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"My Eyes Burned with Anguish and Anger": Hegelian Dialectic and Development of Consciousness in James Joyce's "Araby"

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Abstract

The present interdisciplinary qualitative study aims to analyze James Joyce's "Araby" based on Hegelian dialectic. This seminal story from *Dubliners* (1914) has received immense critical reception over the years and has been studied through various critical frameworks. However, its potential for analysis based on Hegelian dialectic has been largely overlooked. Considering the last episode of the story as a moment of epiphany and self-realization, the study seeks to discuss how the protagonist's development of consciousness can be interpreted based on the three stages of Hegelian dialectic: Understanding (Idealization of Mangan's sister and the bazaar), Dialectical (faced with contradiction at the bazaar), and Speculative (the final epiphany). The analysis demonstrates how the narrator's initially fixed determinations and alienated consciousness in the understanding stage face their contradiction at the dialectical moment that results in the final epiphany, mirroring the last stage of the dialectic where contradictions are resolved and self-realization is achieved. Further, based on the principles of Hegelian dialectic rooted in philosophical idealism, the study not only asserts that the narrator's consciousness evolves through a process driven by contradiction, but it also interprets the narrator's journey from naïve idealization to self-realization as a universal process of maturation. To avoid a mechanical and rigid application of the dialectical method, the analysis relies on close textual reading to identify the elements that contribute to each moment of the dialectic and deeply contextualizes the argument to deviate from oversimplification of the text.

Keywords: *James Joyce, "Araby", Hegelian dialectic, epiphany, self-consciousness*

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Introduction

The unprecedented status of James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) as one of the most "radical changes in the traditional short story" (Beja 1971: 93) has been acknowledged and praised for decades. This collection of sixteen short narratives is an innovative pioneering work that in Joyce's terms is crafted with "scrupulous meanness" to be "a chapter of the moral history" of Ireland (Seidel 2002: 43). Although the collection served as a precursor to the author's later works, it is still considered "the most widely read of Joyce's works" (Bulson 2006: 32), which highlights its undeniable importance in the Irish writer's literary contributions. Penned by an author who lived most of his life in self-exile, *Dubliners* became the strongest possible attempt for Joyce at the time to call on his people's lost identity under the colonizing power of the British Empire and motivate them to restore it by empowering their self-confidence[1]. In other words, this literary masterpiece was Joyce's instrument to reflect the condition of the Irish people and change the way they saw themselves because "before any political or religious revolution could take place, serious self-reflection was required" (Bulson 2006: 33).

In line with his intention to liberate the Irish from their self-oppressiveness, Joyce chose the city of Dublin as the setting of all *Dubliners*' short stories for he viewed the city as the "center of paralysis" and thematically organized the collection into four major themes of "childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life" to "present it to the indifferent public" (Seidel 2002: 43). The implications of this thematic choice might be controversial to address but narrowing it down to Joyce's strive for "age-appropriate consciousness" in every narrative of *Dubliners* (Seidel 2002: 43) and his reference to the public as "indifferent", it is not far-fetched to assert or argue that he deliberately chose this structure to depict the rise of self-awareness in the characters who are identical to the people of Dublin[2] and represent different life stages in *Dubliners*, to demonstrate a continuous evolution or development through the collection that ultimately emancipates the Irish from their indifference and ignorance. On this basis, and with considering *Dubliners* interpreted as "an introduction and background to an epiphany" (Beja 1971: 94), It stands to reason that the common thread of this journey to self-awareness is the recurring moments of epiphany that transform Joyce's Dubliners' ordinary life experiences to sudden and

often deep insights. In a sense, these moments of epiphany are the driving force of the collection as they bridge between the characters' insights into different matters (morality, religion, love, and politics), gradually transforming their consciousness to eventually culminate in a final big epiphany: liberation from indifference and self-oppression.

Interestingly, although the nature of the epiphanies in different sections varies[3], through a more scrutinizing look, one can notice that this transition from one stage to the other is not confined to the themes of the collection; it is also observable in individual stories. The third story of the "childhood" phase of the collection "Araby" is a compelling example of this matter. In a sense, "loss of innocence" might be a sound description for the essence of the epiphanies in the "childhood" phase of *Dubliners*, including "Araby", as the main characters of the stories are children whose confrontation with the harsh realities of life propels them to deviate from childhood and move towards adolescence. It appears that this transition from childhood to adolescence is more broadly observable in "Araby" as it functions as a bridge between the "childhood" and "adolescence" sections of the collection, showcasing a boy on the verge of moving to a different stage of life through its final shattering moment of epiphany. The title of the story comes from an eastern-themed market called "Araby: A Grand Oriental Fête", held in Dublin in 1894, which the twelve-year-old James Joyce visited on a Saturday night when a crush happened at the turnstiles (Mullin 2011: 31). In the context of *Dubliners*, "Araby" is usually referred to as an "initiation story" in which the main character moves from ignorance to knowledge and from innocence to maturity (Collins 1967: 84). This transition however, is to a certain extent unique to Joyce's style because as Morrisey (1982) points out, Joyce does not only show characters who progress from one stage to the next and abandon their former traits, instead, in the case of "Araby" for instance, he creates a protagonist "at the edge of manhood, who has within him a simple naïf, a poetic romantic, and a harsh adult censor" (48). In an encompassing viewpoint, the story depicts a boy's idealized infatuation and subsequent disillusionment, or as Mullin (2011) puts it, "the raising, then the frustration, of expectations" (33).

Purpose and Scope of the study

Over the years, immense attention has been given to "Araby" and multiple interpretations have been provided for its final moment of epiphany. From being referred to as a "story of illusion, disillusionment and coming to awareness" in which the "typical" epiphany at the end, "shows forth emptiness and provides the sinking sensation" (Tindall 1959: 19) to being viewed as a story of "self-revelation" by Walzl (1965) where "a boy sees in the mere act of lights being turned out a projection of his psychological blindness" (443), leading to an epiphany that is described as a "manifestation on the symbolic level of disillusionment in the theological virtue of charity[…]" (445), this is evident that the boy's journey in "Araby" is accompanied by a shift in his consciousness that results in this diversly defined moment of/as manifestation, self-realization, or epiphany. The studies on this matter are numerous[4]; however, there is a common characteristic that binds them; they mostly discuss the story's final epiphany in isolation without tracing the dynamic process leading to it, and if not, the analyses are limited to descriptive interpretations rather than systematic ones. In this light, hitting on Tindall's description of "Araby" as a "story of illusion, disillusionment and coming to awareness" that shows a dynamic process, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how these three stages of the narrator's consciousness can be interpreted based on the three stages of the Hegelian dialectic: Understanding, Dialectical, and Speculative. The present study endeavors to depict how the narrator's initially fixed determinations and alienated consciousness in the understanding stage face their contradiction at the dialectical moment that results in the final epiphany, mirroring the last stage of the dialectic where contradictions are resolved and self-realization is achieved. To achieve this purpose and avoid a mechanical and formulaic application of the dialectical method, the analysis relies on close textual reading to identify the elements that contribute to each moment of the dialectic and deeply contextualizes the argument to deviate from oversimplification of the text.

Significance of the Study

In recent times, the rise of literary theory and various schools in modern western philosophy has allowed many canonical literary works to be interpreted through

different philosophical frameworks, from which fruitful and new insights have been achieved. Needless to say, James Joyce's literary contributions, with attention to their status as canonical, are among the ones that have been largely explored through philosophical viewpoints. Theoretically expanding from analytical philosophy to phenomenology, some of the recent scholarship that philosophically address Joyce's major works include: "The Labyrinth of Language: Joyce and Wittgenstein" (White 1975), "Joyce, Wittgenstein, and the Problem of Representation; or Why Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake" (McNutt 1988), "*A reading of selected writings of James Joyce in relation to the works of Gilles Deleuze (and Félix Guattari)*" (Davies 2005), "*James Joyce and the Philosophers at Finnegans Wake*" (Verne 2016), "Joyce, Heidegger & the Material World of Ulysses: 'Ithaca' as Inventory" (Scholar 2018), "*Joyce's Ulysses: Philosophical Perspectives*" (Kitcher ed. 2020) and "*Philosophical Allusions in James Joyce's Finnegans Wake*" (Baines 2023). In the case of "Araby", however, the philosophical readings of the story are very limited[5] and there is not a single study that directly engages with German Idealism or Hegel's philosophy, especially the Hegelian dialectic, to analyze the notion of epiphany in "Araby". This study, therefore, becomes significant as it provides the first Hegelian reading of the story, positioning it among the limited philosophical readings of "Araby" and more broadly among the few Hegelian analyses of Joyce's entire body of work[6].

Literature Review

In parallel with the recognition of *Dubliners* as "the most widely read of Joyce's works", the status of "Araby" as one of the collection's most highly ontologized short stories remains indisputable. This eye-catching narrative has been studied by many scholars from various critical frameworks, providing a complete overview that goes beyond the limited scope of this paper. The reviewed literature below consists of some of the latest articles written on the story.

The context in which *Dubliners* was written and provided the motivation for Joyce to depict the fundamental principles of Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory in "Araby" has been explored by Maniee and Mansouri (2017), demonstrating how "the narrative voice of the story", "rich imagery and symbolism", "the conversation among the characters", "naming of the characters", and "the description

of the setting and atmosphere that is simultaneously realistic and symbolic" (208), portrays "the cultural, political, economic and social domination of Britain over Ireland, specifically Dublin" (201). The literary genre of Bildungsroman is Tian's (2020) approach to compare the main characters' development from innocence to maturity in Joyce's "Araby" and Alice Munro's "How I Met My Husband". Through emphasizing the similarities in the narratives and discussing the two pairs of conflicts that the stories share; "the confrontation between the child and adult worlds and the impingement of the reality on the ideal" (15), it is suggested that "the stories are not merely accounts of a stage in children's growing up; they present humans' growth and development facing this eternal topic of life" (29). Further, exploring the micro and macrostructural dimensions of "Araby" through the lens of "discourse analysis", Shah et al. (2023) claim that Joyce's use of different narrative techniques such as "a high level of involvement and a wide range of lexical and grammatical cohesive ties" (1) has enabled him to masterfully craft a well-written text that achieves its desired effect. In another study, from the perspective of juvenile psychology and relying on poststructuralist frameworks provided by philosophers like Foucault (1926-1984) and de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Fonseka (2024) asserts that Joyce depicts the boy's transition from childhood to maturity after a series of psychological and physical obstacles, as the character lives in a carceral environment that limits his freedom of action. One of the recent approaches to the story's epiphany is "Epiphany: A Stylistic-Semiotic Interpretation of James Joyce's 'Araby'" by Mohammed (2020) in which the author endeavors to discuss how the seven standards of textuality, outlined in Beau Grande and Dressler's (1981) model, create the mental world of the story by highlighting the relation between verbal and cultural signs to the occurrence of the story's epiphany.

The present reviewed literature indicates that although critical frameworks such as postcolonialism and psychoanalysis provide rich cultural and mental context for analyzing the story and even some studies have addressed the narrator's moment of self-realization or epiphany through lenses such as Bildungsroman genre and stylistic-semiotics, there has not been a study to directly engage with Hegelian dialectic to analyze the protagonist's development of consciousness which results in the final epiphany. The present paper, therefore, aims to address this gap by exploring

how the main character's transition from naïve idealization to self-realization can be interpreted based on Hegelian dialectic.

Conceptual Framework: Hegelian Dialectic

The origin of the term "dialectic" dates back to ancient Greece and is mostly associated with the name of the Greek philosopher Socrates (c. 470-399 BCE). As observable in Plato's *Dialogues* (c. 450-399 BCE), Socrates challenged his listeners' thoughts and ideas by presenting contradictory viewpoints, compelling them to reconsider their position and come to a new resolution. This art of conversational argumentation that aimed at cutting the listeners off from ignorance and reexamining the essential concepts, mostly ethical issues like justice and morality, has been widely understood as "dialectic"[7]. Hegelian dialectic, however, differs from the given description as it is a systematic and historical process rooted in philosophical Idealism, operating as a substantial form of logic in Hegel's major works such as *The Science of Logic* (1812) and *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Similar to the provided definition of dialectic, Hegelian dialectic is also driven by contradiction, whereby opposing sides engage in a process that ultimately resolves into something more developed and sophisticated. It constitutes three crucial stages of understanding, dialectical and speculative, which are not merely parts of logic but "everything true in general" (Hegel 1991:125). This implies that all real phenomena undergo a dialectical process that ultimately resolves into something more developed and progressed. In other words, Hegelian dialectics is the "autonomous self-criticism and self-development of the subject matter," whether that be a form of consciousness or a concept (Inwood 1992: 81). The first stage of this dialectical method, understanding, "holds to fixed determinations that stand firm in their difference from others. It takes each determination by itself, identifies this determination in terms of itself alone, and keeps the determination separated from other determinations" (Collins 2013: 73). This is the phase where ideas are considered in their distinct form, and the mind grasps the concepts in their immediate logic without contradiction. In Hegel's viewpoint, agents always tend to think this way to order the world into distinct aspects, but they ignore the complex interdependence between the ideas8. This mistake becomes known to the mind in the second moment, dialectical, where it "finds that understanding's fixed, limited

determinations carry the seeds of their negation within their own nature” (Collins 2013: 75). This is the stage where inherent contradictions of the initial understanding emerge and its instability is exposed to the mind. This transition to opposite and contradictory concepts might imply that a real understanding of the subject matter is not possible, but Hegel asserts that the third moment of the dialectic, knowns as speculative, is where the possibility of true understanding lies as it “affirms that the original concept and its negation are one truth” (Collins 2013: 76). In a sense, the speculative moment transcends the contradictions revealed in the dialectical phase by integrating them into a higher unity, affirming “the unifying principle that governs the dynamic between the opposites” (Collins 2013: 76). In line with the importance of this dialectical method in Hegel’s system of thought, Robert Stern (2002) mentions, “without this conceptual transformation, it will be impossible for us to see the world without apparent incoherence; only once we have identified and surpassed the rigid conceptual dichotomies of the understanding will we be able to conceive of reality in a way that is satisfactory to reason” (16).

To comprehensively grasp the function and essence of the Hegelian dialectic, a brief explanation of philosophical idealism is advantageous. In contrast to materialism, philosophical idealism in its simplest definition claims that all that exists is known and understood in dimensions that are primarily mental, meaning they are known through and as ideas (Robinson 2025: 1). Idealism itself, however, is generally categorized into two distinct categories: metaphysical and epistemological. The former is in direct contrast with materialism, while the latter asserts that in the process of acquiring knowledge, the mind can only grasp objects by their perceptibility, not as they truly are (Robinson 2025: 1). In other words, the regular world of objects and embodied minds is not the world as it truly is; instead, individuals as subjective minds perceive the world through uncriticized categories9. As a philosopher in the tradition of German Idealism, Hegel endeavored to show how this initial perception of the world as uncriticized categories can be resolved into absolute knowledge of the object by introducing a system of thought known as absolute idealism, asserting that “the best reflection of the world is not found in physical and mathematical categories but in terms of a self-conscious mind”10. Hegel built a system in which reality is fundamentally shaped by an all-encompassing and

self-developing principle called spirit (Geist), and dialectic is the driving force that moves the spirit towards the absolute idea, which constitutes the ultimate reality. In Hegel's idealism, reality is considered to be organic (Brightman 1993: 432), meaning that it is structured like a living organism whose parts are interrelated and a true understanding of it is not possible unless seen as a whole. This implies that in Hegel's viewpoint, reality is not static but unfolds through a dynamic process; therefore, dialectic becomes a way of development toward the organic unity of the spirit and ultimately the absolute idea. If subjective agents initially perceive the world through uncriticized categories, and self-consciousness is the reflection of the absolute, the main concern remains the possibility and emergence of self-consciousness. In his groundbreaking epistemological work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel tries to demonstrate how the dialectical process of consciousness leads to self-consciousness and, ultimately, to absolute knowledge. He depicts how the pedagogic function of phenomenology helps "ordinary consciousness face up to the fact that it can no longer take the apparently obvious distinctions of the understanding for granted, and so makes speculative philosophy possible for it" (Stern 2002: 24). This experience of moving from "certainty" to despair, to renewed certainty, enables the consciousness to revise its position and see things from a different perspective (Stern 2002: 24). Since in epistemological idealism objects are known "in their existence outside and independently of the mind" (Robinson 2025: 1), the phenomenological approach that Hegel adopts enables him to formulate a dialectical process for the development of consciousness as phenomenology is defined to be:

The study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions (Smith 2013: 1).

The intentionality of consciousness demands that it always depend on an independent object for its existence; however, since subjective minds initially perceive the world through uncriticized categories, a distinction arises between the object as it exists in itself and the way it appears to consciousness, which leads to an initial state of alienation. This is to say, alienation occurs when consciousness "fails

to understand that the objects it creates are externalizations of its own subjectivity" (Rae 2012: 30). This state of alienation plays a crucial role in the development of consciousness, as it is an essential part of the process of self-creativity and self-discovery that ultimately guides consciousness toward absolute knowledge (Debnath 2020: 52). This position of alienation is resolved through the dialectical process when consciousness recognizes that its knowledge of the object corresponds to the object as it truly is. In other words, self-realization is the outcome of this dialectical movement, wherein the individual overcomes the experience of alienation and obtains a higher level of self-awareness. The dialectical process, therefore, becomes a method of exposition, wherein each [uncriticized] category is demonstrated to be implicitly self-contradictory and necessarily develops into the next, resulting in the all-encompassing category that Hegel designates as the Absolute Idea (Forster 2006: 132). In this light, adopting the Hegelian dialectic as a dynamic systematic approach, the present qualitative interdisciplinary library-based study asks the following question to address the narrator's development of consciousness that leads to the story's final moment of epiphany: How the three stages of the Hegelian dialectic correspond to different stages of the narrator's state of consciousness in the dynamic process of reaching the final epiphany? Acknowledging the roots of the Hegelian dialectic in philosophical idealism, what new insights can be gained through reframing the story's epiphany from a static moment of disillusionment into a dynamic process of maturation?

Discussion

The story begins with the description of North Richmond Street as "blind" with a "detached" house at the end of it. The boy narrator's isolation and broken parental lineage can be understood from the word "detached" as the reader will come to understand that he lives with his aunt and uncle, but for the sake of this analysis the focus is diverted on the connotation of "blind" as it not only refers to the street being dead end but also suggests that "the boy is also blind" (Stone 2013: 354). This blindness can be associated with his alienated consciousness, which will be explained later, as he lacks a clear view of the things that attract him; instead, they are "blurred and veiled by clouds of romantic obfuscation" (Stone 2013: 353). A crucial

part of the story that deepens its religious implications and adds depth to its thematic development, is the narrator's recollection of the former tenant of their house, a priest who died in the back drawing room where the boy finds a few books. Aside from *The Devout Communicant* (1757), which is a religious book about the Catholic faith, the two other books implicitly foreshadow what the narrator is going to experience in the story. The plot of "Araby" is interrelated with Sir Walter Scott's *The Abbot* (1820) wherein the protagonist dreams of meeting a girl and goes on a knightly quest to buy her something from a bazaar and the boy's favorite *The Memoirs of Vidocq* (1828) by Eugène Vidocq which tells the story of a "Parisian criminal who became the chief detective"11 and is considered a popular novel with the theme of deception (Jingyu 2024: 16). These books become relevant when the narrator meets the girl he idealizes and promises to bring her something back from the bazaar but, due to his "blindness", the boy does not realize that he is deceiving himself and is fully drowned in romantic illusions. While the mentioned books suggest that he enters a path of self-deception, the central apple tree in the wild garden behind the house, an allusion to the Tree of Knowledge in the Bible, hints that he will ultimately acquire some form of understanding. This foreshadowing aligns with the final moment of epiphany and implies that his consciousness would develop in the course of the narrative. To affirm this notion, Collins (1967) further notes that "even the winter season and the bitter, wet weather [as described in children's playtime] precludes a bright outcome" (86), which suggests that at the end of the narrative, a new resolution is inevitable. The narrator's alienated consciousness marked by his "blindness" and romantic obfuscations, further becomes entangled with his idealizations of the girl who is the object of these unquestioned feelings.

The third paragraph of the story is where Mangan's sister, as the object of the narrator's romantic desires, is introduced to the reader. The boy's close and detailed description of her remarks reflects his severe infatuation and idealization. She appears at the door to call her brother home and her figure is "defined by the light from the half-opened door" (Joyce 1993: 17). This use of imagery by Joyce indicates the boy's limited perception and his alienated consciousness as the light from the half-open door does not fully reveal her features, reinforcing his incomplete understanding. Similarly, the fact that the "blind" in the front parlor is fully pulled down except for one inch

suggests that his perception and understanding are restricted. Just as the half-open door and the dim light indicate a blurred perception, the lowered blind is an emblem of his alienated consciousness and his limited grasp of the reality of Mangan’s sister. The mere hearing of her name flames sexual desires in him, sending blood rushing through his body: “Her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood” (Joyce 1993: 18). Even in places most hostile to romance, such as the harsh Dublin market, his thoughts of her are continuous, making him imagine that he “bore [his] chalice safely through a throng of foes” (Joyce 1993: 18). Although this metaphor portrays him in the figure of “a priest or crusader with an emblem of faith”[12], demonstrating his romantic devotion and idealization, it simultaneously alludes to St. Tarsicius, “the boy martyr of the Holy Eucharist”, who chose martyrdom rather than surrendering the sacrament to heathens (Skau and Cassidy 1976: 6). By drawing a parallel between the young narrator and St. Tarsicius, Joyce puts emphasis on their shared youthfulness and “enhances the religious and romantic aspects of the narrator’s character” (Skau and Cassidy 1976: 6). The climax of the boy’s romantic desire for Mangan’s sister occurs on a dark rainy day when he is overwhelmed by his emotions. He goes to the back drawing room and whispers, “O love! O love!” many times (Joyce 1993: 18). Below him, a distant lamp glows, and he is grateful that he can see so little. This moment, consistent with the earlier imageries, indicates his blindness and his satisfaction with his alienated consciousness rather than a clear perception of reality. His immature love, then, becomes an emblem of self-deception, a pleasant dream from which he does not want to wake up. Following this intense expression of love and romantic idealization, the boy is fortunate enough to have a brief conversation with Mangan’s sister, during which the name “Araby” comes up. This moment of hearing about the bazaar marks the beginning of his idealization of it as well. His idealizations and fantasies about the girl and the bazaar are so intense that he sees the girl’s image between himself and the page he is reading, and the very syllables of the word “Araby” appear to him as magical and luxurious. He is so excited to visit the bazaar and fulfill his romantic quest that he becomes impatient with school and plays to a degree that finds them monotonous and childish. This intense desire and idealization, however, also sets the stage for the inevitable confrontation with reality.

On the promised night that he is going to visit the bazaar, his uncle, who is

supposed to give him money for the visit, comes home late. The anxiety of waiting for him forces the boy to wander through the cold upstairs rooms and look out at Mangan's house, where he sees "nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by [his] imagination" (Joyce 1993: 19). This moment contributes to his idealized world, yet the darkness of her house suggests that his deception and lack of clear understanding still persist. The narrator's lack of clear perception and his infatuation depicted in this moment, consistent with the earlier imageries that have their roots in his romanticized visions of Mangan's sister and the bazaar, represent the first stage of Hegel's dialectical process of consciousness: alienation. In this initial stage that Hegel refers to as "understanding", the narrator's consciousness is in a state of fixity, where "concepts or forms have a seemingly stable definition or determination" (Maybee 2020: 2). In other words, it is a state that appears certain, yet its inner contradictions are not fully exposed. Up to this point in the story, the boy views Mangan's sister and "Araby" as glamorous, provoking, enchanting, and magical, and his idealizations do not correspond to reality. He has never seen the bazaar, and his perception and understanding of Mangan's sister are equally distorted. He does not recognize that he is engaged in an immature romanticization of an older girl, who likely wants to become a nun because, as mentioned in the story, she is preparing for a religious retreat at her convent. This religious aspect of the girl makes her somehow unattainable, therefore, the boy's sexual desires for her are in vain. It is worthy to note that Mangan is the real name of an Irish Romantic poet and as Joyce mentions in in his 1902 "Essay on Mangan", Mangan's sister functions as "an emblem of false vision and self-delusion" (Stone 2013: 355) which highlights the boy's lack of clear understanding of her. This is the condition where the narrator's consciousness is alienated as his idealizations do not correspond to reality and he is not able to recognize the contradictions in his perception. However, this alienation will soon be shattered when the character's consciousness enters the second stage of the dialectic. The shift towards this next stage is symbolically heralded when the boy sits down with his uncle to take money from him.

On the scheduled Saturday night, when he finally gets the money from his uncle to go to the bazaar, he asks if the boy knows "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed". Understanding this reference to the poem by the well-known 19th-century

poet Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton (1808–1877) is essential for both the thematic development of the story and the dialectical process. In the poem, an Arab is forced to sell his beloved steed due to hunger and becomes stressed upon realizing that he will only see the horse again in his dreams, and it will soon belong to another (Friedman 1966: 71). However, when he finds himself and the steed inseparable, he breaks off the deal, mounts the horse, and rides away. According to Friedman (1966), "Joyce's reference to this poem, a work notable for its sentimentality, directs attention to the main significance of 'Araby', the assault on sentimentality and illusion" (72). This critique of the narrator's idealized fantasies and sentimentality has a much more profound function through the lens of Hegelian dialectic. The reference can be interpreted as a hint to the idea of necessity in the dialectical process, especially as it occurs between the first and the second moments. In Hegelian dialectic, the initial determinations formed in the moment of understanding are inherently flawed or unstable, causing them to collapse and transition into the dialectical moment (Maybee 2020: 2). In other words, "the natures of the determinations themselves drive or force them to pass into their opposites" (Maybee 2020: 3). This idea of necessity that forces the determinations to move from one stage to the other is a fundamental feature of Hegelian dialectic. In this respect, "The Arab's Farewell to His Steed" can be interpreted as a reference to the concept of necessity. Unlike the Arab in the poem, who refuses to sell and leave his steed, "in Joyce's story the boy realizes that his thoughts of Mangan's sister and the bazaar have been nothing but dreams, and tears of anguish accompany his farewell to these illusions" (Friedman 1966: 72). This implies that the boy's alienated consciousness must abandon its flawed determination and confront opposing realities as he soon moves into the dialectical moment. His uncle's reference to the poem serves as a prelude to the boy's upcoming confrontation with disillusionment as the boy leaves his house and sets off for the bazaar

The narrator leaves the house with a florin in his hand, takes the train to the bazaar, and arrives just ten minutes before it closes. A notable moment that contributes to the dialectical process occurs when he is unable to find a sixpenny entrance: "I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man" (Joyce 1993: 20). The sixpenny gate is meant for children, but since the boy cannot find it,

he is forced to enter the bazaar by giving a shilling to the man at the adult turnstile. The inability to enter through the sixpenny entrance foreshadows his transition into a new stage in life as "he enters, and leaves, a man, or at least further on the road to manhood" (Burto 1967: 123). This also anticipates his movement into a new stage of consciousness as it is gradually developing. Inside the bazaar, he finds a large hall where most of the stalls are already closed, and much of the space is drowned in darkness. As he listens to the sound of coins falling on a salver while two men count money, the shabbiness of the bazaar strips away the romantic aura he had imagined as he becomes aware of the material world and the reality he had previously ignored (Collins 1967: 88). In this confused state, he hears the voice of a female vendor flirting with two men at the stall door. According to Collins (1967), "The girl's retort, 'Oh, there's a fib,' informs him that his illusion is a 'fib,' that vanity had obfuscated the reality which has now become apparent" (88). He briefly lingers at her stall before walking away because he possibly realizes that he does not have enough money to buy anything: "I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket" (Joyce 1993: 21). At this point, he enters the second stage of Hegelian dialectic, which is defined as "the self-sublation of the finite determinations and their transition into their opposites" (Forster 2006: 132, my emphasis). The dialectical moment is a stage of instability, where "determinations that [were] fixed in the first moment pass into their opposite" (Maybee 2020: 2). In this dialectical moment, consciousness comes to terms with whether its knowledge of the object corresponds to the object as it truly is through what Hegel calls "experience" (Hegel 1977: 55), which is a crucial element for overcoming self-alienation and grasping the phenomenon in its true form. The boy's idealized visions and fixed expectations of the bazaar are shattered at the moment of confronting its reality. Far from being an exotic and magical place, the bazaar turns out to be an ordinary marketplace where the vendors are more concerned with selling goods than fulfilling his emotional and romantic fantasies. Instead of finding excitement, exoticism, and sexual success at the bazaar, he is faced with a disenchanting spectacle of imaginative poverty and belatedness (Mullin 2011: 33). Through this confrontation with reality, the boy realizes that his previous understanding of the bazaar was based on fantasies and idealized images. This awareness of the gap between his idealized image and the reality before him

forces him toward the final stage of the dialectic, where his alienated consciousness converts to self-consciousness. It is at this moment, standing amidst the dim lights and closed stalls of the bazaar, that the boy’s illusions are over, leading him to a moment of profound self-realization where he utters the last famous sentence of the story.

The final sentence of the story informs the last stage of the dialectical development: “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 1993: 21). Attending to Joyce’s use of language in this sentence is a matter of great importance as it reveals the intricate layers of meaning that contribute to comprehending the last moment of the dialectical process. At this moment, the boy comes to understand that he has been made a fool of (derided) by the false pride that he is going to have a great achievement (vanity) by visiting the bazaar; that being a romantic and sexual relationship with Mangan’s sister by bringing back a gift. This is the moment of the shattering epiphany as the boy realizes he has been deceiving himself and his romantic quests are in vain. This moment of self-realization corresponds to the third stage of the dialectic, known as the speculative or positively rational moment, which “apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposite” (Forster 2006: 132). In this final moment, the narrator’s consciousness resolves the contradictions between his previous determinations and achieves a new form of understanding. In other words, his consciousness overcomes its alienation and turns into self-consciousness, demonstrating a moment of transformation, not a static disillusionment. The sentence “I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity” is not merely a sign of sadness or despair but shows the emergence of a more developed understanding. This is the moment where he understands that his idealizations of Mangan’s sister and the bazaar were in vain, not due to external obstacles but because of his own misguided ideas. He recognizes that he has deceived himself by imagining he could win Mangan’s sister over with this heroic gesture of going to the bazaar, because at least her devotion to becoming a nun presents an insurmountable problem. This moment of epiphany is the end of the boy’s alienated consciousness as he finally sees both Mangan’s sister and the bazaar for what they truly are. The Irish writer’s depiction of this moment of coming-of-age experience can be interpreted as a universal process

of maturation while explored through the principles of philosophical idealism. As Brightman (1933) explains, "all idealists regard value, mental experience, and persons as wholes or members of wholes" (432). This notion helps to identify the boy's position as a member of the whole and his developing mental activity and experience through the dialectical process, a part of the experience of the organic unity. The system of Idealism emphasizes the concept of "concrete universal", which is a kind of concrete reality whose characteristics and properties can be imagined and gathered in one specific instance13. To elaborate, "humankind" is a concrete universal as its properties can be gathered in one specific creature called "human". In contrast to abstract universal, which expresses a common nature that members of a group own, "the concrete universal is essentially dynamic, organic, and developing. Thus, universality and individuality merge" (Robinson 2025: 2). In this manner, because the understanding stage of Hegel's method is home to abstract universals (Collins 2013: 74), the dialectical process functions as a tool to convert this abstract universal to a concrete universal. This is to say, the individual dynamic developing process of maturation that the boy experiences can be considered as a concrete universal, as the properties of the all-encompassing coming-of-age experience, which is a part of the organic system, can be seen in the narrator of the story. To more explicitly elaborate this notion, Maybee (2020) mentions, "because the determination in the speculative moment grasps the unity of the first two moments, Hegel's dialectical method leads to concepts or forms that are increasingly comprehensive and universal" (4) therefore, the boy's journey from the beginning of the story to the end becomes a dynamic voyage of maturation that signifies a broader coming-of-age experience. In this regard, Joyce's story is not only about a person or a personal narrative, but it also reflects the universal process of maturation. The final moment of epiphany is the moment of transition from childhood to adolescence that happens to many others like the narrator of "Araby" when they gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of desires and relationships. This is an affirmation of Ezra Pound's statement that with a few changes in *Dubliners*, its "stories could be retold of any town" because Joyce is capable of directly dealing with the things about him without becoming engrossed in them, as he uncovers "the universal element beneath them", presenting individuals rather than "types" though emphasizing the "common emotions which run through

all races" (Eliot 1968: 401).

Conclusion

This study intended to demonstrate how the narrator's development of consciousness in "Araby" can be interpreted based on the three stages of Hegelian dialectic. The boy's idealizations of the girl and the bazaar resemble the first moment of the dialectic, understanding, in which the determinations are fixed and their inner contradictions are not exposed. The second moment of the process, dialectical, occurs when the boy goes to the bazaar and confronts the reality of the place. In this dialectical moment, the earlier determinations are converted into their opposite, and consciousness comes to recognize that its earlier knowledge of the object did not correspond to the object as it truly is. The last stage of the dialectical movement is the moment of the shattering epiphany at the end of the story, when consciousness deviates from alienation and resolves the first two determinations into a new resolution. It is at this point that the narrator comes to understand that his ideas and fantasies about both the girl and the bazaar were futile and in vain, reaching a kind of self-consciousness. This reading shed a new light on the story as it tried to address and depict the dynamic process that culminates in the final epiphany through a systematic philosophical approach; something that has been often neglected due to the prevailing tendency to interpret the story's epiphany as a static moment rather than as the outcome of a dynamic process. In the light of philosophical idealism and relying on the notion that the dialectical process leads to concrete universals, the study discussed that Joyce's story is not merely a personal narrative but also reflects a universal process of maturation. The analysis established a link between German idealism and modernist literature, suggesting that fresh and fruitful interpretations can be achieved by revisiting canonical works through philosophical concepts that have been neglected in literary studies. This became evident that notions of disillusionment and epiphany in modernist literature can align with and be interpreted through philosophical ideas such as Hegelian dialectic, deepening the readers' understanding of the intricate layers of modern literary writings. With attention to numerous moments of epiphany in James Joyce's *Dubliners*, future studies can endeavor to analyze other stories and characters of the collection based on Hegelian dialectic. Additionally, authors might

focus on other modernist writings using this framework to expand its application in critical literary studies.

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Endnotes

1 See Eric Bulson, *The Cambridge Introduction to James Joyce*, p. 33.

2 See Note 1.

3 See Walzl (1965).

4 See, for instance, Hendry (1946), Scholes and Walzl (1967), and Bowen (1982).

5 See, for instance, LeBlanc (2000) and Samanta (2023).

6 See, for instance, Tan (2017) and Brivic (2022).

7 See Maybee (2020), Hegel's dialectics.

8 See Robert Stern, *Hegel and the phenomenology of spirit*, p. 15.

9 The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2018). Absolute Idealism. Encyclopedia Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Absolute-Idealism

10 See Note 9.

11 Noted by Laurence Davies, *Dubliners*, P. 162.

12 See Note 11.

13 See Robinson (2025), Idealism.

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