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ENGL 333

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10 November 2018

Eveline: Derevaun Seraun

As the Age of the New Woman began to heighten in the late nineteenth century James Joyce's *Eveline* made an attempt to give a young woman her independent choice to decide her future. This radical effort makes it a great piece of literature to be explored through feminist criticism even though this type of critique seeks to evaluate how stories attempt to dismantle patriarchy. It can be understood that Eveline's hesitant choice to leave her current domestic position is a commentary on the patriarchal society for which she lived in. Although Eveline's desire to escape her impoverished life is a strong, feminist thought she (and the reader) understands that she would be merely leaving her domestic life as a daughter to cycle her life to that of a wife, relying on a man for primary support, cycling the cult of domesticity. Even though the story of Eveline does attempt to undermine patriarchy it serves as a hallmark of history of what it was (and still is) like for women under the oppression of gender, class, and race. The puzzling phrase from Joyce's short story, *derevaun seraun* translated from Irish Gaelic to mean, "at the end of pleasure, there is pain" serves as a reminder that the act of liberating one's person from oppression will be a challenge that may not in the end be successful, especially due to the time.

The obvious power dynamics of the time conclude that patriarchy dominates even within a fictitious story. Patriarchy demands that a woman can either be a daughter or a wife, not her own person. She must be under a man (figuratively and literally). However to give an adequate, yet false sense of control over her life and body, a woman has the opportunity (according to this

story) for a chance at love. Eveline's chance comes in the form of a sailor even though their relationship is warned and forbidden against by her father, but yet he is her only means of escape. Her father who states he "knows of these sailor chaps" can be interpreted as him looking out for her best interest as such a sailor's life isn't easy and more than likely her lover, Frank's promises at a happy marriage would have left her abandoned with children in a distant and unsafe country. It is also seen that patriarchy prevails through religion as such Eveline "prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty". A woman's final resolution to decide her future is called upon to be decided by the one entity who commanded a woman's place it that at the side of a man. It serves to say no matter what decision Eveline chose it would have been considered blessed in the eyes of God.

James Joyce's story does reinforce gender norms, but this story does serve as a chance to get a glimpse of the past. However because Joyce is a male writer he can only write a female character to the knowledge of a man, especially given the time period, whereas a female writer would set free of the female character from her domesticity and give her a happy ending with a faithful love interest. However if a female writer wrote this story it would be viewed as cliché in that time and according to present day feminists. If Joyce truly wanted a revolutionary story worthy of feminist critics' admiration he would have not even given Eveline a love interest, but set the plot to have her leave her father to begin a new world of adventure. However it stands to say that a worthwhile woman of this time would choose to protect and help her family by putting off all her desires, even if it physically, emotionally, and mentally kills her inside.