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English 115, Section X

Holguin

Response Paper One

James Joyce’s “Araby” was narrated by an older man who was looking back at his childhood and was vividly recalling a time of immature love. As a teenage boy, he was irrevocably in love with a girl in the neighbourhood, Mangan’s elder sister. However, his fantasy for this girl was scattered as soon as he left home, the house that nourished his love for her. After he went away for Araby, this house became the graveyard of his impulsive young love, which he eventually abandoned.

The narrator first mentioned the house in the second paragraph where he brought up the priest who used to be a tenant, yet “died in the back drawing-room.” (Joyce 21) The priest left behind everything – his house, money, and furniture along with old books and a rusty bicycle-pump – as if he was making a hasty escape from this world that he had been stuck for so long. (Joyce 21) He passed away in the drawing room instead of on his bed, suggesting that he was not expecting his death. Possibly, he was just gazing at his favorite painting as usual, yet suddenly realized that his whole life was a waste and was desperately in need of a closure as well as a new start. His death was not only a disappearance from this world but also a rebirth that enabled him to get along with his life beyond this world. The house became a symbol of abandonment that was running through the story. More importantly, the house was also the place that the boy lived in everyday, watching and fantasizing about Mangan’s sister. Every morning he would “lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door” (Joyce 22); after he spotted her leaving her house every morning, he would follow her and as their ways diverged, he would quicken his pace and pass her (Joyce 22); he went into the drawing room that the priest died in, thinking about her and pressed the palms of his hands together until they trembled, murmuring: O love! O Love! many times. (Joyce 23) Young love was indeterminate. The boy had a crush on a girl for whom he could conveniently grow his affection by watching and stalking her everyday. At first he was keeping a distance from her. The narrator closely recalled, “I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words.” (Joyce 22) He was obviously not a “ man of action” and this nature of him was another major cause of failing to buy a gift for her in the end. As time went by, the boy failed to gather up the courage to talk to her; however, at last Mangan’s sister spoke to him. (Joyce 23) She asked him if he was going to Araby and told him that she would love to go if only she did not have this retreat she had to attend. While she was talking to him, she “turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist” as if she was shy because of this rather private and intimate conversation. (Joyce 23) She might have figured out the boy’s obsession for her and decided to show some encouragement. However, no matter how encouraging she wanted to be, eventually she did not go with him because she could not abandon her normal life. Instead she chose to abandon him and sent him to Araby along. Even so, the boy was very thrilled about this trip. He wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days (Joyce 24); he could not call the wandering thoughts together; he had hardly any patience with the serious work of the life. (Joyce 24) Since the boy was still staying around Mangan’s sister, his love for her was heightened, until the later incident, when his uncle got home late that night and almost ruined his plan. His affection for Mangan’s sister showed its fragility instantly and started to evaporate as he left the house. He “strode down” to the station, yet “the sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas” reminded him the purpose of his journey. (Joyce 26) After he got off the train, he had to “remember with difficulty” about why he went to the bazaar. (Joyce 27) He lost the only real bonding he had with Mangan’s sister – the house along with it surroundings – and realized how fake and immature his feelings were, so he eventually abandoned them for good, the same way as the priest treated the house.

The house was so significant to the boy’s infatuation for Mangan’s sister that supposable if he had lived further away from her on the street, he would not have fallen in love with her. Thus, as soon as he stepped out of the house and headed to a new place, Araby, he forgot about his great love. He cleared the obsession out of his mind and realized that Mangan’s sister was nothing but a passing-by character in his life, whose name he would eventually forgot about as he grew up. Without the presence of the house, the feelings he used to hold on so tight just collapsed and vanished in the darkness of Araby.

Work Cited

Joyce, James. Dubliners. N.p.: n.p. , n.d. 21-28.