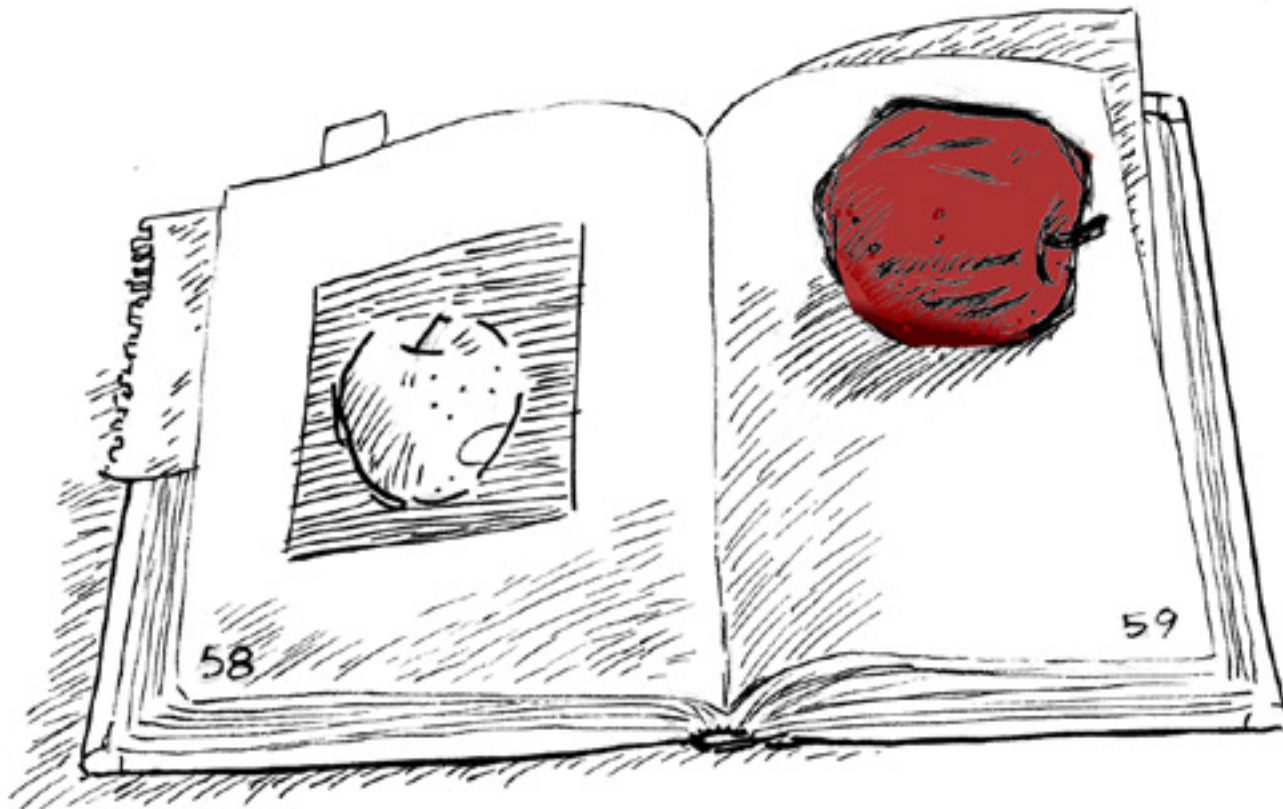


Antihero



Common Traits of Antiheroes:

- are neither 100% good nor 100% evil
- are fated to cause grief to individuals or to the community **or** to self
- are driven and obsessed with past deeds or by fate
-
- do not need to die at close of story; there is uncertain resolution
- can act as a vigilante, even against the self
- act according to their own set of rules, their own values
- *may* have tragedy in their life
- *may* or may not have a tragic flaw
- lack true identity, even to themselves; in some cases they are disillusioned with life, lack strong ideals and goals
- this does *not* define them as a villain
- their actions are merely *reactions* to events
- usually they are not motivated to act *for*, nor act *against* anyone
- they are not fighting fate but present circumstances

Eveline

Do not confuse an anti-hero with a tragic hero.

Existentialists believed modern life does not allow the existence of a true hero. Modern life dehumanizes everyone.

In James Joyce's story "Eveline," the protagonist *does* endure a dramatic and tragic life, *but* this does not define her as a tragic hero.

The story comes from a collection by James Joyce titled *Dubliners*.

- Each of the fifteen stories in James Joyce's *Dubliners* presents a flat, almost one dimensional, super heightened account of realistic life in the Irish town of Dublin. Published in 1914.
- The visual and symbolic details embedded in each story, are highly concentrated, and each story culminates in an extreme epiphany moment.

Eveline

- For Joyce, an epiphany is a moment when the essence of a character is revealed, when all the forces that bear on his life converge, and the character can, in that instant, suddenly understand himself/herself.
- Very dark realizations appear in Joyce's work.
- Each story in the collection is centered on a different character's epiphany, and each story is concerned with some failure or deception, which results in realization and disillusionment.

Eveline

Quick Background

- Joyce himself left Dublin as soon as he could, in a self-exile.
- With all his criticisms of the town, it is interesting all his stories center around this specific Irish landscape. Whereas Faulkner relates his fiction around a Jefferson-masked Oxford, Mississippi, Joyce openly uses Dublin as an example of human failing.
- Joyce was convinced that the Dublin of the 1900's was a center of spiritual, mental, and financial paralysis. Ireland at this point in history was seeking self-identification outside of England. The history of the two countries is a long embattled, dysfunctional argument that includes religious-political and sociological extremes.

Eveline

Themes and Characterizations

- James Joyce loosely but thematically tied together histories in *Dubliners* by means of their common setting. Each of the stories consists of a portrait in which Dublin contributes in some way to the dehumanizing experience of modern life. In this manner he fits into a strong Existentialist philosophy.
- Because of the nature of his theme, exposing negative aspects of modern life, notice he refrains from using a strong subjective or moralistic narration towards his characters actions. Despite the fact Dublin is often shown as gray and dilapidated, despite the fact his characters may act morally reprehensible, *he wants the reader to pass judgements* on the protagonist's actions, or non-actions as the case may be. (As a good contrasting example, Hawthorne's tone comes across as moralizing or judgemental.)

Eveline

- Joyce often uses descriptions from the characters' point of view; he rarely writes in the first person.
- Joyce ties his character's senses with the reader's impressions—likewise, he often uses the character's surroundings to show an aspect of their personality or hidden secrets.
- Notice the story is neatly divided into two main scenes: her father's household and the shipyard.
- A good example of this is the story "Eveline" with the title character in the opening scene.

Eveline

Opening Scene

Who is the protagonist?

What is relevant about the timing of day?

What atmosphere does the word 'invade' and 'dusty' promote?

Eveline

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- Strong foreshadowing elements exist in this opening paragraph.

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Cretonne is a heavy cotton or linen fabric with a printed design, used mainly for furniture or drapes or women's clothing

Eveline

What can the window symbolize?

Eveline

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- The second paragraph establishes a heavier sense of loneliness, regret, depression — all through the scenes of the outside environment: few men on the streets, limited visuals, only sounds on the pavement. Eveline is shown as a lonely figure, daydreaming, seeking freedom from her life. Staring out at the evening there is not much to see in the dark; she stares out not concentrating on the world but reflecting inward.
- She is also shown as a prisoner, trapped indoors, trapped psychologically by as of yet unknowable reason.
- Looking through the window the action recreates memory of the past. Likewise, it shifts the reader into further atmospheric elements, plus moves the action into the particular thoughts of Eveline as an interior monologue (or stream of consciousness).

Eveline

Slowly important details are revealed showing her life as miserable, with conflict:

- Eveline is a girl just over nineteen.
- Mother passed away.
- Her father an alcoholic, with tendencies of violence.
He is the main conflict.

How are the two parents characterized physically?

What is important to notice, these two parental figures are left very nondescript. Joyce does not give major details regarding their appearance or physical nature, only their emotional reactions towards their daughter.

Yet, how is Frank portrayed?

He represents the change she needs to remedy her life. However, the only thing we know, the only thing Eveline knows, is the fact he is: “very kind, manly, open-hearted [and] his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze” (¶10 / 618).

Eveline

Why is presented as a one dimensional character ?

She does not not know that much about him to begin with. Frank has presented her with the internalized conflict of “should I stay—or should I go?”

Paragraph 14, on page 619, presents an important repetition of the opening lines:

“her head was against the window curtain, inhaling the ordour of dusty cretonne” (619).

In this manner, the paragraph shows how monotonous and repetitious her life actually is: a dull rut of modern existence.

- She is waiting to have a revelation to help her change her mind.
- She not seen with a sense of self-will until the pivotal moment when the street organ plays the song which spirals out the memory of her mother on her deathbed.

Eveline

Memory of Mother's Death

The memory of her mother acts as a catalyst for action. The last night with her mother is shown in a claustrophobic, controlling atmosphere.

The crucial point in the memory is in paragraph 17, when the mother insists: “*Derevaun Seraun!*” (619). Recent criticism acknowledges the phrase is more likely nonsense phonetics, and not a recognizable language.

- Notice how the scene at window abruptly shifts without warning into the scene at the dock with Frank.

Why so sudden, without warning?

She was locked in the memory for a long time. She lost sense of landscape and the moments which drew her to the shipping dock.

Eveline

The story likewise abruptly ends without firm sense of definite resolution.

Does she stay or does she go?

Eveline

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Does she stay or does she go?

To answer this question, look at the wording in the final paragraph:

“Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (620).

One theory states she suddenly realizes that the life with Frank would not bring true happiness, that it would be short lived. In the end, if she leaves Ireland it is a selfish act; she promised her mother on her deathbed she would stay and raise the family.

- Pain would be brought to her if she leaves and likewise if she stays. Life for Joyce is filled with contradiction and meaningless choices. In this story of Eveline he wants to stress she needs to save herself and not rely on Frank to be her hero. She needs to realize this, but fails.

Eveline

Epiphany

Eveline's epiphany begins in paragraph 20, which states:

“A bell clanged upon her heart” (619).

- Keep in mind the heart is the major symbol of emotional reasoning, not logical. She is going to react in a bitter psychological awareness of her true self.
- In the end her epiphany transforms her to an animal, a passive animal locked to duty to her father, despite the fact that the first half of the story indicates she is leaving. Joyce likes to show that life is often contradictory.
- In the first part of the story, Joyce shows her mentally preparing to leave. She has written two letters explaining her decision: one to her father and one to her favorite brother, Harry.
- However, by the second half of the story she changes her mind.