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James Joyce
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In his short story, "Araby," James Joyce tells the story of a young boy, who doesn't seem to have any parents, and who lives in a house that used to belong to a priest, now deceased. The young boy falls in love with a young girl, and Joyce uses this love to build and develop his main idea around it. The main idea in Joyce's story is that reality changes over time, not only because the older generation has died and the new one sees things differently, but also because, over time, people change, and so does the way in which they perceive reality.

Joyce introduces his main idea by describing a dead-end street. At the end of the street there's an uninhabited house that stands alone, detached from the "other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them" (495). But life goes on; people will one day forget tragedies and move into the uninhabited house, just like the main character's family moved into the deceased priest's house.

Joyce continues to emphasize his main idea by mentioning what had happened to the priest's belongings. They used to be important things during his lifetime, but now they're all scattered in the waste room behind the kitchen and don't hold any value for their new owners: "The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing room. Air, musty from having long been enclosed, hung in all rooms and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout*

Communicant and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I like the last best because its leaves were yellow” (494). In this paragraph, Joyce emphasizes his main idea by exemplifying how reality changes over time, especially from generation to generation.

Joyce’s next goal is to also allow the readers to understand how changes within people affect the way reality is perceived, as well as how changes in reality trigger changes within people. The main character used to hide away when his uncle returned home: “If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed” (496). But when he needs money to go to Araby, a “bazaar held in Dublin from May 14-19, 1894,” the boy waits patiently for his uncle to get back home (497). Because the boy is in love with a young girl, the changes within himself cause him to stop hiding from his uncle. While at the bazaar, the boy will once again be changed by reality. The surrounding darkness suddenly makes him realize how self-centered he was when pursuing his own interests, without consideration of what was going on at home or around him in general. Suddenly, Araby symbolizes his own superficiality, and the young boy sees it for what it is: just a cheap place, where he ended up only because of his disregard for everything else. He realizes his limitations and how unilateral are all of his actions and feelings, including his love for the young girl. Fortunately, he is young and obviously his new perception of reality will allow him to remedy what he is doing wrong: “Gazing up into darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger” (499).

In *A Portrait of the Artist*, Joyce follows the same idea—that is, reality changes over time and induces changes within people as they grow older. Young Stephen will find his own way, although not without struggle because of the conflict between the church and the politics of

the time that bring confusion and despair into his life. In the end, Stephen Dedalus becomes an artist who finds a way to distance himself from religion, even though religion had been an important part of his life while growing up.

Joyce is a writer whose ideas develop naturally, by allowing his characters to choose their own destiny. Nothing is set in stone, and that is why his work not only seems plausible but also realistic. Joyce, through well-chosen characters, places and examples, emphasizes his main ideas in “Araby” and *A Portrait of the Artist*—that is, reality is ever-changing through time and space, as well as within us. His main characters encounter the “ghosts” of the past and have to fight the “demons” of the present and future that are hidden within themselves and in the real world. Through their choices, they have the power to change themselves, for better or for worse.

Works Cited

Joyce, James . "Araby." *Literature: An Introduction to Writing*. Roberts, Edgar V. and Jacobs, Henry E. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001. 495-499.