CHARACTERS IN "AN ENCOUNTER"

Mahony The young schoolboy who skips classes with the unnamed narrator of the story. He pretends to be named Murphy to hide his identity from the Queer Old Josser.

Queer Old Josser The man who accosts the young boys as they lie in a field near the River Dodder.

Smith The name that the unnamed narrator of the story assumes to hide his identity from the Queer Old Josser.

"Araby"

This is the third story in the *Dubliners* collection, and the final one in the initial group of stories dedicated to childhood. Written in October 1905, "Araby" is the 11th story that Joyce composed for the collection.

Like the first two stories, "Araby" relies upon an introspective, unnamed narrator who is recollecting his adolescent infatuation with the sister of a neighborhood friend, Mangan. More than a simple account of childhood love, however, the story lays out the larger question of the proper use of the imagination. In asking what differences, if any, exist between the images that an active mind produces as a source of aesthetic pleasure and those created as a form of escapism, the story challenges readers to articulate the interpretive values that allow one to distinguish a powerful narrative from idle speculation.

In the opening paragraphs the narrator vividly depicts the confining environment of North Richmond Street where he lived as a boy. (Although the time of the narrative remains indeterminate for most of the story, as will be noted later, the final lines give a strong indication of a retrospective analysis of events.) The narrator immediately highlights a central concern of the story by contrasting the physically circumscribed limits of this dead-end street with the imaginative potential offered by the books found in "the waste room behind the kitchen" (*D* 29). At the same time, the narrator does not restrict his search for imaginative stimulus to books. With no apparent concern for the implications of voyeurism, he recounts how on school mornings he would peer through a lowered blind in a front parlor window to watch Mangan's sister—herself unnamed—leave her house. He describes how he would then shyly follow her and pass her with a few perfunctory words when she reached the point where their paths separated. He was never able to engage her in an extended conversation, and so he was nonplussed when one evening she addressed him and asked whether he was going to the Araby bazaar (*D* 31). When he learns that Mangan's sister is much taken by the bazaar but cannot go to it, the narrator volunteers to attend and to bring her a present.

Although they remained events that attracted a good deal of attention, in Joyce's time such bazaars were fairly common in Dublin. In fact, a "Grand Oriental Fête" was actually held in May 1894, which corresponds with the approximate time of the story. Postcolonial interpretive theory has given readers a sophisticated sense of Orientalism, but nonetheless one needs to avoid making an overdetermined response to the setting. When Joyce wrote the story, the word *Araby* would be read as a variation of the term Arabia; applied to the bazaar, it would immediately evoke the exotic overtones of a distant and mysterious land. At the same time, the commercial banality of the fair would be apparent to all but the most determinedly idealistic Dubliner.

The narrator, however, has no interest in exposing the tawdry shabbiness of Araby. Rather, the bazaar becomes for him a symbol of the evocative power of his own awakening imagination. During the days preceding the fair, images of its splendor dominate his thoughts. Conflating Araby and Mangan's sister into an idealized alternative to the mundane existence around him, the boy fixes all his attention on the time that must pass until he is able to go to the bazaar.

Tension mounts on the Saturday of the bazaar, as the boy waits expectantly for his uncle to return home to give him the money needed to travel to the fair. In predictable dramatic fashion, as the hour grows later, his uncle's delayed return compounds the boy's anxiety. His uncle finally appears at a time that seems too late for a trip to Araby. He

is slightly drunk and has forgotten the boy's plans. The consequent juxtaposition of the boy's frustration and his uncle's lack of concern neatly highlight the relative importance and unimportance of Araby.

The narrator then tells how he set out on what he sees at the moment as a romantic quest to purchase the gift for Mangan's sister. On the rail journey across town narrative details underscore the urban squalor through which the boy must pass, and it prepares the reader for the disappointment he will feel when he finally arrives at the bazaar just as it is closing. The boy finds the exhibition area nearly empty, the bazaar's attendants uninterested in his desire to make a purchase, and Araby's tawdry wares unacceptable for the portentous mission that he has undertaken.

The story ends on a note of frustration and bitterness. As he describes himself leaving the fairground, the now seemingly more mature narrator offers a brief but bitter insight into his youthful consciousness: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (*D* 35). While the shift in perspective may seem a jolt at first reading, the sardonic tone that has recurred throughout the story both substantiates the more mature view and leaves to readers the task of interpreting the significance of the boy's disappointment. Is he crestfallen because he realizes how foolish he had been to inflate the significance of his trip to Araby, or does he feel a deeper, more lasting disappointment over the deceptive power of an incautious imagination? The story avoids prescriptive interpretation by ending too abruptly to resolve the question, but it has deftly advanced the issue of the role of the imagination for the reader to consider.

The thematic organization neatly sustains this aura of ambiguity. Like many of the stories in *Dubliners*, "Araby" contains an abundance of religious and folk imagery. It makes allusions to Catholic litanies and to mythological symbols evoking the Grail quest, blending the two to give a sense of the boy's efforts to impose meaning on the world as dominated by a mixture of faith and fantasy. More specifically, his conflation of dogma and romanticism foregrounds the impulse for escape that anyone with imaginative powers living on North Richmond Street would feel. The imagery associated with these attitudes heightens the reader's sense of the struggle and painful awareness of the narrator's spiritual journey through the pleasures of the flesh without pointing to a clear interpretive response that one should make. Whether the "confused adoration" (*D* 31) of the young boy's childhood has in fact been resolved by insights gained at a more mature age remains an open question, but the complexity and intensity of the forces precipitating that struggle stand out clearly.

For references to Joyce's attitude about the composition of "Araby," see *Letters*, II.123–124, 128, and 437.n.3. See also the appendix on page 381.

CHARACTERS IN "ARABY"

Mangan He is a friend of the unnamed narrator in the story and the only major figure identified by name. It is Mangan's sister, identified only by her relationship to her brother, who inspires the narrator with the desire to visit the bazaar that gives the story its title.

"Eveline"

This is the fourth story in *Dubliners*. "Eveline" introduces the beginning of the volume's second division, accounts of adolescence. It also marks the shift in narrative point of view from the first person, which characterized the first three stories, to the third person, which will inform the discourse for the remainder of the collection. It was the second story of the collection that Joyce wrote, and it was first published under Joyce's nom de plume, Stephen DAEDALUS, in the September 10, 1904, issue of the *IRISH HOMESTEAD*.

With ample use of the FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE narrative technique, the story unfolds both within and at a distance from the consciousness of its protagonist, Eveline Hill, a young woman whose life has become circumscribed by her job as a store clerk and by her responsibilities as a housekeeper for her father and a surrogate mother for her siblings. Straining against these stifling conditions, she has planned to elope with Frank, a sailor who is her presumptive "fiancé," to "Buenos Ayres" [*sic*]. Eve-