Thoughts on Joyce and *Araby*.

Joyce's ability to fuse realism with symbolism appears in "Araby", the third tale of *The Dubliners*. The description of events and locations reflects those of his boyhood. The Joyces moved to a house at 7 North Richmond Street, like the one described, when James was twelve (1894), and he attended for a while a school on the same street run by the Christian Brothers. In May of the same year, a bazaar, a "Grand Oriental Fete," was held in Dublin. But despite the realism of the description, the story is essentially symbolic. A romantically inspired journey takes on the character of a religious quest, and its anti-climatic ending images the disappointment of a misplaced faith. It depicts for Joyce the failure of institutional religion in Western Society.

When studying Joyce, the one principle we must keep in mind is that nothing Joyce includes in his fiction is superfluous. The settings, characterizations, actions, descriptions, and even individual imaginative comparisons all work together to reinforce his message. (For example, it is significant that the central character of the story lives on a "blind" or dead-end street and that the former tenant of the house was a priest.)

This story, like many of Joyce's stories, can be classified as fictional autobiography. It mirrors not only an actual event from the author's life, but also reflects the overriding philosophy which shaped his attitudes toward life. "Araby" is about the making of a cynic, a tale of a young man, driven by romantic infatuation, who takes a journey to find something for his love. He starts out and arrives, too late. The closing of the carnival is the collapse of his purpose, which, however, he has almost given over and forgotten by that time. The religious imagery of the narrative culminates in the cathedral-like hall and the merchandising of the keepers of the booths, who seem strangely mindless of their business and fatigued. The darkening of the hall indicates that religion's day is over (the clock, when he arrives, shows ten till ten). The purveyors of religion might as well close up shop; theirs is a strictly commercial operation anyhow. Inquirers seeking assistance from them and value from their wares have come too late.

Please answer:

1. Discuss Joyce's use of the first-person narrator in "Araby." What advantage does he gain by having the narrator participate in the action? At what stage of his life does the narrator relate the events? Point out passages which reveal his present attitude about his earlier experiences.

2. Discuss the religious references that appear throughout the story. What
characteristics do these references have in common? How are they related to the boy's disillusionment at the end of the story?