

Reflection on james joyce's "araby"

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The first time I went to church, I was eight years old. Because I had grown up rather detached from any form of religious practices, I was curious about how one worshipped God, so one day I asked my Grandmother if I could accompany her on her excursion to church. She agreed, and that was how I found myself singing to hymns I had never heard before. I felt out of place and rather perplexed surrounded by the vast rows of pews. This is the way I feel reading James Joyce's "Araby" with its influences stemming from Western culture.

Although it touches on religion, Joyce's writing can be interpreted as a modernist piece of literature because its views do not favor the church and its style is more experimental. However, the storyline fails to introduce a main character that resembles a real person, and it provides too intricately woven satire that leads to an anti-climactic climax and misses a major chunk of the plot: the conclusion. Joyce fails to engage the entirety of his audience; he is unsuccessful in leaving an impact on me because his writing is dripping in faith-based interpretations, making it hard – because I am not well versed in religion – to decipher why the plot of his story is significant. Characters' feelings and reactions to the plot of a story can either create a strong message, or leave the reader feeling in the dark. Joyce's characters fall into the latter category. Even though the main complications that arise throughout the story have to do with the young boy's naive desires, and how he feels that affects his connection to religion, the overall emotions of the protagonist feel very detached and not well embedded into the scenarios he encounters.

In my experience, there is more to a human than just their “confused adoration” for another human. I cannot say that I have been involved in a crush so wholly consuming that it led me to partake in stalkerish tendencies. For example, the boy’s tendencies to follow the girl on her way to school or watch her sneakily from his front parlor. Also, I have never based my future around my crush, thinking “little of the future” while not being able to speak to them, nor finding the days between being able to partake in conversation with them “tedious”. The overlaying feelings of naivety, lust, and displeasure that are integrated into the story through key words, such as “light” and “dark,” do not sate the yearning I have for explicitly stated emotions. Emotions that I can relate to. I can appreciate someone who can cleverly poke fun at concepts, but not understanding the mockery makes it less amusing. Joyce’s plot relies too heavily on the fact that others will understand his jests, and while those who have extensive knowledge of religion can appreciate his sophisticated details, I do not. I truly wish that I could, much like how I wish I hadn’t felt out of place attending church with my grandmother. His important details in the story include the mention of the seven deadly sins, which leads readers to understand his climax, and therefore, to piece together the conclusion of the story. I had never learned of the seven deadly sins, until recently, so his epiphany was rather confusing to me.

Further highlighting my confusion to the plot is Mangan’s sister’s response to the boy after he explains that he will attend the bazaar. “It’s well for you”. Her tone sounds envious. And isn’t envy a sin? Why isn’t the boy concerned with Mangan’s sister committing sins, since she is seen as Virgin Mary and is

supposed to represent purity? Or perhaps I am merrily misinterpreting the text. These are all details I fail to recognize because Joyce's modernist technique is not targeting his whole audience. I am led astray from the climax, so his radical break from tradition does not feel as revolutionary.

Joyce attempts to challenge the thoughts of others, like he challenges the suffocating aspects of religion. Unfortunately, the overall theme of his writing is not enough to make me sit and ponder — other than when I am forcing myself to read it — because of the unrealistic main character and the unreasonable plot. Although I can see how the modernist technique can be an advantageous learning tool, it is similar to my experience with church: a once in a lifetime adventure. "Araby" leaves me and my brain "[burning] with anguish and anger".