



## Everyday Symbols and the Construction of Meaning: A Symbolic Interactionist Analysis of Desire and Disillusionment in 'Araby'

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### ABSTRACT

James Joyce's short story, *Araby*, is a symbolic interactionist study of how meaning is symbolically constructed to generate psychologically disillusioned meaning. The research examines how a city, a 'bazaar,' a 'sister,' even an everyday object or an environment and how they become emotionally charged symbols determining the plot's protagonists internal reality the method used for this research is qualitative research . The aim of this qualitative study is to explore how the social and cultural factors, such as religious ideology, colonial imagination and romantic idealism, influence the protagonist's perception and his self. Using textual analysis and secondary sources, the study shows that the collapse of the protagonist's idealized world that is based on cultural symbols which are shared by the people of the bazaar is underpinned by confronting the mundane and commercial reality of the bazaar. It is a symbolic break down that prompts a great emotional awakening and loss of innocence. It appears that *Araby* is also a tale telling of the meaninglessness of social symbols. This research makes a contribution to the study of literary and cultural studies by providing new dimensions of the emotional and psychological as related to symbolic interaction in modernist literature.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Framing the Literary Context

James Joyce's short story *Araby*, part of his seminal collection *Dubliners*, offers a poignant narrative of youthful longing and spiritual disillusionment. Although, here the route of the unnamed boy to the bazaar is being one that can be flighted through the fantasy of a girl he loves who he looks up to and admires all of those romantic aspects of that girl; the route of the unnamed boy through a traffic light, a toy, a market, a coin, even though these represent ordinary symbols become an emotional freight through a subjective experience. Joyce's literary form of 'epiphany of events': epiphany of a small moment (Ellmann, 1959) serves as a representation of the tragedy of everyday life, the self's striving but not having the total power to achieve joy; the antonyms of which are thus an 'epiphany'. Such fine distinctions will prove richly revealing to the analyst of symbolic

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interactionism because the association between the individual who makes meaning and the collective symbolic order is so seamless.

### **1.2. Theoretical Framework – Symbolic Interactionism**

All meaning is made in social interaction and as a response to other people's actions, from symbolic interactionism, therefore a sociological theory derived from George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, which holds all meaning derived from social interaction and the actions of others. The mundane experiences have emotional and symbolic value added to them by the protagonist in *Araby* in such a way that the bogey, when it is shown to be the impersonal and commercial, becomes jolt. To this end, the theory's conception behind the claim, which has been this, is that identity, desire and reality are constituted, that is, made out of grammar, turned symbolic, over into void meaning. In fact, the story is the study of case of how people make sense of the social environment assigned to them by symbolically and in the way that leads to the understanding where the gap between what the expectation and material reality.

### **1.3. Symbolism of Desire and Disillusionment**

His romantic, spiritual, existential desire is so bound to the symbolic world the boy creates. The girl is nothing other than a peer, a sign of purity, an escape, a higher meaning. *Araby*, the bazaar, has become an exotic site, the paramount factor in romantic tales of quests. But when he arrives, there is darkness, empty uninteresting conversation to stave off boredom and lack of life in his face. It is, or is symbolically, a moment of collapse, a process of disillusionment in which valuable personal meaning falls apart as its social referent is skewed through time. Hugh Kenner has it: 'Joyce teaches the filled consciousness with the holy long of knowing, which a hollow form of life can simmer.' It is not an emotional collapse, but the collapsed crisis of meaning associated with life on the first decades in the 20th century urban world.

### **1.4. Significance of Everyday Symbols**

*Araby* uses banal houses, banal streets, a market and other banal elements each of which carries deep emotional and symbolic meaning. Because these are everyday objects, in a symbolic interactionist sense, these everyday objects are not backdrops for identity, hope, and cultural expectation but sites of interaction on identity, on hope, and on cultural expectation. The boy's inner world is construed through how the boy reads these symbols and there is a remark about the porosity of made realities in the future breaking of meaning. This not only acknowledges the subtle way in which Joyce thumps his social fabric of Dublin where dreams so often evaporate into ordinary sense of failure but it also acknowledges the soft way the boy's mental transformation.

### **1.5. The Role of Language in Symbolic Construction**

Besides functioning as a mirror of language, *Araby* is language as mediator of symbolic meaning. At times painful for the reader in his diction (mixed sensory detail with internal monologue) in placing the reader into the boy's psychological landscape viewing how this boy's desires are created by cultural scripts and ideals that are internalized. Whisper prayers and poetic imagery are used by the boy to build an entirely romantic narrative outside his environment. In *Araby*, our understanding of symbolic interactionism evidences itself as the gap between the boy's internal narrative and the external world's indifference. He is not disappointed in the bazaar but in the fact that vocabulary and intelligence have no capacity to change this reality.

### **1.6. Gendered Ideals and Social Conditioning**

This also reveals that the symbolic interactionist lens helps to explain how it is through symbolic social norms and gendered expectations that battle the protagonist to an idealization of the girl. Now she is no longer a person, she is only a literal symbol of an angelic creature of which whom appearance evokes instant feelings of mission and immediacy. This idealisation also encompasses the overall cultural narrative on the different masculinity and thinking of femininity and desire. The narrator's little ironic way of showcasing how the protagonist's journey is more like a journey of internalized 'romantic tropes' than a real connection of the theme, subtly criticizes the thing. Lived experience does not fix the gendered symbols but instead learns, rehearses then deconstructs them.

### **1.7. Urban Space as a Symbolic Landscape**

Dublin as they are portrayed in it is not only a setting but more a symbolic landscape with cultural meanings in it, namely, *Araby*. As echoed by the very drab houses, silent streets and dimly lit bazaar, these spiritual paralytic themes are tied in throughout *Dubliners* by Joyce. From a view of symbolic interactionism, it can be said that these spaces mean the worlds in which the environs and the setting will make you think and make you me. The boy's emotional world is also shaped by symbolic geography: the meaning of the city is also a character, that cages in cycles of stagnation and pretends to offer other options for

escape. It's a rite of passage, and his journey there has been one of these spaces from idealism to the clear, painful awareness of adulthood.

### 1.8. Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the nature of *Araby* by James Joyce in the studies of disillusionment and the coming of age, there is a lack of ground to study how everyday symbols are being employed as per symbolic interactionism to construct and deconstruct meaning. As Shusterman himself notes, this study addresses the core issue of these bounded subjectivities at work in these boring objects and spaces that are both desired and able to be desired, and the way in which the protagonist does not attain what he desires almost to the extreme of an emotional and existential catastrophe.

### 1.9. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in that it is an interdisciplinary study that uses literary analysis coupled with sociological theory in seeking to get to a more detailed understanding of how meaning is produced and destroyed in the literature. The study reveals that the character's inner world got influenced by his personal feelings in addition to the environment and the symbols and social story he dwells with using Interaction and Symbolism to explain the work of James Joyce's *Araby*. It also does literary analysis when the objects, spaces and interactions that we deal with on a daily basis can be used as vectors of the wider existential and social crises. The study widens literary scholarship and sociological inquiry, by illustrating the multiple ways in which a symbolic one is lived through (even disparaged) in the people's processes through which they live (despite this or that) their identity, desire, and disillusionment. Of more importance, Joyce's work still retains its contributions to general contemporary debate concerning how we make meaning and the nature and role of human beings.

### 1.10. Research Objectives

- To Analyze the Role of Everyday Symbols in Constructing Meaning within the Narrative
- To Examine the Influence of Social Interaction and Cultural Context on the Protagonist's Perception of Reality
- To Uncover the Psychological and Emotional Impact of Symbolic Collapse and Disillusionment

### 1.11. Research Questions

1. What is the Role of Everyday Symbols in Constructing Meaning within the Narrative?
2. What are the Influences of Social Interaction and Cultural Context on the Protagonist's Perception of Reality?
3. What are the Psychological and Emotional Impact of Symbolic Collapse and Disillusionment?

### 1.12. Purpose of the Study

Thus, this study concerns mainly the study of the use of everyday symbols in *Araby* as devices for making the emotional journey of the protagonist and also when lifted disclose other themes of disillusionment and identity. Using symbolic interactionism as a lens, it will study how the protagonist bestows meaning to objects, and people, and then symbols of these symbolic investments are as much reflections of personal desire and as consequences of social effects. Through the application of this, an analytical approach that yields an interpretation of the meaning that is open to the reader's experience and social context, as opposed to what is fixed. Finally, the study then proves that Joyce does not flee from everyday symbols in *Araby*, and does not; they are an important part of the narrative's emotional and philosophical impact.

### 1.13. Delimitation

Although most of the emphasis in this study lies in close reading *Araby*, this study does not solely use symbolic interactionist theory in a primary analytical framework. While broader psychoanalytic or postcolonial interpretations are not presented, the scope is not expanded to other stories in *Dubliners*. There is no empirical data collection and the research restricts to the secondary literary and sociological sources.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Symbolism in Joyce's *Araby*

The fact that James Joyce employs symbolism in *Araby* in order to express the transformation of protagonist's emotional state is widely acknowledged. Joyce: has used symbolic meaning to be embedded into mundane objects and settings to externalise the internal states of his characters. The house, street, and bazaar are more than physical locations, they are the boy's psyche

reflected. In the opinion of Harry Stone (1965), 'Joyce creates a symbolic geography in which each object is a step on the boy's pilgrimage towards knowledge' (p.427). Stone's reading is instructive because it suggests that Joyce purposefully arranged his everyday imagery as a waylayered with emotional resonance. The change in the boy's neighborhood from the gloomy to the dazzling one is a search for love, but more than that, for a personal enlightenment: to live and die at the bazaar, but to come there with a sense of a mission, to obtain certain expectations, which won't be fulfilled.

## **2.2. Symbolic Interactionism and Literary Interpretation**

Symbolic interactionism is a good way to try to understand how characters in literature ascribe meaning to their world. The theory is rooted in the work of Mead and develops by Herbert Blumer (1969) in that it emphasizes that meaning is socially derived, negotiated and fluid. The perspective presented in this writing rings true in *Araby* as the underlying social and personal narrations that form the protagonist's interpretations of people and places. "Humans act toward things on the basis of such meanings as are attached to things and which have been acquired by the human being from human interaction and further modified in context by the object person himself" (Blumer 1969 p. 2). Using this framework on *Araby* it becomes evident that the boy's romanticized picture of the girl and the bazaar is not inherent, but rather is constructed by cultural myths of romance, religion, and heroism. When confronted with the banal reality, the failure symbolized in the story's end shows the breakdown of those socially constructed ideals.

## **2.3. Desire, Fantasy, and Symbolic Projection**

*Araby*: The protagonist's longing in *Araby* is tied intimately to symbolic projection, or the projection of emotional needs onto external objects and people. Most of all, the boy considers the girl a holy figure beyond the extent of their brief contact, with powers elevated far beyond are in any way, with no further contact to miracles. According to Tindall (1959), "The boy's romantic vision is not influenced as much by love as it is by the search for meaning in a world of routine and restraint" (p. 93). The observation in this text allows us to see how the boy's desire is built through constructed fantasies rather than actual relational experience. Symbolic interactionism explains how this process is taking place, demonstrating how individuals utilising culturally available symbols give meaning to themselves in an uncertain emotional situation. This bazaar is then much more than a destination and it is a projected site of redemption, whose fall represents the shattering of illusion.

## **2.4. Disillusionment and Epiphany in Modernist Literature**

Some of the most recurring themes in modernist literature is pitiless disillusionment and this is usually represented through the sacred moments of epiphany in the symbolic sense of the word epiphany. The ending of the story in *Araby* marks a big emotional break in modernist narrative structure which is similar to that found in realist novel. Joyce's depiction of this disillusionment comes near to what other critics see as the 'modernist crisis of meaning'. In reference to Joyce's characters, Hugh Kenner (1978) portends that "Joyce's characters are often suddenly woken by small-bankrupting turnings of locations that show the symbolic structures to which they anchor cannot avail" (p. 141). That is exactly the case in *Araby* where the boy's symbolic universe dissolves in the presence of reality, resulting in not merely disappointment but the realization of how naive he actually is. This reading is further enriched through the lens of the symbolic interactionist who views the epiphany not as a literary device but on as a moment when reality intrudes upon the socially constructed item.

## **2.5. The Role of Environment and Social Setting**

The town of *Araby* is a drab and stagnant Dublin which is critical to the development of the protagonist's emotional and symbolic issues. Joyce's description of the urban environment is representative of a more general cultural paralysis that hinders the boy from finding an authentic experience and forces him to rely on symbolic fantasy. Joyce's Dublin is not only the background for the spiritual emptiness of the people inhabiting it, but rather this emptiness is part of an active force conditioning their desires and delusions (Schwarz, 1994, p. 211). This reading, though, does lend support to a symbolic interactionist interpretation of it as it points to how environment plays a part in determining perception. The social setting controls limits it to the boy's effort to break out via symbolic means, namely by imagining romance, adventure, and transcendence unto the routine and repressions. After all, his disillusionment is ultimately not only personal but a symptom of the failure of symbolic system to provide meaning in a broken social world.

## **2.6. The Bazaar as a Failed Sacred Space**

The bazaar in *Araby* is, at first, a romantic notion in the mind of the protagonist: it is a holy, a distant, cold, and empty crucible, far from the monotony of existence, where his empty, romantic wishes may be fulfilled. The imagined sanctity here is similar to the way in which people lend meaning, much like purpose or direction to their inner lives, through bestowing meaning on a certain space. According to Bruce F. Meyer (1981), "The bazaar, lifted to a mythic plane through the boy's imagination, then

betrays him with its commercial triviality and indifference" (p.119). The symbolic interactionist view that meaning is not fixed is supported by Meyer's analysis as meaning is also subject to negotiation and are in constant transformation. The boy arrives at Araby which is nearly closed, dimly lit and manned by indifferent vendors, and his ever so fond expectations are shattered. In a shift from its symbolic duty to represent potential and purity, the bazaar as a symbolic space becomes associated with the emptiness and consumerism characteristic of a modernist critique of a spiritually bankrupt society.

### **2.7. Religion and Symbolic Displacement**

Araby is permeated with religious imagery and religious language, as religion is utilized by the boy to understand desire and make sense of the world. Joyce's Dublin shimmers with symbolic systems—like rituals and language of Catholicism; these feelings have a near sacred intensity, something that delves into another powerful symbolic system. Margot Norris (2003) states that "Joyce subtly challenges its [the religious's] symbolic weight to secular experience, causing confusion and inner conflict in the young mind" (p. 88). This displacement is a case of individuals utilizing symbolic interaction to make sense of their experience by using collective symbols (e.g. ritual, sacrifice, sanctity) from a symbolic interactionist perspective. A sort of worship is performed by the boy, a symbol of divine beauty is become. However, the spiritualization of desire is tenuous: the boy's realization of the illusion underpinning his feelings is the final realization of the fragility of meaning in the case of internalization without critical understanding of symbolic systems.

### **2.8. Adolescence and Identity Formation through Symbols**

Araby exhibits a wider process through which the adolescent develops his identity and strives for a sense of meaning through symbolic interaction with the world. Symbols of personal development such as places, people and rituals are used by adolescents in their process of forming who they become through aspirational ideals, emotional projections and imagined futures. This idea is in line with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which states that adolescent constitutes a tension between identity and role confusion (Erikson, 1968). The boy's romantic pursuit in Araby becomes more than a quest for love – it is a symbolic quest to find himself. This developmental arc involves disillusion: something happens in which the external reality refuses to conform to the fantasy in your mind and the fact that you have to come to terms with self awareness. This is a process made more contextual by symbolic interactionism helping place this as an on-going negotiation between internal desires and social meanings that are embedded in cultural symbols.

### **2.9. Irony and Symbolic Breakdown**

Irony plays an important part of narrative as Joyce uses them to reveal the fragility of the symbolic structures the protagonist clings to in Araby. And the boy's heightened expectations are so abruptly denied by the bazaar's mundane reality that it exposes how readily symbolic meanings can break down. First, it is accomplished as a literary device and, second, as sociological comment. Similar to what Peter Brooks (1984) notes, 'failure of symbols to keep belief alive or satisfy desire is a constant theme in modernist fiction, and irony becomes the residue left behind by lost certainty' (p. 34). Within symbolic interactionism then, we do not see this failure as a personal blow to our ego, but as something that is unavoidable because of the nature of meaning being social and up for grabs. The boy's realization that his spiritual and romantic ideals were a house of cards is a moment of truth for the boy's consciousness and fits in with what Joyce was getting at with his critique of ideological and symbolic systems in early 20th century Irish life.

One or two scholars have elaborated on the symbolic and emotional complexity of Araby by way of modernist alienation and religion. Joyce's story portrays Dublin as a spiritual paralysis from religious symbols which do not bring redemption but fail to trap, rather, entraps the individual in an emotional futility, as argued by Benstock (1994). In the same vein, Ellmann (1982) contends that Joyce ironically employs religious imagery so that the boy's earthly love constitutes the secular equivalent of spiritual devotion. On this basis Norris (2003) further develops and argues that Araby might be used as early example of symbolic collapse common in modernist literature, in which personal meaning is crushed by institutional demands. Meister argues that Mahaffey fails to fully acknowledge that the protagonist undergoes psychological turmoil due to a deeper existential conflict which is the gap between individual desire and collective cultural norms (1998). This is the insight provided by these perspectives that make the symbolic structure of the story appear richer and underlines the central theme of disillusionment due to sociocultural influence.

Additionally, it has been talked about a great deal, how setting, language, and cultural imagination is symbolic in Araby. Brown (1984) refers to the bazaar as a symbol of the false promises of colonial exoticism manufactured by early 20th century orientalist fantasies of Ireland. This is complemented by Cheng (1995) who holds that Joyce critiques the commodification of desire since the boy's experience at the bazaar reveals the hollowness of the culturally manufactured ideals. At the same time, Scholes and Litz (1971) proffer that the effect of narrative voice precipitates the protagonist's symbolic misinterpretations and emotional immaturity by means of the narration. Also, Attridge (2004) highlights the power of the story in bringing to life emotional

collapse quite literally through simple everyday images, making the ordinary stand for spiritual failure. Together, these scholars explore Araby a symbolically narrative in which the socio-cultural context of Joyce's Dublin impressed Araby.

### **3. Research Methodology**

To achieve the theme, the researcher will use qualitative methodology of research which will be focused on symbolic construction of meaning in James Joyce's Araby through direct themes in symbolic interactionism. This is because, in terms of the qualitative methods, they best enable a sensitive and deep engagement with language, and symbols and narrative structure, which is the key terrain of the interpretive literary analysis. This is not a task of defining such data but a study of how symbols in text related to protagonist's psychic and emotional path. Now its main method could be that of close textual analysis of such artifacts of literature as imagery, language, setting, and such character interaction. So, those elements are brought into consideration when investigating them from established sociological theories and secondary scholarly sources. Being of a symbolic nature, Araby is an approach caused on for the purposes of revealing and identifying levels of meaning characterized by individual subjectivity as well as the kind of meaning conveyed by cultural forces; desires, identities and disillusionment generated through symbolic language.

#### **3.1. Interpretative Process**

It is to be noted that interpretation of such a study is a result of meaning making process of a literary narrative and meaning making process of reading only. This research is done from hermeneutic tradition and the text of Araby is a space where the constructor of the meaning is not only the narrator but the reader in the process of meanings produce through symbols in a certain context. It is through these qualities of the duplicity of language, metaphor, and irony that it forms an appreciation of their altering characteristics as a property of the literary articulation and attempts to recognize why and how these qualities make one emotionally and philosophically profound with the story. The symbolic interactionist framework that is used turns out not only to be theoretical lens but also interpretation tool by which we can find the social and emotional meaning of all kinds of symbols from the story. The analysis is an iteration and a reflection of the analysis under the assumption of change of meanings of the text as new insights are added to the new understandings.

#### **3.2. Data Collection**

This study is a qualitative research through literature, thus the data sources of this study are secondary and textual analysis that are sole sources. The story Araby, of James Joyce's short story, is analyzed, more specifically symbolic structures, narrative voice and emotional tone of the same. Literature criticism from peer review texts, sociological texts and journal articles are cited that support this with regard to symbols, modernist literature and symbolic interactionism. Sources are then chosen as relevant, credible and add to the existing discourse of Joyce's work. Research was carried out with academic material from databases such as JSTOR, Project MUSE, Google Scholar. In each source, attention is given which integrates the study with emphasis on thematic interpretations and thematic interpretations. The data collection process is preferred in depth rather than in breadth; hence, each piece of the literature will contribute towards the understanding of symbolic meaning making in Araby.

#### **3.3. Theoretical Framework**

The formalization of this study is based on the theoretical frame of symbolic interactionism; the first creation and development of the theory by George Herbert Mead and subsequent formalization by Herbert Blumer. This theory derives the use of symbols to relate the people to the meaning and the world by social interaction. For literary criticism, symbolic interactionism is a powerful lens on assimilation and reaction to cultural symbols and these symbols indicate the societal values and tensions. Of significance about Araby is that the characters' perception of objects, people, and places has no relevance to the actual lived experience of those characters, the lives of the characters themselves are not revealed in the lives they lead. Beyond a mere interpretation of Joyce's borrowing of the everyday symbols this study also examines how meaning is made, modified and destroyed in psychological and cultural context of the story through symbolic interactionism.

### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

#### **4.1. The Street as a Symbol of Emotional Constraint**

It is a vivid description of North Richmond Street where the boy lives: "North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free." The word 'blind' however, does not only carry a physical meaning of cul-de-sac, but a depiction of limitations and the sadness of the environment. The street turns into more than a setting: it is the symbolic background for the boy's psychological entrapment and desire for leave. The internalized

dissatisfaction with routine life dominates his perception of this “blind” street; it is a view built through his social surroundings. Based on his perspective as a symbolic interactionist, the protagonist is blinded by the street’s blindness, both from his environment and himself, which he tries to escape through romantic fantasy and mental experience away from the physical and symbolic limitations of his world.

#### **4.2. Light and Darkness as Emotional Metaphors**

There are continuous references to light and darkness in *Araby*, the two functioning as emotional markers of the author’s state of mind. The most telling line is the following: “I thought to bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes.” In this passage, the boy portrays himself to be on a holy quest, equivalent to a religious figure, carrying a holy vessel towards the bazaar. That all becomes a powerful symbol of his idealized love and purity of his intentions as “chalice.” Yet, darkness always interrupts this image, “It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house.” His growing disillusionment and emotional uncertainty is likened to physical darkness in his surrounding. Symbolic volatility is evidenced by the shifting interplay of light and dark as sacred meanings are created through the imagination, as well as threatened by the realities of the boy’s social and material environment.

#### **4.3. The Bazaar as a Symbolic Collapse of Idealism**

Perhaps the most wonderful symbol in the story is the bazaar, *Araby*, as the boy imagines it, almost magical, something exotic. He believes this earlier in the story; The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated. Thus, this line reveals that the very name of the bazaar is so imbued with symbolic energy that the boy is given a spiritual, as well as an emotional, escape from the mundane. However, when he entered he was surprised, because he saw himself as a creature driven and despised by vanity, and his eyes burned with anguish and anger. It is the collapse of his symbolic universe, which had been the bazaar—the secular equivalent of sacred scripture—once hope filled bazaar, which, despite the expectations of faith, now proves to be a space of emotional void. Seen from a symbolic interactionist lens, the collapse symbolizes the point of losing the meaning attributed to symbols the boy puts his weight into—love, religion, escape—and the gap between internal fantasy and ken reality.

#### **4.4. The Girl as a Symbol of Idealized Desire**

The story of the narrator’s infatuation with Mangan’s sister as his source of moral temptation transforms Mangan’s sister from an ordinary neighborhood girl to become an unattainable object of beauty and spiritual longing. At some odd times, in strange prayers, and praises which I myself knew not of, her name sprang to my lips. This tells you how the boy used his feelings as an affair of the sacred order, trying to make it religious devotion and a romantic desire. As she exists in the boy’s internal fantasy and is malleable to the idea of cultural narrative regarding love, purity, and chivalry, the girl becomes less of a real person and more of a symbolic figure. In a symbolic interactionist sense this is how meanings are made personal from collective ones, as between romantic idealism and religious reverence. His true interaction with her is minimal, and the symbol also remains intact, but fragile; when he realizes for a certainty that his quest was based in fantasy, the image breaks down symbolically and he loses his innocence.

#### **4.5. The Coins as Symbols of Material Disillusionment**

Even the insignificant detail of money in *Araby*, with its collision with the boy’s inculcated idealism. It was around this time that he made his way to the bazaar and made note: “I strode down Buckingham Street with a florin held tight in my hand.” Clenching the coin actually is something that he does with the desperate hope that the material token will give him some sort of meaningful experience, maybe a thing of his imagined love. But inside the bazaar, once you start dealing with the bazaar, the florin and his quest become futile in the transactional, indifferent bazaar. Sacred love is the boy’s view of love, whereas the commercial setting is presided over by cost and exchange. The florin, in a symbolic interactionist vein, is a way in which meaning can be clarified and when it is deformed by juxtaposing personal ideals to the social and financial realities. What used to be used as a symbol of hope is now a sign of the distance between the emotional intent and the material limit.

#### **4.6. Silence as the Symbol of Emotional Isolation**

Indeed, silence also works as a symbol of the protagonist’s emotional isolation and internal conflict that runs through the whole story and is reflected not only in the story but also as a narrative tone. In the beginning of the story, the narrator pointed out: I was thankful that I could see so little. My senses desired to veil themselves all together and I felt I was slipping from them and imitating, O love! as my hands trembled put the palms together. O love!” It is a moment of near-religious solitude where he is wrapped in silence in which the language has failed and symbolic emotion has overwhelmed him. The silence symbolically is a space between imagination and articulation, where desire cannot, in fact, fully be expressed, and it becomes internalized. In

terms of symbolic interaction, this silence means that the external interaction could not make him positively affirm inside his world. Silence is a symbol of the painful truth of incommunicable experience in pain and of the painful truth of both the intensity and its incommunicability.

#### **4.7. The Role of Religious Culture in Shaping Desire**

The religious symbolism in the protagonist's environment colors how he sees and how he feels. In the beginning of the story the narrator says: "The priest who occupied our house as tenants died in the back drawing-room". The presence of a lingering priest in this casual reference to a priest is indicative of the Church's pervasive presence in early twentieth century Dublin life. Even without religious authority, the boy's morality, sacrifice, and devotion are rendered in a subtle way by religious authority. There is evidence of this in his descriptions of how he feels toward Mangan's sister in spiritual terms: 'Her image accompanied me even into places the most hostile to romance'. 'I thought that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes'. The chalice—a sacred Christian symbol—transforms his romantic pursuit into a holy quest. Through symbolic interactionism, this shows how religion and social expectations filter personal feelings to give them collective meanings and not only what he desires but how he expresses and understands the desire.

#### **4.8. Social Rituals and the Marketplace of Meaning**

Secondly, the cultural and social expectations for gender roles and commercial interaction play a part by helping the boy see reality in a certain way. Mangan's sister, when talking to him about the bazaar, merely tells him: 'It would be well for you if you went'. This line, though brief and ambiguous, sparks a dramatic shift in the boy's internal world. She offers the suggestion casually, and he takes it as a request to tell her a romantic tale of duty. In the social scripts of chivalry and masculinity at that time, his perception is influenced. He learns later, at the bazaar, how banal the exchange of people at the bazaar can be when a vendor lifts up its presence in vain and in a very annoying tone says: O, I never said such a thing! However, this ordinary interaction demonstrates the chasm between his fantasy of significance and the material business and monotony. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, His desire was originally given meaning by those social structures that now do the unraveling, while simultaneously confounding perception and cultural norms through their construction and distortion.

#### **4.9. Colonial Influence and the Allure of the Exotic**

Araby itself, the bazaar, could be said to be a representation of this colonial fascination with the exotic and pays homage to how wider cultural narratives influence the protagonist's musings. The boy is not merely buying a gift, but the promise of the foreign and magical. He speaks of his anticipation with holy reverence, from the syllables of the word Araby, I was called through silence in which my soul dwelt." Araby is not just a place but a whole world of an entire mystery, luxury and increase—based on colonial and orientalist discourse that is present in the Irish and British culture at that time. It is not based on reality, but on social constructed myths in which the foreignness equals to beauty, fantasy. This perspective taken from symbolic interactionist points out the example of how collective cultural symbols, for instance the 'Orient', should cast an individual's expectations and self narratives away. Finally, the bazaar, and thus the socially fabricated ideals embodied therein, prove emptiness up against reality: the boy's disappointment at having gone to the bazaar.

#### **4.10. The Moment of Emotional Collapse**

In the final scene symbolic collapse is at its peak and this shatters the protagonist's idealism. Once he arrives at the bazaar, after having realized that it was being as dull as a commercial venture, he says, 'Gazing upwards I saw myself cast upon vanity and my eyes burned through anguish and anger.' This crucial moment is the moment of giving up on all the symbols to which he had emotionally invested (the bazaar, the gift, the girl). It's not just physical darkness, the darkness which surrounds him, but an internal void of his fantasies disintegrating. Through the lens of a symbolic interactionist this can be seen as a declaration that when cultural and personal symbols, those things we have in common, like love, romance, and purpose, break down that is an existential crisis. This disillusionment can now be seen as dehumanizing, as he identifies himself as a "creature," thereby articulating his loss of identity, agency and innocence.

#### **4.11. The Disillusioning Contrast Between Expectation and Reality**

In other words, the protagonist builds emotional meaning through symbols throughout the story, but is unprepared for the lows of mundane reality when he reaches the bazaar. This is the Araby which was once enchanted, "Nearly all the stalls were shut, and the greater part of the hall was in darkness." The boy sees that his desires were based on illusions and the bazaar becomes a physical manifestation of emotional emptiness, a metaphor for the emptiness. To receive a bored shopgirl and cheap goods instead of enchantment, he is not met with enchantment. The difference between the social constructed and experienced symbols is so stark that we see the affective power that emotional dissonance can exert on the psyche. From a symbolic

interactionist standpoint, the linking of these symbols emotionally to what he understood them to mean causes a breakdown in his understanding of the world, a moment of disillusionment to occur whereby childhood idealism passes and emotional maturity is initiated.

#### 4.12. Discussion

This study finds that the everyday symbols in James Joyce's *Araby* are used to create a psychological landscape in which consisting youthful desire confronts social and cultural realities. In the symbolic interactionist perspective, we can see that the protagonist's symbolic world which is done in the form of romantic ideals, religious imagery and colonial fantasies does not just serve as decoration but it has deep connection with his identity and emotional growth. Finally, and perhaps in part as a result of disillusionment experienced at the bazaar, his disbelief at the bazaar accentuates the fact that personal meaning is not fixed, but fragile, especially when based on socially inherited symbols that do not correspond to lived experience. In this symbolic collapse, he undergoes the same type of pain that is a part of a human condition: the pain inherent when culture's internal narratives come into conflict with the reality of which they are part. Therefore, this analysis is brought to a deeper perspective on how literature depicts the relationship between the individual consciousness and the collective social symbol itself.

#### 5. Conclusion

The final conclusion is that *Araby* is a complex literary focus of symbolic interactions based on social and cultural environment to create meaning. At first, the symbols of romanticism and spirituality are portents of the protagonist's journey, loaded with romantic and spiritual meaning, which then becomes a site of emotional collapse when those symbols are proven unable to offer fulfillment. This research interprets the story on symbolic interactionism and finds how Joyce writes a transition from innocence to experience, from symbolic richness to existential emptiness. Not only does the story depict the psychological disillusionment of one person but it also portrays a cultural moment at the shifting of the plural charged symbols (religious, romantic and colonial) which begin to erode. In the end, it is Joyce's use of symbolically charged elements to allow readers to reflect on how we all give, read, misread, and perhaps lose meaning in all of our personal development.

#### 5.1. Suggestions

In the hope that other Dubliners stories could be similarly directed under the auspices of symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective, the future research could be applied to other symbolic figures in Dubliners such as Eveline or The Dead. Comparative studies might also compare *Araby* with other symbolic constructions from other regions such as postcolonial or modernist texts. Additionally, this analysis could actually be expanded with a gendered lens to show how symbols of masculinity and femininity affect the perceptions of characters regarding love and identity. In this final point, the incorporation of reader response theory would not only extend the idea that symbolic meaning is no longer static, but the unchanging, but would help to see how contemporary readers interpret these symbols differently.

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