

Frankly Speaking, “The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you”: Migration and White Slavery in Argentina in Joyce’s “Eveline”

Laura Barberán Reinares

Laura Barberán Reinares is an Assistant Professor of English and Literature at Bronx Community College of the City University of New York (CUNY). She is currently working on a book analyzing sex trafficking in postcolonial literature. Her work has been featured in the journals College Teaching, the South Atlantic Review: The Journal of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association, and the James Joyce Quarterly.

Abstract

In this article James Joyce’s “Eveline” (1904) is analysed, looking at the moral panic about “white slavery” in Europe and South America. The article especially focuses on Argentina, the foremost recipient of trafficked women between 1880 and 1930 (and, of course, Joyce’s destination choice for Eveline). By looking at Frank, the sailor who intends to take Eveline to Buenos Aires, the article explores the possible links between Joyce’s story and the sex trafficking industry thriving in Buenos Aires through the Jewish criminal association *Zwi Migdal*. Frank’s representation allows us to draw this connection because his behaviour with Eveline coincides with the seduction and recruiting methods employed by *Zwi Migdal* procurers. This work adds to Hugh Kenner’s sceptical reading of the sailor and Katherine Mullin’s analysis of Joyce and white slavery discourses by suggesting that, in light of the historical situation in Argentina and Joyce’s hyper-analyzed ambiguities, Frank could be a *Zwi Migdal* recruiter and Eveline a potential sex slave.

*La luz de este prostíbulo apuñala
las sombras de la calle.*

*Paso delante suyo y se me enciende
un pensamiento cruel en la cabeza:
¿Terminaré mi vida en un prostíbulo?
Clara Beter, “Presentimiento”¹*

1

*The light of this brothel stabs
the shadows of the street.*

*I walk in front of it and a cruel thought
ignites in my head:
Would I end up my life in a brothel?*

Clara Beter, “Premonition” [my translation]

Joyce's "Eveline" has traditionally been interpreted as the story in *Dubliners* (1914) that best exemplifies Ireland's "paralysis," a key term for most critics, with the word generally functioning "as a metaphor for the plight of the characters caught up in situations that they can neither completely comprehend nor control, and from which they cannot escape" (Doherty 1992: 35). Eveline's everyday life is haunted by a promise to her dying mother, an abusive alcoholic father who takes her money, a monotonous job, and the children who have been left to her charge. In such a bleak context, Frank, an enigmatic but charming sailor, appears with promises of marriage and a new life in Buenos Aires. Despite her dismal situation in Dublin, Eveline refuses to board a ship with the sailor and stays in Ireland. Many critics have agreed that the oppression in which she lives perversely grants her the only security she has ever known, and thus she fails to move forward and become herself.

Yet the latest new historicist scholarship has illuminated a possibly more optimistic reading of "Eveline" once we consider the white slavery discourses circulating at the time the story was conceived.² This scholarship suggests that Eveline may have comprehended more than readers assumed, controlled her destiny in ways unsuspected by audiences, and escaped an ominous future in Argentina. Some clues in the story hint that Joyce knew more about white slavery than earlier scholars initially thought and that he, as Katherine Mullin contends, slyly incorporated such discourse in his tale. Historians like Ivette Trochón and Gerardo Bra confirm that early in the twentieth century Buenos Aires was the centre of the white slave trade between Europe and South America. Indeed, Joyce's choice of Buenos Aires as Eveline's destination is semantically charged.

In "Don't Cry for Me Argentina: 'Eveline' and the Seductions of Emigration Propaganda" (2000), Mullin compellingly analyzes the ideological perception of sexual danger in foreign lands disseminated by the European media. According to the critic, such discourse was adopted in Ireland to discourage emigration. Continuing with this observation, in *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity* (2003), Mullin persuasively examines the nuanced ways in which Joyce weaves a white slavery subtext (among other "offensive" discourses) into his narrative in order to provoke censors. This article will describe the historical context of white slavery in Argentina at the time "Eveline" takes place in order to provide further

² New Historicism is an American school of criticism that emerged in the 1980s, especially through the work of Stephen Greenblatt. New Historicism's basic tenant is that, in order to interpret a literary text, it is essential to take into account the historical context in which the narrative was conceived. New Historicism privileges the political, cultural, social, and economic circumstances in which a work of literature was created, while it treats literary and non-literary texts in the same way. This type of analysis has allowed scholars to argue that Joyce incorporated a white slavery subtext into his story, which may not have been initially obvious in the study of the text itself.

evidence supporting Mullin's reading of the story, but, while Mullin focuses on the historical context in Europe, this work will explore the situation in South America. This analysis will then concentrate on the possible links between "Eveline" and the sex trafficking industry thriving in Buenos Aires through the Jewish criminal association *Zwi Migdal*. Frank's representation allows us to draw this connection because his behaviour with Eveline reflects the seduction and recruiting tactics employed by *Zwi Migdal* procurers, who travelled regularly to Europe in order to entice poor women with courtship and promises of marriage to later prostitute them in Buenos Aires. This work adds to Hugh Kenner's sceptical reading of the sailor and Mullin's analysis of Joyce and white slavery discourses by suggesting that, in light of Frank's courtship method and Joyce's hyper-analyzed ambiguities, Joyce could have modelled the mysterious sailor after the stereotypical (*Zwi Migdal*?) recruiters so prevalent in social purity propaganda.

In her 2006 book *Las Rutas de Eros*, the Uruguayan historian Ivette Trochón documents sex trafficking patterns during the early twentieth century, concluding that between 1860 and 1930 sex trafficking of women took place predominantly from Europe to the new continent (2006: 21). With painstaking detail, Trochón explains that, in this period, the trafficking of white women originated in countries such as Poland, Russia, France, and Italy and disembarked primarily in Argentina, Brazil, and, on a smaller scale, the United States. The main ports of departure were Marseille, Genova, Bourdeaux, Le Havre, Liverpool, Vigo, and Lisboa (2006: 23). This emergent wave of international sex trafficking depended on several factors: new technologies such as the steamship and the telegraph facilitated transatlantic movements; high indices of male immigrants in the new continent created a demand for "imported" women; the disruption of family dynamics generated by the movement to urban centres because of industrialization; the pervasive poverty, especially in eastern Europe, persuading members of the more exploited populations to search for fortunes abroad--all valid motives that, in turn, opened a space for women to attempt some independence in foreign lands (2006: 21).³ In this respect, the Argentinean government certainly encouraged European female immigration in the hopes of "improving" the local gene pool.⁴ Yet one should note that only educated (read 'middle-class') European women were openly welcomed; "the female immigrant from the

³ Ivette Trochón is paraphrased here (2006: 21).

⁴ On a related note, Jewish immigration was encouraged because the Argentinean government desperately needed to enlarge the agricultural workforce in order to compete in the international market. Jewish communities in the fertile Pampas region greatly contributed to increase the productivity and wealth of the Argentinean nation, which enjoyed unparalleled prosperity in the years before WWI through the end of WWII. The Jewish "gauchos," as they were called, were allowed to purchase land and settle in La Pampa, Santa Fe, and the countryside of Buenos Aires.

lower-classes of southern Europe,” on the other hand, was invoked to symbolize “a failure in the Argentine program of enhancing the race,” especially if she was (willingly or unwillingly) involved in prostitution (Masiello 1992: 6).

Inevitably, the promising economic prospects enticed both legitimate and criminal immigration. The hopes for material advancement of impoverished Europeans and the constant demand for female prostitutes in Argentina turned Buenos Aires into a desirable destination, thus many women saw the opportunity to emigrate. Historians like Donna J. Guy document that only a small percentage of these emigrant women were deceived and later enslaved in brothels; the majority of trafficked women knew that they would be working as prostitutes in Buenos Aires. In fact, the expression “going to Buenos Ayres,” Mullin notes, was turn-of-the-century slang for “taking up a life of prostitution, especially by way of a procurer’s offices” (2000: 189).

The city’s ill fame was not just an exaggerated myth. Trochón corroborates that Argentina was then the headquarters of the biggest global Jewish criminal organization fully dedicated to sex trafficking: the *Varsovia* [Warsaw], better known later as the *Zwi Migdal*.⁵ This association’s modus operandi consisted in sending procurers to Europe to lure potential victims (mainly Jewish girls, who were experiencing extreme discrimination and consequent pauperization) through promises of marriage and a better future in Argentina in order to traffic them and, once in Buenos Aires, sell them as prostitutes. Even though *Zwi Migdal* members constituted a clear minority of the Jewish community in Argentina—and Jewish society considered these traffickers and their prostitutes virtual pariahs—the organization became extremely successful. One compelling reason accounting for its power was that the *Zwi Migdal* was legally registered in Buenos Aires as a society of mutual help, the *Varsovia Jewish Mutual Help Society*, which allowed the traffickers to operate with relative ease. Trochón points out that there were other sex trafficking groups active in Argentina, such as the French *Le Milieu*, which was almost as lucrative as the *Zwi Migdal*, yet far more tolerated because of Argentina’s infatuation with French culture at the time. Another difference is that, unlike the *Zwi*

⁵ Ivette Trochón explains that Jewish sex trafficking into Argentina started around the 1870s and was loosely organized until 1906, when the first Jewish society of mutual help was legally registered and officially recognized under the name of *Varsovia* (2006: 334). Gerardo Bra notes that this was only a façade, as the association was fully dedicated to sex trafficking and all its members were criminals (1982: 29). This organization will be referred to by its most familiar name, *Zwi Migdal*, even though it was effectively called this for only one year before it was dismantled in 1930. In 1929, the Polish consul in Argentina, Ladislao Mazurkiewicz, complained to the Argentinean government that this criminal organization shared the name of Poland’s capital, therefore prompting the name change (Trochón 2006: 341).

Migdal, the French criminal organization was not legally registered. Overall, the Argentinean sex trafficking business was roughly split between these two criminal groups: the *Zwi Migdal* imported poor Jewish women mainly from Warsaw, and *Le Milieu* trafficked women mostly from Marseilles (Bristow 1983: 53).⁶ In any case, what is undeniable is the fact that, because of the great demand for white prostitutes from Europe, Argentina was a favoured destination for trafficked women who ended up working under highly structured sex trafficking organizations (Trochón 2006: 22).

Frank in Joyce's Nicely Polished Looking-Glass

“Eveline” was first published in *The Irish Homestead* on September 10, 1904. Almost exactly one month later, Joyce moved to Pola, Austria and later Trieste, Italy, where he began his permanent exile.⁷ As documented by Richard Ellmann and other biographers, Joyce’s emigration initiated his arduous struggle for the publication of his short story collection, *Dubliners*, which lasted ten years. During this time, Joyce revised the story making considerable alterations. In the final version published in 1914, for example, Joyce suggestively omitted Eveline’s wondering whether her decision to go with Frank to Buenos Aires would be “honourable” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 216).⁸ Eveline’s closing rejection of the sailor, nonetheless, always stayed the same. Many have argued that her panic attack at the docks offers the ultimate proof of Eveline’s (ergo Dubliners’) paralysis. Several critics concur that Eveline cannot help but remain comfortably numb in her familiar routine, thus failing to evolve.⁹

⁶ There was also a smaller French association trafficking women from Paris, a small group of Italian procurers, and local prostitution, but those groups were not as strong and organized as the *Zwi Migdal* and *Le Milieu*.

⁷ John McCourt observes that Trieste was the “world’s seventh busiest port, the second in the Mediterranean after Marseilles” (2000: 29). In such a context, one can speculate that stories of white slave traffic in Buenos Aires would have been heard by Joyce, especially since much of the policing against white slavery occurred at the ports.

⁸ The original version of “Eveline” published in *The Irish Homestead* reads: “She had consented to go away—to leave her home. Was it wise—was it honourable?” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 216). For the final version, Joyce changed the punctuation and deleted the second part of the question: “She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise?” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 28).

⁹ Critics frequently point to “Eveline” as the story that most evidently shows paralysis. As Trevor L. Williams asserts, “[i]n story after story one petite-bourgeois character after another is brought to the mirror to apprehend his or her situation, but (and Eveline is the *prime example*) they see no way to act, no way to transcend the limits of their present consciousness or class position” [my emphasis] (1997: 54). Peter De Voogd summarizes the traditional critical reception of “Eveline” in his essay “Imaging Eveline, Visualized Focalizations in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*,” explaining that this story has generally been interpreted as “the most obvious story in *Dubliners* to express the sterile paralysis that Joyce thought of as typical of Dublin life” (2000: 48).

Yet such received wisdom changed when Hugh Kenner began to suspect Frank's intentions in his book *The Pound Era* (1971). He later suggested that Frank was a liar by analyzing a couple of commas in his "Molly's Masterstroke" (1972) and by highlighting Joyce's use of "pastiche and parody" in his *Joyce's Voices* (1978) (1978: 81). Kenner challenged traditional readings of "Eveline" that present this (anti)heroine as paralyzed in the end, unable to embrace a promising future with Frank in Buenos Aires (1971: 38). Instead, Kenner questions the sailor's frankness (now a seducer?). Other scholars have offered provocative responses to Kenner's reading. The most extreme position is best exemplified by Sidney Freshbach, who, comparing Kenner's interpretation of Frank to house of cards, confesses his desire to "collapse [Kenner's] argument [suggesting that] Frank changes from being a character in a short story by Joyce to an invention of [Kenner's] own" (1983: 223). Katherine Mullin, on the other hand, persuasively argues that Frank could actually be a procurer by analyzing the ideological atmosphere of Victorian England (2003: 69). Other critics, such as Garry Leonard and Suzette Henke, "see the menacing and abusive father as a potentially greater threat to Eveline's safety and welfare than the risk of a possible seduction and abandonment by a lying sailor" (Norris 2003: 59). Margot Norris, for her part, focuses on Joyce's narrative omissions, while she opens the possibility of yet another interpretation of Eveline's "decision by indecision" at the end of the story (2003: 57). Norris explains that "the point of the story may be less the adjudication of the correct choice than to have the reader experience the [. . .] desperate uncertainty of such a life-altering choice," but she shares Kenner's apprehensive view of Frank (2003: 59). As for the most recent scholarship, Sean Latham's Longman edition of *Dubliners* specifically addresses the possibility of Frank being "a 'white slaver' who intends to lure Eveline into a life of prostitution" (2011: 264).

We should pause for a moment on Katherine Mullin's analysis because she develops the existing scholarship by proving through carefully documented archival evidence that, during the time Joyce was writing and revising "Eveline" for publication, the social purity movement in England and Ireland had ignited a moral pandemonium around stories of unscrupulous pimps suspiciously akin to Frank and sexual enslavement of innocent white girls uncannily similar to Eveline. William T. Stead's 1885 sensationalist article about white slavery, "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,"

epitomizes such discourses.¹⁰ Joyce actually mentions Stead in passing in Part V of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), and therefore we know that Joyce was aware of the journalist's existence.¹¹ We also know that Joyce was conscious of the flourishing white-slave traffic from Europe to Buenos Aires, not only from Stead's article and the international scandal it generated but from a copy he possessed and annotated of *The White Slave Market* (1912). Mullin notes that "the extent to which Frank's courtship uncannily suggests that of a villain in white slave tracts is probably most strikingly demonstrated" in the following excerpt from that book:

Some pimps take months and months to gain proper control over their victims. . . . For a long time, one fiend incarnate contented himself with merely "walking out" with the girl, taking her to cheap picture shows, buying her little presents, meeting her as she came home from work and doing everything that would take her mind off his villainy. Once he had taught her to trust him, to love him, he ruined her and ruthlessly "dumped" her into the inferno at Buenos Ayres. (quoted in Mullin 2003: 70)

Frank does fit the pattern: we know little about when the affair started, but Eveline remembers

well [. . .] the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. [. . .] Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her at the stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see the *Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. [. . .] People knew that they were courting and when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor she always felt pleasantly confused. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29)

¹⁰ In 1885, the journalist and editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, William T. Stead, devised a plan to prove that sexual slavery existed in England. With only five pounds, Stead purchased a young girl and then wrote an article he called "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon." As Stead had calculated, this piece of news spawned a literal scandal that quickly spread beyond England. Judith Walkowitz notes that "[t]elegraphic services rapidly transformed the 'Maiden Tribute' into an international event" (1992: 82). Quoting Stead, Walkowitz observes that "Stead proudly boasted that his 'revelations' were printed in every capital of the Continent as well as by the 'purest journals in the great American republic.' Unauthorized reprints were said to have surpassed the one and half million mark" (1992: 82).

¹¹ In Part V, Joyce refers to Stead: "MacCann began to speak with fluent energy of the Czar's rescript of Stead, of general disarmament [. . .]" (Joyce, *Portrait*, 2006: 176).

When describing Frank's courtship, Joyce emphasizes the uncertainty of Eveline's predicament pairing words such as "pleasantly confused" to refer to her state of mind (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29). But when thinking about her possible emigration with the sailor, Eveline at times is less ambivalent as she wonders if that was "wise" and anticipates being judged "a fool," a puzzling reaction that could imply her awareness about the potentially negative consequences of her decision and explain her subsequent panic attack at the docks (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 28). As for Eveline's suitor, while Joyce gives us more ellipsis than concrete data, "the sailor who calls himself Frank" makes at least three suspicious claims (Kenner 1972: 20): he tells the girl stories about the "terrible Patagonians"; he says that he has a "home" waiting for her; and, of all places in the world, he wants to take her to "Buenos Ayres" (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29-30). As Kenner contends, "[c]aught up as we are in the pathos of [Eveline's] final refusal, we may not reflect on the extreme improbability of these postulates, that a Dublin sailor-boy has grown affluent in South America, and bought a house and sailed back to Ireland to find him a bride to fill it" (1972: 20-21).

Much has been written about Frank's dubious stories about the "terrible Patagonians" (long extinct by the time of Frank's travels and not nearly as "terrible" as he describes them) or his alleged "home" in Argentina (extremely difficult to afford in turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires with only a sailor's salary).¹² Let us remember that Frank claims to have "started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allen line"—a footnote in Norris's Norton edition of *Dubliners* defines this position as that of an "inexperienced worker hired to help the crew on a ship with menial tasks and errands" (2006: 29-30). According to David Rock, "in 1914 it was estimated that four-fifths of [immigrant Buenos Aires] lived in one-room households" in what used to be called "conventillos": crowded, unsanitary urban dwellings with shared bathrooms and limited access to drinking water (1985: 175). These "conventillos" were typically the kind of lodging a working-class immigrant would have been able to afford because of the high real estate prices of Buenos Aires, probably not the type of "home" Eveline would look forward to inhabiting.

In contrast with the situation of most uneducated immigrants, sex traffickers enjoyed an enviable economic position in Argentina that would have allowed them to purchase real estate with ease, since they earned considerable amounts of money from the prostituted women and were therefore constantly searching for new recruits. French prostitution, for

¹² These aborigines constituted small clans of nomad hunters. In Victorian times, their attributes were highly exaggerated as they were said to be extremely tall and fierce, a story that Frank could have used to dazzle Eveline. The Patagonians were wiped out by 1879, when General Julio A. Roca finished his "conquest of the desert" military campaign and practically exterminated them. See Barberán Reinares's "Like a 'Helpless Animal' (D 41)? Like a Cautious Woman: Joyce's 'Eveline,' Immigration, and the *Zwi Migdal* in Argentina in the Early 1900s."

instance, was directly linked to Argentina's oligarchy, as wealthier men preferred (and paid substantially more for) a French prostitute or "cocotte," which accounts for the clear favour that *Le Milieu* members enjoyed. As for Jewish traffickers, even though they were stigmatized, the affluence they acquired was certainly conspicuous: the headquarters of the *Zwi Migdal* society of mutual help in Buenos Aires was a luxurious mansion in Calle Córdoba 3280. It contained a synagogue, an ample party hall, a bar, a room to perform wakes, another room for business meetings, and a garden with tall palm trees. Trochón describes marble and bronze plaques in some of its rooms commemorating the memory of presidents, vice-presidents, and secretaries of the association (2006: 92). These facilities, among others the *Zwi Migdal* possessed, allowed Jewish traffickers and prostitutes to continue practicing their faith and their rituals, as the respectable Jewish community expelled them from their temples and cemeteries. In *Bodies and Souls: The Tragic Plight of Three Jewish Women Forced into Prostitution in the Americas*, Isabel Vincent notes that, during its heyday, *Zwi Migdal* members and their recruited prostitutes were "completely banned by the respectable Jewish community" and "ostracized [as] the unclean ones," but that did not prevent their ultra lucrative business from prospering until its dismantling in 1930 (Vincent 2005: 12; Bristow 1983: 5). Unlike sailors, sex traffickers in Argentina were undoubtedly wealthy.

According to Mullin, "Frank closely matches the stereotype of the itinerant international procurer, 'bully' or 'cadet', charming the gullible with tales and rash promises" (2003: 69). The critic notes that "[p]rocurers in social purity propaganda were almost always 'of foreign parentage, probably a Jew, a Frenchman, an Italian, or perhaps a Greek'" (2003: 69). In her analysis, Mullin highlights Frank's foreignness without specifying any particular nationality, but a look at the most common methods of recruitment can shed more light on the sailor. French recruiters, for example, offered the women jobs as prostitutes and did not resort to courtship or marriage (Carretero 1995: 114). *Zwi Migdal* procurers, on the other hand, often seduced the women and promised them marriage in order to traffic them from Europe to Argentina (114).¹³ Such a strategy would lead us to connect Frank with Jewish recruiters: of those Jewish girls who were deceived, a majority reported that it was through tactics of courtship similar to the ones Frank seems to be employing with Eveline.¹⁴ While, arguably, the story paints Frank with an air of foreignness (we know he has a darker complexion, for example), nowhere do we get hints of a foreign accent (French, Italian, or Greek, if we go along with the

¹³ Here Andrés Carretero is paraphrased (1995: 114). Also, see Gerardo Bra (1982: 116-117).

¹⁴ Raquel Liberman, the woman who denounced the *Zwi Migdal* in 1929 and eventually caused its downfall, was seduced through methods strikingly similar to those Frank seems to employ with Eveline (Bra 1982: 116-117).

stereotypical procurer of social purity propaganda). Could we assume that Frank may have been, like Leopold Bloom, and Irish Jew? Joyce's destination choice (the infamous turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires) and his own interest in Jewish themes (as evidenced in *Ulysses*) invite speculation.

Several critics, Kenner among them, have pointed out that *Dubliners* offers an embryonic version of Joyce's oeuvre. In it, the author began the experiments both with form and content that would recur in his later masterpieces. In fact, Joyce initially conceived the germ of the story that flourished into *Ulysses* as one for the *Dubliners* compilation. It does seem pertinent, then, to read his collection of short stories in light of *Ulysses*, where the author explicitly references white slavery and the atmosphere of moral reform surrounding it. In "Circe," for example, the discourses of white slavery, prostitution, and Jewishness become intertwined. During Bloom's nightmarish trial, the City Recorder vows "to put an end to this white slave traffic and rid Dublin of this odious pest. Scandalous!" (Joyce 1986: 384). As for the ideological links between "vice" and Jewishness, Celia Marshik observes that, "Zoe [the prostitute Bloom encounters outside Bella Cohen's brothel,] [l]ike Bloom, [. . .] has a complicated ethnic and national identity: when Bloom asks her if she is Irish, Zoe responds that she is English but then murmurs Hebrew under her breath" (2008: 154). Marshik further points out that Bella Cohen "again links the (racially) Jewish Bloom with fallen women" (2008: 154). The critic remarks that "Cohen's name implies that she is, or has married someone, of Jewish descent, and Bloom refers to 'our mutual faith' in an attempt to placate her" (2008: 154). But, to complicate Joyce's ambiguous treatment of the subject, later in the trial Bloom himself becomes the target of anti-Semitic racist accusations, as Alexander J Dowie summons his "Fellowchristians and antiBloomites" to proclaim the Jewish ad salesman "a disgrace to christian men," a Caliban "bronzed with infamy" (1986: 401). In such a context, the adjective "bronzed" suggests Jewishness and foreignness. Noticeably, in *Dubliners* Joyce describes Frank's complexion with the same word: Eveline remembers how "[h]e was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze" (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29). We don't know much about Frank or Bloom's physical appearance (in Bloom's case, it differs according to the speaker, while we only know Frank through Eveline's eyes), yet the chosen term and its associations with Jewishness in *Ulysses* are suggestive.

While it is not intended to imply that Joyce was suspicious of Jews in Dublin (Joyce's representation of Leopold Bloom becomes a prime example of his sympathetic treatment of Jewish people), in "Eveline," the author could have incorporated the orientalized discourse of the time in order to play with the pervasive fears about Jewish men preying on

Christian virgins.¹⁵ If Joyce had in mind such a stereotyped individual, on the surface, Frank's portrayal would appear to contradict the author's sympathetic image of Leopold Bloom (a character who, despite his ambiguities, resists stereotypes and shows signs of generosity and compassion throughout *Ulysses*). Yet, as mentioned above, Joyce's incorporation of the white slavery subtext in a clichéd, superficial manner may have little to do with perpetuating existing stereotypes and more with highlighting Frank's unreliability by playing with the ubiquitous fear of Jewish procurers seducing Christian virgins, thus keeping the girl seemingly paralyzed within the narrative. Indeed, readers get the impression that, by staying in Ireland, Eveline will probably become as stagnant as the other characters in the collection, as the girl's life seems to follow her mother's (like Joyce's own mother's) overworked future.

Akin to the situation of pauperized Jewish populations in Eastern Europe, Ireland's colonial status contributed to the pervasive poverty and lack of opportunities experienced by its citizens, which in turn propelled continuous migration into the Americas after the 1845 potato famine. Eveline's social class plays a crucial part in her contemplating the prospect of emigration with Frank. Readers never perceive Eveline having feelings of love towards Frank; at the most, she hints at some anticipation about abandoning a life of poverty and oppression in Dublin. But if Frank has "immoral" intentions, what awaits Eveline in a city full of immigrants speaking languages she does not know, with the ghost of prostitution lurking in the shadows, does not look attractive.¹⁶ Donna J. Guy explains that "[b]y the 1860s the Continental press reported frightening stories of women lured away by strangers with false promises of marriage or work, only to be trapped in some sordid house of ill repute," yet the author suggests that such reports "were cautionary tales for independent European females" (1991: 6). Guy observes that white trafficking stories achieved a mythological proportion, when, in fact, "verifiable cases of white slavery were infrequent [and] highly exaggerated," as most of the women knew they would be working in prostitution (1991: 6). When deceit did occur, however, it involved "a system of forced recruitment by lovers, fiancées, husbands and professional procurers" (1991: 6).

Leaving myths aside, Trochón, Bra, and Carretero confirm that there were powerful global sex trafficking associations operating in Argentina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which commanded a vastly profitable business. The most well-known and best-organized association, the *Žwi Migdal*, had international ramifications (with connections in places as diverse as Rio de Janeiro, New York, Bombay, Johannesburg), but found

¹⁵ See Edward Bristow's *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery 1870-1930*.

¹⁶ The overwhelming majority of immigrants came from Spain and Italy.

a central outpost in Buenos Aires, where the government condoned the presence of their 2,000 brothels and their prostitutes (Trochón 2006: 96; Bra 1982: 70, 114). *Zwi Migdal* members' treatment of their recruited women illustrates cases of literal slavery, as the prostitutes were sold from one owner to another and often endured brutal threats, punishments, and ongoing exploitation (Bra 1982: 37; Carretero 1995: 120). *Zwi Migdal* today is considered a disgrace by the Jewish society in Argentina. It is a name no one wants to remember because it brings about a collective feeling of anxiety since the activities of a minority group of Jewish criminals were used as an ideological weapon to disseminate anti-Semitic propaganda. As Bristow notes, “[i]n Buenos Aires[,] every Russian or Polish Jew was believed to be a trafficker, no matter how respectable he might be” (1983: 215).¹⁷

Let us finally consider that Joyce wrote “Eveline” at the height of social purity campaigns in Dublin. At the time, its port visibly displayed anti-white slavery propaganda which Eveline could have seen at the North Wall while giving Frank “no sign of love or farewell or recognition” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 32). Looking at “Eveline” in a broader historical context necessarily changes conventional readings of Joyce’s story. Contrary to the way most critics have traditionally interpreted it, as a story demonstrating the most conspicuous case of paralysis in *Dubliners*, “Eveline” may have a less depressing ending if the girl could be saving herself from a future of sexual exploitation in a foreign land. It is not intended to suggest, however, that “Eveline” defies the notion of a paralyzed Ireland (a conspicuous trope throughout this short story), but that this particular character should not be assumed to embody that “paralysis” all by herself. Her situation remains, no doubt about it, hopeless. Eveline lacks opportunities and her position is clearly deplorable. But after considering the very real risks involved in this adventure with a mysterious sailor (who, regardless of the supposed love he has professed, boards the ship and leaves her), staying in Ireland may not have turned out to be “a wholly undesirable life” after all (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 29). Once we add the ideological atmosphere and

¹⁷ Of course, not every Jewish immigrant in Argentina was a trafficker, although that was the prevailing ideological assumption, which tended to stigmatize the Jewish community (traditionally discriminated against) even more. Interestingly, Jorge Luis Borges’s ancestors have Jewish connections. His grandmother’s sister, the British Caroline Haslam, married in England a Jewish man from Livorno, Girogio Soares (Hadis 2006: 298). Because of Soares’s Jewish connections in Argentina, the couple traveled and settled there in order to start a legitimate business. That was actually the reason why Borges’s future grandmother, Frances Haslam (featured in Borges’s story “Historia del Guerrero y de la Cautiva”), came to Argentina around 1870, at the height of Jewish immigration into the country. Once in the new country, Frances Haslam met the Argentinean Colonel Francisco Borges Lafinur and married him (2006: 298). Clearly, there were separate Jewish communities in Argentina, and the *Zwi Migdal* does not represent the totality.

the historical context in which the story was conceived, the journey begins to look suspicious.

In “Eveline,” Joyce incorporates a subtext of sexual slavery and plays with the prevalent fears disseminated by social purity propaganda in an (arguably) obvious way. He sprinkles such stereotypical discourse throughout the pseudo-romance between the “innocent” girl and the “charming” sailor. But these characters’ representations must have resonated with audiences who soon demanded an end to such uncomfortable depictions of Irish virtue. When reading the story through the lens of Frank’s unreliability, this character becomes one more of the many betrayers that abound in *Dubliners*, “all palaver” with no substance (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 154).¹⁸ From this perspective, it may be Frank who best embodies Ireland’s maladies, rather than the maybe-not-so-passive Eveline herself.

Fredric Jameson reminds us in “Magical Narratives” that the text provides “clues [. . .] which lead us back to the concrete historical situation of the individual text itself, and allow us to read its structure as ideology, as a socially symbolic act, as a prototypical response to a historical dilemma” (1975: 157). Admittedly, Joyce’s story leaves ample room for ambiguity, and thus we can understand why Sidney Freshbach has deemed Kenner’s “interpretation of Frank” as “clearly one of the weakest moments in Joyce criticism” because “there are simply not enough clues in the text to justify [Kenner’s] judgments about Frank” (1983: 226). And Freshbach is right, for Joyce’s short story does not offer enough clues in the text itself. Instead, it relies on a net of intertextual and cultural associations existing beyond the narrative. To fully convey Eveline’s predicament, Joyce may have pointed readers *outside* the text. Knowing that white slavery was “one of the leading social issues of the age,” information that Joyce withholds from the narrative, but that we can assume Eveline (and Joyce’s original readers) must have been aware of, Eveline’s choice becomes far more nuanced (Bristow 1983: 157). With his acknowledged scrupulous meanness, Joyce forces readers to debate with her, to decide with her. In the end, choosing between misery in her native country and potential enslavement in a foreign land, Eveline opts for the first (and sure) option. Yet let us not judge her too hastily because, although the story closes with Eveline visibly “passive” at the port, we know that the mere name of Buenos Aires would have conjured up enough ideological demons to make her feel that emigrating with the sailor, perhaps after all, is not such a good idea.

¹⁸ Betrayal is a sustained trope throughout *Dubliners*. The word “palaver” is uttered by Lily, the caretaker’s daughter in Joyce’s “The Dead.” A footnote in Margot Norris’s edition of *Dubliners* defines this term as “flattering but idle talk” (Joyce, *Dubliners*, 2006: 154).

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