

"Eveline"

Eveline Hill sits at a window in her home and looks out onto the street while fondly recalling her childhood, when she played with other children in a field now developed with new homes. Her thoughts turn to her sometimes abusive father with whom she lives, and to the prospect of freeing herself from her hard life juggling jobs as a shop worker and a nanny to support herself and her father. Eveline faces a difficult dilemma: remain at home like a dutiful daughter, or leave Dublin with her lover, Frank, who is a sailor. He wants her to marry him and live with him in Buenos Aires, and she has already agreed to leave with him in secret. As Eveline recalls, Frank's courtship of her was pleasant until her father began to voice his disapproval and bicker with Frank. After that, the two lovers met clandestinely.

As Eveline reviews her decision to embark on a new life, she holds in her lap two letters, one to her father and one to her brother Harry. She begins to favour the sunnier memories of her old family life, when her mother was alive and her brother was living at home, and notes that she did promise her mother to dedicate herself to maintaining the home. She reasons that her life at home, cleaning and cooking, is hard but perhaps not the worst option—her father is not always mean, after all. The sound of a street organ then reminds her of her mother's death, and her thoughts change course. She remembers her mother's uneventful, sad life, and passionately embraces her decision to escape the same fate by leaving with Frank.

At the docks in Dublin, Eveline waits in a crowd to board the ship with Frank. She appears detached and worried, overwhelmed by the images around her, and prays to God for direction. Her previous declaration of intent seems to have never happened. When the boat whistle blows and Frank pulls on her hand to lead her with him, Eveline resists. She clutches the barrier as Frank is swept into the throng moving toward the ship. He continually shouts "Come!" but Eveline remains fixed to the land, motionless and emotionless.

Analysis

Eveline's story illustrates the pitfalls of holding onto the past when facing the future. Hers is the first portrait of a female in *Dubliners*, and it reflects the conflicting pull many women in early twentieth-century Dublin felt between a domestic life rooted in the past and the possibility of a new married life abroad. One moment, Eveline feels happy to leave her hard life, yet at the next moment she worries about fulfilling promises to her dead mother. She grasps the letters she's written to her father and brother, revealing her inability to let go of those family relationships, despite her father's cruelty and her brother's absence. She clings to the older and more pleasant memories and imagines what other people want her to do or will do for her. She sees Frank as a rescuer, saving her from her domestic situation. Eveline suspends herself between the call of home and the past and the call of new experiences and the future, unable to make a decision.

The threat of repeating her mother's life spurs Eveline's epiphany that she must leave with Frank and embark on a new phase in her life, but this realization is short-lived. She hears a street organ, and when she remembers the street organ that played on the night before her mother's death, Eveline resolves not to repeat her mother's life of "commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness," but she does exactly that. Like the young boys of "An Encounter" and "Araby," she desires escape, but her reliance on routine and repetition overrides such impulses. On the docks with Frank, away from the familiarity of home, Eveline seeks guidance in the routine habit of prayer. Her action is the first sign that she in fact hasn't made a decision, but instead remains fixed in a circle of indecision. She will keep her lips moving in the safe practice of repetitive prayer rather than join her love on a new and different path.

Though Eveline fears that Frank will drown her in their new life, her reliance on everyday rituals is what causes Eveline to freeze and not follow Frank onto the ship.

Eveline's paralysis within an orbit of repetition leaves her a "helpless animal," stripped of human will and emotion. The story does not suggest that Eveline placidly returns home and continues her life, but shows her transformation into an automaton that lacks expression. Eveline, the story suggests, will hover in mindless repetition, on her own, in Dublin. On the docks with Frank, the possibility of living a fully realized life left her.

Eveline

Torn between two extreme options—unhappy domesticity or a dramatic escape to Argentina for marriage—Eveline has no possibility of a moderately content life. Her dilemma does not illustrate indecisiveness but rather the lack of options for someone in her position. On the docks, when she must make a choice once and for all, Eveline remembers her promise to her mother to keep the family together. So close to escape, Eveline revises her view of her life at home, remembering the small kindnesses: her father's caring for her when she was sick, a family picnic before her mother died. These memories overshadow the reality of her abusive father and deadening job, and her sudden certainty comes as an epiphany—she must remain with what is familiar. When faced with the clear choice between happiness and unhappiness, Eveline chooses unhappiness, which frightens her less than her intense emotions for Frank. Eveline's nagging sense of family duty stems from her fear of love and an unknown life abroad, and her decision to stay in Dublin renders her as just another figure in the crowd of Dubliners watching lovers and friends depart the city.

Eveline holds an important place in the overall narrative of *Dubliners*. Her story is the first in the collection that uses third-person narration, the first in the collection to focus on a female protagonist, and the only one in the collection that takes a character's name as the title. Eveline is also the first central adult character. For all of these reasons, she marks a crucial transition in the collection: Eveline in many ways is just another Dubliner, but she also broadens the perspective of *Dubliners*. Her story, rather than being limited by the first-person narration of earlier stories, suggests something about the hardships and limitations of women in early twentieth-century Dublin in general. Eveline's tortured decision about her life also sets a tone of restraint and fear that resonates in many of the later stories. Other female characters in *Dubliners* explore different harsh conditions of life in Dublin, but Eveline, in facing and rejecting a life-altering decision, remains the most tragic.

"Araby"

A young boy falls in love with his neighbour Mangan's sister. He spends his time watching her from his house or thinking about her. He and the girl finally talk, and she suggests that he visit a bazaar called Araby, which she cannot attend. The boy plans to go and purchase something for the girl, but he arrives late and buys nothing.

The narrator, an unnamed boy, describes the North Dublin street on which his house is located. He thinks about the priest who died in the house before his family moved in and the games that he and his friends played in the street. He recalls how they would run through the back lanes of the houses and hide in the shadows when they reached the street again, hoping to avoid people in the neighbourhood, particularly the boy's uncle or the sister of his friend Mangan. The sister often comes to the front of their house to call the brother, a moment that the narrator savours. Every day begins for this narrator with such glimpses of Mangan's sister. He places himself in the front room of his house so he can see her leave her house, and then he rushes out to walk behind her quietly until finally passing her. The

narrator and Mangan's sister talk little, but she is always in his thoughts. He thinks about her when he accompanies his aunt to do food shopping on Saturday evening in the busy marketplace and when he sits in the back room of his house alone. The narrator's infatuation is so intense that he fears he will never gather the courage to speak with the girl and express his feelings. One morning, Mangan's sister asks the narrator if he plans to go to **Araby, a Dublin bazaar**. She notes that she cannot attend, as she has already committed to attend a retreat with her school. Having recovered from the shock of the conversation, the narrator offers to bring her something from the bazaar. This brief meeting launches the narrator into a period of eager, restless waiting and fidgety tension in anticipation of the bazaar. He cannot focus in school. He finds the lessons tedious, and they distract him from thinking about Mangan's sister. On the morning of the bazaar the narrator reminds his uncle that he plans to attend the event so that the uncle will return home early and provide train fare. Yet dinner passes and a guest visits, but the uncle does not return. The narrator impatiently endures the time passing, until at 9 PM the uncle finally returns, unbothered that he has forgotten about the narrator's plans. Reciting the epigram "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," the uncle gives the narrator the money and asks him if he knows the poem "The Arab's Farewell to his Steed." The narrator leaves just as his uncle begins to recite the lines, and, thanks to eternally slow trains, arrives at the bazaar just before 10 P.M., when it is starting to close down. He approaches one stall that is still open, but buys nothing, feeling unwanted by the woman watching over the goods. With no purchase for Mangan's sister, the narrator stands angrily in the deserted bazaar as the lights go out.

Analysis

In "Araby," the allure of new love and distant places mingles with the familiarity of everyday drudgery, with frustrating consequences. Mangan's sister embodies this mingling, since she is part of the familiar surroundings of the narrator's street as well as the exotic promise of the bazaar. She is a "brown figure" who both reflects the brown façades of the buildings that line the street and evokes the skin colour of romanticized images of Arabia that flood the narrator's head. Like the bazaar that offers experiences that differ from everyday Dublin, Mangan's sister intoxicates the narrator with new feelings of joy and elation. His love for her, however, must compete with the dullness of schoolwork, his uncle's lateness, and the Dublin trains. Though he promises Mangan's sister that he will go to Araby and purchase a gift for her, these mundane realities undermine his plans and ultimately thwart his desires. The narrator arrives at the bazaar only to encounter flowered teacups and English accents, not the freedom of the enchanting East. As the bazaar closes down, he realizes that Mangan's sister will fail his expectations as well, and that his desire for her is actually only a vain wish for change. The narrator's change of heart concludes the story on a moment of **epiphany**, but not a positive one. Instead of reaffirming his love or realizing that he does not need gifts to express his feelings for Mangan's sister, the narrator simply gives up. He seems to interpret his arrival at the bazaar as it fades into darkness as a sign that his relationship with Mangan's sister will also remain just a wishful idea and that his infatuation was as misguided as his fantasies about the bazaar. What might have been a story of happy, youthful love becomes **a tragic story of defeat**. Much like the disturbing, unfulfilling adventure in "An Encounter," the narrator's failure at the bazaar suggests that **fulfilment and contentedness remain foreign to Dubliners**, even in the most unusual events of the city like an annual bazaar. The tedious events that delay the narrator's trip indicate that no room exists for love in the daily lives of Dubliners, and the absence of love renders the characters in the story almost anonymous. Though the narrator might imagine himself to be carrying thoughts of Mangan's sister through his day as a priest would carry a Eucharistic chalice to an altar, the minutes tick away through school, dinner, and his uncle's boring poetic recitation. Time does not adhere to the narrator's visions of his relationship. The story presents this frustration as universal: the narrator is nameless, the girl is always "Mangan's sister" as though she

is any girl next door, and the story closes with the narrator imagining himself as a creature. In "Araby," Joyce suggests that **all people experience frustrated desire for love and new experiences.**

"Araby" narrator

The "Araby" narrator's experience of love moves him from placid youth to elation to frustrated loneliness as he explores the threshold between childhood and adulthood. Like the narrator of "An Encounter," he yearns to experience new places and things, but he is also like Eveline and other adult characters who grapple with the conflict between everyday life and the promise of love. He wants to see himself as an adult, so he dismisses his distracting schoolwork as "child's play" and expresses his intense emotions in dramatic, romantic gestures. However, his inability to actively pursue what he desires traps him in a child's world. His dilemma suggests the hope of youth stymied (ostacolato) by the unavoidable realities of Dublin life. The "Araby" narrator is the last of the first-person narrators in *Dubliners*, all of whom are young boys.

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