

### Feminist Criticism

In "Eveline," a short story by James Joyce, the female protagonist, Eveline, lives a monotonous life of caring for her father and brother and tending to the home. Her mother has passed and left the typical wifely duties to Eveline. Upon finding a man whom she wishes to marry, she is left at a crossroads of trying to decide whether or not she should run away with the man against her father's wishes, or remain in her father's home and care to live the same life as her mother would have. While Eveline does the opportunity to make a choice, Joyce's work reinforces the patriarchal structure of a young woman having to be under a man's care without respect to her actual wants in life.

For the most part, Eveline's life is entirely determined by which man she wishes to be in the care of. She can either go with Frank and live a life that she doesn't know how it will really turn out, or she can remain with her father doing the same thing everyday. For this young girl, there is no third option of being on her own. Throughout the entire story, there isn't even mention of her wanting to be on her own. She only wants to be married because "people would treat her with respect then." However, while she didn't very much like her life at home with her father, "it was not a wholly undesirable one." She longs for a life of being away and married with this dream man, but she is also comfortable in her home because she knows exactly what to expect

each day. Unfortunately, Eveline either has to be a daughter or she has to be a wife: there is no just Eveline.

Even when Eveline makes the decision to run away with Frank, she still asks for guidance from God in the last moment, showing that Eveline is consistently looking to a man for direction. She asks God to show her “what was her duty” and ultimately abandons Frank and does not board the ship. While she does make this choice on her own, as in she was not forced into marriage or forced to stay, she still made her decisions based on the will of the males in her life. In asking God to show her “her duty,” Joyce illustrates that she doesn’t really want to do what she may desire, she wants to do what she is supposed to do and wants to fulfill whatever responsibilities she is supposed to. As running away into a marriage with this man holds known responsibilities, she chooses to remain in the care of her father and complete her “duty” in his home. Joyce writes a powerful story in having Eveline make any choice at all. Yet, the patriarchal standard for women is still consistently upheld as Eveline’s choice is inadvertently determined by the males in her life.