

Biblical Influence on Literature: Araby

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Definition of an Allusion

“An allusion is a brief, usually indirect reference to another work or to a real or historical event or person, traditionally as a way of drawing connections between those elements as well as enriching the meaning of the current work through associations with the other. Allusions imply a shared cultural experience or at least understanding. When you think and write about allusions, you should identify which elements of the second work, the work being alluded to, relate to the first work, the work you are reading. You should also think about how the characteristics of the second work enrich your understanding of the work you are reading.” [D. Reiss, <http://www.wordsworth2.net/resource/icarus/icarglos.htm>; 1999]

Allusions to The Garden of Eden in James Joyce’s “Araby”

- Images of Light and Darkness
- Fall from a state of innocence.
- Awareness of Sin and Shame
- Guards at the Borders of Eden
- Even the name Araby is a powerful allusion to the Garden
- The idea that knowledge is a double-edged sword. While it gives information, it also makes us aware of our own superficiality, sinfulness, and sexuality.
- The apple tree in the backyard.

Sexuality

- Joyce powerfully explores the sexual nature of the sin in the Creation story. Adam and Eve’s knowledge of sin comes in the form of sexual shame.
 - Priest=symbol of sexual innocence and celibacy
 - His death at the beginning of the story
 - His “rusty bicycle pump”
 - Mangan’s sister is always shrouded in darkness and shadow, suggesting something illicit.
 - The narrator is constantly aware of her body in his descriptions—her figure, “the white curve of her neck”, the way her clothes move.
 - Sexual tension for the boy
 - His body “Like a harp”
 - His repetition of “My love” in darkness, alone
- Joyce ties this all together by putting it in the context of sexual repression.
 - Sex is presented as exotic, exciting, forbidden, foreign (The Bazaar)
 - By contrast, the boy’s life seems dark, cold, rainy (his neighborhood)