

# The Aesthetic Analysis of Araby

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**Abstract:** Araby is written by James Joyce. This story is about a Dublin juvenile in pursuit of his obscure love, but finally his dream shattered. In order to better appreciate this story, it is wise to notice the aesthetic of this story from five aspects: such as the aesthetic of the subject; the aesthetic of impressionistic description; the aesthetic of images, color and rhythm; the aesthetic of crossing time and the aesthetic of broken art.

## 1. Introduction

Araby is James Joyce's famous short story. It is about a Dublin juvenile in pursuit of his obscure love, but finally his dream shattered. After reading this story, its symbols, color, and words keep coming to our mind. In the mind, those symbols and color comprise as paintings in some way. And some of words of this story like a flow of music following the painting. The whole story liking several of paintings gradually show to the reader, as the music play-words, the paintings gradually change. After the music ending, the showing of paintings end and just leave our reader and an adult man who looking back upon his young age alone. We can see in the last painting that adult man looking back, in his eye there is a young and lonely boy like a fire in a somber bazar. Based on the reading and those painting in our mind, there are some questions: Why it makes us feel that this short story is full of aesthetic? Where are the aesthetic in this story? How the author creates this kind of aesthetic?

## 2. The Aesthetic of Subject

One of subject of this novel is about puppy love. This kind of love is usually not taken seriously but our protagonist taken it seriously sincerely. This topic will remind the reader of their own memory, which is not perfect but is full of beauty of youth. And another subject is about the pursuit of ideal dream and growth. It is normal the way of pursuit is not all plain sailing. People's pursuit even will be shattered. That is a painful process and we even can see it as a tragedy. But most of time, tragedy is full of the art of aesthetic and can't make people forget. <sup>[2]</sup>

## 3. The Aesthetic of Impressionistic Description

There is the aesthetic of ambiguity and impressionistic description in Araby. The ambiguity exists in the blurry information of Mangan's sister without a certain information even without name. This kind of ambiguity can leave more space for reader to image, which is a kind of beauty.

Besides that, there is the beauty of impressionistic description in the story. According to the Dictionary, impressionism is a painting style that originated in France in the late 1800s and is characterized by the use of color to depict the effects of light on objects and to suggest atmosphere rather than exposing too many details. <sup>[3]</sup> The description of Araby shares the same feature. For example, the author writes that she turned a silver bracelet around and around her wrist as she spoke. She was unable to go because her convent was hosting a retreat that week. I was alone at the rails while her brother and two other boys fought for their caps. She bowed her head towards me while holding one of the spikes. The light from the bulb opposite our door highlighted the white curve of her neck, her hair, and her hand on the railing as it descended. It slipped down one side of her gown

and grabbed the white border of a petticoat as she relaxed.<sup>[1]</sup>

From this kind of description, we can see the author use light and color—"white curve of her neck", "white border of petticoat" to suggest the atmosphere which has the beauty of impressionistic description. Through his self-perceived impression of light, shadow and color, the author describes a beautiful picture for readers that can only be seen through the view of the protagonist. We can even read the movement of the protagonist's sight, which is a mirror of the protagonist's inner world. And his moving sight truly reflects his romantic psychology and desire for love.<sup>[4]</sup>

Moreover, impressionistic descriptions can better capture the moment of beauty showing the atmosphere, and better express the beauty of puppy love. The more beautiful the ideal love is, the more unforgettable when the ideal love is shattered. It will make the story more tense and allow readers to experience more deeply.

#### **4. The Aesthetic of Images, Color and Rhythm**

We still can see the beauty of images, color and rhythm in *Araby*. For example the images of "Araby", "chalice", "book with yellow leaves" "silver bracelet" "harp" "white curve of her neck" "white border of a petticoat" and so on are beautiful images with bright and warm color. Compared with the gloomy, dark and damp environment—"brown imperturbable faces", putting those bright and warm color images in a such environment will have the contrast between light and shade and create the beauty of chiaroscuro.

Besides the beauty of images and color, there is the beauty of rhythm. Based on the Dictionary, the definition of rhythm is a strong regular repeated pattern of sounds or movements.<sup>[3]</sup> And we can experience the slow or fast movement of the story by paying attention to the length of sentences. Sometimes if a sentence is long and the containing word pronounce long, the rhythm is slow. And if a sentence is short with short pronounce its movement mostly is fast. Just like listen to music. For example, when describing the beautiful scene of the girl, there are more long sentences in *Araby*. For example, the author states that as the girl was waiting for them, the light from the half-opened door made her form vanish. Her brother, who used to taunt her before obeying, is also present. And our protagonist was always staring at her from the railings. There are long sentences to describe the situation. In that certain situation, the reader can appreciate the beauty of that girl with our protagonist. "Her dress swayed as she moved her body, and the silky rope her hair flung from side to side," we witness with our heroine.<sup>[1]</sup> In this paragraph, the pace of the long sentence is slow and short, and this description shows the psychological state of the protagonist who is immersed in the moment.

In the paragraph describing the state of irritability has more short sentences. And the scene switches frequently, showing the impatience of the protagonist while waiting to go to *Araby*. For example, the author writes that the boy answered few questions in class.<sup>[1]</sup> It seems that protagonist was impatient. And he observed his teacher's expression shift from friendliness to sternness. He hoped he wasn't becoming sedentary, but he couldn't get his scattered ideas together.<sup>[1]</sup>

We can see the sentences' pattern are all use "I do what..." It shows that these things are boring and unattractive repetitions in the heart of the protagonist when he waits to go to *Araby*. And reader can feel the young boy's impatience.

That kind of description above reflects the matching of form and content, which is a kind of rhythmic beauty.

#### **5. The Aesthetic of Crossing Time**

This short story has the beauty of crossing time. One example is that this thing happened in many mornings. The boy had never spoken to that girl, but the name of that girl was like a summons to his foolish blood.<sup>[1]</sup> The word "foolish", it seems that from the future judgment the adult protagonist is ashamed of his former behavior. There is another example. At the end, the protagonist seems to give comment from the future time. The author claims, for example, that the

youngster perceived himself as a beast when he peered up into the night. He was the type of monster whose eyes blazed with sorrow and rage, and who was pushed and mocked by vanity. <sup>[1]</sup>

We can see from this paragraph, crossing time, the adult protagonist can see himself. This kind of voice coming from the future is better than by the author. Because, this kind of writing, will extend the time channel of time in the novel. If compared the whole story become a painting, extending the channel of time just like turning a bidimensional painting into a three-dimensional painting which will create a kind of beauty.

## **6. The Aesthetic of Broken Art**

The broken art comes from conflict in the story.

In his Nobel Prize acceptance address, William Faulkner mentioned the importance of writing conflict for a writer. He held the view that today's tragedy is a widespread and universal bodily terror that has been perpetuated for so long that we can no longer take it. There are no longer any spiritual issues. Only one question remains: when will I be blown up? As a result, today's young writer has forgotten the issues of the human heart in conflict with itself, which is the only thing that can produce good writing, because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and sweat. <sup>[5]</sup>

In *Araby*, there is no lack of description of conflict. At the beginning, the author describes the conflict between fantasy and reality through environmental description. For example, the author writes that being blind, North Richmond Street was a quiet street until at the hour when the Christmas Brother's School released the boys. And a two-story empty house stood at the blind end, separated from its neighbors in a square plot of land. With brown imperturbable features, the other houses on the street, aware of moral lives within them, looked at one another. <sup>[1]</sup> The blind street in *Araby* symbolizes that in that environment, there is no way out for the protagonist's quest. And on the street, the gloomy and terrifying houses and the dark and damp gardens with an unpleasant smell symbolize the decay and darkness of Dublin society.

Under this dark environment, the protagonist has his ideal pursuit--*Araby*. He's serious about his pursuits and has high expectations for *Araby*. For example, the author writes the boy found himself in a big hall. Almost all of the stalls were shut, and the majority of the hall was dark. He discovered there is a stillness that pervades a church after people have finished their worship. And he walked into the center of the bazaar timidly. <sup>[1]</sup> The word of "timidly" expresses the protagonist's expectations, attention and care.

But when the protagonist went through difficulties and came to his yearning "*Araby*", he came to a stall that was about to close, and saw a young lady flirting with two young men. Even though their conversation was just an ordinary flirtatious joke between a man and a woman, it reverberated strongly in the hearts of the protagonist. We can see the protagonist's attitude toward *Araby* has changed after that. The boy remained in front of her stall, even though he knew it was pointless, to make his interest in her items appear more genuine. Then he slowly turned away and strolled through the bazaar's heart. Against the sixpence, he lets the two pennies fall into his pocket. He heard a voice call from one end of the gallery as the light went out. The upper level of the hall had now become absolutely dark. From that the young boy began to have the feeling of disappointment.

After that his ideal "*Araby*" at that moment turn into vanity. It is cruel to see his own ideal pursuit turn to vanity by himself, especially for a young boy. The desire for *Araby* was destroyed cruelly. And there is a kind of aesthetic of broken art. Because the broken place is the place where for the new light--the light of growth and epiphany. Just like a butterfly grow from broken chrysalis.

## **7. Conclusion**

In summary, *Araby* is a classic short story and it is full of aesthetic. This story has the aesthetic of subject, impressionistic description, images, color, rhythm and broken art. It is worthy reading forever. And it shows us that sometimes the broken experiences will shed a light of epiphany on our lives.

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