

## James Joyce, "Eveline" (1904)

James Joyce's "Eveline" (in BB's Course Materials) is a fascinating story about a young working woman that raises issues of women's oppression and its relation to marriage, romance, family, and class. Eveline, the main character, has a very hard life. She lives with her alcoholic father, works, cooks, shops, and takes care of her younger siblings. She is treated poorly in her low-paying job as a shop clerk. Her father is often drunk and verbally abusive to her. He will soon become physically abusive. But Eveline may have a means of escape. She's courted by Frank, a sailor who sings to her and says he will take her away to Buenos Aires in South America. If they wed, as he promises, she will be respected as a married woman and she will escape her difficult life of work, caring for siblings, cleaning, shopping, and being abused by her boss and father. On her deathbed, however, her mother made Eveline promise that she'll care for the family. And we don't know if Frank is *frank*, that is, if he is *honest* in his promises. If Frank doesn't marry her in South America, she will be seen as a "fallen woman" or whore. He might pimp her for all we know. Should she stay with her family or should she go? Eveline does not seem to have a good option, which may perhaps be the feminist point of the story.



"She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired." (Opening of "Eveline.")