

Lois Tyson states that, “feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, or psychological oppression of women” (78). This definition is useful when using feminist criticism on James Joyce’s *Eveline*. In using feminist criticism, *Eveline* critiques the economic, social, and psychological oppression in patriarchal society. The character, Eveline, is oppressed through power dynamics, class, and gender norms.

The patriarchy depicts that men are always in charge. The men work while the women are expected to stay home, clean house and take care of the children. After Eveline’s mother dies, this expectation is left to her. She reveals, “She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly.” Although the father is still alive, it is still assumed that the woman of the house will fulfill that duty.

In addition, although she had a job outside the home, she was not able to use the money she earned as she pleased. Her father was head of household, so he controlled the finances. The text suggests the family is of lower class by the narration, “Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably.” The arguments are most likely due to limited monetary availability. Eveline reveals, “She always gave her entire wages...He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more.” There is the assumption that because she is a woman, she is unable to effectively use money. Due to her gender she has limited economic means.

Eveline's boyfriend Frank seems to be the answer to all of her problems. She even thinks, "Frank would save her." He can take her away from her living situation, as he was a sailor. Eveline reveals, "She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her." Through this she would be an "honest woman" and no longer have to submit to her father. She could live a new life, without the obligation of taking care of her father. In addition, she thinks, "The town will respect me when I'm married." It is gender normative that the woman must be married to be respected (somewhat) and have a place in society. Women are defined by their marriage status. Despite the possibility that lay in front of her, Eveline ultimately chooses to not go with Frank. Although she had a choice, either way she chose was dictated by a man. The woman submits to man. The patriarchy lives on.

Although *Eveline* could be seen as feminist, because it is a feminist action for a woman to make a choice, it fails because it is a false choice. Eveline's future depends on a man. She either gets married and thus submits to her new husband or stays in submission of her father. The woman is continued to be oppressed by power dynamics, class, and gender norms.