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The Affirmative Epiphany in James Joyce's Dubliners

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Abstract

In Dubliners, Joyce's alternative to the available model of growth – the institutional mode of education – is the epiphanic model that hopes to preserve and justify the existence of an independent human being. On the face of it, it seems less likely to study the stories in the light of Wordsworth's theory of education as expounded in The Prelude but I argue that there is clearly a substantial link between the two texts, and that link is provided by Joyce's notion of the epiphany primarily inspired by Wordsworth's notion of 'spots of time' and developed in Stephen Hero. The epiphanic moments provide stability in the otherwise unstable world. It is argued that Joyce appendages 'moral' – stripped off its historical religious meaning – to his aesthetic theory developed in Stephen Hero. He expands his notion of the epiphany – 'an exact focus of vision' – in the context of Dublin which is the intense centre of – moral and spiritual – 'paralysis'. This research paper examines the affirmative epiphany in the first three stories of Dubliners. It is evident from the first three stories that the boy narrator's childhood experiences are far from exciting and adventurous in the sense Wordsworth describes in The Prelude. In the first story, it is the death of his mentor; in the second, it is the uneasy encounter with the middle-aged person; in the third, it is the disillusionment of his adolescent longing for a girl. These three significant incidents bring about moments that problematize his relation with the outside world. The institutions of education he attends fail to mediate between his innocent world view and the problematic nature of reality he confronts in the outside world.

Keywords: Epiphany, Education, 'Spots of time', Moral, Aesthetic

Introduction

Joyce started working on Dubliners in 1904. The time Joyce was preoccupied by the idea of writing short stories, especially the summer of 1904, his wandering existence and consequent exile affirmed two of the most powerful principles of his life – 'aspiration' and 'defiance'; the mood with which he began to write the stories is also reflected in his choice of a pseudonym Stephen Daedalus and later Dedalus

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(Pierce, 2008). As Wordsworth writes in The Prelude, “Such life might not inaptly be compared / To a floating island” (Wordsworth, 1979, III.335–336). For Wordsworth, ‘aspiration’ is the “most noble attribute of man…that wish for something loftier” (V 573 & 575). It is well- known that ‘defiance’ lies at the heart of Romanticism. Though Dubliners – a collection of fifteen short stories – was ready for publication in 1907, Joyce had to wait for seven long years to see it in the published form. Dubliners was first published in the book form in 1914. So much critical attention has been paid to Joyce’s later works that Dubliners appears to be a lesser work by Joyce. As Norris quotes Mary Power and Ulrich Schneider, “Dubliners is not to be dismissed as juvenilia, but is as distinguished as Joyce’s later fiction” (Beck, 1969). Three kinds of critical trends can be observed in the critical material on Dubliners: the first that sees it as overtly symbolical/mythological and judges it in the light of Joyce’s later works; the second views it as simple naturalistic sketches of the lives of Dubliners in their everyday round of existence; the third regards it as a combination of realism and symbolism. Martin succinctly sums up the critical disposition toward Joyce’s works: “Myth and symbol remain the Joycean critic’s stock- in-trade” (Norris, 2003). The first attempt to apply the reading strategies of Ulysses criticism to Dubliners is made by Levin and Shattuck in their essay, “First Flight to Ithaca: A New reading of Joyce’s Dubliners” (1944). Martin raises an objection to the critics who tend to read Joyce’s earlier work in the light of his later work. He gives the example of three distinguished Joyceans: Clive Hart, Barbara Hardy, and Maud Ellmann. Martin further argues, “The neo-Fraudians grope beneath the language for sexual symbolism, the Jungians for archetypes, while Formalists uncover myth beneath myth, folk tale beneath historical fable” (Norris, 2003). Is it really significant to read Dubliners in the light of Joyce’s later works? It is evident that the stories appear to be technically more conventional than his later works. As Bosinelli & Mosher Jr. argue that Joyce “may have used many of the techniques of nineteenth-century symbolism and realism – for example, narrative objectivity, free indirect discourse, and even the titles of his stories – but he often subverted them to impede or defer the reader’s interpretations” (Bosinelli & Mosher Jr., 1998). The stories truthfully represent Dublin itself with “the odour of ashpits and old weeds and offal,” Joyce’s own remarks corroborate “the existential particularity” of “tales calculatingly plotted” (Beck, 1969, p. 9). Beck further argues that Joyce expresses his own scathing reaction to the state of affairs in Ireland with a subjectivity that is masked beneath the texture of his stories: “While scrupulously objectified, Dubliners is far from impersonal” (Culleton, 1998).

Review of the Literature

It is interesting to note that Joyce developed his preoccupations as a writer while living in Dublin but he materialized those preoccupations while living away from Dublin – Dublin means the same thing to Joyce as the English countryside to Wordsworth. Out of his entire published work, Dubliners specifically centre on Dublin life in terms of the details he provides of the hegemonic forms of Irish society. (By hegemonic I mean the dominant prevalent ideology of the institutions of education, religion, nationality, language and family). Dublin is so much at the centre of the stories that it seems to give the impression that it is the actual protagonist of the stories. In his first major published work, Joyce seems to be experimenting with the very form of the novel. He is searching for an appropriate form to express his central concerns. Most of the critics regard Dubliners as a kind of a novel. For example, McCarthy argues that "Dubliners is a coherent collection of related stories, a sort of novel with a collective rather than an individual protagonist" (Boldrini, 1998). Kenner sees it "less as a sequence of stories than as a kind of multi-faceted novel" (Kenner, 1978, p. 48). The collection of short stories seems like one complete unity within which other unities exist; Beck calls it "unities within a unity" (Beck, 1969, p. 35). McGahern argues that "I do not see Dubliners as a book of separate stories. The whole work has more the unity and completeness of a novel" (McGahern, 1990, p. 71). However, this argument cannot lure us to believe that Joyce wrote the stories simply because he wanted to expose the moral and spiritual hollowness of Dublin life. The purpose of writing the stories is more than that. Joyce works out a model of growth of an individual in the midst of the crises of contemporary Irish society. He puts to test the earlier innocence of an individual through the succeeding stages of his growth to that of maturity – the stories begin from the period of a school going boy to that of a mature protagonist of the last story of the collection. How can an individual live up and face the crises of his times and cultivate a sense of individuality that marks him out as a unique and unprecedented being? Wordsworth in The Prelude poses a similar question, "How could the innocent heart bear up and live" (Wordsworth, 1979, VIII 311). Unlike Stephen Hero, the stage of action shifts from the institutions of education to that of the individual crises amidst social chaos and cultural ambivalence. MacCabe points out four rival cultures in Ireland: "the dominant English culture, the Anglo-Irish culture of the ascendency, the remains of the Gaelic culture of the subject Irish population and the Presbyterian culture of Ireland" (MacCabe, 2003, p. xvi). Joyce's own position toward Ireland is ambivalent. On the one hand, he did not align himself with the Irish

Revival movement and the nationalists, and the revolutionary politics of the left; on the other hand, he did not like to identify himself with the English. His stance appears to be more toward the continental disposition in terms of finding any solution of Ireland or personal life. Hopelessness, sickness, and depression are the key words that encompass the atmosphere of Dubliners as most of the stories take place either in the twilight or in the night. Herring (1987) comments on the darkened atmosphere of Dubliners: “We note the continual emphasis on emptiness, incompletion, solitude, loneliness, shadow, darkness, and failure, which so affect the lives of Joyce’s Dubliners and allow subtle expression of his political views” (Herring, 1987). Where does hope come from? How do circumstances teach the protagonists of the stories?

Joyce’s alternative to the available model of growth – the institutional mode of education – is the epiphanic model that hopes to preserve and justify the existence of an independent human being. Wordsworth calls variously but to the same effect this process of education “the education of the heart”, “natural education”, “experiential education”, and “the education of circumstances” (Cited in Pointon, 1998, pp. 9, 27, 36, 53). On the face of it, it seems less likely to study the stories in the light of Wordsworth’s theory of education as expounded in The Prelude but I argue that there is clearly a substantial link between the two texts, and that link is provided by Joyce’s notion of the epiphany primarily inspired by Wordsworth’s notion of ‘spots of time’ and developed in Stephen Hero. It is argued that the epiphany is not simply an aesthetic doctrine but also an aspect of a much larger concern with “learning” beyond and in spite of the institutions of education. Some critics argue that the epiphany is primarily an aesthetic doctrine, and serves as a stylistic device. For example, Leonard argues that “Joyce himself telegraphs a fascination with such moments of overdetermined convergence when he privileges the notion of ‘epiphany’ as the primary aesthetic building block of his stories” (Leonard, as cited in Attridge, 2004, p. 91). Beck affirms the same point, “Most notably Dubliners exemplifies Joyce’s specific aesthetic theory of epiphany” (Beck, 1969, p. 21). In a letter written to Constantine Curran in July 1904, Joyce writes, “I am writing a series of epicleti – ten – for a paper. I have written one. I call the series Dubliners to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city” (Joyce, 1966, p. 134). Though it is an early conception of Dubliners, Joyce’s intention is clear. ‘Epicleti’ originally comes from the Greek word epiclesis meaning invocation; in Christianity, we find the term used as a part of the liturgical invocation of the Holy Spirit; however, Joyce employs the term ‘epicleti’ as an "aesthetic correlative" to the vital sources of human potentialities (Beck, 1969, p. 22). In a letter to Richards, Joyce writes, "My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (Joyce, 1966, p. 134). The employment of the word 'moral' may seem beguiling on the part of Joyce who, as we have seen in Stephen Hero, replaces 'moral' with aesthetic. Does it repudiate his aesthetic theory developed in Stephen Hero or does he add more to his aesthetic theory or does he adjust his vision still more to an exact focus? In the letter to Curran, the key word is 'epicleti'; in the letter to Richards, the key word is 'moral'. Joyce appendages 'moral' – stripped off its historical religious meaning – to his aesthetic theory developed in Stephen Hero. Therefore, 'epicleti' and 'moral' intersect in Dubliners. He expands his notion of the epiphany – 'an exact focus of vision' – in the context of Dublin which is the intense centre of – moral and spiritual – 'paralysis'.

What kind of epiphany the reader confronts in Dubliners? The epiphany of the subject (experiential epiphany) rather than the epiphany of the object (aesthetic epiphany) abounds in the entire collection. The role given to the epiphany as merely a stylistic device undermines the experiential aspect of it. The conflict between the external world of moral and spiritual 'paralysis' and the internal mental and emotional states of the protagonists is juxtaposed; the mounting tension of this conflict is released in the epiphanic moments that bring about a new state of awareness. The conflict is intensified to the pitch of a crescendo where the lightning flash of an epiphanic moment points toward a new level of growth in the protagonists. However, it is not the case with all the protagonists of Dubliners. Therefore, my study divides Dubliners into two parts. In the first part, the epiphany unlocks a new level of growth and is essentially affirmative. In the second part – the stories beginning from "Eveline" to "Grace" – the epiphany is either inefficacious or catastrophic, and is directed more toward the reader. This research paper examines the affirmative epiphany in the first three stories of Dubliners.

How does Joyce go about this process of inculcating the epiphanic consciousness in the protagonists of the stories under discussion in this research paper? The transfigurative and restorative potential of the epiphanic moments provide the base for the protagonists to see in the special sense of the word what they cannot see otherwise. As Garret quotes from Stanislaus Joyce's My Brother's Keeper, "Joyce thought of his epiphanies as psychological slips, 'little errors and gestures – mere straws in the wind – by which people betrayed the very things they were most careful to conceal'" (Garrett, 1968, as cited in Martin, 1990). This special way of seeing their own situation in the context of Irish society transforms their potential into an act of reformulating their selves on the basis of epiphanic moments. Though the texture of the stories is rich with the mood of despair, there is the lightening flash of an insight that alters the mood of hopelessness into that of joy. The epiphanic moments provide stability in the otherwise unstable world. In The Prelude, the discovery of 'spots of time' uplifts Wordsworth from the condition of "utter loss of hope itself / And things to hope for" to the condition of being assured of his creative powers (Wordsworth, 1979, XII 6-7). The moments tend to hold together not only the protagonists' disorderly states of mind but also of the narrative itself.

Joyce writes in the above-mentioned letter to Richards, "I have tried to present it to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. The stories are arranged in this order" (Joyce, 1966, p. 134). He builds up systematically the framework of the growth of an individual beginning from childhood. Since the first three 'childhood' stories of the collection are autobiographical, the boy narrator appears to be the same in these stories. Joyce challenges the concept of the traditional omniscient narrator in Dubliners: "Joyce develops in Dubliners a new kind of narrator, one whose voice not only is compromised but co-opted by the thinking and telling minds of the characters whose stories he unfolds, a narrator whose knowledge is more limited than the characters whose action he details" (Culleton, 1998, p. 113). The narrative phrase or expression is not necessarily the narrator's as Kenner calls it 'Uncle Charles Principle': "The Uncle Charles Principle entails writing about someone much as that someone would choose to be written about" (Kenner, 1978, p. 21). Boldrini, too, traces in the text a strategy of "a cunning oscillation between first-person narrated monologue and the later consciousness of the grown-up narrator" (Boldrini, 1998, p. 232). In Herring's opinion, the boy narrator is not necessarily the same boy in the first three stories but I argue that he is the same boy shown to be maturing by degrees. He reflects Joyce's own response toward the outside world. It is evident from the first three stories that the boy narrator's childhood experiences are far from exciting and adventurous in the sense Wordsworth describes in The Prelude. In the first story, it is the death of his mentor; in the second, it is the uneasy encounter with the middle-aged person; in the third, it is the disillusionment of his adolescent longing for a girl. These three significant incidents bring about moments that problematize his relation with the outside world. The institutions of education he attends fail to mediate between his innocent world view and the problematic nature of reality he confronts in the outside world.

Discussion and Analysis

Joyce places the unnamed protagonist of the first story "The Sisters" in the context of a sick society. The story was written in 1904. The first line of Dubliners expresses the loss of hope: "There was no hope for him this time" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 3). Father Flynn, a sixty-five-year-old retired priest, is on the verge of death. The boy is seriously concerned about him since the last stroke of paralysis. Though the loss of hope is specifically related to the dying priest – an inevitable consequence of an extreme state of physical, mental and spiritual decay – it points to other directions too. The occurrence of the word paralysis, on the one hand, relates to the priest; and on the other hand, it relates to the general condition of Irish society. Unlike Wordsworth's invocation to his muse of inspiration – "gentle breeze" –, Joyce's muse seems to be the sickly disposition of Dublin (Joyce, 1904, I p. 1). Basic argues that "the story can be understood as a metaphor of the unease and mystery of sickness and death" (Basic, 1998, p. 29). The boy is curious to see whether Father Flynn is still alive or not. The only way he could confirm whether he is still alive or not is the light coming from the window of his room. He has been coming here every night since the last stroke. His interest in the old dying priest is simply more than mere curiosity. The boy certainly has a relation with the priest.

Father Flynn is later confirmed dead by the boy's uncle. It is not the boy who discovers him dead but old Cotter, a friend of his uncle's. His uncle's remark to old Cotter reveals that Father Flynn has taught the boy and he held the boy in high esteem. Old Cotter thinks that Father Flynn is a dubious character. He does not consider Father Flynn as an appropriate choice of a tutor for any child of the boy's age. His words trail off in the middle of saying something about Father Flynn. Another highly important aspect is the language Joyce employs in the stories which challenges linguistic theories. MacCabe argues from the post-structuralist position that "literary criticism itself cannot cope with Joyce's texts because those texts refuse to reproduce the relation between reader and text on which literary criticism is predicated" (Boldrini, 1998, p. 232). Joyce deliberately avoids using Standard English and employs instead 'Hiberno English' which is culled from cultural clichés; as Kenner writes, "He was normally poised between some other language and English" (Norris, 2003).

The recurrence of these clichés in the text implies hollowed-out expressions lacking any real substance. Most of the minor characters become the voice of these common cultural expressions because their utterances are mechanically conditioned by their environment: “it actually substitutes a lack of originality for creativity” (Mosher Jr., 1998, p. 53). The critics agree that the high point of Joyce’s use of poetic language against the background of common cultural expressions is in the last two paragraphs of Dubliners. While hearing the conversation between his uncle and Old Cotter, the boy disapproves of Old Cotter’s statements – though unfinished – said about the priest because Old Cotter’s observations appear to the boy as commonplace. In contrast to Old Cotter, he is a thoughtful child indeed who has been abstracted by his environment as an aberration of the norm. It is apparent in the text that there is a mutual fondness between the boy and Father Flynn as stated by the boy’s uncle: “The youngster and he were great friends. The old chap taught him a great deal…they say he had a great wish for him” (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 4). What kind of education the boy receives from Father Flynn? It is the vacation time, which means the boy attends a school but what school he goes to is not told in the text. What we are told in the text is that he lives with his foster parents and they willingly send him to the priest for further instruction. Stephen is a self-made orphan. Joyce does not give him a family name. In the first three stories of Dubliners, the unnamed boy has foster parents who seem to exercise nominal control over his life. The priest is a scholarly person as he had received education from the Irish college in Rome. He seems to have shared his knowledge with the boy. He has taught the boy very many things as the boy acknowledges to himself. His instruction included not just stories about Napoleon Bonaparte but also religion, which formed the major part of his instruction. It is evident from his mode of instruction that he would sometimes put the boy through difficult and serious questions. His treatment of the boy as an adult stand in sharp contrast to Old Cotter’s treating the boy as a ‘child’ in the conversation with his uncle.

Reminiscences of Father Flynn after receiving the news of his death the following morning intensify the boy’s imaginative perception of things. He undertakes to visit his house in order to confirm his death but he could not pick up the courage to go inside the house. His reaction to the death of the priest is strangely a mixed feeling: “I felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom as if I had been freed from something by his death” (Joyce 1914/1993). What is it that he has been freed from by the death of his mentor? In the context of the Wordsworthian mode of education, the boy has been freed from the heavy obligation of ‘the instruction of the mind' – as it is evident in his mentor's mode of instruction – which tends to suppress 'the cultivation of the heart'. Pointon argues that "education [for Wordsworth] meant primarily the cultivation of the heart as distinct from the instruction of the mind" (Pointon, 1998, p. 55).

Earlier, when the boy visits the paralytic every night, he responds equally strangely to the problematic nature of the word paralysis which, in his imagination, is synonymous to simony and gnomon. Williams' study links paralysis with "the displacement of human potential into inauthentic consciousness, petty snobbery, and so on" (Williams, 1998, p. 97). Herring sums up his critical response to the three key terms: "If paralysis describes the moral and physical condition of Dubliners, given their need for freedom, transcendence, and fulfilment, and gnomon reemphasizes these absences as a particular time in history, then simony points to corruption in high places and illegitimate ecclesiastical authority as the primary obstacles to people's fulfilment" (Culleton, 1998). He feels simultaneously repelled and attracted towards it: "It filled me with fear and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work" (Joyce, 1914/1993). As Wordsworth writes, "I grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear" (Wordsworth, 1979, I.301–302). Despite dreadful connotations of the word paralysis, he is curious to know and face the full horror of 'its deadly work'. The death of his mentor sets in motion the creative energies of his soul as he reflects over the dream vision of the previous night. What he sees in that dream vision is the decayed face of the priest trying to confess something in a constant state of smiling. What does it confess to him is not told but the boy feels that "I too was smiling feebly as if to absolve the simoniac of his sin" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 5). His self is opening up to let in the full force of this event – the death of his mentor. He is dimly aware of what is passing before him but it leaves a very profound impression upon his mind. For him, it seems to have assumed the rite of initiation into a new level of growth. His current knowledge and understanding in the formal sense of the word is limited. He feels himself precariously positioned with respect to what is happening to him. He calls to mind the remainder of his dream vision where he sees himself in Persia. The intellectual freedom he gains by the death of his mentor finds a romantic expression in the form of an eastward journey through the dream vision. Nevertheless, the end of the dream remains unknown to him.

The boy's aunt actually takes him to the priest's house in the evening. The dead priest's sisters, Eliza and Nannie, attend them. Nannie takes them to the priest's room where his coffin is laid ready. The boy imagines the face of the dead priest still smiling. Eliza reveals more information about the priest. He appears to be a disappointed old man who was tired of his priestly duties. Though he is reported to have died peacefully, there was something heavy upon his chest. Is it something to do with the chalice he broke near the end of his life as Eliza tells or had he gone mad? What went wrong with him? Toward the end of his life, the priest was found out in his confession-box sitting up “wide-awake and laughing-like” (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 12). What was he trying to confess in that state of ‘laughing-like’? The boy has already seen him in the dream vision as confessing to him something in a constant state of smiling. His wits are tried to the point of exhaustion when he finally achieves an epiphanic moment. As Beck argues, “What it manifests is not defined but revealed” (Beck, 1969, p. 73). It unlocks a new level of growth as the true import of the epiphany seems to determine the future course of the boy’s life. However, Herring argues that the epiphany seems to have heightened mystery rather than resolved the situation in the boy’s mind but he affirms that whatever the nature of the enlightening moment may be, it does not include religion; the boy has gained access to “a deeper knowledge of what it is to know” (Pierce, 2008).

In the second of the ‘childhood’ stories “An Encounter”, Joyce gives a clue about the unnamed boy narrator’s institution of education. The story was written in 1905. The school going boy of the first story is now a student of Belvedere College – Joyce attended Belvedere college in 1893. The college curriculum and the mode of instruction there develop a craving in the boys to seek escape from the dull routine of academic life. Instruction in the abstract and the austerity of the way it is carried out rather emphasize the boys’ tendencies to be fascinated by the forbidden subjects. Instead of taking interest in Roman History, the boys prefer to read adventure books forbidden by their Jesuit masters. The search for the “doors of escape” becomes an immediate urge to express the repressed (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 12). The means of escape that captivate their attention is adventure. First, the boy narrator and his companions form a group of adventurers and playact the adventures described in the Wild West. Soon the commonly sought adventures of the Wild West no longer offer the boy the sense of freedom and release his spirit craves for. He wants something special to appease his curiosity: “I wanted real adventures to happen to myself. But real adventures, I reflected, do not happen to people who remain at home: they must be sought abroad” (Joyce, 1914/1993, p.13). Therefore, he plans a trip away from home with a couple of other boys to see the Pigeon House. One of them does not turn up, but the other two continue according to their plan. Wandering carefree through industrial Dublin gives them much needed respite from drudgery as the boy exclaims to himself, "I was very happy" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 14). They enjoy the feeling of being themselves: "School and home seemed to recede from us and their influences upon us seemed to wane" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 15).

Everything goes on apparently well except that the boys' wandering tires them and they sense that they do not have enough time left with them. They decide not to go to the Pigeon House as they have to be home before four o' clock. While resting on the bank of a river named Dodder, they see a man coming towards them. He appears to be "fairly old" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 17). He falls in conversation with them. First, he talks about the weather. Second, he changes the subject to school and books. He spots the boy as "a bookworm" and says of his companion, Mahony, that he is more interested in games than books (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 17). Third, he begins to talk about literature. The boy pretends as if he had known some of the books he mentions. Fourth, he suddenly changes the subject to sweethearts. He asks them how many sweethearts they have. It is shocking for the boy that the person of his age talks to the boys about sweethearts. The boy notices a sense of strangeness about him for "his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 18). He feels uneasy during their conversation. Suddenly the person takes leave of them and goes to a nearby field, and what he does over there shocks the boys' sense of decency as Mahony directs the attention of the boy toward what he is doing there on the edge of the field. Mahony declares to the boy, "He's a queer old josser" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 18). The most perverse aspect of the story - when the 'fairly old' person masturbates in the nearby field not far from the boys – proves upsetting to the boys' sense of decency. It gives the boy a strange feeling, "I wondered why he shivered once or twice as if he feared something or felt a sudden chill" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 18). In his brief absence, the boy suggests to Mahony that they should not tell him their real names. The person comes back and sits beside them. Meanwhile, Mahony drifts away from the scene; he occupies himself with chasing a cat. The boy feels even more uneasy because he is left alone with the person. In his absence, the person designates Mahony as "a very rough boy" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 19). He begins to speak about punishing boys. He expresses sternness toward 'rough' boys and the only way he thinks of dealing with them is physical punishment. He repeats again and again his reaction toward 'rough' boys with an increasing emphasis on whipping. The boy notices a kind of appeal in his voice that "I should understand him" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 20). In the ensuing pause after his monologue, the boy takes leave of the person and calls his companion with a false name which makes him feel guilty. Soon he sees Mahony running towards him "as if to bring me aid" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 20). In that moment, a sudden revelation dawns upon the boy: "I was penitent; for in my heart, I had always despised him a little" (Joyce, 1914/1993,p. 20). A sense of shame becomes the basis of the epiphany. Why does he despise Mahony? He does not state explicitly the rationale of his hatred toward his companion. The uninvited intrusion of the 'fairly old' person in the otherwise exciting and adventurous experience of playing truant turns into an experience of a shocking discovery. The epiphanic moment displaces him from his former position with regard to experience. The encounter with the pervert and the penitence for despising his companion re-orient his outlook on experience. Herring comments that the boy "must define himself in relation to two authority structures – that of the grown-up world and that of his peer group" (Wordsworth, 1979). The boy, in that moment of guilt about despising his companion, dimly realizes his own propensity for the forbidden. One may not like to agree fully with Beck when he says, "Within the hour he has thus encompassed knowledge of good and evil" but it does point to one significant direction that the epiphanic moment unlocks a new level of growth for the boy (Beck, 1969, p. 93).

In the third of the 'childhood' stories "Araby", the boy narrator is possibly a student at the Christian Brothers' School. After Clongowes, Joyce attended briefly the Christian Brothers' School on North Richmond Street, Dublin. The story is written in 1905. Most of the critics agree on the point that "Araby" is technically more brilliant than the preceding stories. There is little of the school life described in the story. The death of a former tenant of the boy's house, a priest, announces the beginning of the story. Nevertheless, the reader catches a glimpse of an apparently undisturbed happy life of young boys in a dirty Dublin street – North Richmond Street. The boy narrator falls in love with one of the playmates Mangan's sister. The boy bears out the words spoken by the strange 'fairly old' person about sweethearts in the previous story. He contemplates wordless contacts with her feminine form to keep at bay the prosaic nature of reality. He is totally seized upon from within as he allows himself gently slipping into the dream- land of his tender emotions; he confesses to himself, "my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires" (Joyce 22). He keeps following the romantic reverie till he finds a chance to speak to her for a little while. It is she who asks him whether he is going to visit Araby as it is "a splendid bazaar" and "she would love to go" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 22). "Araby" is based on an actual bazaar that visited Dublin in

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1894. Joyce had a first-hand experience of visiting the bazaar. It was quite usual for the ballad singers to evoke nationalist sentiments in fairs like these. In this sense, the story suggests an implicit reference to the Irish struggle for freedom. On the other hand, the idea of the eastward journeys was so fascinating at that time as to indicate alternative means of solution to the Irish problem. In one sense, the story is a version of Irish Orientalism. Joyce wrote two biographical essays on the Irish poet and Orientalist, James Clarence Mangan, in 1902 and 1907. Joyce gives his surname to the boy's beloved. She cannot go there because the convent she attends is observing a retreat that week. She suggests to him that it is good for him to visit the bazaar. The boy promises to bring a present for her in case he manages to go there.

The effect of this brief conversation on the boy overpowers his imagination to the point of obliterating his active contact with the surrounding reality; he finds all else tedious and waits eagerly for the Saturday evening when he could actually make his visit to the bazaar and buy a present for his beloved. He informs his foster parents that he wishes to visit Araby. His uncle arrives tantalizingly late on Saturday evening to give him some money so that he could go to the bazaar. The long delay sprinkles salt over his impatiently held feelings to reach the bazaar as soon as he could. Despite his uncle's late arrival at nine o' clock, he undertakes to go to the bazaar. When he finally embarks on his journey, he starts realizing soon enough, "The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 23). He arrives there only to find that it is already too late for him to decide what to do. The seeds of disillusionment are beginning to sprout in his heart at that moment of indecision: "Remembering with difficulty why I had come..." (Joyce, 1914/1993,p. 25). He attempts half-heartedly to go over to one of the stalls there. On the entrance of the stall, he listens "vaguely" to a trivial conversation of a young lady with two young gentlemen: "O, I never said such a thing! – O, but you did! – O, but I didn't! – Didn't she say that? – Yes. I heard her! – O, there's a... fib" (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 25). The content of this conversation implies cheap and vulgar flirtation that is timed so perfectly with what is going on in his mind at that moment. In Stephen Hero, Stephen overhears a trivial conversation between a young lady and a young gentleman which evokes a special response in him and becomes the basis of the epiphany. Stephen's epiphany leads him toward developing his aesthetic theory and gives him the reassuring feeling of his artistic talents. In "Araby" the boy does not overhear but listens 'vaguely', and the epiphanic moment is catastrophic as it blasts his romantic reverie. His tender emotion of love is pitted against the prosaic nature of reality. At the moment of the dawn of self- realization, he faces to the full the prosaic nature of reality which rules out the possibility of personal fulfilment. Darkness descends upon the world of his tender emotions. He realizes the folly of his romantic desire in the semi-darkness of the closing hall of the bazaar which bears a parallel with the darkened confessional of the first story: “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity: and my eyes burned with anguish and anger” (Joyce, 1914/1993, p. 26). Herring argues that “his earlier blindness to all that inhibited his romantic vision is finally dispelled by epiphany, the sudden clarity of insight being timed to match his waning view of this darkening vanity fair” (Herring, 1987, p. 31). The boy realizes that “vanity has been the cause of his youthful infatuation, his folly of undertaking the mission of attempting to impress the girl by buying her a keepsake, and his consequent denial of reality through flights of imagination”.

Conclusion

Though the epiphany appears to be catastrophic, it is not inefficacious. It is essentially affirmative as it sets before the boy a new awareness of the self and world, meaning thereby a new level of growth. Herring argues that the boy comes to see love as both carnal and spiritual rather than one alone as he journeys “from innocence to experience through disillusionment” (Herring 1987, p. 32).

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