositions and evocations of the chief images—of Mangan's dark sister and the English shopgirl, for example—but by the reiterated patterns, allusions, and actions which bind the whole work together: the dead priest's charitableness, Mrs. Mercer's used stamps, the fall of money on the salver; Araby, Eastern enchantment, the knightly quest for a chivalric token; the swaying dress, the veiled senses, the prayerful murmur, "*O love! O love!*" Scarcely a line, an evocation, an object—the central apple tree, the heretical book of devotions by Abednego Seller, "The Arab's Farewell to His Steed," the blind street—but adds its harmony to the whole and extends and clarifies the story's meaning.

The test of an explanation is its utility—how many facts can it order and make meaningful? The conception of "Araby" embodied in this essay accounts for thorny details as well as larger motifs. The

conception also sheds light on recurrent scenes, ideas, and patterns in Joyce's writings; for example, it makes intelligible a heretofore impenetrable passage in *Finnegans Wake*. That passage, in turn, is part of a longer section which is amenable to similar exegesis, a section which contains lines such as "Never play lady's game for the Lord's stake"; "Lust, thou shalt not commix idolatry"; and "Collide with man, collude with money." But here is the passage itself:

Remember the biter's bitters I shed the vigil I buried our Harlotte Quai from poor Mrs Mangain's of Britain Court on the feast of Marie Maudlin. Ah, who would wipe her weeper dry and lead her to the halter? Sold in her heyday, laid in the straw, bought for one puny petunia. Moral: if you can't point a lily get to henna out of here!

In the light of what we know about "Araby," and paying attention only to those meanings which are pertinent to "Araby," the passage might be freely construed as follows: Remember the bitter tears I shed, I the biter who was bitten, in that secret and buried vigil I kept—all was later shed and buried—for the Harlot Queen, for Mary Queen of Scots, for Mangan's sister, who lived, as all Ireland does, under the rule of Britain's Court. These and others, blended together, I venerated in my maudlin, sentimental way, as I also venerated Mary Magdalene, saint and prostitute (a weeper who wiped her weeping dry). To what end?—sacramental? (altar), noose or enslavement? (halter), or merely a dead end? (halt her)? Ireland and Ireland's religion was sold in its heyday, laid low and prostituted in the straw, sold for one puny penny, for a petunia. Moral: if you can't accept Ireland's religion (lily), if you can't paint the lily (that is, gild the lily, romanticize Ireland, cover all with a veneer of gold—with a pun on "pointillism," and with sexual overtones), at least you can get the false dye (henna) out of her, and get the hell (Gehenna) out of here!

Obviously this is a bald transcription of something much richer and much more subtle. Obviously, too, the passage is wed to the patterns of *Finnegans Wake*, so that from the point of view of "Araby," the passage is overlaid by considerations extraneous to the story. (For example, "Harlotte Quai"—that is, "Charlotte Quay"—and "Britain Court" are also actual places in Dublin.) But though "Araby" is not the *raison d'être* of the passage, it provides a key to the passage. For most of the meanings in the passage are so condensed

and private, they can be satisfactorily read only in the light of their much plainer and more detailed conjunction in "Araby." How then does the passage come to be in *Finnegans Wake* at all? It is there because it is tied to a series of events which shaped some of Joyce's fundamental insights and concerns. Eventually that cluster of events and associations, given early literary coherence in "Araby," became both matrix and correlative for such concerns. We see the cluster in *Finnegans Wake* as we see it in all his writings. Joyce, in truth, was always walking through and meeting himself.

We have already noticed that some portions of those original events and associations can be identified; other portions we can detect only as they filter again and again through Joyce's successive fictions. In *Finnegans Wake* these fragments of events and associations, truncated now and fantastically jumbled, have suffered a strange sea change, but they are still discernible, sometimes all the more so, and sometimes all the plainer in import, because of their laborious encrustations of meaning.

For one thing, as in "Araby," the name "Mangan" (this is the only time it occurs in *Finnegans Wake*) again appears in female guise, now as "Mrs Mangain." The changed spelling of the name is significant because it underlines the mercenary and sexual elements (Man-gain) which had played so large but so implicit a role in the boy's confused adoration of Mangan's dark sister. At the same time a whole group of associations sounded in "Araby" are also sounded here. "Harlotte Quai" and "Marie Maudlin" are a recrudescence of the virgin-harlot fusion embodied by Mangan's sister, the fusion of the "harlot queen" (Mary Queen of Scots) with Mary Queen of Heaven and Mary Magdalene. "Britain Court" again suggests courting Britain as well as submitting to British rule. "Vigil I buried" refers once more to the secret vigils the boy devoted to his false madonna, and to the ultimate deflation and burial of that self-deluding idolatry. While "biter's bitters" is another version of the boy's "anguish and anger"; as Joyce put it in his essay on Mangan, it is "the bitter disillusion and self-disdain" which must end all such romantic projections; or, once again, as he put it in *Ulysses*, it is the "agenbite of inwit." (Note the striking repetition of words, meanings, and sounds, here—"anger," "anguish," "agenbite," "biter's," "bitters," "bitter," "inwit"—as though a constellation of sounds had become wedded to

the archetypal event.) In a similar manner, the commingling of sex, selling one's self for money, and being brought low which is so central to "Araby" is epitomized in, "Sold in her heydey, laid in the straw, bought for one puny petunia." The sexual element is conveyed by "sold in her heyday" (punning on "hayday"), and "laid in the straw" (that is, made love to in the straw—"hayday" again), while engrafted upon the same words is the idea of selling one's self for money: "sold in her heyday," and "bought for one puny [that is, "one penny"] petunia" (with a pun on *pecunia*). And all this is conjoined with the ultimate deflation, the idea of being brought low: "laid in the straw"—a remark which, in the context, applies to Ireland and the Catholic religion as well as the narrator.

The last sentence in the passage is also packed with additional meanings analogous to those in "Araby." The lily is the predominant flower of Catholicism, but more particularly, in Catholic symbolism, it is the flower of the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, the plant, henna, in addition to producing a dye, that is, a masking substance, also produces a white flower connected with Mohammedan religious symbolism and used, like the dye, in Mohammedan religious and erotic rites—the word "henna" itself is of Arabic origin. Hence, in a manner analogous to the end of "Araby," the line implies that Irish Catholicism, and in particular the worship of the Virgin Mary, is dyed or adulterated by money, sex, and "Arabian" exoticism; or to put it another way, if one can't have a religion devoid of henna, if one isn't allowed to paint the lily unless one gilds it, one must leave the religion and the country. But this statement, though its implications and even its images are redolent of "Araby," goes beyond "Araby." For in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce is looking back; he can convey his moral from the distant pinnacle of exile and achievement. In "Araby" the boy has just discovered that he is confusing lilies and henna; in his moment of anguish he can not yet see that he must gild the lily or get out.

IX

Joyce's art in "Araby," and in many of his other writings, may be likened to a palimpsest. Perhaps more than any artist of his era he was willing, for the sake of his over-all design, to obscure, even to wipe out rich nuances and powerful ironies. But at the same time,

and again perhaps more than any contemporary artist, he was careful to lacquer his images and actions with layer after layer of translucent, incremental meaning. The finished palimpsest is rich with shimmering depths, strange blendings, and tantalizing hints: here something has been rubbed out, there a few faint lines coalesce meaningfully and then dwindle away, while in the center a figure, distinct, yet merging with myriads of dim underforms, swims slowly into focus and then turns and dissolves and re-forms before our gaze. Abednego Seller drops out of view, only the misleading, enigmatic *Devout Communicant* remains; England's silver florin gleams brightly in the boy's tight grasp, the ancient golden lily and golden saint glimmer darkly in the shaded depths; Saturday evening shopping trips and "this night of Our Lord" stand boldly in the foreground, the liturgical engrams of which they are a part loom faintly in the distance. Mangan's shadowy sister—a version of the darkling siren Joyce drew so often—is limned and limned again. Harlot and virgin, temptress and saint, queen and shopgirl, Ireland and England—she is a miracle of blendings, mergings, and montages. While a multitude of harmonizing designs, some clear, some dim, some just faintly discernible—Mary Queen of Scots, "Our Lady of the Hills," Dark Rosaleen, a criminal dressed as a nun, Levana, Eastern bazaars, Caroline Norton, and idolatrous vigils—complete the deceptive palimpsest.

In *Dubliners* we sometimes become fascinated by the more legible figures in the palimpsest. But the more obscure figures are there too, and Joyce, by his reticences, encourages us to seek them. We know at the end of "Araby" that something devastating has occurred, and we would like to know exactly what it is. Ultimately, the full radiance of sight, of meaning, is ours, not the boy's. He has caught a glimpse of reality, of himself as he really is; he can reject the old encumbering vision, he can decide to dream "no more of enchanted days," but he can not yet fashion a new life. As the story has it, the light is out; the boy must grapple in the dark. But like blind Oedipus, in the dark the boy finally sees: his moment of illumination is given to him as he gazes "up into the darkness." That moment of blinding sight is also the moment of artistic vision, of the unfolding of "the capacities of [the] spirit"; not merely because the moment is later seen and reseen with the clarity, the penetration,

the rich ramification of the artist's eye, but because the moment itself is a *sine qua non* for the artist's eye. The boy's end is his beginning; he has walked through and met himself.

"Araby" is the rendering of a quintessential moment (and for Joyce, *the* quintessential moment) in a portrait of the artist as a young boy. It is as though the boy of the story has come to the end of a well-lighted dead-end road. He now confronts a tangle of dark paths. Perhaps one of those paths will eventually lead him to a brighter road and to a wider, steadier vision of the surrounding countryside. The boy has not yet chosen the path he will follow; he may very well choose the wrong path. But at least he has seen that his own comfortable well-worn road, well-lighted and thronged with travelers though it is, is a dead end. That insight makes further travel possible; he can "welcome . . . now at the last the ways that [he] shall go upon." North Richmond Street is blind, but Dublin perhaps has thoroughfares, and if not Dublin, then, as the conclusion of *A Portrait* tells us, the beckoning roads of all the world beyond Ireland: "white arms of roads" leading "beyond the sleeping fields to what journey's end?"