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The interminable umbilical cord :

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The Interminable Umbilical Cord:
Mothers and Daughters in Dubliners

by
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Abstract

A study of three of the Dubliners stories reveals the fact that the mothers of Joyce's Dublin exert a control over their daughters that may be crippling, humiliating or, at the very least, of dubious value.

In "Eveline," a dying mother makes her nineteen-year-old daughter promise to take over her role as the center of the family, keeping it together as long as she can. By exacting this promise from Eveline, her mother effectively destroys her daughter's personality and any chance for happiness for Eveline in a life of her own.

Mrs. Kearney, "A Mother," tries to recapture her youth through her daughter Kathleen. This mother brings public humiliation on her daughter by arguing loudly and insistently for Kathleen's wages backstage at a concert.

Polly Mooney's mother in "The Boarding House," manages her daughter's life in an indirect manner by forcing her into situations where she can work out her own fate -- under Mrs. Mooney's discreet but all-seeing eye and in the confines of Mrs. Mooney's infamous boarding house.

The Interminable Umbilical Cord:
Mothers and Daughters in Dubliners

Introduction

That "A girl's best friend is her mother" is an adage that may hold true anywhere in the world except, perhaps, Dublin can be seen from a study of three of the Dubliners stories, "Eveline," "A Mother," and "The Boarding House." In each of these stories, the mother attempts either to dominate, control, or otherwise strongly direct her daughter in a particular path. In "Eveline," the mother attempts to order her daughter to follow in her own miserable path by making her promise to keep the family together as long as she can. Because it is a death-bed promise, it is all the more terrifying and powerful to her adolescent daughter. In "A Mother," Mrs. Kearney subjects her daughter to public embarrassment by insisting on haggling over money at a cultural event. She, alone, controls her daughter's participation in the grand concert. Mrs. Mooney of "The Boarding House" exercises a more discreet control over her Polly, but, by making certain arrangements, she "assists" Polly in achieving a mutually agreeable goal.

It is this petty struggling for control over other human beings that paralyzes Dublin. It is the overinvolvement in this struggle that prevents escape. It is their

exhaustion from endless participation in the struggle that makes Dubliners seem so dreary and mean and that keeps them from dreaming great dreams and realizing small ones.

Eveline, Kathleen, and Polly are all less than they could be if they had only been prepared for flight rather than for obedience.

"Eveline"

"Eveline," the second of Joyce's short stories to be published, appeared on September 10, 1904, in the Irish Homestead. Less than a month later, October 8, Joyce and Nora Barnes sailed from North Wall east to Trieste.¹ This was the third time Joyce left Dublin in an attempt to flee its paralyzing influence. Only with Nora was the attempt a successful one.

"Eveline" is the shortest story in Dubliners, the first in the "adolescent" category, and the first to name its major character. "Eveline" is also "one of the most painful" of the stories of Dubliners "for it depicts both Eveline's desire for liberation and her inability to choose it effectively."² Unlike Joyce, Eveline is never able to get beyond the iron fence of Dublin's North Wall. She is the first character in Dubliners to try to escape, the first to have a definite invitation to flee, and she is the last.³ From "Eveline" on, all Joyce's Dubliners will stay trapped within the city limits as surely as if Dublin's borders were marked by thick walls rather than thin signposts.

Eveline's invitation to escape comes from Frank, a sailor "who had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday."⁴ In Eveline's words, "Frank was very kind,

manly, open-hearted" (48). And he wants her to come away with him by the nightboat out of Dublin to be his wife in Buenos Ayres. Eveline cherishes every memory of Frank. She recalls the first time she ever met him, what he was wearing, where he was standing, how he looked as he stood there. Eveline and Frank meet at a boarding house where he lives and she used to visit. Soon, he is meeting her at the Stores every day after work and is walking her home. He flatters her, spends money on her, shows his pride in her by taking her to see The Bohemian Girl, where "she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him" (49). The extravagance of going to the theatre at all is impressive enough for Eveline who must scrimp and save every penny. She must have been doubly impressed by the extravagance of sitting with Frank in seats that surely cost a great deal.

Frank not only takes Eveline to places of music like the theatre, but he also brings his own music into her life as well. "He was awfully fond of music and sang a little" (49). He sings to Eveline, teasing her affectionately by singing her a song about a girl who loved a sailor. Frank has a tender nickname for her. He entertains her with stories of his adventures at sea, the places he has been, the things he has seen, possibly even of the dangers he has faced (those "terrible Patagonians"), to win her

admiration.

His campaign is highly successful: "First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him" (49). By the time her father discovers Frank's existence in his daughter's life, Eveline is referring to him as her "lover." Frank is offering himself and his love and a new life to her. At least, this is what she wants to believe.

Because we are seeing what is happening from Eveline's point of view, indeed, much of it from inside her head, we are easily tricked into seeing Frank as the dashing young sailor she thinks he is. The reader must see both in and around Eveline and when we do so, we "suspect Frank due to slight implications in the details and phrasing of the story."⁵

Frank is indeed an amiable, dynamic person who lodges on the main street while Eveline is tied to a home on Dublin's crowded back streets. He does come into her dull life breathing love and romance, music and enchantment, but, as her father says, "I know these sailor chaps" (49) and he forbids her to see him.

Frank has been a sailor since signing on as a deck-hand when just a boy, a story guaranteed to bring both sympathy and empathy from Eveline, whose childhood has also been cut short by demands to work. Frank tells

Eveline the names of the different ships and lines he has worked on, a source of excitement to her as so much exotica is poured on her dusty, dull life. We are less excited and captivated by Frank's tales. Our practical minds tend to wonder why he moves from ship to ship, line to line, unable to establish a permanent association with one shipping company rather than temporary associations with several. Why does Frank, with all the wide world to choose from, come to Dublin for a holiday? He has no family ties here to speak of. There seems to be no real reason for him to return.

At their first meeting, Frank "was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze" (49). He must have looked like a young Adonis to the love-starved Eveline as she saw him standing there. To us, he looks very much like a typical street-corner Don Juan, waiting, his appearance carefully arranged, to lure the first naive or the first willing girl who comes his way, and then to play his subtly calculating game to win his desire. Eveline says of their meeting, "It seemed a few weeks ago." It probably was.

The night boat from North Wall goes only to Liverpool.⁶ She has only Frank's word for it that he has booked passage on to Buenos Ayres. Curious that a girl who can

remember the details of her dates with Frank cannot tell us anything about her wedding plans -- in Liverpool? In Buenos Ayres? Or is there to be no wedding at all? At boarding time, Frank repeats "something about the passage over and over again" (51). A genuinely loving lover, sensing Eveline's growing distress, would have found something more comforting, more personal to say.

At North Wall, Eveline sensed that her savior would also be her destroyer. She sent him on alone and chose to destroy herself.

Eveline is powerfully aided in her self-destruction by her father, a man who appears as opposite to Frank -- in Eveline's mind -- as opposite can be. With Frank, she feels she has love, respect, music, laughter, the chance to dream delightful dreams, to escape, to live, to be free! Frank obviously loves strange places, people, and ideas. If he has a family, they exist without him. He is generous to Eveline, and that is all that matters to her.

Eveline's father is "a sadistic tyrant" who terrorizes Eveline even though she is nineteen years old and could be treated like an adult.⁷ She must see her father as a man intent on beating out every bit of happiness in her life. As a child, she remembers how her father used to go after the playing children with a stick. Then it was easier to

avoid his anger: a look-out would warn the children of his coming. Now there is no nix to alert her to his bad moods. Bitter and ugly experience alone prepares her for them. "She sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence" (48). He threatens her now with beating, an act he had reserved only for her brothers when they were children. Saturday nights are the worst time for her with her father: he berates her, destroying her confidence in herself as a homemaker. He humiliates her by refusing to give her grocery money until the stores have nearly closed and then telling her to run out and buy food rather than to waste any more time at home. There is never praise for her for her share of the wages or her keeping the house in order and caring for the younger children.

Her father distrusts Frank's intentions and orders her not to see him again. He abuses her so much that he has given Eveline palpitations of the heart. He is as insular and rooted in Dublin as Frank is world-ranging in vision. Eveline's father swears at the "Damned Italians! Coming over here!" invading his Dublin (50). The night her mother died, an Italian organ grinder had been ordered away from their home by her father who had given the grinder sixpence and then, despite the fact that her mother lay dying, had come "strutting back into the sick room."

Music was meant to be silenced. The alien was to be rejected, sent away, paid off.

Despite his harsh treatment of her, Eveline cannot reject her father as completely as he has rejected her. The underlying sexual attraction of Eveline for her father is most definitely there. The heart palpitations he inflicts on her could be the result of love as well as fear, attraction as well as repulsion.⁸ His chasing the children with his "blackthorn stick" is a prominent memory for her.

When her mother was alive, her father was a less violent person, and the memory of her mother still has a softening effect of sorts upon her behavior. Her father threatens her with "what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake" (48). She even remembers a moment of laughter in her otherwise bleak life: her father put on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh at a family outing on the Hill of Howth. He has shown genuine tenderness to her when she was sick by making her some toast and reading her a story while she lay in bed. "Her father was becoming old lately," she notices. "He would miss her," she reports, imposing her hopes upon him. She wishes that he would miss her. It is unlikely that he will.

In her typical passive way, she has written her father and brother a letter, contents unknown. It is almost as if she cannot participate directly in any emotional in-

volvement with anyone. Everything is at least once removed from the reality of her life.

Eveline's thoughts of Frank are suffused with tenderness. Then she recalls the edict from her father, and her memories flow on away from the reality of a father who torments her to a father who is aging, reminding her that there were happier days and that her father was part of them, too. The happy days, because they include her mother, blend once again into days of torment as she recalls the second enormous influence on her life: her mother and the deathbed promise.

All of Eveline's happy memories seem connected to the time when her mother was alive. The Howth Hill picnic, of course, is her most specific memory, but she does recall that, as a child, "still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive" (46). Eveline notes that "that was a long time ago . . . [now] her mother was dead" (47). Her father would destroy her except "for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her" (48). The sense of her mother's death and of the death of her happiness pervades the story until she remembers Frank's vitality, and the memory blots death out completely for a time.

The music from the street organ recalls it to her,

but death has never been far from the surface of her conscious mind. She recognizes the music, but we are not told if it is the same song that was playing the night her mother died. In any event, Eveline associates the music with the promise she made to her dying mother, "her promise to keep the home together as long as she could" (50). Certainly her mother knew at first hand the burdens of keeping that particular home together, because she exacts a promise that places the weight of the family's welfare on Eveline, not on her father. At least this is what Eveline hears and remembers. Her promise is also to keep the family together as long as she can, not as long as she lives, a subtlety that Eveline chooses to overlook.

Eveline remembers only "the pitiful vision of her mother's life . . . that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" (50). She remembers her mother's final words, "saying constantly with foolish insistence: Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun" (50).

Her final words are senseless to Eveline and therefore seem all the more disturbing to her. "Whatever the senselessness, the tone of despair would have been clear."⁹ Whatever the words, the message of her mother's futile, ridiculous life would have been resoundingly clear. Even if she had understood the mother's mad crying, she would have been no less alarmed and scared. Tindall reads them

as "the end of pleasure is pain" or "the end of riches is bitterness." Another reading is that "the end of song is raving madness."¹⁰ All possible interpretations would have closed in on Eveline at the very moment when she is losing the mother who has been part of her happiness. All of the interpretations would have been even more claustrophobic as she muses upon her imminent escape from Dublin with Frank. After all, she can never forget her mother's life. She can never deny that her own life has been so very like her mother's, also wrapped up and eaten away by commonplace sacrifices and a loveless existence. She must also realize that, ironically, for her there have been no pleasure to end in pain, no song to end in madness, no riches to end in bitterness. There have been only the pain, the madness, and the bitterness, only the death without life.

The impact of this knowledge forces Eveline to her feet: "Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness" (50).

Unfortunately, Eveline's sudden need to live suspends her between two dreadful poles. There is her overwhelming need for life and love, and for the security of marriage poised against her promise to her mother on her deathbed. There is the music of the street organ echoing both the

music Frank has brought into her life and re-echoing the night of her mother's death. She cannot forget either the promise of life with Frank or the failed promise of her mother's own life, which was lived in misuse and ended in insanity.

The vision of her mother's deathbed is vivid before her. She recalls that futile life and the craziness at death. She remembers the continuously alienating actions of her father, who would remove all beauty from her life just as he removed the organ grinder and his music from her mother's death. Eveline stands up. She knows that she "must escape the environment which would link her to the craziness of her mother forever. She knows that she must escape from a father who orders music and companionship to leave."¹¹ Failure to do so is a denial of the sanity, beauty, music, and comradeship that make the distinction between life and existence. It is this distinction Eveline cries for: "But she wanted to live" (50). It is unfortunately, only a cry and not a demand.

Poor Eveline! It is impossible that she would know how to demand anything of anyone much less how to make a demand of life. Her voice is never heard even in her own story. We hear her father pontificate on sailors, curse Italians, and comment on absent priests. We hear her mother's crazed cry. We hear Frank call her to come.

Warnings, curses, and entreaties, but never Eveline's own voice, are heard in the story. Even the critics tend to dismiss her: "She is not a protagonist, like Father Flynn, but a mirror," Kenner says.¹² The stress falls on the men who want to control her life and the mother who seeks to imprison her, almost as if Eveline is a blank stage upon which the others fight for the front-and-center position. The "real" Eveline is practically non-existent, even to her self.

Although the story is told entirely from Eveline's point of view, it is not in the first person "I", but rather in the more distant "she." "Her identity has been so thoroughly subsumed that she could think of herself only as an object, which, in context, indeed she is, being borne off like one of the 'brown baggages' carried by the soldiers on the Quay."¹³

Her self-perception is based on how others perceive her, and their perceptions, according to Eveline, are not positive at all. The attitudes of her mother, father, and Frank toward her have already been discussed. The only other clues to her self-image come from Miss Gavin at the Stores and from herself.

Eveline considers the probable reactions of her co-workers at the Stores when they discover she has gone away. She will not miss any of them, especially Miss Gavin, who

has a way of chaffing Eveline when others are listening. Eveline "would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores" (47). She does not indicate whether there are any friends there to miss her. She muses on what they will say upon discovering that she has run away with Frank: "Say she was a fool, perhaps, and her place would be filled up by advertisement" (47). An interesting thought process is indicated in her answer to herself. She does not believe that any one will say how much she must really have loved Frank, or how exciting the elopement is, or make other more romantic responses. Instead, she feels that they, like her father, will find her incompetent once again. Eveline lacks enough ego to think that she might possibly be missed by her colleagues or that she might be an irreplaceable worker. She will be thought a fool and someone else will get her job, as simply dismissed as if she had never existed. Worst of all, her disappearance will bring pleasure to Miss Gavin. Eveline's absence is preferred to her presence.

Either what others think of her is so negative or what Eveline thinks they think is so negative that her personality remains stunted and withdrawn. Eveline, says Brandabur, is Joyce's most extreme example of a shell of personality "who exert[s] little or no force of being on those around them except in a negative way."¹⁴

Eveline's feelings about herself are not quite negative, but she is indeed a most passive person. People act upon her life; she does not act upon theirs. She is utterly accepting of authority; the authority of her father and dying mother is greater and more commanding than the authority, authenticity, of Frank. She exists to serve them, occasionally to please them, but never to please herself. She is meek, she is timid, she is selfless, and she is fixed in these traits although Frank forces her to consider the possibility of change, if only for a moment, and if only the person for whom she is being meek, timid, and selfless for.

That she is tired of the present state of things is obvious to us from the very first paragraph. In retrospect, we can only marvel that a young lady about to flee her wretched life and elope to Argentina can be so unenthusiastic, so uninvolved in the Great Adventure she is ready to begin. Instead of flitting about, releasing nervous energy and glorying in the excitement of the unknown, Eveline "sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue" (46). She is utterly passive and as lifeless as an old invalid wearily watching a world that sickness forbids his participation in, a fact that he has come to accept. The evening invades the avenue. She doesn't welcome it; it is an intruder, an alien; it has

the power to threaten the security of her home just as the Italian street musician invaded the sanctity of Dublin's streets, according to her father, and just as Frank, on yet another level, was intruding, slowly taking over her life and taking her away from the nunnery of her home.

Eveline is practically arranged in the window, as if she could not participate in this action of her life either. The voice of the narrator is passive. "Her head was leaned against the window curtains" (46). The order was in her nostrils as if even the breathing of fresh or dusty air was beyond her control. "She was tired" (46).

Her fatigue and passivity continue to be emphasized. Her thoughts respond to what she sees. Slowly, repetitiously, circuitously, she makes associations suggested by outside stimuli of which she is only vaguely aware. Sometimes happy, infrequently happy, more often full of death and self-denigration, Eveline weaves for us a sad, depressing tapestry of herself.

Eveline hears the footsteps of the man from the last house passing on his way home, the sense of "last" conveying to us the impressions of crowded suburbs of a city, far from the center of bright lights and life, and also the tail-end of a street where few pass except those who must because they live there. The man's footsteps trace

him to the cinder path in front of a new series of houses, and the cramped, burdened feeling of Eveline's neighborhood is felt. The houses, like the dusk, invade Eveline's little kingdom and encroach on her remembered happiness and freedom. Where the houses stand was a field where she and her brothers and sisters used to play "with other people's children," a curious phrase that makes us consider this a special treat. Was the family so insular, so self-contained that playtimes were restricted to family lest other people's children invade the family circle? It was an outsider from Dublin who destroyed the playing field by filling it with "bright brick houses", an ill omen of what invaders can do to a neighborhood. The possibility, of course, is that the "bright" houses were more of an improvement to the neighborhood than Eveline's own little "brown" house in spite of the fact that they were built on the playground. In fact, perhaps total neighborhood improvement could have been established by the building of the new homes and then tearing down the old, where Eveline lives, and putting the playground there.

By extension, then, the Italians and Frank and other invaders can possibly restore Dublin and Eveline to beauty, life, and happiness if Dubliners can give up the old ways and think in terms of change and innovation.

Actually, Eveline is not quite certain if the golden haze of childhood she remembers was completely golden. She immediately isolates two children from the playing group: little Keogh, the cripple who was assigned to keeping watch for her father, and her brother Ernest, who would not play in their games because he was too grown up --two examples of isolation from the mainstream of humanity. Keogh is physically prevented from participation; Ernest has made a deliberate choice. Later, Eveline will re-enact this childhood scene as her mental crippling prevents her from escaping with Frank, but her choice is also deliberately made.

The good times of children at play turn to unhappy memories just as the tenor of their games must have changed when Keogh spotted her father and his blackthorn stick heading for them. They "seemed to have been rather happy then" (46), Eveline recalls. She isn't really certain. She doesn't quite trust her memory, but she does know for sure that her mother's death changed everything: "her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive" (46). She and her brothers and sisters are adults now; "her mother was dead" (47). Joyce makes equations with his sentences and we are forced to see that they do balance out. Her mother alive equalled her father as endurable, pleasant, possibly kind. Time passes, she

matures, her mother is dead. Changes bring about unhappiness and death. A girlfriend from her childhood is dead, too; other young friends have gone East. Everything changes. And the impression we have is that the changes are not good; at the least they have brought unhappiness to Eveline through death and separation. Now it is her turn to change, to separate herself from home. The unwritten statement, the unspoken words have to be saying that change will bring unhappiness to her again. Change always brought her pain.

Eveline's mind returns to this idea of home. If we look beyond the words of the story to the picture they paint, we can see Eveline sitting in that window, allowing her mind to wander at will, but suddenly wrenching it away from the abstract to the concrete when the thinking leads in painful directions. As people will do when interior landscapes become threatening, Eveline concentrates on the exterior landscape of her home rather than pursue the question of what change will bring to her. When her thoughts dwell too long on death and change, she forces them into new patterns. "She looked around the room reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week" (47). She talks like an old, old housewife as she adds that she had dusted those things "for so many years" and ends another comment with "during all those

years" (47). We are deceived into thinking her much older than her nineteen years, much more ground-down than a teenager has any right to be. She used to wonder "where on earth all the dust came from," a neat reminder to all of us that dust does indeed come from earth and that we shall all be part of that dust eventually. The dust, like death, is omnipresent in the room. It can be re-arranged and relocated, but it can never be removed completely from the room, Dublin, or the world. The decay is everywhere and in everyone.

Dutiful Eveline has faithfully dusted that room every week of every year. Every week she has dusted the "familiar objects," a phrase she repeats twice as if trying to impress them in her mind forever. One of the objects she dusts is the photograph of a priest, an old school friend of her father's, whose name she never knew but whom her father calls attention to every time a visitor comes to call. He points it out to passing visitors with the comment that the man is now in Melbourne. At least one Dubliner has made an escape, but there is nothing in his freedom to give heart to Eveline. She doesn't even know his name. He is her father's memory, not hers. Perhaps she dimly perceives that, if she escapes, she too is in danger of becoming only a yellowing photograph. A representation of herself is all that will remain if she removes

herself from the only people who give her her reality.

The decaying photograph hangs "above the broken harmonium beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque" (47). Not only has her father successfully banished music's comfort from the mother's death, but he has also driven it from their lives by failing to make enough money to supply his family with basics, much less have enough left over to repair a harmonium. The broken harmonium is there to remind the family of the music and happiness that was once part of their home. It is as silent and decayed as the priest's photograph, as useless and ironic as the promises of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.

Blessed Margaret's function, in the religious scheme of things, is to bless the homes that display her picture. Blessed Margaret Mary brought about her own paralysis by inflicting tortures on herself to purify herself. Her paralysis was cured when she promised God that she would devote herself to the holy life, which she did. She left her life of strict mortification only once, to take a trip, but Christ immediately called her back to Himself and His service.¹⁵

Like the theme of warped family ties, the religious theme is a theme of twisted redemption. The promises of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque are meaningless to Eveline's

family. The print hanging on the wall brings no blessing to them any more than the harmonium gives them music. At best, the print can serve only to remind them of what should be and embitter them because of what is.

Like Blessed Margaret Mary, Eveline will also become paralyzed by self-inflicted tortures, but, unlike the saint, Eveline will not be cured by devotion to duty nor will Christ call her back to redemption when she tries to take a trip, to escape. When she turns away from Frank, she is not turning unto Christ and salvation but unto her devil of a father (the man with the blackthorn stick) and damnation. Both women will lose themselves in devotion to duty, but one is rewarded with life. Eveline wins death.

Her thoughts continue to swirl around her life. In retrospect it does not look so bad at all. Perhaps her contemplation of the Melbourne priest's photograph has stimulated her unconscious mind to consider the consequences of leaving home for the first time. Surely the print pricks her conscious mind into recognizing the Church's views of family and her duty to them. Both the priest and Blessed Margaret Mary, who are honored in her home, lived their lives, made their escapes, in the service of the Church. What will be her position at home if she flees in her own selfish behalf and, worst of all,

flees with a man?

She is faced with a new quandary. She has made a promise to Frank, and her commitments are not lightly made. Joyce reveals Eveline's strange slowness of perception in two sentences that quicken in tempo as the reality dawns on Eveline: "She had consented to go away, to leave home. Was that wise?" (47). Although she has been sitting at the window for some time, knowing that in a few hours Frank expects her at the North Wall, it is almost as if she is first realizing that she has, indeed, made a commitment. "She had consented to go away" -- her promise was given some time ago, but the sentence continues "to leave home," as if she had never understood that the object of going away is to go away from home. With this reality facing her, she asks quickly "Was that wise?"

At this point she weighs the answers, giving evidence either of the very great slowness of her mind or, more accurately, of the very fast movement of their courtship. She finally has time to ask herself how well she really does know Frank. If she knew him as thoroughly as she thinks she does, she would not acknowledge that "in her home anyway she had shelter and food" (47). Frank, after all, has told her that he has a house waiting for her in Argentina. He tells her he is successful there, "has fallen on his feet." What reason does she have to doubt him?

The strange places she loved to hear about are exciting to her only as so many words. The reality clothed by the words is frightening to her. Those places are too strange! In Dublin, she is surrounded by people she has always known. There are no strangers to trouble her security, to penetrate her insularity, except by their words.

With questions of food, shelter, and familiarity, Eveline has considered the negative side of leaving with Frank. On the positive side is the fact that leaving home would be leaving two jobs that she hated: working hard at home and in the Stores, a pleasant thought marred slightly by her inkling of how others see her. She squashes the knowledge that others think her foolish by considering the status marriage will bestow on her. In Argentina, things will be different. She will be in a new home. She will be in a strange country. The strangeness is as attractive now as it was repulsive a few seconds ago. She will be married. All of which is true, except that Eveline does not think in the more positive, definite terms of "will." She thinks in terms of the doubtful, questioning "would." "Then she would be married" -- and the doubt, question, and impossibility of it all are underscored as the sentence continues -- "she, Eveline." Her ego is so shattered that she cannot imagine that anyone would want to marry her.

Her thoughts of marriage are centered on what marriage "would" do for her: bring her respect, bring her the proper treatment as a wife that her mother never had and that she, by displacement, also lacks. In her musings on marriage, Frank is not included. Marriage, to Eveline, is an institution to define her. It apparently does not have to include love. She will use marriage as a means of distancing people from her. Frank will be the shelter and protection against unpleasant realities that she needs to survive. He will not treat her the way her father treated her mother. Her thoughts go back to her father's growing violence and the way he had beaten her brothers. Since her mother's death there is no one to protect her, but she gives no thought to protecting herself by leaving. She is too obedient and submissive to fight back.

Thoughts of her own marriage remind Eveline of her parents' marriage and all that was wrong with it. The threats, the fights over money, the hard work all weary her. Yet she equates the hard work with a hard life; the two are inseparable, and to leave the work is to abandon her life. "Now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life" (48). Her mental movements between the positive and negative reasons for running off with Frank have left her reconsidering her original promise. Even after painfully detailed memories

of the humiliations her father heaps on her and of her isolation as housewife and surrogate mother to the younger children, her life seems not all that undesirable. Eveline is too passive and ingrown a person to find it a desirable life. Positive emotions open one to hurt.

Eveline's thought processes move neither in a straight line nor in a strictly circular one. Instead, she zig-zags between poles that equally attract and repel her. Earlier, the thought that when her mother was alive she seemed happy is counter-posed with the thought that now her mother is dead and she is unhappy. Then she thinks of her mother's role as wife and immediately swerves back to decide how she will be treated as wife and mother. Now she considers her life and does not find it so bad after all, a thought swiftly followed by thinking of the new life she is about to explore with Frank. For the first time, in the word "explore," Eveline uses a word with some excitement and adventure to it. Also for the first time, Eveline's thinking is not moving in exact parallel opposites. Her past-present associations continue (then alive, now dead, then happy, now unhappy; her mother, disrespect, herself, respect). The opposite of "a not wholly undesirable life" should either be a totally undesirable life or a wholly desirable one. Instead, for Eveline, the association is "another life." She opts for

the neutral, unassuming choice. The thinking that began with the possibilities of exploration flounders instantly in the insipid adjective "another." Her imagination fails her. She is incapable of sustained dreams.

She is not utterly without imagination, however. The brightest adjectives, the strongest descriptions are in the paragraph describing Frank. There is no death in that paragraph, and the past for Eveline is limited to the early days of their meeting; all is suffused with happiness and music not found elsewhere in the story. There is no dust, no work, no outsiders like Miss Gavin to make her feel self-contempt. Even her all-pervading father does not intrude on her mild happiness until the paragraph's very last sentence, where she recalls that he forbids her to see Frank again.

Eveline's relationship with Frank is revealed in this paragraph as being a backward little thing, the verbal descriptions of which belie its lack of love. We can, from our outside perspective, imagine how flattering it was to Eveline when the handsome Frank began paying attention to her. Regular relationships are usually based on familiarity, which Eveline and Frank had: "They had come to know each other" (49). Then people discover that they like each other, and then there is love. For Eveline, the latter process is reversed. She knew him. She allowed

him to court her. Then she had begun to like him, an emotion that really should have preceded the courting, but once again, for Eveline, it is the institution that is to be preferred to the individual. The idea of love is preferred over love. She puts it her own way: "First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him" (49). She does not say that it had been exciting to know Frank or to be with him. What was important to her was that any fellow wanted to court her! The other girls at the Stores, the people in the theatre, and her family would all be forced to admit that Eveline couldn't be so terrible after all if she could get a good-looking man like Frank.

It is only after her father forbids her to see Frank that she takes the third step in the relationship, complaining that she then had to meet her "lover" in secret. She becomes a tiny bit independent and selfish at last.

We lose Eveline's thoughts for a moment. The pulp-magazine glamour of the paragraph on Frank, full of his face of bronze, courting, affairs, and lovers and secret meetings, ends with her defiance of her father, and then her thoughts go nowhere else, almost as if silenced by guilt. Again, she seems to force her thinking away from painful subjects and to concentrate on the familiar, the physical world outside her head, rather than the turmoil

inside it.

The evening that had invaded her avenue has now deepened. The influence of the intruder spreads. The physical world is becoming blurred: "The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct in the dim light" (49). Her reasoning powers are also growing blurred in the dimness of her understanding. She mentions the letter to Harry first and then the one to her father; her appeals for understanding go first to her brother and then to the tyrant, as if she hopes that, at this last instance, Harry will finally rise up and effectively protect her from her father's wrath, or at least intercede on her behalf, or, at the very least, will have her point of view before her father poisons Harry's mind against her. She likes Harry and seems to feel that he would help her if he could. Harry might have protected her from her father except that his business requires him to be out of Dublin a lot. Harry sends her money when he can. Harry knows her father's fury. He has been beaten by him. Harry is nice enough, but her special brother was Ernest who was her favorite. She loved him and he is dead too. Every member of her family she loved and who had shown her love by protecting her is dead. She has only her father, the absent Harry, and the present Frank.

The past and present become increasingly intertwined

in Eveline's thoughts: Ernest, Harry, her father, a day in the near past when her father was nice, and days in the long ago past when her life was happy. In between those times her mother's death occurred. In the present time, her own "time is running out" (50).

She should be hurrying off to meet Frank, but she cannot seem to feel the reality of time's pressure. "She continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window," still that neurotic need to feel the physical and near world when internal mental pressures mount and threaten to sweep one away. "The window," "the window curtains" both allow Eveline to see the way of escape without actually having to make that escape real. She is moving into active gear now that time, too, is running. She is inhaling the odor of dusty cretonne where she earlier allowed it to invade her nostrils. Before, she heard the man pass her house and she followed his footsteps down to the end of the street. Now her ears are reaching out for the sounds of music from the street organ far down the avenue. The present reverts to the past in her mind as the music reminds her of her mother's death. Again she repeats words as if to remind herself of a reality. Of the music, she says she knew the air, and later refers to it as "a melancholy air of Italy." It reminds her "of the promise to her mother, her promise to

keep the home together as long as she could" (50).

In a skillful touch, Joyce calls our attention to the atmosphere of death by describing the cretonne as dusty. Death's opposite is also conveyed in a play on the word "air," meaning the song the street organ played, but also the necessary breath of life, the sense of freedom, of escape, of light and growth. The two uses of "air" surround the single, damning phrase "in the close dark room" where Eveline was inside with her dying mother, and music and air were outside, being chased away by her father.

Time is still running on, and Eveline muses on "the pitiful vision of her mother's life" (50). She is becoming more and more actively involved in her own life, more and more prepared to try to take charge of it. The promise she made is forgotten as her mind is alert to the horror of her mother's life: it "laid its spell on the very quick of her being" (50). She seems to realize for the first time what a useless and futile life was her mother's, "full of common-place sacrifices and ending in final craziness" (50). Had there been beginning and intermediate stages of craziness as well? Eveline shows her first physical reaction at that moment: she trembles as she hears her mother's final words repeated again in her mind, "With foolish insistence," as if they were important for

Eveline to remember and learn from.

Eveline, like a paralytic relearning to walk, has come from the place where she sat dispiritedly by the window, to the point where her muscles show their readiness to move by trembling, and now she can stand, must stand! The terror of her mother's life, which she is rapidly subsuming, forces her to her feet. "Escape! She must escape!" (50). Frank will be her means of escape. He will be her savior. "He would give her life," and she indicates her insecure feeling about his love by adding "perhaps love, too." Is there another subconscious objection to her consciousness that makes her say "But she wanted to live"? Otherwise, the paragraph moves more smoothly if this sentence is removed. It inserts the least bit of doubt about Frank's ability to save her, or about love and life's being an equal equation, or that both love and salvation lie outside Frank. In any event, Eveline has begun to assert herself, to make some demands for her own happiness: "Why should she be unhappy! She had a right to happiness" (50). For her, the only escape is in Frank: "Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her" (50). For once, Eveline has her sequence of events in proper order. All she has to do is to go to him and go with him. He will do the rest.

The Eveline who trembled, felt impulses, questioned the status quo and made modest demands is now standing beside Frank in the dock at the North Wall. Escape is imminent, and Eveline is numb. Although in the midst of a swaying crowd and although Frank is holding her hand, Eveline seems out of touch with humanity. "She knew that he was speaking to her" but the "he" is not humanized with the name of Frank. She does not seem to be comprehending what he is saying because he is repeating it over and over again. "She answered nothing" (51). She cannot respond. The boat, that vessel of escape, appears to her as nothing but a "black mass" "lying in beside the quay wall" (51). The light is confined to the illumined portholes. Instead of fleeing to a bright new world, the vessel of flight is amorphous, black, and restrictive of light. Is it the shape of Eveline's future with Frank, full of darkness and foreboding, and, despite its potential, still only moored to a Dublin quay?

Eveline's fear becomes tangible. Her cheeks grow pale and cold. She feels herself in a "maze of distress." "She prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty" (51). She is not asking a blessing on her voyage. She is not praying for a safe journey. Her prayers indicate that she is already starting to turn from her escape and is seeking only divine confirmation

of her actions. A good Catholic girl like Eveline already knows that a mid-night trip with any man is wrong. A good Christian girl who has lived as sheltered a life as Eveline's knows that her family should come first and that direction toward one's duty almost never involves indulging oneself, especially in a love affair!

The mist obscures the boat's outline and swallows up the ship's whistle, calling passengers on board. Eveline's thoughts are already moving away from going with Frank and she is shrinking into herself. No longer does she consider how things "would be" when she and Frank are married and living in Argentina. Now she says "if she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank" (51). They would be en route to Buenos Ayres. Eveline worries that their passage has already been booked and presumably paid for. The "if" is becoming more definitely a "no" as she wonders if she could draw back after all Frank has done for her. She is still not thinking in terms of Frank and love, only in terms of debts paid and owed. Her growing knowledge that she cannot leave home makes her ill, and "she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer."

Like her mother at the end, Eveline's prayer is meaningless. She has already determined her duty. To ask God for more direction after the decision has been

made is as much nonsense as her mother's last foolishly insistent words. Her mother's voice was saying those final words constantly and insistently. Eveline is saying hers silently and feverishly. In the end, both mother and daughter are reduced to a non-human level, the mother a babbling fool and the daughter a helpless animal. The mother is lifeless, and her pitiful life was loveless. Eveline, because she rejects even Frank's love, is both without love and without life.¹⁶ She has a long existence in front of her. She is only nineteen, too young to have to live without love forever.

At this point of embarkation, Eveline is such a mass of tortured feeling that it is almost as if her physical self ceases to exist. The ship's bell "clanged upon her heart," rather than rang in her ear. She is without the protective covering of skin and without the filtering protection of her senses. The bell clangs directly on her heart and this center of emotions must respond to it.

Frank grabs her hand and bids her "Come!" The sea, which should be carrying her away from Dublin's death-grip, now tumbles about her heart, and Frank, who should have been her savior, is now the one who threatens to drown her: "He was drawing her into them [the seas]. He would drown her" (51). Eveline grips the iron railing with both hands to avoid being swept into the sea and

perhaps to prevent Frank from dragging her along with him. She may also, once again, be clutching at the physical to avoid the mental; the physical exertion and tension of gripping the rails would keep her from dealing with the mental pains either the departure or her failure to depart would inflict.

Again, Frank calls her to come, but she cannot. "It was impossible" (51). She now grips the iron rail in a frenzy and sends a cry of anguish into the night--"amid the seas." Frank rushes beyond the barrier and continues to call Eveline. When others force him to move, he still calls her name. It is too late. We move now from inside Eveline's head and get our first glimpse of her exterior. If we had been at the quayside that night and heard Frank's calls and if we had turned around to see whom he was calling, we probably would not have known, except perhaps for noting a young lady with a very white face, the face of someone frightened to death. Otherwise, there would be no indication that she is the one being called. Setting her face is a deliberate action on her behalf, a deliberate rejection of him. She is passive, "like a helpless animal." All signs of her humanity are gone. "Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" (51).

What David Daiches calls "the aloof recording" of Eveline renders the story's ending all the more painful.¹⁷

For the first two-thirds of the story, the diction has been distant and unemotional, a tedium of not-so-bright childhood memories underlaid with death and dust and some modestly bright adolescent memories of Frank. In the final third of the story, however, the dullness of the prose brightens and quickens, reaching a peak of frenzy that may seem small enough to our jaded tastes, but for Eveline it was an enormous and crushing experience.

Because of the slow, limited vocabulary of the early part of the story, some critics have called Eveline slow and dimwitted. She is, in reality, limited but not necessarily by intelligence. Her experiences have been severely circumscribed: her father, her brothers, the younger children, the Stores are all her world and are all very limiting experiences. The flat vocabulary and simple sentence structure, the repetitions and the commonplaces of the story reflect this. With Frank there is a new experience. He is a life-giver and her vocabulary reflects this, too.¹⁸ Now she is "elated," she feels "excitement," she is "pleasantly confused," and there were even the exotic "terrible Patagonians."

The final vocabulary moves from the pleasant into the frenzied. Eveline is simply too inexperienced to handle the demands of the new situation, and she tries to hide her distress in frenzied action which alternates

with utter passivity. The situation reaches its climax at the dock, where she must make both the physical and the psychological separation complete. She cannot do it. The duty that she prays to be shown has already been established: it is to a dead mother and never to a living Frank, certainly never to herself and her own happiness.

What happens at the dock is the "disintegration of a personality" that is incapable of blending past duties into present conditions and unable to separate itself from past emotions unto present ones.¹⁹ At the quay, we follow Eveline's "descent through conflicting emotions into an almost cataleptic state," the natural result of emotional overexhaustion.²⁰ She becomes numb and rigid from having felt too much and dreamed too much in such a short span of time. Other than the emotions stirred by her mother's death and the fear invoked by her father's threats, Eveline does not seem ever to have experienced the positive emotions for any length of time. Frank only makes her feel "pleasantly confused." She likes him. She does not record for us any of the stronger positive emotions like love or hope. Therefore she cannot interpret her quayside feelings in any manner other than fear. She cannot see the voyage in any terms other than separation as in separation equals death, as with her mother, her childhood friends, Ernest, and possibly even the anonymous

priest in Melbourne. The feeling of freedom is too alien to her. It is so far absent from her experience as to be terrifying, and she cannot cope with it. The iron railing, like the bars of a prison, will keep her safe from that unknown freedom. She must maintain that prison security at all costs. Entrapment is all she has ever known and all she ever chooses to know.

At the North Wall, Eveline accepts everlasting defeat and the obliteration of selfhood which is death. In her own way, she recognizes that going away with Frank will bring her death and that staying at home with her father is death, too.²¹ She opts for death among the familiar. In doing so, she also opts for celibacy, becoming that "widely representative figure . . . one of that underprivileged and put-upon minority, the spinsters for whom love's proper tide is reversed and chilled into filial dutifulness, and whose care is required for the offspring of others' passion."²² But then, Eveline's inability to have a satisfactory sexual relationship is already implicit in the end of her story. She fears the big black mass of the ship; she fights the seas that will drown her. She rejects, indeed fights against, Frank's insistent demands to come. The romantic dream she has built up in her mind is in too much danger of becoming real and physical. She must fight against that kind of submission and consequent

recognition of her own sexuality at any cost. Returning to her father releases her from the pressures of sex. His ravings and threats and her hard work can purify her body and mind. Like Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque and the nameless priest, she can defend her chastity and at the same time scourge her own female sexuality, all in the name of duty.

Eveline has been so emotionally paralyzed that she can think of life only in terms of duty. Her love for Frank was weaker than her dutifulness to her mother. She has been rendered incapable of regular human love. If her love had been strong enough, she would have gone with Frank. If she had made her decision not to go in a conscious manner, surely she could have bidden him good-by.²³ But she gives him no response whatsoever. She sets her face to him and gives him no sign of recognition, as if they had been strangers all their lives and not about to be husband and wife. She has so completely withdrawn from the conflict within her that even her eyes refuse to give Frank a sign. The image is that of a corpse: Eveline is dead. The helpless animal of her soul huddles in the cover of her skin, and her hands clutch the rails as of a cage, wordlessly begging to be let alone.

Like the other Dubliners, Eveline has had a glimpse of the world outside Dublin. She dreams of making that

escape, but she lacks what may be called the positive drives of love, faith, and hope to make that escape a reality. Since strength of self is too fragile, she is doomed to fail. From now on, her escapes will come from her seat by the window, where she will look out at the unvaried life that passes her by while the greater varieties and possibilities of life elude her beyond the barrier she would not cross.

Up until this point in Dubliners, the limits of Dublin seemed not impossible barriers. The boy in "Araby" could move East for a time, anyway, and all encounters did not seem to have to end in such a sordid fashion, but with "Eveline" we begin to suspect that "Ultimately limitation inheres in the tearful nature of things, discovered between the spirit's inordinate projections and realities unaccommodating welter."²⁴

Eveline was trapped long before she knew she was trapped, and her pitiful imagination will never help her to transcend its limits. Some critics believe all of "Eveline" takes place in her imagination, but her imagination is so limited in range as to make this an unlikely conclusion. A girl who cannot imagine her own wedding or who has not really explored the meaning of going away, who dwells on a past so stark of the details and embroidery that imagination normally attaches to memories, is not

likely to have imagined the whole story or even the last part. The final paragraphs are too full of emotions, albeit emotions fought over and repressed, to belong only in the mind of the girl who reviews her life at the story's beginning.

The irony, of course, is that Miss Gavin is exactly right about Eveline in the same way that her father is right about Frank. Eveline does not see people--waiting or loving her or demeaning her or destroying her. She is too trapped in her own personality to be aware of them. And Miss Gavin ordered Eveline to "look lively," telling Eveline that she is dying, that she must exert some energy on her own behalf, that she must live. The one person in the story whom Eveline was happiest about leaving is the only person in the story who offers her the key to getting out: open your eyes and live!

"A Mother"

If "Eveline" is a story in which a promise to a dying mother controls the actions of her daughter, then "A Mother" can be taken as a story in which the youthful promise of a living mother attempts to control the actions of her daughter. Both the living and the dead mothers try to force their daughters into living their lives. Eveline's mother makes her promise to assume her own unhappy role. Kathleen's mother is trying to make Kathleen repeat her youth, but in a happier and more successful manner. In Dublin, where the hold of the dead is greater than the claims of the living, Eveline's mother succeeds in sculpting a daughter to fit her own role. Mrs. Kearney is less successful in forcing her daughter into a preconceived pattern. The converse in both cases holds true. Because Eveline's mother succeeds, Eveline's life fails. Because Mrs. Kearney fails, her daughter Kathleen has a good chance for success. Failure and success in terms of their lives mean the quality of their lives, their chances for personal fulfillment and personal happiness.

The determination of a successful life does not hinge wholly on the mothers, although the motherly influence plays an enormous role. Kathleen Kearney has had a financially secure homelife. She has had a good Catholic education and has excelled in the field of music. She is

involved in the Nationalistic movement. She belongs. She feels worthwhile as a person. She does not know what beatings, hunger, and fear are.

Eveline, on the other hand, has never had the feeling of being worthwhile. At work and at home, her abilities are cut down. She is overworked and underloved, and out of the mainstream of Dublin life. Kathleen grows up with complete confidence in herself. For Eveline, there is only self-doubt.

In "Eveline," we are hearing the story from the daughter's point of view, with the dying mother serving only as the touchstone of futility and a divider of happiness and unhappiness. The dying mother may dominate Eveline, but Eveline dominates the story. In "A Mother," we approach the story from the mother's point of view. We see Kathleen through Mrs. Kearney's eyes. We are aware of Mrs. Kearney's attempts to control her daughter at the same time that Kathleen's actions and gestures indicate how limited that control really is.

Although the story begins primarily from Mrs. Kearney's point of view, that viewpoint is gradually eliminated even as Mrs. Kearney's importance dwindles.²⁵ Ultimately, we are allowed only the sight of a pantomime enacted between her and Hoppy shortly before she sweeps out the door. As the other artistes become less sympathetic toward her, the

point of view also pulls away from her, and we are left looking at a pathetic and bitter woman, who despite her actions, is right: her daughter really should have been paid.

Mrs. Kearney has been looking after her daughter's best interest for a long time. She cannot stop now.

She remembers the unhappiness of her own youth and is determined that Kathleen will never know it. In order to ensure this, Mrs. Kearney attempts to have Kathleen duplicate her life, but, she hopes, this time, to be able to steer Kathleen around the pitfalls she herself faced.

A comparison of Kathleen's life with that of her mother's reveals the forced parallels of Mrs. Kearney's creation. Mrs. Kearney went to a high-class convent. Kathleen is sent to a good one. In exactly the same words, Joyce notes that both Kathleen and her mother "learned French and music." Kathleen, however, because of her father's wise financial management, went on to the Academy. Mrs. Kearney did not, being sent out into the world with her two talents to snare a husband and therefore a secure life: "She sat amid the chilly circle of her accomplishments, waiting for some suitor to brave it and offer her a brilliant life" (149). Where her mother was cold and unbending, described as having "ivory manners," Kathleen seems to be more friendly. She and her

friends exchange Irish postcards and meet after mass to gossip and speak the little Irish they know. When the crisis over Kathleen's payment for playing at the concert develops, Miss Healy, Kathleen's friend, manages to stick by her side out of a friend's loyalty even though she would have preferred to be with the others.

As Kathleen is now at the age where marriage must be considered, it can be imagined that Mrs. Kearney is going to take it upon herself to control again the direction of Kathleen's life by exposing her to masses of cultured society at one time, thereby proclaiming her eligibility to all. Mrs. Kearney herself "was sent out to many houses where her playing and ivory manners were much admired. . . . But the young men whom she met were ordinary and she gave them no encouragement" (149). Mrs. Kearney finally married just before she reached the age limit where spinsterhood begins and just as her friends began gossiping about her single life. She wants something a lot better for Kathleen.

Mrs. Kearney has selected the most substantial kind of man to be Kathleen's father and her husband. Mr. Kearney is older, thrifty, sober, and pious. Above all he is obedient, coming to Mrs. Kearney's side at the mere arching of an eyebrow. He also lets Mrs. Kearney alone and provides her with the financial status that allows

her to play so freely with Kathleen's life. Without his money, Kathleen could never be so well-educated and secure or even able to travel in those circles where eventually one gets asked to accompany artistes at concerts.

Mrs. Kearney keeps an alert eye out for what is au courant and therefore profitable in advancing the cause of her daughter. When the Irish Revival begins to catch on, Mrs. Kearney is quick to hire an Irish teacher to teach the language to her two daughters, an attempt to graft onto them a culture she could not pass along and that she probably would have disdained had not others of taste picked it up. In hiring the Irish teacher, Joyce tells us, Mrs. Kearney "determined to take advantage of her daughter's name" (150). She is using the movement to advance Kathleen and not out of any genuine appreciation of Irish culture. Mrs. Kearney catalogues Kathleen's friends as Nationalist friends or musical friends, and she probably also has them weighted according to their usefulness to her in getting Kathleen suitable acclaim and an acclaimed suitor.

Her mother not only labels her friends, but she also tries to determine who her friends will be. At the concert, Mrs. Kearney steers her daughter away from Miss Healy and toward the tenor and baritone, who could certainly advance Kathleen's career better than a nobody

like her friend. She wants to be "on good terms with them," we are told, but while she and Kathleen talk amiably enough with them, Mrs. Kearney's eyes are on Hoppy Holohan, who has the immediate power to make or break Kathleen.

Calculated actions such as these accomplish what Mrs. Kearney desires. Even prior to the concert, people are talking about Kathleen Kearney. Her name is on people's lips: "People said that she was very clever at music and a very nice girl and moreover, that she was a believer in the language movement" (150). When Kathleen is asked to accompany at the "four grand concerts" sponsored by Mr. Holohan and his Society, Mrs. Kearney is content with her success so far.

Mr. Holohan's request for Kathleen's talent brings out Mrs. Kearney's full organizational and maternal instincts. It also brings out Mrs. Kearney's real loyalties to the Revival. After considering Kathleen's participation, she plies Hoppy with wine and biscuits, and then "she entered heart and soul into the details of the enterprise, advised and dissuaded; and finally a contract was drawn up by which Kathleen was to receive eight guineas for her services as accompanist at the four grand concerts" (150). Money rather than culture is her main concern. After the contract has been decided upon, she and

Mr. Holohan discuss the other incidentals such as the advertising and programme arrangements. "She had tact" (150). She also leads us to believe that she has taste that is invaluable to the concert program. Hoppy comes every day to consult with her--and to consume her liquor!

Once these details are decided, Mrs. Kearney goes back to work on Kathleen, doing her best to make certain that all will go well, playing the role of god-mother with her little plots and plans. She goes to some expense to make sure that Kathleen will be beautifully dressed. She buys a dozen tickets to send to friends who cannot be trusted to remember or perhaps to be interested in such things. Like a god, she attempts to control both the players and the audience: "She forgot nothing and, thanks to her, everything that was to be done was done" (151).

Mrs. Kearney has inflated her importance and the grandness of the four grand concerts. She is instantly deflated the night of the very first concert when the ushers all but outnumber the audience. A rare moment of self-doubt nudges her. Perhaps she has the time wrong. She cannot believe that all of Dublin can be so mistaken as to the value of the concerts. She cannot believe that the rest of the committee can be so blasé about the "paper crowd." She seeks out Mr. Fitzpatrick, who is characterized by the word "vacant." He has a vacant face, a vacant

smile, and his manners vacate him at the Thursday night concert, much to Mrs. Kearney's annoyance. The control she thought she had over everyone does not extend to him.

But she can still control the movements of her daughter. She acts as a kind of interpreter for Kathleen, a protector who intercedes between the common riff-raff like Mr. Fitzpatrick and upper-class persons like Kathleen. When Mr. Fitzpatrick smiles his vacant smile at the room full of performers and announces, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I suppose we'd better open the ball" (152), Mrs. Kearney rejects his informality "with a quick stare of contempt" and re-interprets his words in a much more refined manner. She asks Kathleen, "Are you ready, dear?"

Feeling her control slipping, Mrs. Kearney seeks out Mr. Holohan to find out what is going on. Mr. Holohan does not know what is going on, but he does know that the Committee made a mistake in planning four concerts. Mr. Holohan has the wits to see how things are going for the musical part of the Revival, and he judiciously drops the word "grand" as part of the four grand concerts. Mrs. Kearney, who had used self-vaunted tact in arranging the order of the artistes for the concerts, now draws back from them. The artistes are trying, is the best she can say about them, but they have no real talent to try with. Here Mr. Holohan reveals how little control Mrs. Kearney

has actually had over the program and how little influence she exerted in its structure. The Committee is letting the first three concerts go and The Committee will put all its effort into the last concert, he tells her. The Committee has decided that all the talent will be used on Saturday night. Apparently even the lists she worked over to alternate known and unknown artists have been ignored. Her part in the concerts was actually quite small. She has gone to great trouble and expense only to find herself completely unnecessary to the program. Her only substantial contribution to the concerts lies in her having birthed Kathleen, the accompanist.

Kathleen is all she has left to salvage her damaged pride. When she learns that the Friday night concert is being abandoned, she sees even this sole contribution slipping away. She becomes alarmed at the prospect that Kathleen will not be paid for four concerts as was worked out in the contract by Mrs. Kearney with Hoppy. Her anger grows to an alarm that she can barely keep suppressed. Only her sense of what behavior is ladylike keeps her from open sarcasm about this Committee which has suddenly proved more powerful than she. She confides her suspicions to her husband, who agrees to come with her to the concert. Until now, it has been her project, under her control, directed and guided by her desires. Now that her

control is slipping, she must have his help. He will be the base from which she continues her machinations and from which she executes her plans.

As Mrs. Kearney scurries around the theatre trying to find a member of the Committee, the other artistes gather. We now have a third viewpoint for Mrs. Kearney's actions: her, ours through her, and that of the others gathering backstage. Mr. and Mrs. Kearney talk together about Kathleen, seeming to be trying to estimate how well she will co-operate in the plans. They glance at her often. Kathleen seems to be trying to remain aloof from the discussions. She and her friend Miss Healy gossip about the aged soprano from London, Madame Glynn.

Kathleen remains disinterested while her mother haggles over the payment. Mrs. Kearney continues to argue on Kathleen's behalf and repeatedly refers to the contract: "Her daughter had signed a contract for eight guineas and she would have to be paid" (157). Her obsession with the contract grows. She evidently reports her conversation with Holohan to her husband. Her self-control is now also sliding from her: she is "speaking so animatedly to her husband that [Mr. Holohan] had to ask her to lower her voice." Where are her ladylike demeanour and her ivory manner now? Mrs. Kearney turns to Kathleen for support, and she becomes the silent Kathleen's mouth-

piece. "She won't go on. She must get her eight guineas," says her manager-mother. The crowd is growing wild with impatience. The other artistes are growing nervous with the delay. Kathleen, embarrassed by her mother but powerless to stop her, is looking down and moving the point of her new shoe in the classic pose of a child who is being scolded and who didn't mean to be bad at all. Mrs. Kearney will not be moved. Only the payment of the contracted sum of money will do.

Faced with a clamoring audience, restless performers, and the immoveable Mrs. Kearney, the Committee has no choice but to pay up. Interestingly enough, the money is counted out into Mrs. Kearney's hand and not into Kathleen's. Mrs. Kearney finally loses her control over Kathleen too when she begins a new fuss over being underpaid by four shillings. Before she can begin to argue this point, Kathleen is on her way out to the stage to begin the concert. Kathleen speaks for herself this time and does not require the tender solicitude of her mother to start. She merely says, "Now, Mr. Bell" and moves out in absolute defiance of her mother's wishes.

Faced with Kathleen's abdication, Mrs. Kearney stands alone. The excited talk in the dressing room not only excludes her; it is about her. The gossip she had so carefully avoided by doing all the right things all her

life now envelops her, and her name will be associated with the scandal forever. What she had hoped to achieve, launching Kathleen's career, has failed utterly. No less a personage than the Mr. O'Madden Burke has said that "Miss Kathleen Kearney's musical career was ended in Dublin" (160-1). What could be more final than that?

Mrs. Kearney's maternal solicitude, like her interest in The Irish Revival, turns out to be a sham. That she is actually trying, through Kathleen, to compensate for her own unacclaimed girlhood, is revealed by a sentence in which the pronoun "she" has an ambiguous antecedent.²⁶ It might well mean Kathleen, but it could also mean Mrs. Kearney because of the implications carried over from the preceding paragraph: "They thought that they had only a girl to deal with and that, therefore, they could ride roughshod over her. But she would show them their mistake" (161).

Mrs. Kearney is no longer a girl, but in projecting her life and ambitions into Kathleen, she feels like one. Moreover, it is not really Kathleen who is being ridden roughshod over. Kathleen has consented to play with only half her wages paid. Kathleen did not negotiate the contract; her mother did. Kathleen did not go to any expenses for the concert; that was Mrs. Kearney's doing. Kathleen's feelings have not been hurt by the Committee; her mother's

have.

Mrs. Kearney recognizes bitterly the power of men in a man's world: "They wouldn't have dared to have treated her like that if she were a man" (161). The young girl who rejected Dublin's men as commonplace and ordinary now finds that those same common, ordinary men rule her and have the power of rejecting her, too. Mrs. Kearney vows to fight their injustice. Her daughter will get what is due her, and she will get it now. She is perfectly within her rights to ask for the money. The baritone has already been paid, and we can assume that the others have been, too.

Mrs. Kearney continues to confuse whom she is fighting for. Her pronouns indicate her subconscious intermingling of her personality and her daughter's:

"My daughter has her contract."

"I'm asking for my rights."

"And when I ask when my daughter is going to be paid I can't get a civil answer" (162).

Whichever personality Mrs. Kearney assumes, it will be the losing personality in the fight against the Committee. Mr. Holohan turns away from her, as does the entire group of waiting performers. She has lost the sympathy of the artistes by mimicking Hoppy to his face. Her illusions of being seen as a lady are shattered. The crowd

is appalled by her behavior. She has alienated all. Even her husband and daughter show signs of re-aligning themselves with the opposition. We see her standing at the door of the dressing-room, ignominiously ignored by everyone. She is "haggard with rage, arguing with her husband and daughter" (162). Are they trying to change her mind? Are they asking her to go home and bear her humiliation in silence? Is she trying hard to prove to two non-believers how right she is?

Mrs. Kearney can never believe that she is wrong. She waits for the second act to begin, expecting, hoping, that once again Hoppy and Mr. Fitzpatrick will appear with the money and possibly even a public apology that will vindicate her, but there is only further humiliation for her. Her daughter's friend, Miss Healy is asked to take Kathleen's place. Worst of all, Mrs. Kearney has to step aside to let two artistes make their way to the stage. She has been ignored, replaced, and set aside.

Her anger turns her into an inanimate object. She stands "like an angry stone image" re-activated only by the sounds of music she has excluded herself from. She orders her husband to find a cab, and the Kearney family leaves the site of Mrs. Kearney's greatest humiliation. Both Kathleen and her father are prompt to obey her. Now is no time for another argument.

Mrs. Kearney has taken pains to select a husband who will provide security for her family. She has given her daughters the right kind of schooling and has introduced them to the most popular society. She has failed, however, to give Kathleen a feeling of security in more important ways. She has made Kathleen her tool, her second chance at youth, and the bearer of all her own private dreams and wishes. In her own way, she has done exactly what Eveline's mother did: ask Kathleen to assume the role that is hers. In Mrs. Kearney's case, she wishes to take over Kathleen's life and live it as her own. By taking over Kathleen's role, she utterly destroys the role she had worked so long to build for herself, that of a genteel and cultured lady. Instead, her pose was dropped in an argument over money. She is every thing she thinks she is not and the reverse is also true. She sees herself as a person of tact, but she becomes utterly tactless with Hoppy Holohan. She sees herself as a gracious hostess with Hoppy but then she ruthlessly attacks him. She sees herself as an advocate of Irish culture but then she is perfectly willing to sabotage a grand concert for her daughter's four shillings.

Hayman sees her as being one of that breed of men and women for whom power is all: "Her interest in music and the Irish Revival, even her interest in money . . .

are all, James Joyce suggests, secondary to a desire to be right, to win out, to control."²⁷

Her efforts to control her daughter have already been discussed. Unlike Eveline's mother, she does not extract a promise at an emotionally explosive moment. She directs and controls in a straightforward and uncompromising manner. Kathleen obeys her but not to the self-destructive extent that Eveline obeys. But then Kathleen is not Eveline. Their homes, families, schooling, experiences, and opportunities have been vastly different. Kathleen's whole life will not necessarily be shadowed by this debacle, since people will know what she knew--"It was not her fault."²⁸

Kathleen will not assume the responsibility for her mother's behavior. She will follow her meekly; she will argue against her ideas. She will choose her own time to make her stage appearance: "Now, Mr. Bell." What her mother does is her own business, and although it may involve Kathleen, it will never subsume her or overwhelm her. It was not her fault. She is blameless for her mother's actions. She will not be held accountable for her mother's life.

Eveline feels that sense of accountability too keenly. She takes her mother's life as her own. Kathleen goes on to find life, if only as a "sparrowfart" in Ulysses, but

she will live. Eveline chooses death by assuming the role of a dying mother, and we hear of her no more. A dead mother controls a lifeless Eveline. A living mother tries to control Kathleen, but cannot. In the end, Kathleen's own living spirit is too strong.

"The Boarding House"

If awards were being given to Dubliner mother-of-the-year, one would surely have to go to Mrs. Mooney. Of all the Dubliners stories involving mothers and daughters, hers is a story devoid of attempts to dominate and control her child. Instead, Mrs. Mooney practices a form of benign neglect. She arranges things and waits patiently for them to turn out her way rather than rushing ahead and demanding certain patterns of behavior from her daughter.

Mrs. Mooney is a butcher's daughter who learned to handle all moral problems with the same finesse as her father and later her husband handled carcasses of meat. She is a determined woman. When she bemoans the fact that her husband could never take the pledge and stick to it, we know that she has been the overwhelming force in making him take the pledge initially, and she may well be the very force that drives him to break it. Her determination shows in the lengths to which she will go to get Polly married. First Polly is put to work as a typist, and when that proves unrewarding, Polly is brought home to help at the boarding house. There, she is given "the run of the young men." Mrs. Mooney has been quite patient, but she is almost ready to send Polly out to another field where the harvest of single men might prove more

abundant when she notices the affair going on between Polly and Bob Doran.

Mrs. Mooney is not someone Bob Doran will find easily dissuaded from her goals. She is not a Mrs. Kearney who will bludgeon the sympathetic until they oppose her. She is a big, imposing woman, but within that bulk dwells a shrewd brain. She is too used to watching out for herself and her family to bungle things now. When her husband's drinking caused him to go after her with a cleaver, she went to the priest, won her separation from her husband, took the kids and the money that was left from the butcher shop and bought the boarding house. All of this was achieved in short order, and her husband was sliced out of her life as definitely as if she had amputated him with a butcher's knife.

Now she manages to keep her family comfortably well off by being wise and thrifty. Her boarding house is a combination of floating artistes and stable young men. If her daughter cannot select a husband from the regulars, then perhaps there will be someone in this week's traveling theatre group. She collects the daily bread-crusts for Tuesday's bread pudding. She keeps the sugar and butter locked away. She knows the value of silence and she knows when to speak.

Mrs. Mooney has set a definite goal for her daughter:

marriage. She will work with her daughter to attain that goal. Polly must play her role; Mrs. Mooney will play hers. She girds for the meeting with Bob Doran as a soldier would for war. She has the advantage over most soldiers, however, in that she knows exactly what she is fighting for. She also knows, which few soldiers do, that right is on her side. She is an outraged mother whose trust was violated. Reparations are in order, and they will be paid in the form of marriage. All the weapons are stacked against Bob, for Mrs. Mooney has armed herself with virtues such as her daughter's honor, her family's honor, her hospitality, and his reputation, all formidable opposition.²⁹

Her virtues, of course, are all ironic. A close reading of the story will show how cleverly Polly contrived to "lose" her honor to Bob. Polly was probably undercutting her own honor when she sang

"I'm a . . . naughty girl.

You needn't sham;

You know I am." (73)

Only her brother is willing to fight to defend her honor, and we know what kind of man he is!

Mrs. Mooney is called Madam. Her son Jack is a brawling drunk, and Polly is a "a little perverse madonna" (73). There does not seem to be a great deal of family

honor at stake either. Mrs. Mooney's hospitality is probably adequate, but we can assume that her guests pay for each hospitable moment.

The only valid virtue that Mrs. Mooney arms herself with is Bob Doran's reputation, and he himself has gone over this aspect of the problem again and again, knowing it is here that he is trapped. We may be sure that Mrs. Mooney has accurately assessed his position as to security and income, or she would have interfered a lot sooner in Polly's affair.

Whether Polly calculated Bob's financial background is doubtful. She just seems to be one of those combinations of virgin and temptress that describe so many of Joyce's women.³⁰ The Madam's daughter is portrayed in gentle, uncalculating terms. She is slim, has light soft hair and grey-green eyes. She is pictured as being as delicate as her mother is harsh, and yet she has all her mother's shrewdness and patience and determination to succeed.

Her mother only put Polly into the situation. It was up to Polly to use it to her advantage, and she did. Polly connived in her own soft way to make Bob very aware of her presence--touching him softly with her dress, then her fingers, and getting close enough so that he could feel her warm, soft breath. She prepared for the occasion

of asking him to relight her candle, dressing with an eye to winning him, and with a bit of perfume to help the eye receive her intended message.

After the fact, she again uses her softness and vulnerability to keep him from changing his mind. She makes him feel revealed, naked, by telling him that she has told her mother everything. Before he can deal with his own terrible vulnerability, she begins to cry, clinging to his neck. Cleverly, she simultaneously makes him want to protect her and she wants to remind him, physically, of past, happy times. When she threatens suicide, Bob is forced to pour all his attention on her. He must be the strong, brave one. She knows that and encourages that feeling. She also keeps herself pressed against him to keep his mind on sex, too. How can he turn from her when the "delirium" has left such a strong impression on him? Meeting her mother will do it, and meet her he must. As he leaves the bedroom, Polly is still crying, softly.

It doesn't take long after his leaving for Polly to recover her composure. She restores her face and hair; she wallows in "amiable memories" (79). The worries have been wiped from her face. "She waited on patiently, almost cheerfully, without alarm, thinking of the future" and waiting for her mother to call (79). She is so involved in her dreams and plans that she almost forgets

"what she had been waiting for."

In that last line, Polly reveals exactly the degree of understanding between herself and her mother. Without a lot of words, the two women have contrived to get what both tacitly agree Polly wants. In discussing the exact relationship between Polly and Bob, there had been awkwardness on both Polly and her mother's part. A kind of cautious role-playing occurs lest either woman reveal her knowledge of the other's role. Polly takes care not to let her mother know how much she knows about the extent and intent of her mother's tolerance. Mrs. Mooney's cooperation is always most discreet. Each woman knows what she is doing and what the other is doing and shares this knowledge with the reader. A companionable feeling exists between this mother and daughter, a polite conspiracy, a mutual understanding, and a shared goal.

Mrs. Mooney is the better mother of the three.³¹ She has a tight grip on reality that Mrs. Kearney lacks and the dying mother of Eveline never knew. Mrs. Mooney has all of moral rightness on her side before she deals directly and absolutely with the problem. Mrs. Kearney is too refined and sophisticated for the direct approach. She relies on the rightness of a contract as the basis of her argument, and those printed words, once removed from the people who spoke them, lose their impact against the

spoken arguments of Mr. Fitzpatrick and Hoppy Holohan and a near empty concert hall. Mrs. Mooney knows she is playing the role of an outraged mother. Mrs. Kearney is not aware of the role she has been playing all her life, and when she is revealed, she plays the fool. As for Eveline's mother, we know nothing really of her except at her death. We can surmise that she had no eye for separating the real from the illusory. If she had, she could have seen the impossibility of what she asked Eveline to do. Perhaps at the end, she was able to see what her role had been in life, and this alone would have brought on her final craziness.

And the daughters? Her dying mother haunts Eveline and prevents her from ever enjoying a normal life. Her death-promise will dominate Eveline forever. There is no escape for her even though she wanted to be able to escape with Frank. Eveline is confined in her mother's place, to grow old and to become a Maria in her later days. She is un-sexed, brutalized into animality, and trapped in the family circle.

Kathleen is dominated by a living mother who would condemn her to repeating her mistakes. Yet Kathleen is far from being an Eveline, pursued by the ghosts of the dead. She cannot help her breeding, her schooling, her Irish tutoring, and perhaps not even her interest in

music and French. She cannot help her mother's pushiness. It is not her fault, but what she can help, she does. Her defiance may be very limited defiance, and her arguments may be respectful but passionate, but she does defy her mother by walking onstage before her mother is satisfied with the contract negotiations. She does argue with her mother. She does temporarily "disown" her mother when Mrs. Kearney's behavior becomes most unmannerly and loud. Kathleen, by these few small acts, indicates her ability to escape the deadening, smothering influence of her mother. Kathleen can live outside the constricting family circle dominated by her mother. Does she, however, become in Ulysses what her mother would have wished to be?

Polly does not suffer the burdens of a domineering mother in any way. Her mother is a living pragmatist who understands, despite her own bad marriage, that a husband is a Dublin girl's sole security and status. She sets the stage for her daughter, encouraging her to move about to find the setting that suits her. Polly must act her own part from then on. Polly does not have to submit to her mother's wishes, as Eveline and Kathleen must do. She does not have to fight against her mother as Kathleen does in a small, tentative way, and as Eveline ought to do but cannot. Polly and her mother work together, and out of this joint effort will come Polly's achievement of

her own dreams.

Ancient Ireland was a matriarchy, Bierman reports, and Tindall tells us that when Ireland assumed a body, it always was a female body, and its name was Kathleen.³² The domination of the female is a recurring theme in the three stories discussed, as is its corollary, the ineffectual male. Eveline's father is a cruel, drunken tyrant, but he needs her wages to keep the family going. He needs her labor to care for the home and the younger children. He needs her, and the memory of her mother, to keep him from becoming a total animal and beating up all his children all the time.

Kathleen's father is "valued for his abstract quality as a male." His voice is never heard in the story. He is merely a quietly looming presence who has fathered Kathleen. He went along to the last grand concert but not to fight on Kathleen's behalf. He was there for solid moral support, for whom we cannot be certain, because he does join Kathleen in arguing against her mother after they have all been dismissed. At Mrs. Kearney's command, he promptly goes and gets a cab. He, too, is dominated by her.

Polly Mooney's father ran his in-laws' butcher business into the ground, drank heavily, attacked his wife, lost his wife and family because of it, and was summarily

dismissed from their lives as if he had never been part of their existence. In fact, he is so thoroughly ousted from their family circle that he is referred to as "a disreputable sheriff's man" who used to come to talk to Polly in a corn-factor's office rather than as her father (73). He drops out of the story as soon as the whole family is clustered in the boarding house.

Who can say whether stronger men could have kept Eveline from being so emotionally crippled or Kathleen from being so humiliated or even Polly from being so hypocritical and deceptive? The problem is that in Dubliners, the women do dominate and control, even from their death-beds. They live vicariously through their daughters and try to force their daughters into molds from which they wish they had been sprung. It is this inability of Dubliners to live their own lives free from the oppression of those who should love them that makes Dublin the oppressed, loveless, crippled city that it is.

Endnotes

¹Warren Beck, Joyce's Dubliners (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1969), p. 122.

²Edward Brandabur, A Scrupulous Meanness (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 58.

³Brewster Ghiselin, "The Unity of Dubliners," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, ed. Peter K. Garret (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 72.

⁴James Joyce, Dubliners (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), p. 49. All references to Dubliners will be from this edition of The Portable James Joyce, edited by Harry Levin and will be included in the text.

⁵Beck, p. 115.

⁶Beck, p. 115.

⁷Brandabur, p. 61.

⁸Beck, p. 111.

⁹Beck, p. 114.

¹⁰Beck, p. 114.

¹¹Clive Hart, "Eveline," in James Joyce's Dubliners, ed. Clive Hart (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), pp. 49-50.

¹²Hugh Kenner, Dubliners, in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, ed. Peter Garrett (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 44.

¹³Brandabur, p. 59.

¹⁴Brandabur, p. 59.

¹⁵Brandabur, p. 65.

¹⁶Clive Hart, "Eveline," in James Joyce's Dubliners, ed. by Clive Hart (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 51.

- ¹⁷ David Daiches, Dubliners, in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, ed. Peter Garrett (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 31.
- ¹⁸ Clive Hart, p. 51.
- ¹⁹ Brandabur, p. 57.
- ²⁰ Beck, p. 117.
- ²¹ Brandabur, p. 64.
- ²² Beck, p. 111.
- ²³ Beck, p. 23.
- ²⁴ Beck, p. 117.
- ²⁵ David Hayman, "A Mother," in James Joyce's Dubliners, ed. Clive Hart (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 131.
- ²⁶ Hayman, p. 124.
- ²⁷ Hayman, p. 124.
- ²⁸ Beck, p. 274.
- ²⁹ Nathan Halper, 'The Boarding House,' in James Joyce's Dubliners (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 74.
- ³⁰ Hugh Kenner, Dubliners, in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners, ed. Peter Garrett (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 44.
- ³¹ Beck, p. 269.
- ³² Robert Bierman, "Streamersess Mistress to the Sea: A Note on FW," Modern Fiction Studies, 2 (1956), p. 79. William Y. Tindall, A Reader's Guide to James Joyce, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971), p. 37.

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