T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

POSSIBILITIES OF FEMALE LIBERATION AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

THESIS

Sedef GUZELYURT

English Language and Literature
Department of English Language and Literature

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Gamze SABANCI UZUN

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07/08/2018

T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ
DOKTORA TEZ ONAY BELGESİ

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Prof. Dr. Özer KANBUROĞLU

Enstitü Müdür Vekili

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that all information in this thesis document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results, which are not original to this thesis.

Sedef GUZELYURT

FOREWORD

This study would be impossible to achieve without having supportive people around me, I want to thank all my beloved ones who had even a word with me related to my study, I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work during this study, this long journey comes to an end successfully thanks to our collective effort.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reads the problems of women and their living conditions in the light of the feminist theory. Female entrapment in some premises such as motherhood marriage and social environment is what is questioned in this work. My intention in this study is to discuss some possible ways of liberation for the women to escape the patriarchal conventions by using Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*, 'Making a Change' and 'An Unnatural Mother', Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, 'The Storm', 'Her Letters' and 'A Respectable Woman' and Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*. The first chapter will deal with Charlotte Perkins Gilman's presentation of women entrapped in motherhood. Gilman is of the opinion that motherhood is natural; however, she claims that it should be professionalized. The second chapter will handle with Kate Chopin's works stated above in terms of the sexual liberation for women who are made to live in their asexual marriages. How adultery is found natural and humane in the confined marriages of the time is my main focus in this chapter. I will then analyze Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* in which Lily is entrapped in her single life and in the upper-class society which expects her to marry in order to secure her life. By analyzing these three major 20th century writers, I conclude that Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton complement each other and that is why analyzing them altogether enables us to see the big picture for the entrapment and the liberation of women.

Keywords: *Entrapment, Motherhood, Sexuality, Single life, Liberation*

YİRMİNCİ YÜZYIL BAŞINDA KADIN ÖZGÜRLÜĞÜNÜN OLASI YOLLARI

ÖZET

Bu tez, yüzyıllardır süregelen kadın problemlerini ve yaşam koşullarını feminist teori ışığında tekrar okumaktadır. Annelik, evlilik ve sosyal çevre gibi mecralardaki hapsolmuşluk bu tezde tartışılan ana başlıklardır. Bu tezin amacı Charlotte Perkins Gilman 'ın *Herland,* 'Making a Change' ve ' An Unnatural Mother', Kate Chopin'in *The Awakening*, 'The Storm', 'Her Letters' ve ' An Unnatural Mother' , Edith Wharton'ın *The House of Mirth* eserlerinde kadınların erkek egemen toplum öğretilerinden kaçabilmek için ürettikleri çeşitli özgürleşme yollarını incelemek, eserlerdeki muhtemel kaçışların kadını ne kadar özgürleştirdiğini tartışmaktır.

Birinci bölüm Charlotte Perkins Gilman'ın yukarıda bahsi geçen eserleri analiz ederek, yazarın bireysel ve sosyal annelik anlayışını inceleyerek, Gilman'ın anneliğin doğal olduğunu ve anneliğin profesyonelleştirilmesi gerektiğini savunduğunu ortaya çıkaracaktır. İkinci bölüm Kate Chopin'in eserlerinde tutkusuz evliliklerinde yaşamak zorunda bırakılmış kadınların cinsel özgürleşmesini ele alacak ve kadın evliliklerinde hapsolmuşluğunun bir şeklinin de bu olduğunu ileri sürecektir. Evlilik içerisinde zinanın doğal ve insani bulunduğunu da öne sürecektir. En son bölümde de Edith Wharton'ın *The House of Mirth* eserinde, kendi hayatını güvene alabilmek için evlenmesi beklenen Lily'nin bekâr hayatında ve yaşamak zorunda olduğu burjuva toplumunda hapsolmuşluğu işlenecektir. Bu çalışmanın sonuç bölümü ise, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Kate Chopin ve Edith Wharton birbirini tamamlar nitelikte olduklarını gösterip bu sebepten bu yazarları birarada analiz etmek kadınların hapsolmuşluğunu ve özgürleşme yollarını daha geniş görmemizi sağladığını ortaya koyacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Hapsolmuşluk, Annelik, Cinsellik, Bekar hayatı, Özgürlük*

1. INTRODUCTION

> "Woman is lost. Where are the women? Today's women are not women"; we have seen what these mysterious slogans mean. In the eyes of men--- and for the legion of women who see through men's eyes--- it is not enough to have woman's body or to take on the female function as lover and mother to be a "real woman"; it is possible for the subject to claim autonomy through sexuality and maternity; the "real woman" is one who accepts herself as Other. (De Beauvoir 1949, p.323)

The problematic behind the position of women has been discussed for centuries, with debates raging in the 19th century surrounding "the woman question" and the role and rights of women in society. However, in her seminal book, *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone De Beauvoir fundamentally changed the terms of the gender debate, by arguing that what had been talked of as the problem of women had in fact always been a male problem, as in the misogynist discourse of patriarchal society, females have always been positioned and addressed as Other. Rather than operating on an equal plane with men, power structures and a male-based societal discourse conspire to make women see everything in their life, even their offspring, from the viewpoint of a man. In such a context, De Beauvoir question who a "real woman" is, and suggests that it may conflict with what society claims a "real woman" to be. What she concludes is that the "real woman" of the time is the one who accepts the precepts of a patriarchal society; she claims that even on those terms, a "real woman" ought to be able to claim subjectivity and an autonomous position for herself via both sexuality and motherhood; yet in fact, she argues, according to society the only "real woman" is the one who accepts to be an Other, ceding subjectivity to men and reconciling herself to become always an object.

On this basis, De Beauvoir highlights the overwhelming scope of discrimination against the women and paves the way for women to reject patriarchal authority and attempt to claim a subjectivity and identity without Othering oneself. As things stand, De Beauvoir's analysis suggests that women are largely lost in the

history, eyes and in the lives of men; that they are all made locked in the cage of patriarchy and that they are always positioned as the Other. Having been recognized and seen by society only as mothers and wives, women are now forced to question what a "real woman" is. De Beauvoir begins with biological sex:

> But first, what is a woman?… "She is a womb," some say. Yet speaking of certain women, the experts proclaim, "They are not women," even though they have a uterus like the others. Everyone agrees there are females in the human species; today, as in the past, they make up about half of humanity; and yet we are told that "femininity is in jeopardy"; we are urged, "Be women, stay women, become women." So not every female human being is necessarily a woman; she must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity. (p.23)

Having to question what a "real woman" shows both how revolutionary and defamiliarizing De Beauvoir's approach to femaleness, womanhood and femininity is. In De Beauvoir's model, society requires both the Otherness of women and their femininity, which she argues is demonstrated by being a lover, wife or mother. As De Beauvoir suggests, a woman without femininity has no place and no definition.

Being a second-wave feminist, De Beauvoir interrogates what it is to be a woman, and is reproachful that men do not need to ask such questions when women are obliged to ask. The extent of female liberation is defined and circumscribed by men in that male-oriented world; this is the mechanism that governs and operates their own decisions and dictates upon female independence, which is identified and thus regulated according to societies' expectations.

Second-wave feminism focuses mostly on gender equality and ending sexual discrimination. The pivotal aspect of this wave is that it encourages women to understand their personal lives as conditioned by the existing power structures and the legacy of the sharply defined gender roles of the nineteenth century. Though they attained the right to vote in the first-wave and rallied on the equality of the sexes as well as owning their own property, yet in that legacy women were treated as if they had no place anywhere in society apart from their homes, as if they were not the constitutive of the society; in fact, at the beginning of the twentieth century "American law accepted the principle that a

wife had no legal identity apart from her husband. She could not be sued, nor could she bring a legal suit; she could not make a contract, nor could she own property." (Pre-Civil War Reform Women's Rights 2016) Furthermore, they were exposed to a wide–ranging social discrimination which marked them as secondary citizens. Their legal standing was governed by their husbands and they had very few rights; reproductive rights in particular and issues like contraception and abortion were unmentionable. A woman had no right to own property in her own name or to pursue a career of her choice; the expected career for a woman was to be a good daughter, mother and wife. Thus, in addition to questioning the meaning of being a female, Simone De Beauvoir attempts to deal with this historical legacy of gender inequality.

De Beauvoir argues that it is necessary to rethink the whole of what has been understood as "the woman problem" from the opposite perspective. She writes "the whole of feminine history has been man-made. Just as in America there is no Negro problem, but rather a white problem; just as anti-Semitism is not a Jewish problem, it is our problem; so the woman problem has always been a man problem" (p.181). De Beauvoir gives the example of the other oppressed communities in society in order to clarify the Otherness of women in patriarchal society. Women cannot be the problem in society as they have no such choice -- the entire world around them is made exclusively by men and they are made to live under the conditions determined by a male-centric society. She takes care to highlight one significant difference, however, between women's position and that of other oppressed communities: that of number. "But women are not a minority like American blacks," she writes, "or like Jews: there are as many women as men on the earth." (p.27). Thus De Beauvoir details the situation of women with that of historically oppressed minority groups in order to draw a parallel of entrapment and subjugation, and she attacks the male-oriented society which sees women as less, and claims that they are equal to men.

Women are doomed to be secondary to men, always already ensnared and seen by all members of society as the second sex, De Beauvoir argues. They are doomed because they are made to believe that this is their destiny. While men are always made to believe that they are the Subject of their own destiny, women are always obliged to question what it means to be a woman. Thus,

quoting and commenting on Benda's *Le rapport d'Uriel*, she unwraps the problematic of female subjectivity within a patriarchal society.

> "A man's body has meaning by itself, disregarding the body of the woman, whereas the woman's body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male. Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man." And she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called "the sex," meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other (p.26).

Her fundamental thesis is that men oppress women by bestowing upon them the characteristics on each and every level and defining them as the Other, of course, in relation to men. In light of this argument, we can say that while women are objectified and defined as the Other, men are seen and see themselves as vital and necessary. Thus defining the woman as fundamentally Other, man is effectively denying her humanity. For De Beauvoir, the woman performs two major functions: wife and mother. However, De Beauvoir states that women's situation is not the result of her character; rather her character is the outcome of her situation. If she is mediocre, complacent, unsuccessful, and passive, all of these features of her are the consequences of her subordination, not the cause.

In another seminal text of second-wave feminism, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan built on de Beauvoir's arguments in order to assert that women have been consistently disenfranchised in all parts of life.

> Only men had the freedom and the education necessary to realize their full abilities, to pioneer and create and discover, and map new trails for future generations. Only men had the freedom to shape the major decisions of society. Only men had the freedom to love, and enjoy love, and decide for themselves in the eyes of their God the problems of right and wrong. Did women want these freedoms because they wanted to be men? Or did they want them because they also were human? (1963, p.140)

Thus Friedan attacks the male-dominated society which excludes women from all parts of social life. Arguing from a feminist perspective, of course, Friedan claims that women do not need to be the Other, they do not need to imitate men but they ought to be liberated sufficiently to see and realize their capabilities on the basis of being human beings, they are not allowed to define themselves.

Concordantly, De Beauvoir claims that "woman cannot be defined objectively through this world, and her mystery conceals nothing but emptiness" (1949, p. 320). While men are seen as whole and as gifted with everything by way of "freedom" and "education", women within patriarchal societies are viewed as outsiders, and often associated with frippery and futility. As both De Beauvoir and Friedan show, the trap is total: women are not only seen as the Other in all dimensions of society compared to men, they are subordinated in terms of education as well, which because the playing field is not level to start with, serves to further disempower women.

In other words, women's education is limited, thus the knowledge that is given to them is limited, and thus their view on marriage and motherhood is limited. That is why historically they have been subordinated by patriarchy, because they have been structurally prevented from accessing the knowledge and education that would allow them to contest their position. Writing in the mid-eighteenth century, Rousseau typifies a patriarchal view of women's education of the time.

> "The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to make life sweet and agreeable to them, these are the duties of women at all times, and what should be taught them from infancy" (Rousseau 1906, p.263).

This is the prescription that is applied to all the women in the 19th century. Women are always taught to soothe men's anxieties, they are made to act like counselors, and their only education is in how to be pleasing for a man. Mary Wollstonecraft, the leading name of the first wave movement, elaborated on the education of women and is critical of Rousseau in this respect.

> But I still insist, that not only the virtue, but the *knowledge* of the two sexes should be the same in nature, if not in degree, and that women, considered not only as moral, but rational creatures, ought to endeavor to acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the *same* means as men, instead of being educated like a fanciful kind of *half* being, one of Rousseau's wild chimeras. (Wollstonecraft 1792 p.52)

Wollstonecraft criticizes the way Rousseau sees female education and she is critical of women who are forced to stay indoors and remain ignorant of everything around them. She encourages women to be educated with boys and

to have professions. She asserted that they should be allowed to enter some professions that they train for. By doing so, they will have the reason, virtue, and modesty and will free them from their physical and mental shackles. Writing back to this misogynistic structure of education in her book *Sexual Politics* (1970), Kate Millett, detailed the operations of previous and subsisting educational inequality:

> Traditionally patriarchy permitted occasional minimal literacy to women while higher education was closed to them. While modern patriarchies have, fairly recently, opened all educational levels to women, the kind and quality of education is not the same for each sex. This difference is of course apparent in early socialization, but persists in and enters higher education as well. (p.42)

By unpacking how even the education system is gendered, she simultaneously reveals the anxieties of male-dominated society that would quickly surface if women were equally educated, stating that while some support moves to open up the field, "there are an equal number who argue against the education of women, predicting its malevolent influence should the newly educated go beyond the agreed-upon end of subordination" (Millett 1970, p.75). In contrast to what Rousseau thinks, Millett confirms that education will enable women to understand that they are subordinated, and therefore they can learn the tools to rid themselves of patriarchal oppression, as their education will challenge patriarchy, they are excluded from it. If women continue to be denied equal access even in the world of education, they have limited possibilities of experience; what follows is that they can only experience their existence within marriage and motherhood. Thus marriage is seen like a business deal; a woman's greatest achievement in life is regarded as marrying a suitable husband and giving birth to his children. As De Beauvoir states, the women are limited to domestic work and the care for the children.

> In any case, to give birth and to breast-feed are not *activities* but natural functions; they do not involve a project, which is why the woman finds no motive there to claim a higher meaning for her existence; she passively submits to her biological destiny. Because housework alone is compatible with the duties of motherhood, she is condemned to domestic labor, which locks her into repetition and immanence; day after day it repeats itself in identical form from century to century; it produces nothing new (1949, p.98).

Women, feminism demonstrates, need more than these natural functions; however, they are doomed to domestic labor, which is found to be compatible with the motherhood. However, domestic labor is both repetitive and ultimately unproductive: one is left with nothing to show as all of their labors at home are by nature not creative. What De Beauvoir and Friedan demonstrate is little less than the multiple imprisonment of women. By considering their place at home, women are jailed up both in their motherhood, and its seeming naturalness, and the domesticity which attends it, and further, women are unable on to claim that they need something new because they cannot, owing to the fact that they are lacking in education.

Not finding domesticity suitable for women, De Beauvoir attacks it saying that "[a] woman is shut up in a kitchen or a boudoir, and one is surprised her horizon is limited; her wings are cut, and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly. Let a future be open to her and she will no longer be obliged to settle in the present" (p.731). Their potential to experience the world as men do is fundamentally hindered because they are locked in their kitchens and homes. They are not allowed to experience the world as men do, they are not allowed access to enough education to know the outside world, because of the fact that they are suspended in their marriages as well. In addition to having limited experience in education and being seen as the Other, the women are not seen as individual subjects in their marriages either. This is neatly elucidated by De Beauvoir, who notes that "when she is a young girl, the father has total power over her; on her marriage he transmits it entirely to her spouse" (1949, p.118). As their identity as individuals is denied, women are exchanged as assets, with little compensation in return. De Beauvoir elaborates on this ancient and subsisting view of the marriage contact:

> In marrying, the woman receives a piece of the world as property; legal guaranties protect her from man's caprices; but she becomes his vassal. He is economically the head of the community, and he thus embodies it in society's eyes. She takes his name; she joins his religion, integrates into his class, his world; she belongs to his family, she becomes his other "half." She follows him where his work calls him: where he works essentially determines where they live; she breaks with her past more or less brutally, she is annexed to her husband's universe; she gives him her person: she owes him her virginity and strict fidelity. She loses part of the legal rights of the

> unmarried woman. Roman law placed the woman in the hands of her husband (p.506).

Thus a marriage is here likened to slavery, resembling a business deal much more than a romantic relationship between lovers, with the woman forced to change everything including her religion, world, family, and surname and surroundings. In fact, the only transformation for her is that she is now to be led by a husband not by a father; she is no longer the belonging of her father, and has become the belonging of her husband. Because "woman is destined to maintain the species and care for the home, which is to say, to immanence" (p.506). Caring for the home and the children, that is to say, domestic affairs and reproductive responsibilities are vital activities to keep the ideal married woman busy.

Based on this Gilbert and Gubar, in another key text of second-wave feminism *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, claim that "marriage is crucial because it is the only accessible form of self-definition for girls in her society" (Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p.127). While talking about Jane Austen, Gilbert and Gubar attack the society in which marriage is the only way for a girl to define herself despite the fact that she is identified through her husband. When the institution of marriage is so oppressive, De Beauvoir argues, "woman takes revenge through infidelity: adultery becomes a natural part of marriage. This is the only defense woman has against the domestic slavery she is bound to" (De Beauvoir 1949, p.88). The women find a way for their liberation through adultery just like the men have been doing for centuries. In this way we can see that in the case of restrictive, and potentially loveless and sexless marriage, adultery become a natural vehicle of protest for women and a humane reaction to such entrapment. Ultimately, what all these thinkers argue for is liberation for women from their limited marriages and domestic duties.

Betty Friedan is known as a leading figure in women's movement in the United States, and *The Feminist Mystique* is now a canonical work of second-wave feminism. In it she presented a visceral critique of the idea that women can only find fulfillment through childrearing, homemaking, and marriage and domesticity as a whole. Further, she asserted that women are treated as victims who try to find identity and meaning through their husbands and children. In

the opening part called "The Problem That Has No Name" Friedan criticizes the structural domesticity of women and the quiet unhappiness that accompanied it:

> The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning [that is, a longing] that women suffered in the middle of the 20th century in the United States. Each suburban [house] wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries … she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question — 'Is this all?" (Friedan 1963, p.57)

Friedan addresses domesticity as the problem with which each woman must struggle alone, dissatisfied, and yearning for independence. Most women of the time who were aware of their conditions were, she implies, trying to understand if this really is all there is to life. Yet this melancholia can be interpreted as the beginnings of liberation, as they start to expect more from life rather than of being interminably entrapped in their silent submission. Thus these unhappy women pave the way for those who want to voice their own awareness about their being trapped at home. In other words, they try to uncover the problem which has been buried in the ground and sedimented into the seams of society for centuries.

On this basis, Friedan's book sets out to find a world for women outside the traditional roles. She challenges the domesticated life of women of the time in a way that disturbs contemporary society. Friedan criticizes the domestic role of woman as housewife, pointing out that all housewives have "the same tone and the look of other women, who were very sure that they had the problem" (p.64). Accordingly, since all women are subjected to the same experiences in life with their gender limitations, they begin to lose their individuality, since the social structure encourages them to be types rather than individuals. In other words, as a result of what the world offers them, they all appear to be the same.

In addition to their lack of experience, Friedan also notes that women in male-dominated society are not given a chance to mentally grow up. "It is as if you were a little girl, there has always been somebody or something that will take care of your life: your parents, or college, or falling in love, or having a child, or moving to a new house. Then you wake up one morning and there is nothing to look forward to" (p.65). Women in patriarchal societies are thus made to believe that there should also be somebody to take care of them; they are not

left alone in any scene of their life. They are forced to be little girls in their adult relationships. Their life, either single or married life, is always baby-like. They are treated as if they need more mature, adult men in their lives, either a husband or a father. Women are always kept in or reduced to an infantile state. It is a pity that they are unaware of their circumstances owing to the fact that they are taught to believe in the precepts of the male-centric society. When such structures condition lived social relations, we can see that women are not allowed to be in charge of their destiny; rather, only men are permitted to be the masters of their own destiny.

Friedan, by adding that this archetypal domesticated woman feels like a girl, emphasizes the infantilization of women in society, and argues that this is in fact how society is conditioned to regard women in general. A woman who Friedan interviews says, "the problem is always being the children's mommy or the minister's wife and never being myself" (73). She states that women and their life have always been ignored; they are only identified with their children and husband. Their individuality is always underestimated. Friedan presents the general idea that once women fulfill their maternal role, they think that their "own growth and evolution [are] over" (p.126). As they are taught to do so, when women perform their jobs as mothers, they believe that they are fulfilling the limits of duty to themselves.

As well as women's psychological dissatisfaction, Friedan proposes that sexual dissatisfaction is another problem for women. She goes on to elaborate how this has been mystified by patriarchal society in order to contain the disruptive potential housed within it: "The mistake, says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love" (p.92). Friedan states that being under the male domination and being sexually passive is one of the most important features of society's version of the real woman. However, according to Friedan, sexual passivity of women is the direct result of societal strictures, with women being confined to their domesticity even sexually. Further, if this sexual dissatisfaction develops into having sexless marriages, women also become unfeminine, as femininity in fact is the equal of

reproductivity. Ultimately, in many cases, Friedan argues, these women's sexual needs are routinely ignored in their marriages.

With De Beauvoir and Friedan providing the radical backdrop, Kate Millet, in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) was able to assert that "the Sexual is Political". The phrase parallels Carol Hanisch, an American feminist and activist who coined the slogan "the Personal is Political", which became a motto of second-wave feminism. Millett opines that male-dominated culture is disgracing women and highlights the patriarchal prejudice that runs rife in literary production:

> "The great mass of women throughout history has been confined to the cultural level of animal life in providing the male with sexual outlet and exercising the animal functions of reproduction and care of the young. Thus the female has had sexuality visited upon her as a punishment in a way of life which, with few exceptions and apart from maternity, did not encourage her to derive pleasure in sexuality and limited her to an existence otherwise comprised mainly of menial labor and domestic service (Millett 1970, p.119).

The sexuality of women has been discussed for centuries; however, those discussions have largely been confined to the men's sexual needs as Rousseau stated beforehand. Women do not have their own sexual pleasure; they partake in sexual relationships just for the sake of motherhood. Chiming with this, Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* states that "sexuality and eroticism are often opposed to motherhood and reproduction" (1978, p.203). Both Millett and Chodorow argue that as long as sexuality is limited to maternity and to the satisfaction of men, and if maternity is one of the causes of women's limitations, then they begin to see sexuality in terms of punishment, rather than as self-satisfaction or gratification. Millett argues that sex itself takes place in the warp and weft of social and political relations, in fact sex is conditioned through actually existing social structures. As Millett states:

> Coitus can scarcely be said to take place in a vacuum; although of itself it appears a biological and physical activity, it is set so deeply within the larger context of human affairs that it serves as a charged microcosm of the variety of attitudes and values to which culture subscribes. Among other things, it may serve as a model of sexual politics on an individual or personal plane. (1970, p.23)

Millett stresses that sex, while it seems to be the most intimate and private of relations, is in fact fundamentally affected by external issues which come from the society of the time. Women are expected to be productive and accordingly

sexual intercourse requires offspring, as it is seen as the duty of the female to produce children and expected as the primary function of matrimony to enlarge the family. Millett contends that sexuality is complex, and in patriarchal society becomes cultural rather than a biological or physical activity. It is an issue that has a larger context, sexuality is whether non-procreative sexuality will be that repressed or not. The marriages and the sexuality of the time objectify women and complicate issues of sexual pleasure. Thus Millett echoes De Beauvoir's conception of the marital contract where "the general legal assumption [is] that marriage involves an exchange of the female's domestic service and (sexual) consortium in return for financial support" (p.35).

Millett takes this notion of the transaction and pushes it to what she understands to be its logical end: that sexuality is in fact a synonym for prostitution. Thus, Millett's contribution to the debate on marriage emerges as building on De Beauvoir, arguing not only that women are seen as the property of their husbands, but that female sexuality can be resembled to labour, for which women receive financial support in return. Thus she recalls De Beauvoir's Marxist argument regarding marital sex that "the love act is a service she renders to the man; he takes his pleasure, and he owes compensation in return. The woman's body is an object to be purchased; for her it represents capital she has the right to exploit" (1949, p.507). Both thinkers illuminate the commodification of women in their sexual life and how, frequently, a woman can be understood to be selling her body in exchange for the financial security she receives from her husband. Moreover, both ideas accentuate how deeply this deficiency is entrenched in the male-oriented society, because, in this society, "[women's] mission is at home, [and they administer] their blandishments and their love [so as] to assuage the passions of men as they come in from the battle of life" (p.71). Thus women are here for the comfort of men who return from the rough of the external working world, access to which is denied for women, battle-weary and keen to be soothed sexually by their wives or lovers, who must be on hand to perform.

This confinement of women exists so as not to disturb the power of men. Millett states that "if knowledge is power, power is also knowledge, and a large factor in their subordinate position is the fairly systematic ignorance patriarchy

imposes upon women" (p.42). Men represent and hold power and are therefore knowledgeable, and because women are seen only as child–bearers, they have neither access nor right to knowledge. This ignorance has a knock-on effect on women's ability to control their own reproductive life.

Casting back to the nineteenth century, knowledge surrounding birth control and contraception among women was severely restricted, and abortion itself all but unmentionable. Even in the external world of men, at the beginning of the 1840s, the sale and the use of contraceptives was banned in America. Some birth control methods were attempted, such as the withdrawal of men before orgasm, melting suppositories, douching after the intercourse along with some potions that were extremely toxic for both mother and foetus. In all of these techniques, women had to rely on men. Such disempowerment over their own body signals that sexual activity was often associated with punishing consequences, thus placing further limits on women's sexuality. As De Beauvoir wrote in the mid-twentieth century, legally the system still operated so that: "all that can be done is to enclose her in situations where motherhood is her only option: laws or customs impose marriage on her, anticonception measures and abortion are banned, divorce is forbidden" (De Beauvoir 1949, p.92). In the light of this information, it can be said that if women therefore have no right over deciding to have a child or not, abstaining from sexual intercourse becomes the most effective form of birth control, which places a limitation not only on men's sexual desires and needs but also on women's and their right to enjoy a fulfilled and fulfilling sex life.

In addition to having no right over their bodies, birth control and sexuality, feminists have also argued that women face restrictions in their language. Through a limited access to education, for example, and particularly the patriarchal language of legislation and governance, a woman's language is also limited and fragmented due to the restricted experiences they are provided with. However, Helene Cixous, French feminist writer and deconstructionist critic, has written about the possibility of women freeing themselves through writing and, in so doing, freeing their bodies. In 'The Laugh of the Medusa' she asserts that "[t]he individual woman must write herself, her body must be heard" (Cixous, 1975, p.2043). Cixous defends the rights of women in the literary field

by supporting their places in literature and additionally encourages women to write about themselves in order to abolish this sexual discrimination between men and women, which forms the basis of interpretation in patriarchal society. She urges women to write even if the language is made by men: "Even language conceals an invincible adversary because it is the language of men and their grammar. We mustn't leave them a single place that's any more theirs alone than we are" (p.2050). She goes on to urge women not to stay trapped in their own bodies by a language that does not allow them to express themselves or use their bodies as a way to communicate and asserts that women have a place in language equal to men. To write in a feminine mode, "women must write through their bodies, she insists, because she believes that "there is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink" (p.2049). Calling in the tools of psychoanalysis, Cixous speculates upon the symbolism of the writing process. If one interprets the pen as a symbol for the fundamental maleness of writing, and so metaphorical of the penis, Cixous asserts that women can disrupt that male discourse as the ink which flows from a woman's pen is naturally white, sourced from coming from the mother's milk. Continuing to expand upon lactation, she argues that is why whatever a woman writes is valuable because it is necessarily endless and spontaneous. Just like the lactating mother, the writing woman has a "body without end, without appendage, without 'principal parts' (p.2056). Unlike a man, a woman can experience herself as "capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity" (p.2051) She argues that women should not be afraid of lacking, that they do not have the typical masculine castration anxiety, so they can be comfortable with generosity and anonymity.

> Unlike man, who holds so dearly onto his title, his pouches of value, his cap, crown, and everything connected with his head, woman couldn't care less about the fear of decapitation, adventuring, without the masculine temerity, into anonymity, which she can merge with without annihilating herself: because she is a giver (p.2051).

Women have no fear of castration, so they should comfortably write about their bodies. Women can be comfortable with generosity and anonymity, she urges the women to reveal their sexuality and write more on their bodies, exploring their natural bodily creativity and productivity. This is a call to liberation from the restrictions De Beauvoir enumerates:

> To be feminine is to show oneself as weak, futile, passive, and docile. The girl is supposed not only to primp and dress herself up but also to repress her spontaneity and substitute for it the grace and charm she has been taught by her elder sisters. Any self-assertion will take away from her femininity and her seductiveness." (1949, p.402)

De Beauvoir attacks the 19th century society in which the female strength is always denied in because it is man who is associated with power; that is why the woman is not allowed to change the definition of femininity. In this way De Beauvoir can be resembled to Wollstonecraft who urges women to be powerful and to teach them to their children. Cixous argues that women should have self-assertion, should be powerful enough to use her body and to have her own language. Cixous knows that "every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine" (p.2044). She urges the women to create their own language to speak and to voice their silence. She interprets the ancient tale of the decapitation of the snake-haired Medusa's as men's attempt to silence the voice of women, to cut off women's language and she accuses men who have committed the greatest crime against women by making them believe that their continent is dark. Their continent is dark as they have no education to light it up. Therefore, she urges women to write saying that "it is time for women to start scoring their feats in written and oral language" (p.2044) in order to explore the beauty of the feminine unconscious. By urging the women to write she paves the way for what she calls the New Woman and argues that "it is time to liberate the New Woman from the old by coming to know her, by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the old without delay, by getting out ahead of what the New Woman will be" (p.2042).

In parallel with this unconventional appeal to women, Betty Friedan favors the idea of "New Woman" who is assertive and challenging and who threatens the conventional ideas about womanhood and wifehood in the 19th century.

> The New Woman heroines were the ideal of yesterday's housewives; they reflected the dreams, mirrored the yearning for identity and the sense of possibility that existed for women then. And if women could not have these dreams for themselves, they wanted their daughters to have them. They wanted their daughters to be more than housewives, to go out of the world that had been denied them (Friedan 1963, p.88).

Instead of marriage and motherhood, Friedan clarifies that the New Woman is already a housewife who challenges the confinement of domesticity. Though the New Woman may not achieve her dreams because of the confinements of the time, they can leave an independent place to their daughters.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, concordantly, promote the idea of female mode of expression and assert that their language is also limited and controlled by men; they see themselves as responsible for creating their own expressive models in preparation for their successors. They give the example of literary tradition to draw parallels between women writers and the women's role in general. Exploring the problems of women in the nineteenth century *The Mad Woman in the Attic* reviews the place of women both as literary figures and as writers. They highlight that for women living prior to the nineteenth century, sexual discrimination, gender exploitation and social entrapment was excessive. Gilbert and Gubar in "Towards Feminist Poetics" clearly state radically that women have no literature, they are lacking in literary world and they are all evaluated through a male literary lens.

> Almost all nineteenth century women are in some sense imprisoned in men's houses. Figuratively, such women were locked into male texts... male, texts from which they could escape only through ingenuity and indirection. It is not surprising… [that] the spatial imagery of enclosure and escape elaborated with what frequently becomes obsessive intensity, characterizes much of their writing (Gilbert & Gubar,1979, p.83).

Women are variously entrapped, both in male language as it is scrutinized in the above quotation, and in the situation of women in the literary world, with the social inferiority symbolized by the enclosure of women in their houses and marriages and where women exist apart from the world of men, yet are compelled to speak and write in a language made by the patriarchal system which oppresses them.

Gilbert and Gubar state that rather than stultifying creativity, the experience of being locked into the male-dominated world means that the literary creations and works by women from the nineteenth century are in fact rendered ingenious and released from patriarchal domination. Until this period, verbal expression had been thought as a male ability, creating a psychic barrier and a burden for women writers of that time, who faced a silencing of their literary voice by

virtue of being defined according to their sexual organs. The writing process then was seen as an activity solely for men, because even the ability to grasp and wield "the pen" itself was seen as a peculiarly male activity. Gilbert and Gubar clarify G Manley Hopkins' thoughts on the maleness of writing in *The Mad Woman in the Attic* as it follows;

> Is the pen a metaphorical penis? Gerard Manley Hopkins seems to have thought so… The artist's "most essential quality," he declared, "is masterly execution, which is a kind of male gift, and especially marks off men from women… Male sexuality, in other words, is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen is in some sense a penis.... (Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p.3-4).

In this quotation Gilbert and Gubar claim that, in the patriarchal canon of English Literature, even the writing process of women has been obstructed, firstly by having to use a phallic symbol in order to produce their work, and second by their biological inability to effect "masterly execution", which historical has been seen as an essentially male capability. So if the pen has consciously or unconsciously been conceptualized as a metaphorical penis, then it is the author who has been viewed in terms of a father who inseminates a text with his meaning. Gilbert and Gubar create a counter-argument "If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?" (p.7). "A life of feminine submission, of 'contemplative purity,' is a life of silence, a life that has no pen and no story, while a life of female rebellion, of 'significant action,' is a life that must be silenced, a life whose monstrous pen tells a terrible story" (p.55).

Thus, silence is the language of New Woman, because real women are not allowed to have any stories. They are silenced and oppressed; without history or story to tell and denied access to experiences which would generate them. Piety, purity and submissiveness are some features of being silenced, and such qualities are generally deplored in wider external society because silence symbolizes passivity and powerlessness. Moreover, the life of women must be silenced, because if they are not then the horrors of a woman's life that is encircled by patriarchy could be voiced and the system fundamentally shaken. However, Gilbert and Gubar's purpose is to demonstrate that some women writers were able to challenge this inarticulateness and, in so doing, challenge the patriarchal regulations of the time.

> women from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to Emily Bronte and Emily Dickinson produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards (p.73).

Jane Austen, George Eliot, the Bronte sisters and Emily Dickinson helped many contemporary women to own a creative literary history. According to Gilbert and Gubar they can be accepted as the ancestors of women writers, and represent a kind of hope for the women coming after them. Nevertheless, even here, they argue, female expression is entrapped owing to the fact that these writers simultaneously subvert the literary tradition and comply with it – writing within it. Gilbert and Gubar argue that it is of great importance to have the conformity as it shows the entrapment of female expression, which cannot be fully freed from patriarchal conventions. Thus, women writers of the nineteenth century are in between, liberated but not fully so, and unable to keep silent within these patriarchal limitations that condition their working practice. These women, who are unable to live with these limitations, promote some methods for liberation in spite of the abusive effects of patriarchal mentality. In this way, the female writers kill the female characters in order to liberate them from patriarchal conventions or to show that she must be killed because of disobedience, which thus makes them both subversive and obedient.

With this at hand, Emily Dickinson claims that "infection in the sentence breeds" (Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p.55), as men are the residents of literary world, women do not have any ancestors and they need some in order not to feel imprisoned within the male texts. Dickinson tries to reconstruct the female perspective and experience in order to transform the patriarchal traditions that silence and control women. In fact, the patriarchal definition of women makes most women ill, she argues, and furthermore, this illness is infectious, so with everything she writes, the woman writer is infected repeatedly with this illness of patriarchy. In order to get rid of it, Dickinson encourages female writers to write, though "we may inhale despair" (p.45) from the patriarchal texts that deny the female autonomy and capability in writing.

While Dickinson paves the way for the female writers to write, De Beauvoir draws a parallel stating that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (p.14) to show that being a woman is all about contouring oneself to the established social, cultural, political and economic constructions of patriarchy. Women are not born women but are shaped by thousands of external processes. Whereas De Beauvoir encourages women in general to find their individuality, Dickinson, emboldens women writers to begin to write by literally pointing out a route to them, and heartening them in their attendant struggles as women are expected to wrestle for their identity, both for themselves and for their successors.

Gilbert and Gubar claim that the writers in the 18th and 19th century such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, Bronte sisters and Emily Dickinson helped many contemporary women to own a creative literary history. These women have come to be seen as the ancestors of women writers, and became a kind of hope for the women coming after them. Their literature bore marks resulting from the limitations under which they produced their material, and thus all these women writers "turned towards themselves and used imagery of enclosure exploring images of frustration, prisons, and cages forging a literature, more or less, of escape – a literature that prompts escape from the social boundaries" (Gilbert & Gubar 1979, p.86). Gilbert and Gubar go further, claiming that recurring figures of female madness in these works represent ciphers for the author themselves. Writing within patriarchy, simultaneously wishing to follow its rules and to rebel against them, women writers, Gilbert and Gubar argue, experience a kind of insanity as they grapple with the conundrum of speaking when they are restricted. Accordingly, their madness becomes a way to voice their oppression, which makes madness the new female language. Through madness of women, the restrictions of women are uncovered and women's silence transforms into a self-revelation. In fact, women writers' "palimpsestic" narratives do not conform to the confines of patriarchal language. In "break[ing] out" of what Cixous calls "the snare of silence", madness becomes a key signifier and mode of expression for the structural oppression of women.

With this notion in hand, Gilbert and Gubar turn to scientists and social historians like Jessie Bernard and Pauline Bart who claim that patriarchal

socialization literally makes women sick, both physically and mentally. For instance, hysteria, a Greek word deriving from word for womb, is a disease identified as occurring mainly among women, along with anorexia, agoraphobia and arthritis. Indeed, there are even some illnesses that are believed to occur only in women. These illnesses were very common, especially among the women writers of the nineteenth century who were often understood to be threatening the patriarchy with their works. Indeed, many of them were detained from writing by rest cure, without being busy with anything else. The rest cure was given to many female writers including Charlotte Perkins Gilman in order to perpetuate their domesticity. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that the women writers who are aware of these limitations upon women try to use images that express this confinement and so liberate the female in a way.

Elaine Showalter in her Female Tradition refers to the same writers that Gilbert and Gubar discuss as ancestors and asks why their writing is "inaccurate, fragmented and partisan" (Showalter 1977, p.15). The first reason she identifies is that nineteenth century women's literary history has suffered from an extreme form of "Great Traditionalism," which reduced the diversity and extraordinary range of women's writing to a tiny band of the "great." The second reason is that these lesser-known writers were excluded from anthologies, histories and theories. Elaine Showalter in her 1989 essay 'A Criticism of Our Own: Autonomy and Assimilation in Afro-American and Feminist Literary Theory' referred to "gynocriticism", which she defined as the study of women's writing. In her work Showalter supports the work being done within gynocriticism stating that "[i]n a relatively short period of time, either gynocritics have generated a vast critical literature on individual women writers" and "persuasive studies of the female literary tradition from the Middle Ages to the present." (p.181) However, Showalter stated that gynocritics seem to have isolated the black women textuality; therefore, gynesis came about and referring to Alice A. Jardine, the writer of *Gynesis*, Showalter defined gynesis as, "the exploration of the textual consequences and representations of 'the feminine' in Western thought" (p.182). Showalter found gynesis problematic stating "if women are the silenced and repressed Other of Western discourse, how can a Feminist theorist speak as a woman about women or anything else?" (p.183) Then she

touched upon the burgeoning field of gender theory, highlighting that "gender theory explores ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system." (p.184) In order to have a feminist criticism of our own, she suggests, women cannot abandon their investigation of women's literary history, nor their belief that they will develop a criticism of their own. She raises the figure of the Victorian women novelist as an example, as they have enabled gynocritics to see that women have had a literature of their own. Each woman writer has been a part of this tradition and has a place in this tradition; women must open their voices and contribute to a new literary history (p.186). In order to have this new literary history, however, women writers must be liberated and their voices heard. The possible forms of that liberation and the escape of those women who find they cannot define themselves is the main scope of this research.

Women in the early twentieth century began to write their frustrations and they become influential writers and artists, even men became more overt in their writing at that time. The advent of the century witnessed great changes both in the style and content of women's writing along with an increase in the depiction of feminine images and themes in literature. Major and influential women writers included Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edith Wharton and Kate Chopin, all of whom took the opportunity to exhibit all the frustrations of women of the time. They started to externalize their interests, concerns, and their growing awareness, as well as redefining and frequently rejecting their outdated status within the patriarchal dominated societies.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton suffered from the strict gender roles of women in their respective societies. Gilman suffered from strict gender stereotypes along with the role of being a mother. Chopin, being aware of the women' problems especially in their marriages and having lived as a widow with six children for a very long time felt the lack of sexuality in her own life keenly, and wrote about female sexuality and the importance of passion in a woman's life. Wharton always suffered from the financial worries of upper-crust New York society and she dedicated her life to writing about the excesses of the upper-classes and how the vagaries of upper-class men in particular affected women in her own society. These writers, at the dawn of the twentieth

century, fling down the gauntlet and attempt to write a freedom that they at one point lack themselves. This thesis will therefore look at the ways these writers try to resolve the problems of late nineteenth century women.

The first chapter will be dedicated to Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the light of her concern about women's entrapment in motherhood, through concentrating on her most famous novel *Herland* and two short stories 'Making a Change' and 'An Unnatural Mother'. Motherhood is one of the issues that Gilman works most on because she herself suffered significantly from the rigidity of motherhood. The discussion on motherhood will start with an analysis of *Herland,* a thought experiment in the mode of early science fiction which predominantly focuses on the advantages of social motherhood and an individual's decision to choose whether they want to be mothers or not. Parallel to Friedan's suggestion "[c]hosen motherhood is the real liberation. The choice to have a child makes the whole experience of motherhood different, and the choice to be generative in other ways can at last be made, and is being made by many women now, without guilt" (1963, p.132). Gilman presents mothers who are totally content with their current role as a mother or as a child carer. In the novel, by showing the females out of the house but professionally fulfilling everything needed in that society, Gilman indirectly critiques the constrictive and oppressive conditions that women, and particularly mothers, live under in American society. The analysis of the novel also includes the idea of social motherhood as Gilman presents it in *Women and Economics*, as she points that as the whole race is responsible for child-rearing, thus it should be done professionally.

Corresponding to Gilman's theory on social motherhood in "Making a Change", she fictionalizes a bond between a young mother, Julia, and her mother-in-law, who was first critical about Julia's mothering but later on sees her incapability as a result of her withdrawal from the public world. Therefore, she helps Julia to return to her previous career as a music teacher by taking care of the baby, and later on they open a music school together. With this school, it is not only Julia that is transformed into Gilman's concept of the New Woman, but also Mrs. Gordins, her mother-in-law, who goes on to enjoy the benefits of public life. At

the end of the story neither of the women, despite being mothers, are entrapped by the responsibilities of motherhood.

However, in 'An Unnatural Mother', Gilman's idea of social motherhood could not be achieved and as Angelika Köhler states the story delineates "the discrepancy between the conservatism of the Victorian concept of the True Woman and the modernity of the New Woman" (p.4). The protagonist of the story, Esther, sacrifices her own life for the sake of saving a number of children and yet the townswomen do not accept to look after Esther's child after her death. Just because she saved all other children but left her own child without a mother, she is labeled as "unnatural".

The second chapter in the thesis is dedicated to Kate Chopin's novella The Awakening and three short stories "The Storm", "Her Letters" and "A Respectable Woman" and argues that in these texts women's entrapment in married life encompasses the repression of her sexual desire and her break from these limits is provoked via her subsequent need for self-expression and solitude which, in combination, can result in her flourishing as an autonomous woman. The spiritual and psychological change that the female characters experience after sexually liberating themselves will be the focus of this chapter.

The third chapter scrutinizes Edith Wharton's most acclaimed novel The House of Mirth to argue that the female characters represent the wider choices offered to women, who are brought up with the idea that marriage and motherhood are the only natural roles that they should fulfill. Correspondingly the novel criticizes the hypocritical society of New York at the fin de siecle, the infantilization of women and their entrapment both in married life, seen as compulsory for living, and in single life, which, for society, indicates a dereliction of duty on the part of the woman in question and renders them equally entrapped, ostracized and feeling worthless.

2. MOTHERHOOD IN CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN'S WORKS

2.1 No One But The Mother: Gilman's Presentation Of Motherhood

For Charlotte Perkins Gilman "motherhood is seen as "a mere "instinct," a wholly personal feeling; it was a religion" (Lane 1979, p.68) and in *Herland* (1915) she fictionalizes a new type of motherhood, which is not seen as an obstacle to women's freedom, but a contribution to it. Although it is written as a utopian novel, its only unreal element is the existence of parthenogenesis reproduction, a method of reproduction that eradicates the role of a male partner because it is a society that consists only of women. Gilman's aim in creating an all-female society is to show women's ingenuities once they are outside the strictures of patriarchal duties. Yet, she does not strip women of their roles as mothers, because she also believes that motherhood is of utmost importance for the race; nevertheless, for Gilman, child-rearing is not an exclusively female activity: "motherhood is not alone upon woman, and, through her, upon the race" (Gilman 1898, p.337). Therefore, her perspective of motherhood is in stark opposition with the patriarchal mentality, which limits childcare only to the mother. Indeed, her philosophy is structured as a macrocosm of the adage it takes a village to raise a child; in her conception, the responsibility of the child should not be narrowed down to an individual mother, but distributed throughout the society, or in this case, the whole race, because the process of child-rearing "serves its purpose to the human race. Primarily its purpose is to reproduce the race by reproducing the individual; secondarily to improve the race by improving the individual" (p.178). By presenting motherhood as a responsibility of the race, she emphasizes its significance in the process of broad social improvement. In 'The Office of the Mother', she lays out how her views of child-rearing are knitted to her conception of women's liberation, challenging "how can a mother lead her children when she is not going anywhere?" (Gilman 1904, p.20).

Herland touches upon these issues in a utopic society of motherhood, which is described flawless in terms of child-rearing. The whole society is responsible for each and every one of the children, and any woman who does not see herself fit for child-rearing has the freedom not to undertake the role. Although the beginning of the novel presents an idealized dream-like environment, where all women work in harmony with one another for the improvement of their society, with the entrance of three male explorers, utopia is transformed into dystopia. As the male characters all try to understand and appreciate each other's different ways of living, Terry carries his internalized patriarchal values with him when he eventually gets married to Alima. As a man of dominance, and a man who believes that the wife is his object in the marriage and has to satisfy his needs, he rapes her when she refuses to have sexual intercourse. The outcome of his action is unexpected for him, because he is judged by the society's elders, and banished from *Herland*. The novel reaches its happy ending with his removal from the land, and Gilman manages to successfully fictionalize her theory of motherhood.

Ann J. Lane notes that:

> In Gilman's work it is not the scientist, the warrior, the priest, or the craftsman, but the mother who is the connecting point from present to future. In her utopia, Charlotte Perkins Gilman transforms the private world of mother-child, isolated in the individual home, into a community of mothers and children in a socialized world. It is a world in which humane social values have been achieved by women in the interest of us all (1979, p.27).

According to Lane, the mother is the connection between present and the future, therefore her isolation not only threatens her existence but also the improvement of society. Gilman also believes that maternity is both pure and precious and emphasizes that domestic duties hinder a woman from her maternal tasks. Thus, in *Herland*, she creates a world where there are no domestic duties.

Gilman's recreation of motherhood honors the role greatly, to the extent that mothers are figured as "Queen- Priestess" (Lane 1979, p.57) full of joy, because through motherhood they contribute to the improvement of society. As opposed to the mothers within patriarchal society, who are described as having "a sense of helpless involuntary fecundity, forced to fill and overfill the land, every land, and then see their children suffer, sin, and die fighting horribly with one

another" (p.68), the mothers of Herland do not give birth just to fill the land but to create intellectual and effective minds.

> … after the baby-year, the mother was not so constantly in attendance, unless, indeed, her world was among the little ones. She was never far off, however, and her attitude toward the co-mothers, whose proud child-service was direct and continuous, was lovely to see. (Gilman, 1915, p.103).

What Gilman proposes here is that the mother-child bond is necessary only for a certain period after giving birth, as during this period it is the mother only who can attend to the baby's direct needs, primarily breastfeeding. But in *Herland,* this period ends with the partial separation of the mother and the child which is seen as beneficial for both parties in terms of creating and nurturing subjectivity… With this social motherhood, the mother's as well as the child's exclusion from the society ends. The Herlanders act as part of a team who take care of children without any "brute passion" but with wisdom and love. Therefore, a child ceases to be the passion project or possession of a single mother, who frequently suffocates from the ceaseless responsibility, and instead becomes one of "our children" (p.71). When Vandyck Jennings, the narrator of *Herland* hears women talking about their children, he draws a similarity between mothers and "ants and bees" (p.71). We can read here Gilman's own criticism of existing motherhood, as she implicitly underlines the fact that in following the traditional roles of motherhood, women in fact move away from their natural duties. In *Women and Economics,* she notes critically that "[n]o other animal species is required to care for its young so long, to teach it so much" (1898, p.184). For Gilman, if maternity is a natural duty to the human race, it should be carried out in consort with other natural requirements. Caring for a child for a long time, she argues, will not help to create independent minds, but rather minds that are under the control of the mother. And of course the irony is if the mother is not well-equipped, she will not be able to create a different mind. This is done by Gilman "primarily for the purpose of better realizing their duties to the children" (Hill, 2010, p.26) Just as the ants and bees allow their children to survive in nature, mothers should allow their children to do the same. This, she implies, makes for a healthier, more natural parental process.

When Gilman creates this version of social motherhood, she is also aware of the criticism that may appear, namely as long as a mother sees her child as her possession and reward in this life, she will refuse to share her with anyone. In the novel, while talking with Vandyck, the character Somel voices the response:

> It is her baby still—it is with her—she has not lost it. But she is not the only one to take care for it. There are others whom she knows to be wiser. She knows it because she has studied as they did, practiced as they did, and honours their real superiority. For the child's sake, she is glad to have for it this highest care. (Gilman,1915, p.83)

In Herland, a baby is not separated from the mother when another woman takes care for it, but rather entrusted into total care-giving expertise as every woman has the capability and full understanding to take care of any child as they are all educated and trained equally.

Feminist theorists have appreciated Gilman's revolutionary idea of social motherhood. In parallel with Gilman, Sara Ruddick opens the plane out further to include male carers, asserting that "[there is no] reason why mothering work should be distinctively female, anyone who commits her or himself to responding to children's demands, and makes the work of response a considerable part of her or his life, is a mother" (Ruddick, 1995, p.12). Ruddick, like Gilman, favors the idea of developing a social structure like the one in *Herland* and supports the idea that anyone can mother providing there is commitment to the job, as there is in the novel. Because in *Herland* "each mother had her year of glory; the time to love and learn, living closely with her child, nursing it proudly, often for two years or more". (Gilman 1915, p.103) Thus, after having her baby, each mother takes care of her child completely with the love and affection of the whole community for the first two years of life until it is taken upon the most equipped few to further their education.

Children's education is an issue to which they attach great importance, which is why new mothers continuously educate themselves while on the job. In Gilman's world, this sharing of responsibility, however, yields overwhelmingly positive results, allowing women to enjoy a life full of vitality and energy with their young children and taking away any notions of child-rearing being a burden for them. Caring for a child in *Herland* does not mean just the provision of nourishment since "mother-love has more than one channel of expression."

(p.71). Indeed, Gilman attaches the greatest importance to female education of the children as she stresses its significance for the sake of happy and fulfilled children.

Gilman claims that bearing a child is “an animal function” (1898, p.283) but knowing how to educate a child professionally is the thing that society most needs. Knowing how to raise and educate the children professionally, the Herlanders work for the service of the baby before the child comes, which is called “a period of exultation” (Gilman, 1915, p.70) Knowing that education is significant for everyone especially for children, Gilman, as Ann Lane suggests, “used her energies and her gifts in an effort to understand the world and her place in it and to extend that knowledge and those insights to others” (1979, p.229). Gilman locates motherhood not only in the child-bearing process; she finds effective child education compulsory provided that it can be turned into professional work. As Lane suggests above, Gilman tries both to learn and to teach, and that is why she expands the scope of motherhood to what is termed ‘female education’ in Herland.

First-wave feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft argued too often that education for women was merely preparation to be “good mothers”. Her book, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman asks how a woman who has a received a standard female’s education within a patriarchal society can be expected “to govern a family with judgment, or take care of the poor babies whom they bring into the world?" (Wollstonecraft 1792, p.18). But Gilman’s conception is more hopeful. In contrast to Wollstonecraft, Gilman in Herland, does not expect the female to govern a family, rather she expects the female to expend all of their energy on the children and for their education. Moreover, in order to educate their children, women should be educated, experienced and trained. Thus in her most comprehensive piece of non-fiction, in Women and *Economics* Gilman contends that many inexperienced mothers lack the capabilities to raise children effectively and she criticizes the concept of sheer ‘maternal sacrifice’ as inadequate for the children (p.195). By contrast, in *Herland*, education is conceptualized differently and Van in his talk to Somel clarifies that motherhood in Herland is also different from the motherhood in patriarchal society because there is a distinction between motherhood and maternity in

Herland as education is depicted as inevitable side of motherhood compared to patriarchal America.

> "But education is our highest art, only allowed to our highest artists. "Education?" I was puzzled again. "I don't mean education. I mean by motherhood not only child-bearing, but the care of babies. The care of babies involves education, and is entrusted only to the most fit." (Gilman 1915, p.82)

The whole community sees child education as the society' preeminent work, and this exchange between Somel and Van is of great importance since it corresponds to Gilman's theories on child education in her non-fiction. Herland's model is completely in line with Gilman's conviction that motherhood and education are stepping-stones for the future and should be valued more highly. She emphasizes the significance of education when a mother undertakes the care of child and argues that the maternal role should be thought about carefully rather than just entered into biologically and blindly, because "motherhood is but a process of life, and open to study as all the processes of life are open" (Gilman 1898, p.178). Exploring the fundamental links between motherhood, she asks: "Since we cannot justify the human method of maternity in the physical processes of reproduction, can we prove its advantages in the other branch, education?" (p.153). Having accepted women's dominant role in the reproductive process as natural, Gilman asks how, given their naturally enhanced child-rearing responsibilities, women could assume a greater role in their children's education. Thus in Herland she stresses the importance of an educational approach which makes child care more advantageous for future generations. "We must now show that our motherhood, in its usually accepted sense, the "care" of the child (more accurately described as education), is of a superior nature" (p.153). *Herland* is a proof showing that holistic care of the child is above everything, to the extent that it is indivisible from education itself, where young minds are "taught continuously but unconsciously never knowing they were being educated, their idea of education was the special training they took…" (Gilman 1915, p.95). As the process evolves spontaneously, the children are not aware of the fact that it is compulsory to be educated. Though they face some problems, they in fact learn from their mistakes and solve their problems which shows the dynamism and vitality of their education.

> Our theory is this . . . Here is a young human being. The mind is as natural a thing as the body, a thing that grows, a thing to use and enjoy. We seek to nourish, to stimulate, to exercise the mind of a child as we do the body. There are the two main divisions in education—you have those of course —the things it is necessary to know, and the things it is necessary to do" (p.104).

Thus education in *Herland* approaches the mind in the same way as the body, and nourishing, stimulating and practicing are the key words in their education. The all-female society functions heavily on an all-encompassing child-rearing process, which even develops and modifies the language over time in order to make it as simple as possible for the children to learn, education being one of the most important aspects of the culture. Therefore, the women of Herland study and educate themselves so as to become good teachers for their young learners. They have achieved an ideal style of education in their land and it is of great significance that the process thrives on consistency and is enacted with no force. While the Herlanders are constantly working on its improvement, they can be seen to be in an extended phase of continuous learning and autodidacticism. It is vital to note that the narrator makes the reader feel that the education is a long and demanding process, both for the ones administering it and for the children who are seen as hope for the better future. As education is to the mind in Herland "the children seemed always playing with something; or else, sometimes, engaged in peaceful researches of their own" (p.106). The education is designed to utilize the utmost potential that women possess. To show the significance of developing an effective education strategy to the society, Gilman shows that it is a demanding and time-consuming process. In the novel Somel points that "we have been working for some sixteen hundred years, devising better and better games for children" (p.106) According to the needs they observe from the children, and they are always searching for the new and the most advanced techniques by focusing on necessity. Here, we can notice both the emphasis on the longevity of their efforts and the collective approach to the endeavors described. Somel begins the description with "we" and uses the pronoun to refer to generations of predecessors and her contemporaries indicating that Herlanders are always working collectively on improving education and meeting the evolving needs of their children.

If *Herland* is a vision of utopia, then it is set up to highlight the flaws of the existing education system in America, which pass from one generation to the other, seemingly without any need of change. In contrast to the education in America, *Herland*'s system is designed deliberately with the child's growth in mind at every stage. The result is that they have a better society, though neither the women as a mother nor the child is at the center of their society, but rather the collective. Gilman, with her picture of an ideal society, suggests a radical and transformative version of human society, where nothing is actually in the center of their living, but their education, their interest in nature and everything is in balance, and this is achieved with their professional solidarity. Everything is ideally prepared by Herlanders with the desired end of having a happier and better society in mind; this greatness is placed in direct contrast with patriarchal America. She gives an example of a house specifically planned for babies. In the houses there are "--no stairs, no corners, no small loose objects to swallow, no fire--just a babies' paradise." (1915, p.107), which implies the idea that the architecture of the place is a direct contribution to the education of the child. Everything is prepared fastidiously for the baby, nothing dangerous exists to harm them, and the whole society shares in the excitement of an expectant mother and all young women feel the necessity to nurse and take joy in doing so. In fact, the children are nursed and tended to very well in this society: their needs are never ignored, the most important part of the education is that they are taught how to use their bodies. This environment can be interpreted as a heaven filled with peace, safety and compassion.

Child education is above everything in *Herland*, and improving generation on generation is seen as a natural aim in rearing children. They are mothers whose primary aim is "to help [their children] to a better maturity than that of [their] parents, to leave in the world a creature better than its parent" (Gilman 1898, p.179). The Herlanders are of the opinion that a child should be far better than the parent. Indeed, the education process as described here can be resembled to the act of creating sculpture, as mothers make people from scratch as is stated in *His Religion and Hers "*Here is the new baby. Begin again." (1923, p.50). Thus for Gilman, children are seen as the hope of the society, so the child's mother is responsible for changing and innovating the established methods of child-

rearing which can be done with education. Ultimately, rearing children becomes the vehicle through which society – or, in Gilman's terms, the "race" reaches its full potential: "the main line of race improvement is through the child" (p.9). Thus, as the women improve in their methods, they will become "wiser, stronger and nobler mothers" and the children in their care will get "the widest experience" (Gilman 1898, p.290). Thus we can see how the theme of motherhood in *Herland* chimes with ideas repeated in Gilman's nonfiction over the course of her writing career. Back in 1898 in *Women and Economics*, she advocates for major changes to the role of motherhood, arguing that this change is essential for the improvement of the whole race, as every child is a chance for a better future.

> She will love her child as well, perhaps better, when she is not in hourly contact with it, when she goes from its life to her own life, and back from her own life to its life, with ever new delight and power. She can keep the deep, thrilling joy of motherhood far fresher in her heart. From her work, loved and honoured though it is, she will return to the home life, the child life, with an eager, ceaseless pleasure, cleansed of all the fret and friction and weariness that so mar it now. (p.290)

Bringing up children to be both socially and psychologically healthy, Gilman argues, the mother needs to step away from her child in order to return willingly again to her motherhood. The woman who is steps away will learn something in the process and can then teach it to the new-born baby on her return. *Herland* is Gilman's test-case for her theory, and for Gilman's protagonist the experiment is a success. This revolutionary approach to the role of motherhood exists at the heart of Gilman's feminism, and is what Gilman fights for in all her works; instead of motherhood being associated with involuntary and continuous labor, in Gilman's model women act in solidarity to spread responsibilities and enhance the mother child relationship, and by such a process they create real people.

In addition to having an ideal education, which cannot even be imagined, Gilman makes the women of *Herland* reproduce through parthenogenesis, in which the offspring are produced without the contribution of a male; such a method could also be characterized as virgin birth. Gilman is not the only feminist to look at parthenogenesis with a keen eye. According to De Beauvoir

"in parthenogenesis the virgin egg develops in embryonic without male intervention. The male plays no role or only a secondary one. (1949, p.4). Simone De Beauvoir, who remained childless, argued that "women drag themselves into slavery by making the decision of getting married and having children (Patterson 1986, p.87). De Beauvoir's clarifies that parthenogenesis is a way for women to rid of the limitations that the children bring upon them. De Beauvoir clearly states that having a child, and having to take responsibility for looking after that child too often places limitations on a woman's life. In Gilman's use of parthenogenesis, she firstly wants to free women from a limited life by literally absenting men and fathers, and simultaneously allows women to appear as "capable, intelligent and strong to bear children [alone] through parthenogenesis" (Trahair 1999, p.176). Firstly, Gilman shows that the women are powerful and smart enough to reproduce their own race; secondly this feature makes the novel utopic because it happens without the union of female and male, a form of reproduction, which can be seen in plants and animals not among human beings. Gilman dismisses the sexual union to show that women need autonomy in their motherhood as well and as it is in *Herland.* As a result, according to Gubar in and edited book *She in Herland*, parthenogenesis "functions symbolically… to represent the creativity and autonomy of women, mother-daughter reciprocity, and the interplay of nature and human nature" (Slusser, Rabkin& Scholes 1983, p.144). This is in parallel with what Trahair states above: it is a way to create an all-female society, which provides a perfect setting for women to appear as entirely autonomous and self-governing.

While Gilman to some extent adheres to heteronormativity by associating the female sex with procreation, nevertheless, she neutralizes the more oppressive aspects of this function by making the female characters asexual. In doing so, she points the frustration and complexity that many females experience in their sexual life. That is why the *Herlanders* do not have any experience and idea on female sexuality. This process of getting pregnant without any involvement in any sexual intercourse has been criticized by some; however, knowing that Gilman is a writer of contrariness, it can be assumed that she sets up such a structure in order to satirize the existing prejudices against the notion of motherhood in American society. Cavataro in his article criticizes Gilman's

portrayal of asexual women, arguing that her choice to do so absolves her from full contradiction of patriarchal models: “even once the women of Herland marry,” he argues “they are still depicted as desexualized. Their focus is on motherhood, which is historically viewed as the antithesis of sexuality” (Cavataro 2011, p.1). However, in contrast to Cavataro’s analysis, it is possible to understand Gilman’s choice as pouring scorn upon the gender construction of patriarchal society. Instead of thinking that it is antithesis, it is possible to understand Gilman’s presentation of asexuality as raising awareness that the understanding of female sexuality has a lot more developing to do. Thus, it can be argued that Gilman in fact uses parthenogenesis to promote a vision of female independence and strength, and to highlight the problems and chaos women often face when men intrude in their lives.

Gilman also uses the notion of parthenogenesis to criticize the limitations patriarchal society constructs and naturalizes surrounding the role of motherhood. Placing responsibility for the only method of population and birth control in the decision-making process of each individual woman allows Gilman to indirectly revisit issues of birth control and unwanted pregnancies in American patriarchal society. At the time of writing *Herland*, the birth control movement was being increasingly discussed, and by giving women control of how many children that they actually give birth to, a decision made on the basis of the number that society can comfortably house and feed, Gilman is able to criticize conservative approaches to contraception as fundamentally damaging to societal wellbeing. In Bernice L. Hausman’s article, “Sex before Gender” (1998), she comments on Gilman’s choice and states that “parthenogenesis is a metaphor for women's control of reproduction” (1998, p.506).

In *Herland*, women evolve both socially and biologically and parthenogenesis is a way of facilitating her rejection of social limitations on women; therefore, parthenogenesis, and its dependence on the emotional readiness of the woman for its timing, is metaphor for birth- control. Gilman’s maternal liberation can only be achieved by changing the gender expectations, which is why Ann J. Lane was able to describe *Herland* as “a book about a woman’s world without passion or intimacy” (1990, p.130). It is important to understand that Gilman’s decision not to include sexuality in her novella could be representative of an

attack on passionless marriages, despite the fact that Gilman knows it is difficult to escape from the world of romance and love, as Cockin states in and edited book *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Three Women*, "loving has been opposed to living" (Rudd&Gough 2000, p.131). Rather than focusing on sexuality and love, perhaps the more traditional terrain of women novelists, she chooses to make her characters focus on "living".

In addition to avoiding sexuality and showing motherhood as women's duty to the improvement of race, Gilman also highlights the failings of American society, via the perspective of the male characters in the novel. As the novel is written with the stereotypical male perceptions, it is very important to see the differences between the patriarchal American society and the society of Herland. Van is the most positive character and he accepts the rules and realities of *Herland* faster than the others. Gilman chooses Van as her primary narrator, and not Terry, who is even condemned many times by Van because of his rudeness. Contrary to what Cavataro argues about the use of male narrator that is "the male gaze is central: even in a land of their own" (2011, p.3), one can also note that Gilman does not prefer male perspective as it is natural or is expected by the reader; rather she chooses Van because he idolizes the women and tries to understand how these women live a smooth and peaceful life together. Sargent also sees the use of male perspective as "an effective satire" (Schaer, Gregory, & Sargent 2000, p.52), as she uses it to expose the shortcomings of male mind in attempting to understand the operations of a female society. Van is chosen by Gilman as he learns and tells what he learns, the shocking events and everything that he witnesses. Rather than being used to somehow authenticate her tale, rather Gilman's usage of the male point of view enables her to more effectively satirize quintessential male bias.

On this basis, according to Susan Gubar in an edited book *She in Herland* "the satiric critique generated from the Utopian reconfiguration here means that the better *Herland* looks as a matriarchal culture, the worse patriarchal America seems in contrast" (Slusser, Rabkin & Scholes 1983, p.147). By delineating the good sides of Herland, Gilman knowingly shows the inadequacy of patriarchal American society, and emphasizes that males also need to change and to be educated. In fact, it is "a fictionalized society in the process of becoming better"

(Kessler 1995, p.49) That is why the men in Herland are always searching to understand the complexities around them. They try to learn the mysterious ways of the society they encounter and it is of great significance that they are repeatedly shocked whenever they learn a new thing about the land. The three men have a lot of prejudices and preconceptions on Herland when they first come, for example they "had expected a dull submissive monotony" or "jealousy" and even "hysteria" (Gilman 1915, p.81): Opposing the crassness of the men's preconceptions, the women in *Herland* have good taste in everything, the environment around them is meticulously designed, they are not tedious in society; rather, they are constantly innovating and creating across every dimension of the society. Furthermore, there is a marked lack of conflict and quarrelling because "They were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together--not by competition, but by united action" (Gilman 1915, p.60). There is no competition nor war which can serve the narrators as a counterweight to the normalization of competitive and aggressive behaviors of patriarchal America.

Instead of being simply obedient and uninquisitive about the world around them, they are interested and proactive in making scientific discoveries. Indeed, the Herlanders discoveries and innovations are often underlined by Gilman throughout her utopia. Writing on this topic, Jane Donawerth has commented that "[t]he feminist utopias make us see a history of women in science" that the conventional scientific canon occludes (Donawerth 1990, p.539). The Herlanders have knowledge in all branches of science such as "anatomy, physiology, nutrition" and it is enough to furnish "a full and beautiful personal life" (Gilman, 1915, p.105), a key aim of the society. In this feminist utopia, therefore, Gilman creates an environment where everything is good and everybody is happy because as Donawerth suggests, "in Gilman's Herland, genetics is applied not through the traditionally masculine values of hunting, competition, and individuality but through the traditionally feminine values of nurturing and, more generally, creating an environment where no one will be hurt" (Donawerth 1990, p.552). Thus, in contrast to masculine (and we might add capitalistic) values, *Herland* is founded on the scientific values of a communitarian maternal society where everyone is safe and everyone is nurtured.

Interestingly, this communal social consciousness that the Herlanders share is attributed to genetics, and the fact that all the women in the society share. They all have the social consciousness because all the women are coming from the same mother ancestor and that because that mother founded the whole race, everything in their life is based on motherhood. “By motherhood they were born and by motherhood they lived, life was to them, just the long cycle of motherhood” (Gilman 1915, p.58). They come from women and are raised by women and they become women who go on to give birth to the next generation of women.

In this communal maternal society, the Herlanders are trying to create a society in the center. Herland’s women do not need anything related to masculinist society; compared to masculinist society they are far better off. Motherhood is placed above everything in the society, Gilman depicts the society as flawless in order to show the deep contrast between America and Herland. Weinbaum in her article “Writing Feminist Genealogy” states that “In stark contrast to the crowding multitudes that pollute the United States as they populate it, Herlanders are carefully rendered: all citizens are female, all births timely and genetically refined. (Weinbaum 2001, p.282). Weinbaum sarcastically refers to the racial purity of Herlanders and it is difficult to read the book without thinking of the disastrous social engineering projects of twentieth century like Nazism and Stalinism. With reference to racial purity she states that purity and pollution are massive tropes in racial theory. In a way it can be interpreted that Herlanders are producing ideal citizens who do not create any pollution with crowd; instead they are educated as an ideal citizen of the world and this world is achieved without any assistance of patriarchal man. The three men coming to Herland are really shocked to see such a society without any flaws point since they always act in solidarity in all works.

The three men coming to Herland are really shocked to see such a society without any flaws since they always act in solidarity in all works. The Herlanders are understood to have a great sisterly bond, and the male outsiders find difficulty in comprehending how that sisterhood has become a culture in this society rather than an obligation. They also find it hard to understand how powerful the relationship between a child and a mother is and along with the

strong mother-child bond, the female solidarity among Herlanders is deeply confounding for the male outsiders. That this female society operates on friendship and sisterhood contrasts the preconceptions of the male protagonists, as their presumption, emanating from American patriarchal society, is that women are expected to be in rivalry with each other. Thus they are surprised that "[t]hey loved one another with a practically universal affection, rising to exquisite and unbroken friendships, and broadening to a devotion to their country and people for which our word patriotism is no definition at all" (Gilman 1915, p.94). They love their country to the extreme; however, Van does not term it patriotism, as the perception of patriotism in America "includes neglect of national interests, a dishonesty, a cold indifference to the suffering of millions" (p.94). Van states that along with loving each other, their dedication to their society is extraordinary.

> They loved their country because it was their nursery, playground, and workshop--theirs and their children's. They were proud of it as a workshop, proud of their record of ever-increasing efficiency; they had made a pleasant garden of it, a very practical little heaven; but most of all they valued it—and here it is hard for us to understand them—as a cultural environment for their children (p.94)

Van states that they love their country because it means a lot for them because they have created an environment which foster child-rearing, and that a country should be built on such values, rather than the values of competition and combat is hard to understand for him. All the women work together and all are considered to be the joint mothers of their children. Because of the fact that they do not have any societal expectations or biological limitations, all the women become mothers when they really feel ready, if they do not feel, they put the whole thing out of their mind and devote themselves to the other babies. (p.71). This is in contrast with the view of the patriarchal world, as the women do not have the right to choose to be mothers or not, they do not even have the birth control as everything is controlled by men. That motherhood comes to form the basis of first the religion of society, which progresses, "as they grew more intelligent" to what Van calls a "Maternal Pantheism. (p.59) confirms its centrality in the society. Though motherhood is frequently spoken of as a sacred duty in America, it is the professional work that requires extreme meticulousness that defines its true sacredness in *Herland*.

Child education is also different from what the men have observed in their own American society. Van states that “the babies and little children never felt the pressure of that "forcible feeding" of the mind that we call "education” (p.95). There is no ‘must’ in *Herland* in terms of education, no compulsion. In fact, all children seem to relish their education and Van, shocked by their enjoyment, questions “if they loved to do it, how could it be educational?” (p.104). This question is deliberately designed by Gilman to illuminate and criticize US education, which by contrast is implied to be complicated and forcible education. Van, acting as spokesman for the culture, explains that “in our theory great stress is laid on the forced exertion of the child's mind; we think it is good for him to overcome obstacles” (p.104). Thus, when placed alongside Gilman’s feminist utopia, Van’s perception of education shows the deficiencies in Western education, appearing as cold, deliberately tough and designed to cultivate alienated individuals. The pedagogy in Herland, rather, is so powerful that in that it prepares the child to be conscious, to question and to search, while the education in America is based on grades, classes, and passing through a system. Van acknowledges his admiration: We have not so subtle and highly developed system as you, not approaching it” (p.105). In the educational environment cultivated by the Herlanders, everything is constantly evolving over time, unlike the system in America, which, despite the country’s relative newness, appears as ossified and lacking in true educational purpose. While discussing the children’s learning through play, Somel asks whether it develops the faculties you wish to encourage. (p.106) As Van contemplates the matter, he admits that in the States they still use the same material which “came down from child to child, along the ages, from the remote past” (p.106) and in the process he seems to see that it is obvious that using old strategies and games unthinkingly do not encourage the student to do better. He also observes that the children’s environment is prepared so as not to hurt them and, when observing the rubber walking rail that the toddlers practice their walking skills on, Van confesses that “they have never thought to provide that simple and inexhaustible form of amusement and physical education for the young” (p.107). The children in American society are not cared for as they are in *Herland*. Even a child’s propensity to injure themselves in an adult-centric environment is mitigated by the precautions taken in Herland.

In addition to the children, their education and environment, Herlanders work for the betterment of the country in all senses. “[The citizens of Herland thus all] sat down in council together and thought it out. Very clear, strong thinkers they were. They said: "With our best endeavors this country will support about so many people, with the standard of peace, comfort, health, beauty, and progress” (p.68). Every detail is taken into consideration, an impossible task for the American government Herland is written during the WWI.

The women can be considered as great thinkers but they differ from the women in patriarchal America as they have an asexual nature. They are associated with motherhood rather than femininity, which leads Van to ponder on the nature of it:

> These women, whose essential distinction of motherhood was the dominant note of their whole culture, were strikingly deficient in what we call "femininity." This led me very promptly to the conviction that those "feminine charms" we are so fond of are not feminine at all, but mere reflected masculinity—developed to please us because they had to please us, and in no way essential to the real fulfilment of their great process (p.58).

It is important to note Rousseau here as he typified the patriarchal view of women, he also claims that pleasing and soothing men is the utmost duty of a woman, Wollstonecraft harshly criticizes him claiming that the mothers must not teach them what they learn, they must encourage professional life. (Wollstonecraft, 1792 p.54). In this sense Terry, a somewhat classic example of male chauvinism, sees the women as deficient in terms of “feminine charms”. Rather, the women of Herland are warriors, with short hair and unwomanly dresses. Their lack of femininity and sex appeal is a source of confusion for Van and Jeff, and a source of significant frustration for Terry. As Cavataro points, having short hair “would practically be considered a crime of gender in male’s native land” (Cavataro 2011, p.2). In this way Gilman satirizes the gender construction of the patriarchal world by exchanging the accepted roles of men and women in society. By depicting the women like men, Gilman attacks the precepts imposed on women in patriarchal society. It can be assumed that Gilman feels the need for men to change by making the males learn from the females, and by likening them to women, she tries to change the belief of how a woman should be in men’s minds.

Terry expects the women to have feminine charms because of the shallowness of his knowledge about what being a woman is in his own society. “The men do everything, with us. We do not allow our women to work. Women are loved, idolized, honored and kept in the home to care for the children” (Gilman 1915, p.61). Terry accepts that the women in Herland are much more than being mothers; they are teachers, educators, environmentalists, and scientists. However, he criticizes the prevailing effect of motherhood on the physicality of the women, objecting that women are expected to please men. In his eyes, Herlanders do not have any feminine qualities, they do not love and they do not know anything about sexuality, which is the primary lens through which Terry is used to conducting his relationships with women. Yet in creating Herland, Gilman can be understood to be undermining this style of misogyny. In contrast to what Terry thinks, Gilman presents a platonic love, stating that “to them, love is not sexual; love is comradely, warm, sisterly, and motherly instead. So even after the heterosexual marriages, friendship and mutual respect should come before sexual expression” (Ying 2013, p.672). Thus Gilman exalts the love of sisterhood as opposed to the love of the men and women, which is described as artificial in the patriarchal world. In that sense she shows how the patriarchal point of views on sexuality do not work in Herland, as the women there are the mothers, sisters and they value friendship and sisterhood. Using Van’s point of view, Gilman can be seen as trying to school her male readers: “As I learned more and more to appreciate what these women had accomplished, the less proud I was of what we, with all our manhood, had done” (Gilman 1915, p.60). By forcing three male protagonists to explore the mechanisms of Herlandian society, she allows the male perspective to change what it accepts as right. Gilman in this sense criticizes the place of women in her own society by using Van.

In contrast to Van, Terry never accepts the Herlanders as human beings “They are not human. They are just a pack of Fe-Fe-Females.” (p.80) Terry, a womanizer and a misogynist, is used by Gilman to highlight some of the worst aspects of patriarchal American society. Terry believes fundamentally that women should be led and schooled by men, and despite the maturity of the society, insists on infantilizing the Herlanders into potential students: “These

women think of nothing but children, seems to me! We'll teach them" (p.119)! Terry attacks Herland because he cannot remove himself from seeing women's sole purpose to be the sexual fulfilment of men. This compulsion reaches a crisis when, after marrying Alima, he attempts to rape his wife, "[putting] in[to] practice his pet conviction that a woman loves to be mastered, and by sheer brute force, [and] in all the pride and passion of his intense masculinity, he tried to master this woman" (p.132). Gilman clearly states that "[i]t did not work" (p.132), and claims a victory for the feminism on display in *Herland* as the community shows its power of by enacting their strict laws against violation which results in the dismissal of Terry from Herland. The community does not object to the sex act itself: it accepts that Alima is Terry's wife and that sexual intercourse between a married couple is not abnormal, but Terry's brute force and insistence functions to show how the patriarchal world sees marriage and wifehood. Thus Gilman uses her proto-society to make the argument that despite a marital contract, humanity objects that it is not acceptable for Terry to force Alima, even if she is his wife. We can argue that Gilman punishes Terry for the thing that he knows, that is central to his philosophy: that "a wife is the woman who belongs to a man" (p.118). In Terry's logic, they are married, and so he finds the right to have sexual intercourse with her. His involvement with Herland's system of justice does not convince him that he is wrong, in spite of his banishment. While Gilman's inclusion of an attempt at marital rape and its punishment allows her to make a cogent feminist point about such acts that taking place in America society, critics have seen its inclusion as ultimately undermining her own arguments. Kathleen Lant, for instance, cites this incident as one in which Gilman violates her feminist ideology because she suggests that Gilman she cannot, it seems, satisfy her narrative requirements without violating her own ideologies (Lant 1990, p.303). However, we can argue that Gilman does not violate her own ideologies in that sense; rather, she includes the rape to show how men are a threat to women, and, through putting Terry through a trial, is able to both make a didactic point to her readers and vicariously punish would be marital rapists for this. Gilman's ideology is to teach both sexes, she does not differentiate between them. In fact, "in such a society rape is man's basic weapon of force against woman, the principal agent of his will and her fear" (Lant 1990, p.306). As the women here are stronger

than the men in all terms, it is the only way Terry can attempt to assert his dominance. Gilman tries to show how men can act brutally when their dominance is challenged. Lant finds this turn in the story disappointing, and questions "why could Gilman not tell a story that moved her beyond the "masculinized" literature she professed to deplore?" (Lant 1990, p.304) Actually, by including voices of masculinity, their views and how they change over time, she shows how she attaches importance on both male and female education. For Terry, she shows how it is punished when you rape. According to Gubar's analysis, "there is no central, secret interior place to penetrate, for there are no mines or caves in Herland; in this way, Gilman reimagines and reshapes women metaphorically. Women do not exist to be entered, conquered, or taken; they exist as agents of their own experience" (Slusser, Rabkin& Scholes 1983, p.141). Terry's banishment highlights that the colonizing male cannot act out his hegemony in *Herland* - his violence and misogyny simply have no place. With Terry's banishment, it can be assumed that Herland is Gilman's land that she created ideally for female. This land can be interpreted as Gilman's dreamland – a feminist utopia of everything she would like to see in female life. By using the 'utopia genre', she is able to outline her ideas of what would make a good place while at the same time keeping it apart and aspirational, because it is imaginary. It is what Gilman dreams of. She knows that she cannot separate women from the world to live peacefully in an isolated place. Rather it is a vision of how she would like the world to be. The utopian genre relies on imagination, a suspension of disbelief in order to draw attention to major failings in our present reality and provide hope for future possibilities.

This utopian world is the hope of Gilman for future life of mothers because Gilman "transforms the private world of mother-child, isolated in the individual home, into a community of mothers and children in a socialized world" (Lane, 1979, p.27) They are the community of mothers, as Gilman believes that the altruism of motherhood could alter the world and "bring into human life a more normal influence" (Degler 1974, p.33). She is convinced that motherhood could achieve this by a strong breed of children, and "a more enlightened generation of women evolving" (Elbert 2004, p.104) In fact this is the definition of "universal sisterhood" (Weinbaum 2001, p.285). She feels that women cannot

do what is needed, as the patriarchal society is a burden on them along with many household chores. Desirous of a new version of what motherhood could be, with *Herland* she achieves a "new form of liberated motherhood, leaving out the false sentiment often associated with the institution of motherhood" (Elbert 2004, p.122). As the general notion in America about motherhood is that it is understood to be a sacred duty, Gilman contrasts this idealization by suggesting that in fact it is professional work to be done meticulously. She tries to professionalize all the domestic duties in order to highlight their value both socially and economically. Gilman creates such a utopia to show how oppressive patriarchal society was at that time, to emphasize the entrapment of women in all senses in this repressive society and to propose a version of motherhood that is not necessarily domestic. Indeed, *Herland* is a concrete example that motherhood is achieved without domesticity, education given to children is achieved with almost no problem, as Knight and Davis state, "literary feminists like Gilman, expose the absurdities and limitations of patriarchal practices and institutions" (Knight 1999a, p.168). With her creation of an ideal world, Gilman shows how harsh realities are for women in the patriarchal society of America, and condemns these realistically by creating an ideal society with all its requirements. In writing feminist allegories, women writers found a way to describe "the failures of the present and the dangers of the future," and criticize patriarchal discourses (Showalter 1993, p.168). Gilman's achieves an autonomous life for the women in her novel, and through her male narrator, shows that the men could also change for equality in all dimensions of social life. Gilman wants to show that women could stop being the weaker sex, if they were not treated as such. If they are treated as they deserve, there could be a better world for two sexes to live in. By emphasizing the collective motherhood and sisterhood in Herland society, she rejects any biologically-grounded argument for women's emancipation, asks that childcare be considered a professional activity and that women in general are recognized for their potential. Gilman creates a society in which the motherhood and childcare takes place away from the domestic domain in order to show that not only women but also men are oppressed because of the preconceptions that they had to live with and they need to perceive and learn.

Herland is different from her short story, 'Making a Change' in that sense, as in 'Making a Change' the grandmother undertakes the responsibility of the child, not because the child needs old traditions, but because it enables the mother to feel liberated. While the mothers in Herland are always around, Julia, in 'Making a Change', is left without her child; she is not in direct relationship with him. Van notes that the children are really happy in Herland. "I never heard a child cry in Herland, save once or twice at a bad fall; and then people ran to help, as we would at a scream of agony from a grown person." (p.103). In addition; even the climate is taken into consideration and that is why "the babies were reared in the warmer part of the country, and gradually acclimated to the cooler heights as they grew older (p.103). Every detail is studied, worked on, tested and then implemented in the Herland society and, all procedures are done collaboratively without anything official and without any schools.

Thus *Herland* enables Gilman to play out her idea of 'social motherhood', in which she asserts that motherhood should be a professional role that entails extensive training and that the whole race shares joint responsibility for the children. As she criticizes the kind of motherhood which thrives on a brute passion, the kind she has seen in late Victorian North America, she states that the mothers in Herland are rather furnishing the children with education and wisdom. While nursing mothers typically keep their children with them for two years or more, the emphasis is on a society of women working together in solidarity.

2.2 Motherhood And Liberation in 'Making A Change'

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story 'Making a Change' was published in 1911. In 'Making a Change', the main protagonist, Julia a music teacher, marries Frank Gordins and moves into his house with him and his mother. Despite her profession, she gives up working after she gets married. She gives birth to a son and she begins to encounter some difficulties considering her new life as a mother. Being unable to attend for her son by herself, she unwillingly gives the child to her mother-in-law's care. While the grandmother is taking care of the baby, Julia attempts to commit suicide, but is saved by her mother-in-law. After the attempt, Mrs. Gordins realizes that taking care of the child is not enough to

help ease Julia's state of mind, as it is not motherhood she struggled with, but the social expectations of the role of motherhood that take her to the edge of death. As a solution to such entrapment—that of the patriarchal clash between being a mother and being an independent human being—Mrs. Gordins founds a kindergarten and Julia begins to give music lessons, while Mrs. Gordins, the senior, takes full responsibility of the child. When Julia starts to work, everyone in the family becomes happier.

In this part, I will scrutinize how Gilman tries to promote an idea of new motherhood, one which coheres with ideas surrounding the New Woman, a key trope in the feminism of the *fin de siècle*, by focusing on the perspective of the experienced mother and the perception of motherhood in patriarchal society. In this story too, Gilman conveys her idea that motherhood is a community responsibility, a responsibility for the whole race; race is the lens that Gilman uses to talk about society. Mrs. Gordins takes responsibility for caring for the child, but as she is the old woman, Gilman creates a conflict here, according to her own ideas. Throughout her fiction and non -fiction, Gilman tries to show that motherhood is not *de facto* the responsibility of the birth giver, but rather that it is a social duty. The conflict within Gilman's thought comes when she gives the child to Mrs. Gordins, an old-fashioned woman with her old-fashioned doctrines, which ought to stand in contrast to her idealized version of new motherhood.

In 'Making a Change' there are two mothers. The first is Julia, who brings with her the promise of an improvement in womanhood, as she is educated and has a career, and Mrs. Gordins, as the older, experienced woman. According to what Katharine Cockin states in an edited book *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Three Women*, the relationship between the young and the old woman results in anxiety "as sources of anxiety as well as sources of radical knowledge" (Gough & Rudd 2000, p.317) The anxiety of the relationship is clearly seen each time Mrs. Gordins criticizes Julia's mothering skills; however, the irony is that once Mrs. Gordins takes over the care of the child, it is clear that her old ways are not sufficient because the child does not become educated with the old doctrines of the old woman. Yet as Gamze Sabancı points out, "Mrs. Gordins is the agent of change for Julia" (Sabancı 2010, p.151). If she, as a patriarchal woman, does

not exist, the change that happens in Julia cannot be achieved. For Gilman, Mrs. Gordins represents how motherhood can become a depressing experience if it is done entirely with the sole responsibility of the birth mother, but by taking over the caring role she also provides a release for the birth mother.

Julia is struggling to look after her newborn baby. The beginning of the story shows this struggle as it begins with the voice of the baby "Waa waaaaawaaaa" (Gilman 1911, p.61). The crying voice alone makes the couple stressed as they are unable to soothe the baby and Frank, Julia's husband, quickly gets angry, exploding "Is there no way to stop that child crying?" (p.61) The tense relationship between the couple is clear, as is the husband's view that it is not his job to look after his son. At the time of this exchange, Julia is not feeling well, but she is still expected to be the one to take care of the baby, her husband's attitude showing precisely that parenting should be left to women and not to the men. Rather than questioning himself, Frank evades this responsibility and asks his wife to solve the problem.

Julia's identity is fundamentally transformed in the eyes of society, including her husband's, once her baby is born and rather than a professional teacher, individual and wife, she becomes only the mother of her child. This new life of her makes her discontented, as is clear from the very beginning of the story: "If Frank is not satisfied with the child's mother, he must say so, perhaps we can make a change" (p.61). As emerges in the course of the story, the 'change' that Gilman means is not a change of wife, which might be the assumption of patriarchal society, or merely a change of childcare arrangements, but a change for the whole family and for the whole society. At this point in the story, the senior Mrs. Gordins, though being an experienced mother, does not offer her help, while Frank continues to nag his wife because the baby will not stop crying. Her constantly crying baby is seen as Julia's "duty to take care of" (p.62). Julia is expected to be a mother, Frank is complaining about the baby's cry and the grandmother is reluctant to step in, and Julia accepts the rationale of this oppressive logic absolutely following convention. Julia and the society that she lives in believe that mothers are the only appropriate caregiver for a child and the three protagonists thus fulfill their traditional roles.

Gilman, however, uses Julia "in order to criticize the society in which the mothers are the only caregivers and they are left alone with their children" (Schwarzenbach & Smith, 2004, p.326); in fact, she is of the opinion that motherhood should never be done only by the mother and that a certain point, a child should be adequately socialized via meaningful relationships with others in order to prepare them for living within a community as previously discussed in Herland.

In addition to being inadequate to the child's needs, Gilman is also of the opinion that motherhood excludes women from society and makes them isolated. This in turn impacts on their ability to fulfill their expected duties as mothers and being left at home alone with their babies without any social support is the reason she gives for insufficient or ineffective mothering, and a deterioration in the mental health of the woman. Though women are biologically preconditioned to be child bearers, Gilman argues that it does not follow that they are biologically preconditioned for motherhood. It should not take place in a vacuum, it should be a shared experience.

Ultimately, Frank, being the patriarchal head of the house, insists that his mother take over the care of the baby. Mrs. Gordins answers with the classic marital speech act, and consenting by saying "I do" (Gilman 1911, p.61). While the proposal and acceptance could be seen as taking place between mother and son, Mrs. Gordins's answer can also be interpreted as sealing a contract between mother and daughter-in-law, a more socially and psychologically beneficial arrangement than the marriage in its current form between Julia and Frank. According to Polly Wynn Allen "Gilman frequently suggested in her stories that women's intergenerational needs for self-expression, like those of the older and the younger Mrs. Gordins, should be approached simultaneously, in a complementary, mutually supportive manner" (Allen 1988, p.153). It can be assumed that, despite both women's initial reluctance, Gilman shows that the two females need each other, and Gilman tries to prove that the motherhood responsibility can be shared.

Julia's discontent becomes serious and she attempts suicide. The lengths to which she is driven highlight, Gilman's insistence that women should be freed from their entrapped domestic world and her belief that only by

professionalizing the mother and the domestic work can women be liberated and thus become more effective and happier mothers. “The services of a foster-mother, a nurse, a grandma,” she insists elsewhere, “are often liked by a baby as well as, and perhaps better than, those of its own mother” (Gilman 1898, p.102). In terms of Gilman’s extensive philosophy regarding mothering that she displays through her works, we might argue that Mrs. Gordins is not suitable for being a good mother for the young baby because she has not been professionally educated in childcare like the model mothers of Herland. However, the figure of Mrs. Gordins enables Gilman to suggest the transformational benefits involved for other women who are involved in sharing childcare responsibilities.

From the outset, Mrs. Gordins always criticizes Julia’s mothering skills. She thinks that Julia is not a “natural” mother. She has the “musical temperament that does not always include patience, nor necessarily, the power of management” (Gilman 1911, p.63). Therefore, according to her, the problem is not the baby but the mother and “her absurd ideas” (p.65). As well as Mrs. Gordins, Frank also thinks that Julia is a failing in her role as a mother Yet, according to Gilman, the acquisition of mothering skills does not come from the old traditions, but from personal and professional development: For Gilman mothering comes from the inner feelings and the mother shapes her role according to what she has inside. When Julia unwillingly lets her mother-in-law start caring for the baby, she finds it hard to accept this, because of the maternal feeling that she has. Gilman shows this burden saying “young Mrs. Gordins looked at her mother-in-law from under her delicate level brows, and said nothing.” (p.61). However, Julia feels that she cannot pull her weight; therefore, she consents to her mother-in law’s offer, as she is exhausted because of sleeplessness. Although she has the maternal feeling, she has some problems in terms of turning it into practice. The senior Mrs. Gordins is depicted as experienced. “She has the real love of it, and the practical experience” (p.61). Julia does not have this practical experience. She has difficulty in finding a way because of the change the baby brings to her life as she was a musician and she was earning her money before marriage and, because of the dependency of a newborn child she is unable to nourish her personal life. Gilman clarifies the same thought in *Women and Economics*;

> Because of her maternal duties, the human female is said to be unable to get her own living. As the maternal duties of other females do not unfit them for getting their own living and also the livings of their young, it would seem that the human maternal duties require the segregation of the entire energies of the mother to the service of the child during her entire adult life, or so large a proportion of them that not enough remains to devote to the individual interests of the mother (Gilman 1898, p.133).

According to Gilman, women leave everything for the sake of looking after their children so they do not have any social life and cannot break out of their domestic life, which is consumed by motherhood. The all-consuming nature of being a new mother and her inability to deal with the newborn child provides the entire backdrop for the story; therefore, the burden, rather than the joy, that the child brings to her life can clearly be understood. She leaves everything to do with her job because of the maternal duties and her past life was happier compared to the one she experiences after giving birth. An analepsis serves to depict Julia's past life for the reader.

> Julia's nerves were at the breaking point. Upon her tired ears, her sensitive mother's heart, the grating wail from the next room fell like a lash---- burnt in like fire. Her eyes were hypersensitive, always. She had been an ardent musician before her marriage, and had taught quite successfully on both piano and violin. To any mother a child's cry is painful; to a musical mother it is torment (Gilman 1911, p.61).

Julia, an ambitious musician entrapped in her domestic life, gradually falls into depression because of her maternal duties that she is not used to. According to Allen, like many of Gilman's female characters, Julia Gordins is frustrated to the point of impending insanity by the conflicting claims of her family's care and the expression of her life work. (1988, p.169).

Julia is desperate as she is aware that she has to take the responsibility of her child, but for Gilman, it is the society in which they live that makes women feel that they are, alone, solely responsible for their children. Julia, as well as her mother-in-law, feels that there is a need for change. Is the "change" in this sense necessary for Julia or for the child? In the case of 'Making a Change' it is done for the child because both Frank and Mrs. Gordins, the senior, cannot understand what Julia is really experiencing. For Julia, at this stage in the narrative, the real change for her would be a change of the residence and away from what she feels as the overbearing presence of her mother-in-law, with

whom they live as a result of her husband experiencing financial problems at the start of their marriage. Julia thinks that she can find relief if she changes the residence. Her husband is always out at work and therefore "hadn't had the faintest appreciation of her state of mind. When people say they are nearly crazy from weariness, they state a practical fact" (p.62). This repeats a trope common in Gilman's works that men do not understand what their wives really experience. Likewise, in 'The Yellow Wallpaper', the protagonist's husband, John, cannot truly empathize with his wife's experiences along with not knowing to what extent she suffers (1892, p.4). From the point of view of patriarchal society, what women have to do within the domestic sphere does not entail any hardships from which suffering, anxiety, or depression could emanate. Gilman criticizes this gendered division of domestic and external labor in *Women and Economics,* by claiming that these "are not sex functions, they are race functions" (Gilman 1898, p.137)

Gilman argues that occupations historically have been divided arbitrarily between male and female duties, and that these is a societally rather than naturally conditioned decisions. Nevertheless, 'Making a Change' demonstrates how persuasive this gendering is. Frank Gordins only thinks of his job and how to earn his living in order to look after his son, mother and wife. When one of his friends asks about his marriage and home, he responds that "the child always cries but [that] it is natural and he dismissed the whole matter from his mind and bent his faculties to a man's task-how he can earn enough to support a wife, a mother and a son" (Gilman 1911, p.64). The man's task is thus to be the provider, while the woman's is to be the mother and the wife. However, Julia cannot conform to society's version of this expectation in that she thinks that with the baby "her heart overflowed with utter devotion and thankfulness" (p.63) but the reality turns out to be different. Her happiness, however, yearns for expression and she longs for music. She feels that she cannot lay open what she feels without the existence of music in her life.

After a great deal of effort and a lot of sleepless nights looking after her son, in desperation she submits to her husband's will and decides to make a change. It is difficult for Julia but Frank is happy about this decision. "Thank Goodness for that, Jule! You do look tired, girlie-" (p.63)? She said; "Yes, yes … I think I

will. Her voice had a peculiar note in it." (p.63). Julia is hesitant to make such a change; however, her husband, being the expected man of the time, cannot comprehend what is going on in her mind. He does not see how difficult it is for her to give her baby son to her mother-in-law; nevertheless, she acquiesces in the face of exhaustion. "'Would you mind looking after Albert? She asked in a flat quiet voice. 'I think I will try to get some sleep'. 'Oh I shall be delighted replied her mother-in-law'" (p.64). Julia is a young mother run ragged by child care. She eventually feels that the only way left is to commit suicide; as society prevents her from relinquishing these tasks without great shame, she thinks that she will set herself free by committing suicide. Luckily Mrs. Gordins sniffs out the scent of gas from behind Julia's locked bedroom door. She pulls herself through the transom window above the door, rescues Julia, and decides to take control of their lives.

Women's suicide rate in developed nations at the turn of the century was extremely high. Recent theorists have argued that these high rates could be understood as a psychic response to societal strictures on women. According to Howard I. Kushner in his article *Women and Suicide in Historical Perspective*, "the highest suicide rates are found among those women who are the most submerged in the family" (Kushner 1985, p.8). According to him, domesticity and domestic labors make women feel entrapped and they resort to committing suicide to free themselves from social constrictions. Julia is a case in point; however, she is saved. Next comes the true, more profound change in the story which is twofold. "Julia is embraced and nurtured by society—or someone who stood for the patriarchal ideals of motherhood—and Mrs. Gordins changes from critic to affectionate maternal savior. (Gilman 1911, p.66). The help of Mrs. Gordins shows the importance of female solidarity and what can happen when women choose to help each other. She begins to understand Julia's feelings and she decides to make a new change, this time with Julia's needs in mind. Her apologetic confession that neither she nor Frank had been good to Julia echoes how society could be cruel by convention towards women in general at that time. By taking responsibility for Julia's mental health, Mrs. Gordins enables the two women to find a way to liberate themselves.

Mrs Gordins Senior sets to work on making great changes and, recognizing her own love of babies, she decides to found what she calls a baby garden –a nursery- for fifteen babies including Albert on the roof, allowing her to take care of her grandchild and other children in the local community. Julia, meanwhile, is freed to give music lessons as she did before her marriage, when she was happy; and with their extra income they hire a professional housekeeper and French cook. Effectively, the older woman's solution ensures economic independence for both women. Having control over one's personal finances is key to Gilman's feminist outlook and is stressed many times in *Women and Economics.*

> Economic independence for women necessarily involves a change in the home and family relation. But, if that change is for the advantage of individual and race, we need not fear it. It does not involve a change in the marriage relation except in withdrawing the element of economic dependence, nor in the relation of mother to child save to improve it. But it does involve the exercise of human faculty in women, in social service and exchange rather than in domestic service solely. (Gilman 1898, p.127)

According to Gilman, the women should make changes at home and in their relations: a life of domestic service is not enough for women; they should be in social service as well. When Julia leaves her job and begins her domestic life, misery ensues and she can only find her own self again by working. She had her own business once and she was happy with that life. As "the labor which the wife performs in the household was given as part of her functional duty, not as employment" (p.129), by rekindling her own business and earning her own living she is able to release herself from that part of her domestic life.

Julia is now free of her duties as a mother. Nevertheless, some readers have questioned the authenticity of the ending. Sabancı (2010) asks "However, this ending challenges the credibility of the story. Is it a success in terms of the young mother's experience of motherhood?" (p.108) Gilman does not imply that Julia is not capable of looking after a child, but that she is unhappy doing so. Yet, as stated above, she is a successful and ambitious teacher, and Gilman's point is to disrupt the notion that a woman should have to give up a constituent part of herself in order to care most effectively for her child. This will bring us to the concept of Gilman's New Motherhood which includes "the fullest

development of the woman, in all her powers, that she may be better qualified for her duties of transmission by inheritance" (Gilman 1898, p.379). Julia is a professional musician, so her son can inherit this talent from her. Julia, as a working woman, is performing a social service as well. Given the opportunity to be free, she is a good mother to her child, even if her mothering skills serve as a contrast to her mother-in-law's and do not take the form of traditional conceptions of motherhood.

Mrs Gordins is depicted as a talented, capable and affectionate mother. Yet; there is no word saying that Julia is not. As we have seen throughout our analyses, Gilman lays emphasis on the importance of mother's being educated in order to be professional, and Mrs Gordins' background could be considered insufficient in that sense. Julia did try to adapt to the new conditions her baby brought to her life, and she does not leave her baby happily nor willingly. But in fact, what is needed is solidarity, for as soon as Mrs. Gordins helps Julia, and not just her child (Frank) by taking care of the baby Albert, her own child-caring skills professionalize and thus allow her to act as Julia's professional help in the mothering process. Thus helped, Julia can then go on to make the mothering experience her own.

How this might work out after the story's end is implied by Gilman in her Kitchen-Mindedness, which stresses the importance of a child's environment. "Surely if all children were brought up in blacksmith shops, it would make them good blacksmiths; if they were brought up in dental parlors they would become good dentists!" (Gilman 1910, p.144) It follows that if Julia's son is brought up surrounded by children coming to get piano classes, then he might have the capability to become a professional musician as well. Professional help can help the child as well; considering the story Mrs. Gordins is what Gilman finds as a way for Julia's professional life Gilman always criticizes kitchen-mindedness, which for her acts as a metaphor for domestic imprisonment. "Being kitchen-minded we cannot see that health is a public concern; that the feeding of our people is one of the most vital factors in their health, and that the private kitchen with its private cook is notable to keep the public well" (p.145). Founding a baby garden is a way of taking domestic burdens and turning them to a public service, and functions as a socially acceptable way of liberating both

women from domesticity. Polly Wynn Allen states, “more than anything else [Gilman] wanted to liberate the women from solitary, burdensome housework. To that end, she urged women to pursue as many strategies as they could think of, appropriate to the particular location and circumstances” (p.163). In this way, Julia is able to pursue her own career instead of being stuck at home. By leaving the question of Julia’s resumption of full motherhood duties unresolved, Gilman leaves open the possibility that it could be acceptable for Julia to choose to concentrate on her profession as her main passion, allowing her son to mainly cared for permanently by his grandmother.

Emphasizing that Julia is first and foremost a teacher and that she is happy and successful in her professional life shows that female solidarity works. What Gilman does is to create a New Mother, in line with the figure of the feminist New Woman, who resembles a father figure by supporting the family financially. Julia becomes the teacher of the children, but the responsibility of her son is left to her mother-in-law. If Gilman tries to promote the idea of social motherhood, it is still left obscure. In Herland, the birth-giver and the professionals work collaboratively in order to provide the best care for the children. By contrast, Mrs Gordins presents another possibility, serving as a helper for the birth of Gilman’s New Mother figure.

In the wake of these changes and economically independent new mother, all the members of the family begin to feel better, which is recognized particularly by Frank who notes the improvement in the wellbeing of the baby. This suggests that there is hope for Gilman’s model and for the future of the working mothers. As the baby begins to feel better so does Frank Gordins. “Frank Gordins was pleased when the baby “outgrew his crying spells”. He spoke of it to his wife. Yes she said sweetly. “He has better care.” “I knew you would learn said he, proudly. “I have,” she agreed. “I have learnt ever so much!” (1911, p.66) The couple begins to return to their old days and Frank is satisfied with this situation which shows that economic independence and being out of the domestic life is better for Julia, for the family and for the society.

Female solidarity presages Julia’s economic independence; that is why ‘Making a Change’ as the title referred, contains a hope for women and why “this story is said to have been entrepreneurial or economically oriented and it is particularly

instructive" (Davis 2007, p.26). It is instructive as it offers an insight for women into how they might solve their own problems and empower themselves. Julia's personal progression from professional independent single woman to happily married with a brand newborn to suicidal mother berated by her husband and his mother for her lack of maternal instinct to a woman who takes control of the situation, ultimately renewing and empowering herself means she can function as a model for Gilman's New Mother. Considering the time, Julia and her mother-in-law challenge the restrictions of the society in terms of the house service, motherhood and wifehood.

Gilman argues that society has conflated motherhood with domestic service, and defines mothers on the basis of the quality of their cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. With the character of Julia, Gilman proves that a woman can be successful if she has her economic independence, but, as we have seen, leaves open the question of whether this independence eventually coincides with a resumption of her mothering role. Julia's independence stands opposed to the dependence she outlines her non-fiction:

> "[it has been seen that] women, as a class, neither produce nor distribute wealth; that women, as individuals, labor mainly as house servants, are not paid as such, and would not be satisfied with such an economic status if they were so paid; that wives are not business partners or co-producers of wealth with their husbands" (p.7)

Domesticity should not keep women from having independent professional lives, but equally, it should not keep a woman from her invaluable maternal tasks either. She asserts that patriarchy does exactly that and in fact trivializes motherhood by offering no financial remuneration for the labor involved. She thinks that true motherhood will only be achieved with a life outside the home.

According to Gilman, a woman's economic independence enables her to nurture and mother as an individual and to bring up children who are both independent and primed to contribute to society. The great difference in Gordins family can clearly be perceived after Julia and the senior Mrs Gordins change. Economic independence is not sufficient, however. In order to be a mother. Gilman argues, a person needs to work on the skills of being a proper mother, as the characters in Herland do. In fact; her concept of New Motherhood dismisses the gender-constructed notion of motherhood. This new notion of motherhood provides the

scope of motherhood to all genders and all people. Motherhood should be attributed to society, not to the birth-giver.

As all of these decisions are made by Mrs. Gordins, she is the one who directs everything at home and Frank Gordins does not know how these changes happened; he is only satisfied with the happiness of his family. His ignorance demonstrates that despite his supposed position of power, he is the outsider in this family and knows very little of how it actually operates. In fact, when he first sees the baby garden, he becomes really angry, and has to be soothed at first by his mother by greeting and apologizes for the secrets and explaining their new financial situation. Frank asks whether his wife gives music lessons or not and Mrs. Gordins tells him how happy they are with this new situation and tells his son not to feel bad about a thing that has made all the members of the family happy (p.68). Then Julia appears and she also apologizes and tells that it is a real success and begs him to be proud of that.

Gilman shows that this happiness is achieved through economic independence and new motherhood. Nothing more is mentioned about the child apart from his happiness. As her mother-in-law takes on the whole responsibility of childcare, Julia assumes the role of a breadwinner. To placate Frank, Julia tells him how she is saved her from the danger that she was in. “The way to have my mind again and not lose you! She is a different woman herself now she has her heart and hand full of babies. Albert does enjoy it so! And you have enjoyed it till you found it out” (p.69). Frank begins to be convinced by her arguments, and although he is initially uncomfortable with both his wife’s and his mother’s new self-governing independence, he also is shown as beginning to adapt, telling his wife that he could stand it for their happiness. This shows that as patriarchal society’s logic is challenged, its effects begin to lessen and men start to recognize the stark reality of their prejudices against women; in addition, a woman’s independence enables them contribute to the income and expenses of their home, thus reducing the financial pressures on men.

Once Julia's attempted suicide is thwarted by Mrs. Gordins and she is saved, this story is a happy one with the entrepreneurship and solidarity of two female friends at its heart. Others have pointed out this transition from depression to hope, such as Davis and Knight’s essay in Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her

Contemporaries: “These shared life experiences informed their action, as did their [the narrator and Julia] struggles to depart from unhappy marriages. Both wrote their way out of these marriages” (Davis & Knight 2004, p.146).

Gilman herself offers a positive way of life for women with ‘Making a Change’, by allowing her protagonist to step outside the accepted social parameters. Yet the reader is left wondering whether Julia succeeds in carving out a role for herself as Albert’s mother, or whether her ceding of maternal duties to her mother-in-law permanently limits her intention to mother her son. With the joy and happiness in the air it can be interpreted that Gilman provides a happy ending and a vision of New Motherhood. Everyone feels better with the new arrangement, a dramatization of Gilman’s theory in her Women and Economics that “freeing an entire half of humanity from an artificial position would make better motherhood and fatherhood, better babyhood and childhood, better homes and better society” (1898, p.317). For Gilman, in order to free the women from the entrapment at home, domestic work can be made more professional; however, she leaves Albert permanently in the hands of Mrs Gordins Senior, which would seem to clash with what she really believes in terms of motherhood. Nevertheless, her point that female solidarity and a woman’s financial independence can overcome the acute psychological stresses of domestic motherhood is artfully achieved.

2.3 Motherhood as Sacrifice in ‘An Unnatural Mother’

‘An Unnatural Mother’ is a story written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman which was published in November 1895 in ‘*The Forerunner*’. In her non-fiction writings, Gilman was candid in disclosing the difficulties she experienced while she was raising her daughter Katherine and open about her thoughts surrounding the idea that motherhood is difficult to do alone. In the story, Esther, the main protagonist, discovers that a huge deluge and flood is threatening her village; running to inform the people, she makes a choice to bypass her own home, where her baby daughter is, in order to reach the village in time. After rousing the villagers, she runs back to her house to save her baby but in the process is killed by the flood. She sacrifices her life and saves one thousand and five hundred people in the surrounding other villages. But her decision to leave her

daughter alone leaves her criticized and condemned by the townswomen, who in relating the story to a stranger, gossip about her unconventional upbringing, marriage and motherhood. After her death, most of the townswomen abandon her daughter, who miraculously survives.

The story has echoes of Gilman's own experience of motherhood. After her marriage to Charles Stetson, she gave birth to Katherine and a short time afterwards separated from her husband and left alone with her daughter. When Charles got married again, she sent her daughter to live with her father and his wife and she began to tour the country and she began to give lectures. She was criticized because of that decision and was similarly accused of being an unnatural mother. In fact, she freed herself from the obligations and the restrictions of motherhood and she set foot to her most productive period in her writing career; she became intellectually prosperous. Though she suffered from grief and remorse, she considered it to be the best decision both for her and her daughter. While Gilman was raising her daughter Katherine alone, she had some difficulties and faced societal judgment as a result: "the good mamas of Pasadena were extremely critical of her methods", she recalled later (Gilman 1935, p.171) Being an unnatural mother, Gilman taught her daughter "the simple facts of sex" and let [Katherine] go around "barefooted in the California sunshine" (p.171), for which she was scandalized by the other mothers around her. However, Gilman in later years defends herself, arguing that "if they had thought, surely it should have been clear that it would have been of no benefit to her to keep that dear child away from her father and a pleasant home, to drag her over land and sea on lecture trips, or board with strangers while I travelled. That might have been "natural", but not good for the child" (p.174). Thus, in their family set-up, where Gilman, like Julia, had professional success, Gilman asserts that what she did was suitable and natural for her daughter.

In 'An Unnatural Mother' Gilman creates a world that she finds natural in terms of her point of view on child-rearing. She is also aware that it is not easy to think about motherhood as a separated form of life for mothers, Gilman tries to justify her own failures and as Catherine Golden suggests "her feelings of inadequacy" as a mother. (Golden, Joanna &Zangrando 2000, p.30). If Gilman experienced some conflicts in terms of her own motherhood, she often wrote to

understand and to justify her own actions. In other words; she wrote this story in order to prove that she is not an unnatural mother, although she is aware that she was perhaps inadequate; however, Esther's story is Gilman's assertion that in some cases, it is morally feasible for a mother to leave her child. Esther's choice, her style of mothering, Gilman's criticism of the scornful townswomen and her idea of social motherhood will be analysed. Unlike *Herland* where the utopia of social motherhood is realized quite well, 'An Unnatural Mother' highlights what happens when narrow, mean individualism informs the mothering norms, as on Esther's death, most of the townswomen refuse to take her daughter in. Gilman is critical of the townswomen mothers in 'An Unnatural Mother' who, unlike the mothers in *Herland,* do not take responsibility for Esther's daughter and do not choose to act in solidarity as Herlanders do. Gilman attacks the townswomen who think that Esther is an unnatural mother since she puts the welfare of many other children (and adults) ahead of that of her own daughter, showing their hypocritical insularity by their refusal to consider her orphaned baby's welfare. The critics like Catherine Golden, Joanna Schneider Zangrando also suggest that unnatural mothering was a repeated trope in Gilman's work, and that the narrator of 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and Julia in 'Making a Change' would likewise be considered as unnatural as they turn the care of their children over to another woman; however, she asserts that they are not, that it is natural to her, as she reflected in her own life choices, and that it is in fact natural for society at large. Nevertheless, while Gilman wrote this story because "she was also branded an unnatural mother after relinquishing custody of her then nine-year-old daughter to Walter Stetson [and h]er lifestyle [was] found [to be too] unconventional", Knight and Davis (2004) in *Charlotte Perkins and Her Contemporaries* imply that her decision continued to trouble her reputation throughout her life: Struggle as she might throughout the remainder of her life to define her decision as purely self-wounding—as having been made for Katharine's and the world's greater good—the label of "unnatural mother" would cling to her tenaciously. (2004, p.9).

Gilman does not find motherhood unnatural, she finds it really hard to deal with its responsibilities alone, and that is why all the criticism that she received was so offensive for her, as is made clear in her autobiography. "To hear what was

said and read what printed one was would think I had handed over a baby in a basket" (Gilman 1935, p.163). Gilman realized that the things said about her were unfair, but working out the legacy of society's judgment and working out how to separate motherhood from a mother's duty became a lifelong preoccupation in her work.

Being criticized and vilified, she starts to write 'An Unnatural Mother' "to expose the narrow-mindedness of people" (Knight 1999b, p.137). Apart from that, Gilman tries to show that motherhood when it isolates the mother is not natural; instead, as in *Herland* it should be collective. Gilman succeeds in *Herland* in conceptualizing a version of collective motherhood and she achieves something similar in 'Making a Change' as the child and the mother are separated from each other for the greater good of the individuals, the family and the wider society. In 'An Unnatural Mother' though she seems to fail in the acquisition of the duty of motherhood to the race, she gives a hope that it can be applied in the next generations.

Esther Greenwoood's decision to sacrifice her life, and potentially the life of her baby in order to save 1500 other people is judged and condemned, just as Gilman was judged and condemned, and this time, leaving the child to the care of another woman is less comfortable. As the townswomen gossip about her decision while at the same time ostracizing her orphaned daughter, Esther is accused of "negligence"; moreover, her upbringing, marriage and finally her decision which resulted in her sacrificing herself for the sake of others is found to be reproachable. The story begins at a meeting of different townswomen who are extremely judgmental of Esther Greenwood. Miss Briggs starts the barrage of harsh criticism saying that "No mother that was a mother would desert her own child for anything on earth" (Gilman 1895, p.67). The other women around Miss Briggs concur, agreeing that a woman's own child comes before anything else and that it is not proper for Esther not to have saved her own child first. Susannah Jacobs, another woman from the town, continues to criticize her saying "'And leaving the care on the town as if we hadn't enough to do to take care of our own!'" (p.67). The necessity of social mothers and collective motherhood can clearly be seen in this quotation, in this sense the women in that story are in stark contrast with the women in Herland, who as we have seen

are caring to the society's children without discrimination of biological parentage and who likewise care for each other. Only the youngest Briggs girl supports Esther "You don't any of you seem to think what she did for all of us, if she had not left hers we should all have lost ours, sure" (p.68).

Though Maria Melia agrees with what Esther does, all the others in the village do not. Unable to see the big picture and the sacrifice she has to make, the women consider her a bad example and the attempt of the unmarried daughter of Mrs Briggs who tries to bring about a different perspective is promptly dismissed. Her mother opposes her saying "you've no children of your own, and you cannot judge of a mother's duty. No mother ought to leave her child, whatever happens. The lord gave it to her to take care of –he never gave her other people's. You need not tell me" (p.68). Gilman satirizes the women who accept biological motherhood as preeminent over the wider good of society, and Maria is swiftly undermined and her ideas dismissed, as in the eyes of the townswomen, her single motherless status disqualifies her from commenting on motherhood; shutting down her opinion is in contrast to the perception that says every woman is a mother in *Herland*, because in *Herland* women have the responsibility of looking after a child even if they are not their biological mothers.

Gilman tries to emphasize the essentialness of social motherhood, which is not achieved in 'An Unnatural Mother'. Miss Jacobs remarked that "[Esther] She was an unnatural mother" (p.68). The women of the village believe that the ultimate priority is to take care of one's biological child, no matter what the issue is, and as she does not she is called unnatural. Esther, being brought up by a widower, does not see her mother and they think that not knowing what motherhood is the thing "that was ailed her in the first place" (p.69). The women of Toddsville believe that a girl should see a good, ideal example of a mother in order to be a good one. Gilman satirizes the conventional beliefs of women. "She never knew what was to have a mother, and she grew up a regular tomboy! Why she used to roam the country for miles around, in all-weather like an Injun! And her father would not take no advice" (p.69). As a girl without a mother, she is criticized for not being brought up as an ideal girl for the society. As her father raises her as a single parent, he does not force her to wear shoes or

to grow her hair long like the other girls. The townswomen claim that "she never seemed to care for dress and company and things girls naturally do" (p.71). Nothing that she does is appreciated by the townswomen and she is always criticized because of the culturally and socially unorthodox life she experiences.

The townswomen also think that "a man is not fit to bring up children; mothers have the instinct; that is all natural mothers have. But dear me! There is some as don't seem to be mothers even when they have a child" (p.71). Esther's father makes her read and learn more about the world just as Gilman's father had done; in this sense both fathers are like mothers and they want their daughters to be different to the townswomen who, believe that all women should be kept ignorant of everything, because "as if any man alive would want to marry a young girl who knew the evil of life!" (p.73) Gilman speaks to this conception of womanhood in her *Women and Economics,* "The girl must marry: else how to live? The prospective husband prefers the girl to know nothing. He is the market, the demand. She is the supply. And with the best intentions the mother serves her child's economic advantage by preparing her for the market" (Gilman 1898, p.269). Stressing that a man wants a girl who knows nothing shows how the townswomen internalize all the patriarchal limitations and they behave accordingly. They reject Esther and judge her and her father due to the challenge their alternative lifestyle poses to the status quo.

As we have seen, Maria Melia, the youngest of the Briggs girls, often tries to reason with the women in support of Esther's unconventional actions, but it falls on deaf and indignant ears as Maria "is not married and she is not a mother" (Gilman 1895, p.77). Esther is also accused of not having "maternal feelings" (p.74), but this is contested by the fact that she is known for always having a lot of children around her and for their devotion to her. Though she always has children around her, her self-sacrifice and the fact she left her daughter in order to save a lot of children (with whom she is depicted as having close relationships) leaves her condemned by society's judgment, despite the fact that it might alternatively be seen as virtuous. When she sees the dam about to burst, she runs in desperation to warn the three villages, dying in the act of returning to her own child, who survives, which is interpreted as negligence by

the townswomen since it left the responsibility of taking care of her daughter to the reluctant townswomen. However, Catherine Golden in her article 'Light of Home, Light of the World' argues that "Gilman makes it clear that women must be prepared to forego their duty to the private home in order to become the world's mother" (Golden 1996, p.142). Golden suggests that what this story means in the context of Gilman's output is that a mother should think widely enough to become a world's mother, and she uses the townspeople to criticize the existing patriarchal limitations and superficial ideas regarding being a mother. The townspeople judge Esther because she puts community before the self, and their individualism cannot comprehend why she would do that. Instead of being selfish she is considerate enough to save a lot of children and sacrifice herself, and, more shockingly, perhaps her own child.

As stated before, Gilman uses this story to relate her own experiences and criticize how the people in her society see motherhood in general. However, Gamze Sabancı is not convinced that Esther's mothering skills emerge unscathed. In her book *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Short Stories as a Social Criticism*, Sabancı suggests: "knowing that for Gilman the relationship between a mother and a child is vital, it is possible to see how Esther's action could be 'unnatural', even if it is admirable" (Sabancı 2010, p.114). So, it could be that Gilman is implying that what Esther does is unnatural; but for Gilman, always, the most unnatural thing is how motherhood is conditioned by patriarchy and then internalized by both women and men in the society.

Gilman highlights her ideas on motherhood by using Maria Melia. As Esther is dead, Gilman uses Maria Melia to illuminate Esther's personality, and imply, perhaps, her tendency toward social motherhood: "she was so nice to us children of the town. She was five or six years older than I was, and most girls at that age won't have anything to do with little ones. But she was as kind and pleasant" (Gilman 1895, p.70). Esther is always fond of children, so it is both natural and unnatural of her to save those same children before her own. But the voice of Maria Melia, even though it is not as loud as the other voices of the townswomen, can be understood as ventriloquizing Gilman support of what Esther does. These insular mothers, Gilman implies, should feel the

responsibility of having that child and take care of her. Though Esther is dead, Maria Melia represents the hope for the future of Esther's daughter.

As we have seen, Gilman's firm belief is that mother and child thrive if they share the same environment, and both the baby and the mother should socialize and be active members of this society. Both the mother and the baby need the society's support, as an individual mother could never be as the sole educator of humanity because for Gilman, the child should be a product of the society rather than a product of the mother herself; in addition, she does not reject the home and the family but believes that a more active social life would make "better motherhood and fatherhood, better babyhood and childhood, better food, better homes, better society" (p.317). Thinking that domestic duties and motherhood enslave women and circumscribe the female world, she tries to redefine the home and family. Patriarchal society and its expectations impoverish women and women are expected to care for their children without doing anything else, but Esther, like Gilman, does not conform to such strictures, seen as 'natural' mothering qualities by the surrounding society. Posing such a threat to these fundamental tenets of patriarchy is why both Esther and Gilman are so roundly condemned by the mothers around them.

Gilman in her non-fiction work "Concerning Children" expands her ideas on the responsibilities of motherhood and differentiates between a natural and an unnatural mother.

> "The natural mother is content to mingle her sacred duties of child care with the miscellaneous duties of a house-servant; but the unnatural mother, for the sake of her children, refuses to be the kitchen's maid, parlour-maid, and chamber-maid any longer. She recognised that the real duties are too important to be hindered in their performance any longer by these primitive inconveniences" (Gilman 1900, p.275).

Gilman states that the unnatural mother rejects anything that is domestic and this kind of mother finds all of these tasks too primitive while the natural one sacrifices herself for the sake of her child by subsuming herself in these duties. Gilman goes on saying that "she and the others arrange their households on a basis of organised professional service, with skilled labour by the hour and so each has time to perform some professional service, pay well for the performance of domestic tasks" (Gilman 1900, p.276). In this sense Gilman

seems to favour unnatural mothers as she always defends professionalism in motherhood. “The Unnatural mother cares for children –all of them- and knows that she can best serve her own by lifting the standard of child-culture for all” (p.277).

Gilman tries to defend social parenting but without the sympathy and support of a sufficient number of women, it fails in this story. Only Esther acts with the idea of a social mother but not the others. If the children get the same care, then the society will progress. Esther rescues other people while leaving her own child behind. Though it does not seem logical at the first sight, in fact, one of the women allows that Esther might have seen her husband, Jake, coming home and assumed that he will save their daughter. Believing that motherhood is a natural instinct, why does Gilman kill Esther, and remove her from her child? To underline her point that ignoring the needs of a child who is not biologically one’s own is also a dereliction of mothering duty. A parent is uniquely fitted for the purpose of raising children, and that ought not to stop with the limits of the biological family. This is why she does not think parenting responsibilities and judgments should be ceded to the state, as she argues in *Concerning* Children*;* “it is not necessary, or in any way desirable, for the State to remove the child from the parent. Parents are evolved for the purpose of rearing children, and possess highly specialised and urgent impulses in that direction, —far too useful forces to be ignored. (p.279)

Gilman is of the opinion that the mother and the society should work together to bring up a child, so what Esther does do not have any effect on society as she is still condemned by the society. The people in the society do not feel any responsibility for Esther’s daughter. In *Concerning Children* Gilman touches on it more.

> What thought, what care, what service does the average mother give to other people’s children? None. She does not imagine it to be her duty. She imagines that her duty lies toward her own children, and that it is no faintest fault of hers if other children suffer. If she sees little ones visibly neglected and injured, she merely blames their individual parents, and gives no further thought to the matter. (p.282).

Individuals living in the same society should share the duties such as education, motherhood and it is good for the development of society. Everybody in the society should feel this responsibility. However, the mothers in 'An Unnatural Mother' can be assumed as unwilling and stuck in the patriarchal conventions:

> "Young girls should be kept innocent! Mrs Briggs solemnly proclaimed. Why, when I was married I knew no more what was before me than a babe unborn and my girls were all brought up so, too" (1895, p.73).

As we have seen, Maria Melia's defence of Esther is always silenced by the society on the grounds of ignorance and inexperience. In contrast, in *Herland*, all women are willing to look after children and they respect the views of older generation in this sense. In 'An Unnatural Mother' the mothers see such collaboration as a problem. In addition to this, *Herland* offers a community of Gilman's New Women; in 'An Unnatural Mother', the narrow-mindedness of the townswomen when placed alongside with critical voices like Esther and Maria Melia shows that in a patriarchal world, social parentage is only possible if women are willing to embrace such change. As Esther is killed at the end, and there is no one living to adequately defend Esther, the older women, and the patriarchal order they stand for, emerge as victors. In 'An Unnatural Mother' she shows how one woman, by making the ultimate sacrifice, aids the community and becomes a world mother by thinking of the whole community, not only her own child; but the society was not ready for such radical social action. In parallel to this, according to Barbara Scott Winkler, Gilman "fought for a more egalitarian relationship between the sexes, but was not able to escape entirely from the Victorian conception femininity" (1980, p.174). Gilman could not fully enact her own ideologies, either in her own life or in fiction, without being occasionally hampered by the contemporary ideals of the female role, which is why some contradictions cannot be overcome in her stories. Yet having personally experienced failures both in marriage and in motherhood, Gilman resists the female archetypes of patriarchy and, through her fiction and her social theories, goes a long way towards justifying her own decisions about motherhood by creating a vision of the New Mother.

3. SEXUAL LIBERATION IN KATE CHOPIN'S WORKS

3.1 Sexual Liberation in The Awakening

The Awakening was published in 1899 by Kate Chopin. Edna is the wife of Leonce Pontellier and she is having a holiday with her husband and two children at Grand Isle. Edna spends most of her time with Adele Ratignolle from whom she learns a lot about self-expression, although Adele is a devoted wife and mother, unlike Edna. Edna gradually feels attracted to Robert Lebrun, the son of Madame Lebrun, and his affection and attention impress Edna. The relationship grows and, having realized the intensity of his passion for Edna, Robert Lebrun leaves as he is unable to deal with the realities of the society around him, despite the fact that he is known to be a womanizer. Upon his leaving, Edna returns to New Orleans a changed woman and has a sexual relationship with Alcee Robin; she leaves her house because she does not feel any bonds with her relationship and marriage, and moves to a pigeon house and she rejects her Tuesday conventions, which makes her husband angry. Mademoiselle Reisz, the unconventional and old woman, is the only person who knows about Edna and Robert's relationship and who encourages Edna to act upon her feelings; in other words, she helps Edna towards her sexual awakening. When Robert finally returns, they start to have an adulterous affair. However, he cannot escape the ties of the society, as she is the wife of another man, and he leaves. Edna realizes that she cannot live within the bonds of her society, and she liberates herself and swims far out in the sea.

Chopin explores Edna's desire to find and live her true self in terms of sexuality when she is still married. Per Seyersted, in *The Collected Works of Kate Chopin* states that "she was the first women writer in America to accept sex with its profound repercussions as a legitimate subject for serious fiction" (1996, p.32). Indeed, Kate Chopin is widely credited with being the first American woman writer who finds women's sexuality as the most vital subject to write on.

In this part of my dissertation, I will delve into the implications of self-expression and the solitude of a woman pursuing her own sexual liberation within the confines of marriage at the time. How Edna's mental suffering, her consequent isolation and her subsequent liberation along with her defiance against societal norms will be discussed in detail. We will see that one of the most significant confinements of Edna is her marriage in which she cannot reach the levels of passion and eroticism that she wants, even though convention states that marriage should provide a fulfilling erotic life as well. In fact, the opposite was quite often the case, and as Simone De Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* argued, it was possible to understand that "while being supposed to lend ethical standing to woman's erotic life, marriage [was] actually intended to suppress it" (De Beauvoir, 1949, p.436). As a result, most of the marriages depicted by American women writers are passionless, cold and unsatisfying for a wife. Chopin questions the ethics of sexuality, adultery and selfhood in these cold marriages. According to Barbara Ewell, "the novel quietly implicates us in its probing of such moral questions as the nature of sexuality, selfhood, freedom, the meaning of adultery and suicide, and the relationship between biological destiny and personal choice. (1986, p.158) According to Ewell, the novel scrutinizes Edna's choosing of her own independence despite her biological destiny, her adulterous attempts to find her own self and her quest for passion in her exploration of sexuality. She does not stay like Adele, who is an idealized figure of the time, but changes her ways, and follows her passion. Margaret Culley interprets this as coherent with the birth of the New Woman, where "women at all levels of society were active in attempts to better their lot, and the 'New Woman,' in the late nineteenth-century equivalent of the liberated woman, was much on the public mind" (Culley 1994, p.117). Margaret Culley states that female writings are revolutionary and untraditional; in fact, women's writings from this time are fundamentally unruly in their attempts to liberate the many and various female characters who are torn between the regulations of the existing patriarchal society and the new idea of independence. Elizabeth Ammons in her book *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers* describes how the writers are in limbo.

> The turn-of-the-century women writers found themselves, often in deep, subtle ways, emotionally stranded between two worlds. They

> floated between a past they wished to leave (sometimes ambivalently, sometimes defiantly) and a future that they had not yet gained. They were full members neither of their mothers' world, at the one extreme, nor of that of the privileged white male artist, at the other. Further, the ways of living and types of writing associated with "art" had by and large been shaped by men; they were not necessarily compatible with the kinds of lives and types of stories that women writers wished to express. Tension between the tradition they aspired to enter and the lives and fictions they sought to create as women was inevitable. (1991, p.11)

Edna Pontellier is one of the representatives of this tension. At the beginning of the novel, it seems that she is an ideal woman, happily married with two children; as the novel flows, however, it becomes clear that she is not the woman that she wants to be. She is in between; but nevertheless, she is in pursuit of her own life; as a result, she stands against the standards of the period in which she lives, as women during that time are expected to be "ideal", "perfect ladies", "angels of the houses" and, most importantly, to be submissive to society in general and to men in particular" (Showalter 1988, p.14). Considering the time, it is important to say that women remain in between, because in the nineteenth century many were unaware of the liberation that could be gained from sexual pleasure, but at the same time had a *fin de siècle* consciousness that made both the writers and the characters they created more rebellious, just like Edna. Thus, rather than giving a moral lesson, *The Awakening* explores the side effects of marriage, sexual desire and gratification, in the extra-marital relationships of Edna.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there is a shift from domesticity towards a more modern way of life. Women of the time, including women writers began to question their place, their rights to education, their social life, and their status within marriage. Woman writers began to examine the female protagonists who change from being submissive women to rebellious ones through their unconventional behaviours. This unconventional behaviour of the female protagonist comes about vis-a-vis the social and cultural changes which lead to the appearance of the 'New Woman'. In Edna, Chopin creates a character that overcomes the social boundaries of the time; she is different from what the society expects. Based on these changes, Edna Pontellier appears when the society and the culture are almost ready for that literary character. Yet, as

with all radical or revolutionary art, *The Awakening* was attacked by many critics because of its bold clarity about sexuality and its depiction of a woman's independence. This is a transition period and though Edna is living in that period, Showalter states that the novel was a "focus on Edna's consciousness" (Showalter, 1988, p.211). Parallel to this Sandra M. Gilbert, in 'The Second Coming of Aphrodite: Kate Chopin's Fantasy of Desire' sees Edna as a heroine who is "journeying not just toward rebirth but toward a regenerative and revisionary genre, a genre that intends to propose new realities for women by providing new mythic paradigms through which women's lives can be understood" (Gilbert 1983, p.211). It is a journey towards her consciousness. Thus Chopin uses Edna to show how a woman can emancipate herself sexually from a confining marriage. According to Kenneth Eble "*The Awakening* is openly about sex and is very open, indeed for her time perhaps shockingly open, in describing Edna as a sexual being" (1956, p.332). Such frankness is unexpected considering the time it was written because Edna is depicted as sexually active outside her marriage without taking her wedlock into consideration. Thus, Chopin problematizes Edna's sexual discontent in her marriage and allows Edna to embark on a quest of eroticism and passion. According to Nancy Cott "the central tenet of Victorian sexual ideology is passionlessness" (Cott 1978, p.220). Chopin interrogates this lack of marital passion and reveals Edna's eroticism in her suppressed life. Accordingly, the narrator describes Edna's marriage without a trace of warmth and passion. (Chopin 1899, p.21) and likens Edna's marriage to many others around her, which were supposedly fated to be. Edna's marital discontent can clearly be observed. "The acme of bliss, which would have been a marriage with the tragedian, was not for her in this world" (p.21). Her idea of an ideal marriage, passionate and sympathetic, is simply not for anyone living in this world, and for the ones who are happy, like Adele Ratignolle, the only happiness is in being productive. Indeed, Adele is "the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm. If her husband did not adore her, he was a brute, deserving of death by slow torture" (p.10). In order to be acceptable in the society of the time, the female should have womanly features but be personally passionless. In addition, according to Nancy Cott, "passionlessness was on the other side of the coin which paid, so to speak, for women's admission to moral equality" (1978,

p.228). The women of the time are not expected to pursue their own sexual pleasure; in addition to being brought up to be passionless, they are made to believe that revealing one's sexual drive is immoral. That is why Edna cannot find her place in marriage and she states that marriage is not cut out for her; she is unable to reach the happiness that she is dreaming of.

One of the most important reasons for being passionless is the social regulations that abound in the society, and which mostly associate women with maternity and men with business and earning money. Alice Stockham in her sex education manual for women reveals the logic:

> We teach the girl repression, the boy expression, not simply by word or book, but the lessons are graven into their very being by all the traditions, prejudices and customs of the society. Physicians and psychologists teach, and most women and men believe: That sexual union is a necessity to man, while it is not to women" (Freedman &Emilio, 1988, p.179)

Men are able to exert their sexual desires and passions while women are permitted no word to say regarding their sexual drives. Women are believed to be dormant in terms of their sexuality, while men are believed to be active. Edna undoes this Victorian logic. It is clear that Edna wants to explore her sexuality and the experience the true passion that she yearns for. She acknowledges that there is no passion in her marriage, in fact, it is sexless, which guarantees a lack of marital comfort and stability. Indeed, in almost all the marriages of the time wife was expected only to show her womanliness but in motherhood and in pleasing her husband. According to Paul Fancy,

> A woman is not expected to please herself through her womanliness in any other sphere other than marriage and motherhood. She is not permitted her sexual needs or desires and is not allowed to cater to her carnal instincts. Woman is destined only to dedicate her sexuality for satisfying man and so she is not encouraged to appease her bodily appetites. Through this, the sexuality of a woman is made more as a punishment for her, than as a pleasure (Fancy 2013, p.158).

Marriage is not a place for a woman to express her sexuality, only to indulge her husband's; thus women are expected to satisfy the needs of their husbands and give birth to children. Becker speculates that it is possible for women of the time to accept this situation because "the woman, as a source of new life, a part of nature, can find it easy to willingly submit herself to the procreative role in marriage" (Becker 1974, p.170). In Edna, Chopin creates a character who

challenges such logic. A woman's main role being reduced to that of being a mere birth-giver is exactly the position Edna rails against the ideal woman of the nineteenth century. This ideal is described comprehensively by Barbara Welter which "includes four cardinal virtues –piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power (Welter 1966, p.152).

Edna could not achieve the feminine role that was supposed to constitute her womanliness; she is not obedient, not domestic and thus she is not happy. This quote makes it obvious that marriages of the time promise bliss only if the woman achieves her female role, and in this case it can be interpreted that the marriage institution regulates human sexuality, particularly women's, by the state and with the help of the law. Edna's marriage is a big catastrophic disappointment to her, which she makes clear when she says "a wedding is one of the most lamentable spectacles on earth" (Chopin 1899, p.73). She thoroughly opposes an institution that she believes cannot make any woman happy; for her, marriage is just an illusion of happiness. Actually her married status resembles to that of the domesticated parrot, as Joyce Dyer points out in *The Awakening: A Novel of Beginnings*: "Like the domesticated parrot in the novel, Edna is vulnerable when she is free. She has been cared for too long by an owner and taught a language not her own. (Dyer 1993, p.79). The caged parrot thus echoes Edna's own entrapment in her passionless marriage. The parrot sometimes speaks Spanish or French words, an odd and disturbing habit which resonates with Edna's own sense of alienation from the people around her, who speak the same language but cannot really speak the same language. Moreover, the parrot's linguistic tics, we can say, perhaps imply the less restrained and more explicit language used by the Creole women who are around Edna. Their womanhood represents something different for Edna, for while chastity is of great importance for them, they are freer about speaking about sexual relationships in detail, along with the bodily realities of having a baby. Having been brought up by a Protestant father who is a Colonel in the army, Edna is not used to hearing such a language. In this way, the language

that the parrot speaks ventriloquize Edna's inner thoughts and responses that she cannot reveal. The language of the parrot is in parallel with the lack of sexuality in Edna's life. (Wolff 1996, p.21). Further, the parrot is colourful, and demonstrative perhaps of how women beautify themselves to appeal to the eyes of men. Lastly, it voices Edna's will to escape by reiterating "Go away! Go away! That's all right! (Chopin 1899, p.5). In this way the parrot speaks French or Spanish to speak the words which show Edna's true but supressed feelings, both about escaping and her sexual desire which she cannot reveal. The parrot's babbling serves as an opposite to Edna's silence at the beginning of the novel. As Urgo shows, at this stage in fact "Edna cannot appreciate conversation because, when we first meet her, she is essentially mute. For the first six chapters of the novel, she says all of four sentences" (Urgo 1987, p.23). Her silence is also a proof to show how females are silenced in their marriage and in that society. The parrot shows Edna's hidden feelings which she is aware of, but which the people around her are not. Edna performs her social role, visibly but inaudibly. According to Cynthia Griffin Wolff,

> Her outer self was confirmed by the entirely conventional marriage while her inner self was safe known only to Edna. An intuitive man, a sensitive husband, might threaten it; a husband who evoked passion from her might lure the hidden self into the open, tempting Edna to attach her emotions to flesh and blood rather than phantoms (Wolff 1973, p.452).

Edna is aware of sexual and sensual pleasure and she wants it; her husband does not realize what she feels. Critic Carl Degler makes it clear that Leonce lacks the sensitivity to understand what she feels, so Edna chooses to hide her feelings at the beginning of the novel because "there was in the nineteenth century a consensus on the subject of women's sexuality or that women were in fact inhibited from acknowledging their sexual feelings" (Degler 1956, p.1469). Though Edna is unable to acknowledge it at the beginning, it is clear that she is not an ideal woman of the time either socially or sexually. Edna is described as a rebel. She rebels first against her father, then against her husband and at last against society. Edna is clearly dissatisfied with the role of a woman as a wife: she does not want to be the "angel of her house" and so she sets out on a search for her own identity. Being an angel for her is equated with being passionless, either by affectation or constitutionally so. As Cott articulates, "If women were

to act modest and sexually passive, and also act without affectation, then, logically, they must be passionless" (Cott 1978, p.226). Cott argues that passionlessness liberates Victorian women from their husbands; it is an assertion of power against patriarchy. To illustrate, Leonce treats Edna as a belonging and looks upon her "as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property" (Chopin 1899, p 4). Though she is seen as if she is the belonging of her husband, she by no means venerates her husband; rather, she ignores him by "answering with little half utterances" (p.7). Thereupon "he thought it very discouraging that his wife, who was the sole object of his existence, evinced so little interest in things which concerned him, and valued so little his conversation" (p.7). As we can see, there is not a passionate relationship between Edna Pontellier and her husband Leonce. After her return from swimming, when Mr Pontellier returns her the wedding rings, she takes them and "she slipped them upon her fingers; then clasping her knees, she looked across at Robert and began to laugh. The rings sparkled upon her fingers. He sent back an answering smile" (p.4). Mr Pontellier behaves towards her as if she is his own property. However, later on, Edna rebels and casts off her wedding ring, symbolically and temporarily releasing herself from the marriage, where on "she stamped her heel upon it, striving to crush it" (p.59). Although she subsequently places it again on her finger, the violence of the gesture speaks to her sense of frustration with her marriage.

In fact, Edna's decision to marry Leonce, a Creole, was fuelled by her desire to rebel against her father and her sister. She marries Leonce, not for romance but to punish her family for their disapproval. This can be seen as her first attempt towards self-determination, although it turns out to be a misstep only serving to entrap her in a passionless marriage. However, Edna does not consider herself to be individually unlucky in her marriage; she thinks that all marriages are the same at that time and that everyone who takes part is just playing in a masquerade. Her own marriage she views as accidental; she marries Leonce just because he is a suitable party.

> Traditionally, one of the most important roles the woman is assigned is that of a wife with marriage and motherhood as the only acceptable modes of self-definition for women. In the nineteenth century, desire and sexual pleasure in marriage were considered inessential and the

> only purpose of sexual intercourse was procreation (Mikolchak 2004, p.31).

Mikolchak believes that in the marriages of the nineteenth century, the women have only two roles; being a wife and being a mother, there is no sexual pleasure in a marriage. When Mr Pontellier is disturbed because of his wife's behaviours and he consults a doctor, he tells the physician that "You understand we meet in the morning at the breakfast table", thus implying that their marriage is sexless (Chopin 1899, p.73). Moreover, the couple lack common time together; Chopin does not portray their dinner tables as Leonce is never home in the evening, and their separate lives contribute to their lack of sexual relationship. The narrator conveys their routinely sexless marriage via their dialogue in which he implies by saying that the mosquitoes may devour her, but not clearly states that he wants a sexual relationship by repeatedly asking his wife to bed; however, she tells him no to wait for her. (p.35)

Leonce calls for his wife to join him, suggesting that he would like to be sexually intimate, and further suggesting, perhaps the urges of an uncontrollable male sexuality, though he seems to show some consideration for his wife's health. Edna's reluctance to move can be interpreted as a symbolic refusal of the conjugal bed. The incident provokes Edna to compare her previous life with the one that she has now and she articulates that "she would, through habit, have yielded to his desire. (p.35)

Edna explains that once she was always available for him but now she rejects him which results in them living in a sexless relationship, in which Edna cannot find sexual gratification. But likewise, when Edna and Robert's relationship begins to blossom, it is important to note that she does not want him to stay with her near the hammock. Rather, she wants to turn to her inner self which is not known by anyone, and prefers solitude in her marriage. In fact; for Edna marriage allows for escape - escape from her dreams about the young cavalry officer, the man whom she believes that she loves before her marriage, it is an escape to reality. Her marriage, though without intimacy, is perceived of as a means of shelter, a place to hide and as a state of safety for women.

Adele, who is the exact opposite of Edna, realizes the distance between the couple, and remarks that "It is a pity Mr Pontellier doesn't stay at home more in

the evenings. I think you would be more—well, if you don't mind my saying it—more united, if he did" (p.76). Edna responds "Oh dear no" says Edna, with a blank look in her eyes. "What should I do if he stayed home? We wouldn't have anything to say to each other" (p.76). Adele implies that Leonce should be at home in the evenings as it might increase the couple's intimacy, including sexually; it seems that Edna has already come to terms with the fact that they have nothing to share, implying to her friend that she and her husband are already in a sexless marriage. By this point, however, even replicating Adele's picture perfect marriage would not be enough to make Edna happy, as is increasingly aware that she does not feel comfortable either as a mother-woman or as a wife-woman. Janet Beer states that "[a]ll Chopin's unhappily married women are in revolt against endings, against the idea of them as finished and completed in the act of marriage" (Beer 1997, p.44). Edna is entrapped by her marriage and in her domestic life, as were many women at that time, and as Beer states she rails against the notion that an incomplete woman is completed by the process of marrying and having children. Edna is not happy at home and feels restricted by the female domesticity which comes along with marriage. After she spends the evening with Ratignoles, she pities Adele's life because of the blind contentment that she has and states that "she would never have the taste of delirium" (Chopin 1899, p.63). Chopin means the intoxicating madness of following passion that steps out of social confinements and finds ways to satisfy both body and soul. In fact, Adele does not realize that life has another side apart from the marriage while Edna is aware that there is something more to this world. As Edna struggles to define herself in her world, she realises that it is not that she married the wrong person in Leonce, but that marriage as it is played in society is wrong for her. The idea that two people can be happy together like Adele Ratignolle and her husband is, for her, seen only as an illusion. Even the relationship between Adele and her husband is a blind contentment, it is unreal. To be married, happily or otherwise, for Edna at this stage, is to be interpreted as being in a state of sleep by Edna and she no longer believes that marriage can make any woman truly happy. This is because she has already embarked on a great personal journey: as Chopin writes, "she was seeking herself and finding herself" (p.58). This shows that Edna feels in a state of flux and in-betweenness as she is tries to find her own self.

Edna has been brought up by a strongly patriarchal man, and early in the novel she reveals that "she couldn't leave her father's presence when he was there, nor remove her eyes from his face", demonstrating his power over her (p.20). Because he is very strict patriarch, Edna is forced to acquire these beliefs throughout her childhood, feeling the weight of male domination from the very beginning of her childhood. Her father's patriarchal beliefs are clearly seen when he tells "you are too lenient, too lenient by far, Leonce. Authority, coercion is what is needed. Put your foot down good and hard; the only way to manage a wife. Take my word for it." (p.79) He begins to warn Leonce against women and his ideas on marriage shows the difficulties of being a wife in a marriage.

Therefore; Edna has some difficulty finding where she belongs. She hesitates between the strictures of her upbringing and the freedom of her own choices. According to Mikolchak,

> …the only way the woman can be defined if she doesn't suit the roles imposed by society is by saying what she is not. Not only the adulterous heroines find themselves in a linguistic void, but whoever tries to describe a woman deviant from the norms is also entrapped into talking about something that has no name. Indeed, if women are socially constructed as mothers and wives, what does it make a woman who is not a wife and not a mother? Linguistically such a woman does not exist or is considered an aberration, a spinster. But Edna is not even that, because she is married and has children (Mikolchak 2004, p.33).

Despite this feeling of being in flux, she already understands that she cannot find herself in her marriage, so she begins to act out of her marriage. Unable to conform to the expectations that she would find herself or be completed by marriage and motherhood and domesticity, she tries to find a way to get out of this marriage. According to Cynthia Wolff "he is an essentially prosaic man" (Wolff 1973, p.243). According to Wolff, Leonce is simply ordinary; he is kind to his wife and children but he spends very little time with them because he is always away on business. To show his affection towards his children, the narrator states that "though he had forgotten to bring the bonbon and peanuts of the boys, he loved them very much, and went into the adjoining room where they slept to take a look at them and make sure that they were resting comfortably" (Chopin 1899, p.7). He discovers that his son Raoul has a high

fever and comes back to tell his wife; however, she is quite sure that there is nothing wrong with him. Nevertheless, he reproaches his wife questioning “If it was not a mother’s place to look after children, whose on earth was it?’ He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business (p.8). This episode leads to him accusing his wife of being ignorant about her children and, as a typical man of the time, he asserts that it is the mother’s duty to look after her children and that as a man he is unable to deal with two roles simultaneously, that of breadwinner and of dedicated home-based parent. But the exchange tires Edna, and listening to him is “monotonous” and “insistent” to her ears. As she cannot define and express herself in her marriage, Chopin depicts Edna as a woman who is extremely unhappy in all dimensions of her life.

Her first defiance, as we saw above, is to her patriarchal father and sister, in her choice of Leonce as a husband. But as this choice fails to make her happy her defiance continues, as ultimately she challenges all social norms in order to liberate herself from all of her duties. That is why the most important theme of the novel is self-expression. During the book, Edna is transformed in many ways. While at Grand Isle, Edna faces real oppression which harms her a lot, this mood of her is strange to her and she does not prefer to share it with her husband. Rather she prefers to cry to herself emphasizing the pleasure she gets from solitude and independence. (p.9) Referring to loneliness and freedom, she tries to look for ways to free herself from the society’s boundaries; she defies the system of attitude of the typical Victorian woman. When she is at Grand Isle, she is the only one there that is not of Creole descent. The narrator states that the creoles have affected Edna because their freedom of expression was at first incomprehensible to her, though she had no difficulty in reconciling it with a lofty chastity which in the Creole woman seems to be inborn and unmistakable. (p.12). Though she marries a Creole husband, she does not feel that she is able to speak with the same freedom as her Creole friends because of her strict Protestant upbringing, although their freedom of expression impresses her. Having grown up in Kentucky, at traditionally conservative southern state, she then moved to New Orleans where she encounters a different type of behaviour to that which she is used to from her childhood. She thinks that Creole women seemed to defy the traditional role of the Victorian women; they

speak openly about sex and childbirth. This is apparent to Edna while reading from "[a] book [that had] gone the rounds of the pension. When it came to her turn to read it, she did so with profound astonishment." (p.12) While she is embarrassed by the books content, and takes to reading it in secret, her Creole friends discuss the book openly. She finds her lost self-amongst them, their lack of self-censure placing her own insufficiency in speaking and thinking freely into stark relief.

Her first act of self-expression is in trying to be more open, like they are. She finds her first explorations in self-expression liberating and soon Edna begins to be able to speak of and define her emotions with clarity. At the same time, she starts to feel the awakening of her sexuality. The "awakening" that Edna experiences is the awakening of her true self – her real humanity that has been lying dormant under a socialized exterior. The unleashing of the inner Edna in the face of societal convention constitutes the main thrust of the novel. Chopin gradually shows how a woman becomes aware of the transparency of the society in which she lives and how this woman decides to change herself in order to discover an authentic self underneath both socially and personally conditioned oppression. The Creole society that she now lives in also has a physicality about their social interaction, and a tactile warmth which is very different from the contact she had experienced while she was brought up. For Edna, this is encapsulated in Adele, and in the course of their developing friendship Edna chooses to "loosen a little the mantle of reserve that had always enveloped her. There may have been –there must have been –influences, both subtle and apparent, working in their several ways to induce her to do this; but the most obvious was the influence of Adele Ratignolle" (p.16). Adele Ratignolle becomes Edna's best friend and confidante; she charms Edna because she is open about romance and sex, despite being indisputably loyal and chaste to her husband. Adele is one of the most static and reliably figures in the novel; once Edna knows her, Adele acts in exactly the way she expects.

It is thanks to Adele that she becomes part of Creole society and socializes more freely, which relaxes her domestic duties and ties. Throughout the course of their friendship, Adele often acts as a mirror to Edna, revealing both her insufficiencies and her unattainable ideals. As Edna begins to get used to a more

sensuous way of behaviour, she feels a sense of liberation; nevertheless, she does not feel that this emancipation is sufficient. Physical liberation does not free her from the more deeply sedimented social expectations and conventions. Seyersted explains, "the female's capital is her body and her innocence, and she should be attractive and playful enough for the man to want her" and "she should eagerly welcome the 'sanctity of motherhood'." (Seyersted 1969, p.103). Why is it that Edna ceases to return her husband's sexual advances? Rather than defiance, it seems to be the result of a growing realisation that she is can no longer conform to social, including marital, norms. She has realised that she is not a wife-woman, and she cannot take enjoyment in the things that most women seem to be able to. She is a woman of independence, and she resists any kind of limitations imposed upon her. Adele, in contrast, is a woman "who insists on being a subject and a man's equal, but who cooperates with the male rather than fighting him" (Seyersted 1969, p.105). She is always on good terms with her husband while Edna is not. "She was keeping up her music on account of the children, she said; because she and her husband both considered it a means of brightening the home and making it attractive" (Chopin 1899, p.27). Adele always cooperates with her husband and that is why in a sense she is the "modern woman" of the society (Seyersted 1969, p.105).

Adele helps Edna to find herself in the transparency of Creole society, but in time Adele also becomes an object of sympathy for Edna, who sees her happiness in her mother-woman life as too safe to be thought of as really living and pities her. Thus Adele's happiness will not allow her to experience the extremities at the edge of human existence, which Edna is drawn more and more towards. Thus Adele functions as a catalyst for Edna's awakening, but also as a window into a life Edna no longer has an interest in conforming to; she helps Edna to see the deficiencies in her own life, especially in motherhood. Edna finds that the life of the mother-woman fails to satisfy her desire for an existence free from definition. She wants her own identity as a female, and her femininity overcomes her responsibilities. "I would give my money, I would give my life for my children, but I wouldn't give myself" (Chopin 1899, p.53). Adele fails to understand Edna's search for individuality, and Edna must look elsewhere for empathy.

The second way in which Edna begins to liberate herself is in exploring her increasing inclination towards music and art, and she learns to both find and express herself through these fields. At first she states that she likes music and she has some pictures in her mind while listening to music. “Edna was what she herself called very fond of music. Musical strains, well rendered, had a way of evoking pictures in her mind. She sometimes liked to sit in the room of mornings when Madame Ratignolle played or practiced” (p.29). She appreciates music, which helps her to find herself; by contrast Adele “keep[s] up her music on account of the children… [and] because she and her husband considered it a means of brightening the home” (p.27). What functions Adele does is for her children and family which shows her devotion to home, family and husband. Edna enjoys Adele’s playing, but when she first hears Mademoiselle Reisz, the experience is overwhelming, profound and physical, she states that never before has she felt that it arouses something in her mind and her wonderful body. (p.29) Chopin’s emphasis on the body is in parallel with Cixous’s convocation for women to utter the language coming out of their bodies, in this part Edna tries to find her language to speak through the music that appeals to her soul. Edna calls one piece that Mademoiselle Reisz plays “Solitude”, although the title is something else. The image that comes to her mind represents a moment of full self-expression in introspection for Edna, of internal creativity. Edna is a character who tries to develop her self-expression in solitude, which is perhaps why Chopin initially wanted to title *The Awakening* “A Solitary Soul”. As a woman looking for emancipation, she finds herself in music and art: thus when she hears “Solitude”, “there came before her imagination the figure of a man standing beside a desolate rock on the seashore. He was naked. His attitude was one of hopeless resignation as he looked toward a distant bird winging its flight away from him” (p.29). Her vision is deeply personal. Imagining a naked man marks the moment at which she starts to emancipate herself sexually; this is the first step of Edna’s awakening and her opening up to her sensual life, which has up until this point never been explored in her marriage.

While listening to Madame Reisz she feels fever burning inside of her. While she has always enjoyed music, and found it provocative for her visual imagination, it is the first time she realizes that music and art could be so

affecting and impressive, and it opens her up to feelings and emotions that she has never felt before. The overwhelming experience leads her to become more expressive of her emotions in public as well as in her relationships with art. Mademoiselle Reisz's only passion is music. She is unmarried and childless with eccentric manners which combine to alienate her from society, and as such she serves as a source of inspiration for Edna, and with her guidance, Edna's creative development continues. Being a successful pianist, she helps Edna to become interested in music for its own sake, an idea which stands in contrast to Adele's view of music, which is, for her, worth investing time in as it can be a useful tool with which to ornament life at home. In conversation with Edna, Mme Reizs remarks that "to be an artist includes much; one must possess many gifts—absolute gifts—which have not been acquired by one's own effort. And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul" (p.71). Mme Reisz believes that an artist can only achieve greatness when s/he ignores what society says. When Edna asks her to clarify what she means by "courageous soul", she answers saying "the soul that dares and defies" (p.71). With Edna searching for her individuality, she explores what artistic expression can do for her in her quest. Yet while Mme Reisz allows her to discover the passion in her soul, Edna must look elsewhere for to explore her erotic and sensual capacities, which are awoken in her encounter with Mme Reisz's virtuosic playing. This is because, as Killeen argues, "while Mademoiselle Reisz might escape the conflicts within her own sex by absconding to an area of sexlessness . . . Edna is unprepared to do this" (Killeen 2003, p.423).

Unable to continue repressing her sexuality, Edna begins to consider a passionate relationship as a channel of self-expression, because in her relations with Mr Pontellier she has been unable to reach self-actualization. According to Mary Papke, Edna thinks that "to be a mother woman is to abjure one's self for the sake of others; [and] to be an artist woman is to live celibate, to give all one's love to expression" (Papke 1990, p.82). She is looking for something different, a physical relationship to satisfy her increasing sensuality, which is why despite being greatly influenced by both Adele and Mme Ratignolle, she does not want to be like them. Nevertheless, both these women can be seen as catalysing forces in Edna's own, multidimensional awakening.

Being thus awakened to her status and the oppressive nature of social convention, Edna starts a journey of defiance. She quickly begins to experience some problems with her husband. In this testy marital tiff, it is clear that Leonce is worried about his wife's attitude towards her domestic responsibilities and her newfound forthrightness. The narrator states his anxiety clearly, and he sees that she is different from what she is and he does not understand that she is actually leaving her artificial self to recognize her real self (p.64). Her husband does not understand what she really experiences, or recognise that the wife he has known till now has been a performance of a wife woman, or a mother woman. He only sees that there is something wrong when she begins to ignore the duties expected from any married woman from that time.

A major indication that things are changing for Edna comes with her rejection of Tuesday receptions. The Tuesday, the most important weekly event on the social calendar of the local society women, is an open house in which people who want to visit her could come by and exchange pleasantries. Edna's decision that she no longer wants to open her house to this convention strikes at the heart of Victorian social traditions and, at her own domestic life. Rather than accepting visitors, she decides to pay a visit to her friends, and this infuriates her husband. As a result, he consults a doctor, exasperated and thinking that his wife may be going mad. Leonce tells Dr. Mandelet that "[s]he's got some sort of notion in her head concerning the eternal rights of women" (p.73). Mandelet asks Mr Pontellier "with a smile, "has she been associating of late with a circle of pseudo-intellectual women--super-spiritual superior beings?" (p.73) This little exchange highlights the emerging social reality that women have begun to talk about their rights and that the men are also aware of it, although, the sardonic tone Dr. Mandelet adopts implies that their talk about release and freedom from patriarchal limitations is being met with mixed reactions from the men in their lives. The doctor nevertheless advises Leonce not to bother her and assures him that it is something temporary. But Dr. Mandelet refrains from asking Leonce if there is a man in this case, as he is sure that even Creoles could not talk about matters of adultery. Though they are frank in their discussions, adultery and infidelity remains a strictly taboo topic.

Edna, however, does begin to have adulterous relationships, firstly with Robert, a grand passion which remains unconsummated, and then with Alcee, a physically satisfying, but ultimately soulless relationship. With both men, Edna learns to express herself sexually, a new experience and a marked change from the passionless intercourse she has shared with Leonce. She first feels that she is "pregnant with the first-felt throbbings of desire" (p.34) when Robert walks her back from the beach and sits next to her while she is sitting in a hammock. She thinks more and more about Robert and spends more and more time with him, until her thoughts of him consume her. She repeatedly expresses her desire to be alone with him, and she starts to talk about her desires more clearly and explicitly. After Robert suggests they go to Grande Terre the following day, "she gazed away toward Grande Terre and thought she would like to be alone there with Robert, in the sun, listening to the ocean's roar and watching the slimy lizards writhe in and out among the ruins of the old fort" (p.39). All her senses are evoked in this premonition, highlighting the sensuous and all-consuming nature of her growing attraction to Robert. Edna wants to have Robert sexually, but it is Robert who ultimately pulls away from the affair, leaving Edna passionately in love. She becomes obsessed thinking about him, his being is even dominant in her mind, her longing cannot be put into words, even when she tries to forget, he comes again to her mind with intense desire, in short she is deeply infatuated (p.60).

Edna has never disobeyed her husband, but now she is breaking all the social codes that she has to follow. She is even happy with Robert's domination over her thoughts. Edna finds the attraction and excitement that she has never felt in her marriage with Leonce. When she learns that Robert decides to leave for Mexico, she does not understand that he is leaving because he is attempting to do the honourable thing before they fall into an adulterous relationship. He leaves Edna on fire with thwarted passion, she feels as if she is in her teens. She does not mind the past as it has already finished, and the future as it is unknown to her, the most vital thing for her is the present because it was a torture to think "that she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded. (p.51)

After reading Robert's letters to his mother Edna asks if he writes any to her however; she says he does not really fall in love with her, she feels that she has lost another chance; she understands that she is compelled towards him and she finds her past, present and her future meaningless without him. Robert is known at Grand Isle to be a compulsive flirt, but unlike the other women who become the objects of his attentions, Edna is unable to get used to his charms and instead is seduced by his intimate attention. Robert attracts her sexually, and she finds herself falling in love with him, to the extent that contemplating a life without him she feels meaningless. Indeed, she finds meaning in the passion that she feels.

> Robert's going had some way taken the brightness, the colour, the meaning out of everything. The conditions of her life were in no way changed, but her whole existence was dulled, like a faded garment which seems to be no longer worth wearing. She sought him everywhere—in others whom she induced to talk about him (p.51).

Having been awoken to passionate lust, life becomes meaningless for Edna after Robert removes himself from the temptation posed by their intensifying relationship and goes to Mexico. Edna is left wounded, thwarted and disappointed and recognises that she has learnt how to feel passion. Having finally broken the barrier and learned how to swim she finds some relief from her desire and her memories of Robert in the sea. Indeed, the sea is figured throughout the novel as a symbol of escape and freedom, as it is eternal. Before she learned how to swim, the narrator tells the reader that "she wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" (p.31). In this image, she implies both that Edna wants always to push at her own and at other's limits, and at the same time in the returning trope of swimming, Chopin foreshadows Edna's death and emphasizes that Robert is an important figure as he is the one who teaches her how to swim, a way of her self-expression. Robert removes himself from the unruliness of his desire for Edna and travels to Mexico, leaving Edna with no object for all her passion. Soon after returning to New Orleans, she meets Alcee Arobin and she has an affair with him. The physicality of their relationship is placed front and centre. When he kisses her, the narrator tells us that "it was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming touch that kindled desire" (p.92). This is the first time in Edna's life that she has felt passion and sexual arousal from a kiss and the two embark

on an erotic relationship. In so doing, however, Edna learns that the sexual satisfaction that she feels towards Alcee is not the same as the passionate desire she has for Robert, and the multitude of emotions that she feels in the wake of their affair renders her confused and regretful and she, because she thought she might find herself in sex but instead she feels alienated, she cries and thinks about her husband's and Robert's reproachful look, yet she felt "neither shame nor remorse. There was a dull pang of regret because it was not the kiss of love which had inflamed her, because it was not love which had held this cup of life to her lips. (pp.92-93)

Edna's sexual affair with Alcee Arobin can be interpreted as a quest to explore her own eroticism, an area of her life that has lain dormant until now. However, her involvement with Alcee, confirms in her own mind that she feels a greater passion for Robert Lebrun. When Robert comes back, she wants to be with him again, and now feels liberated from her marriage because, not only has Leonce gone away on business, but she has also moved out of the family home while he is away, into what she ironically calls "the pigeon house".

> She leaned over and kissed him—a soft, cool, delicate kiss, whose voluptuous sting penetrated his whole being-then she moved away from him. He followed, and took her in his arms, just holding her close to him. She put her hand up to his face and pressed his cheek against her own. The action was full of love and tenderness. He sought her lips again. Then he drew her down upon the sofa beside him and held her hand in both of his (p.118).

The intensity of their sexual desire is clearly felt by both of them and as Edna is now more experienced, she is able to contrast to her feelings to those she has had when she has been with Alcee Arobin. In sharing her body with another man, she experiences her bodily liberation which can be interpreted as the achievement of Cixous call for the women to speak up with their bodies. Edna finds both her sexual partner and her individuality through her relationship with Robert, and feels that this is the first time she has experienced true passion.

> I love you," she whispered, "only you; no one but you. It was you who awoke me last summer out of a life-long, stupid dream. Oh! you have made me so unhappy with your indifference. Oh! I have suffered, suffered! Now you are here we shall love each other, my Robert. We shall be everything to each other. Nothing else in the world is of any consequence" (p.120).

She expresses her passion, how she has suffered when he was gone and this passionate outburst makes clear that for Edna, Robert is the true catalyst for her awakening. A process which not only includes love for another, but also love for herself. In fact, she loves her awakened self; she loves the whole process of awakening, and especially the sexual awareness. According to Paul Fancy, once awoken,

> "Edna Pontellier makes no attempt to suppress her sexual desires nor does she hesitate to throw off her traditional duties towards her family. She realizes that she cannot lead a lifeless existence by being an inessential adjunct to a man, as an object over which he rules. (Fancy 2013, p.159)

She acknowledges that her life until this moment has been futile, and now she feels that her relationship with Robert is a way to liberate herself, because he is the one who stimulates her to change. By liberating her body, she understands that she can no longer live a lifeless existence. Robert finally explains the reason why he left Grande Isle for Mexico, saying "because you were not free; you were Leonce Pontellier's wife. I couldn't help loving you if you were ten times his wife; but so long as I went away from you and kept away I could help telling you so" (p.119). He explains that "something put into my head that you cared for me; and I lost my senses. I forgot everything but a wild dream of your some way becoming my wife.'" (p.119) Edna cannot hide her feelings at this, exclaiming by saying "Your wife!" (p.119)

It is clear that Edna is surprised and shocked by what Robert says, but equally, by this point it is very clear that Edna does not want to be any man's wife in the novel; in fact, she simply does not want to enter into another institution which would control her. Alcee and Robert are just a tool that she uses to fulfil her need of passion and eroticism. According to Paul Fancy "in the novel *The Awakening*, the males, such as Robert, Edna's father, Edna's husband, and Alcee Arobin, all try to control Edna, but do not realize that Edna wants to be a strong, independent woman" (2013, p.158). When she responds Robert by saying "I am no longer one of Mr Pontellier possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours,' I should laugh at you both." (Chopin 1899, p.119) The narrator ironically tells us that Edna is awakened now and she will no longer be

the possession of any man. “Conditions would some way adjust themselves, she felt; but whatever came, she had resolved never again to belong to another than herself. (p.89) The problem is that Edna is not the person that she was at the beginning of the novel; she wants to choose her own life, and to be at the centre of her own life. Edna’s choice is not to marry anyone again because she wants to get rid of the limitations of all the patriarchal norms. That is why Robert leaves her with a message “Good bye—because I love you”” (p.124). What she really wants is passion and desire together and she can no longer live in a sexless marriage or be with somebody for the sexual arousal.

Her move to what she calls expression when she moves to the “pigeon house”, represents another attempt at self-exploration and expression. Moving out of her marital home in order to live alone is an act which is not heard of at those times, and another of Edna’s attempts to release herself from the domestic life that constrains her. She decides that she can no longer conform to her husband’s expectations and will no longer be forced to do anything by anyone. Thus, when her husband suggests taking her abroad, she refuses and she tells the doctor “’I am not going to be forced into doing things. I don’t want to go abroad. I want to be let alone. Nobody has any right’” (p.123). She moves to the pigeon house which can be interpreted as ironic because she chooses to call her alternative lodging as a pigeon house which are the domesticated birds that come and go. It can be suggested that Edna is a bud who comes and goes, which shows her in betweenness. However, the pigeon house is her place of freedom and a place of pleasure for her.

> The pigeon house pleased her. It at once assumed the intimate character of a home, while she herself invested it with a charm which it reflected like a warm glow. There was with her a feeling of having descended in the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual. Every step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual. She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life. No longer was she content to “feed upon opinion” when her own soul had invited her (p.104).

According to Carol Stone, “Edna’s little house, like Woolf’s “*A room of one’s Own*”, is a symbol for growing psychic and financial independence. In addition, even more important than these actions, Edna has defined herself as an artist” (Walker 1993, p.29). She begins to sell her paintings and thus she earns some

money, though she is warned by Mademoiselle Reisz saying that "to be an artist includes much" (Chopin 1899, p.70). Edna answers saying "you see that I have persistence. Does that quality count for anything in art?" (p.70) Though she tells that she persists in painting, Edna cannot count on the assistance of her female friends, despite the fact that Adele has waxed lyrical about her talent: "Madame Ratignolle's opinion in such a matter would be next to valueless, that she herself had not alone decided, but determined." (p.62). In many ways, Edna begins to figure as one of Gilbert and Gubar's lonely female artists who seeks for sisterly precursors and successors. That Edna "sought for the words of praise and encouragement that would help her to put her heart into venture" can be seen as part of this compulsion (p.62). As Edna begins to sell her paintings, the small financial independence it gives her allows her a sense of release from a patriarchal husband who considered it a mother's duty to look after children" (p.8). Her painting is part of her attempt to find her a place, because she finds herself no longer fit for looking after her children. While talking to Mademoiselle about leaving for the pigeon house she reasons it saying that her marital home, "the house, the money that provide for it, are not mine. Isn't that enough reason?" (p.88) Edna rejects everything that her husband, in other words, the symbol of patriarchy in her life owns. As she begins to earn her own money and gain her economic independence, she begins to free herself from another bond of patriarchy we have seen in Gilman: "the economic status of women generally depends upon that of men generally, and that the economic status of women individually depends upon that of men individually, those men to whom they are related" (1898, p.276). Edna wants to exist beyond these boundaries by becoming economically independent of her husband.

Her last awakening comes while she is talking to Dr. Mandelet: "the years that are gone seem like dreams—if one might go on sleeping and dreaming but to wake up and find—oh! well! Perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life" (Chopin 1899, p.123). Edna thus perceives that nobody understands her way of life and her defiance against the time. "I don't want but my own way. This is wanting a good deal, of course, when you have to trample upon the lives, the hearts, the prejudice of others—but no matter still—I shouldn't want to trample upon the

little lives." (p.127) She states that she only wants her own way without hurting anybody around her, she wants absolute independence of everything, and most of all the patriarchal values that exalt motherhood along with sexless marriages. Edna is finished with being either a wife-woman or a mother-woman.

Her last choice as an independent woman is to leave the life that she is in. After Robert leaves, she sees that she cannot have a happy life. She declines to live as a mother-woman and as a domestic woman in her husband's society so she does what she chooses and she commits suicide. Edna realizes that the society that she lives in is not ready for her, and she decides to kill herself without leaving any trace. To do so, she returns to the site of her first awakening, Grand Isle.

> "Edna walked on down to the beach rather mechanically, not noticing any special except that the sun was hot. She was not dwelling upon any particular train of thought. She had done all the thinking which was necessary after Robert went away, when she lay awake upon the sofa till morning" (p.126)

Edna has already resolved to end her life on the way to Grand Isle, and chooses this method in order to leave no traces behind and save her children from the disgrace of having a mother who is socially outcast. Her choice is a choice to set herself free, rather than to lose her own self in the society that she lives. According to Anne Jones (2013) in *The Female Artist in Kate Chopin's The Awakening: Birth and Creativity,* "she will not sacrifice her own autonomy because, she will not relinquish the core of her vision, which is not finally romance, but rather her own autonomous being… so she freely goes to the sea, losing her life. But she does not lose herself" (Walker 1993, p.30). Jones emphasizes that by committing suicide she keeps her vision and does not lose her autonomy; instead she gives herself to the eternal and she swims far out where no one can swim, breaking the boundaries as she so wished to do the night she first learned to swim, when she thought how "she wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before" (p.31). Throughout the novel, Chopin has depicted the sea as symbolic of Edna's freedom. At the end, the sea embraces her, and freedom embraces her, Edna, who is not embraced by anybody or anything in her life. "The touch of the sea was sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace." (Chopin 1899, p.127)

While she was swimming, "she thought of Leonce and the children. They were a part of her life. But she need not have thought that they could possess her body and soul" (p.128). Actually in this way, Edna enacts that she does only what she chooses and that she wants no longer to be possessed by anybody. Her awakening has been a swimming to the places where no woman has swum before, and so she ends her journey by killing herself. Edna, though admirable, makes a desperate attempt to resist the constraints of society and the patriarchal world. She dies as an awakened woman in all dimensions. Thus she is depicted as a woman who struggles to find herself in society and, once she has found it, refuses to give up her autonomy. What she achieves is the birth of a new self, which can act as a model for women in the future. Per Seyersted, in *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography*, considers Edna's suicide, rather than an act of submitting to failure, "a strong assertion of her identity" (1969, p.149). Edna treasures her hard won autonomy and chooses to leave herself to the sea, the most important symbol of freedom in the book.

> The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamouring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude. All along the white beach, up and down, there was no living thing in sight. A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water (Chopin 1899, p.127).

The sea allures Edna, she is first attracted to Robert in the sea, and the sea serves as the opposite of home and confinement for Edna; it is the place where she starts to contemplate the meaning of her life and where she decides to take action to save herself. The existence of a bird with broken wing while she is fading away to the depth of the sea, implies that though Edna goes broken-hearted, she liberates her own body and creates her own body language. Her choice of ending her life in the sea is of great importance as "the sea is a dominant symbol that can be variously interpreted to mean a world of adventure, of opportunity, of sexual pleasure, of danger, loneliness and death" (Fancy 2013, p.159). Edna chooses that place since it is the place where her awakening starts. According to Showalter,

> Madame Lebrun's *pension* on Grand Isle is very much a woman's place, not only because it is owned by a woman and dominated by 'mother-women' but also because…its principle inhabitants are

> actually women and children whose husbands and fathers visit only on weekends" (Showalter 1994, p.73).

In the light of Showalter's statements, Chopin implies that the females can only be awakened in places where masculine culture is not prevalent. Edna goes back to the place where she first liberates herself. Edna as Ringe states, is seen as "a solitary, defiant soul who stands out against the limitations that both nature and society place upon her, and who accepts in the final analysis a defeat that involves no surrender" (Culley 1976, p.206). In death, Edna rescues herself from defeat, and her triumph at the end is in solitude she wins.

3.2 Sex as Psychological Relief in 'The Storm'

"The Storm" is a short story written by Kate Chopin in 1898 and published in 1969 for the first time. In "The Storm", Calixta is a married woman with a son; she is constantly busy with her housework. Alone at home, she is busy doing something on her sewing machine. Her husband Bobinot and her son Bibi go to the store. Calixta realizes that there is an approaching storm: she shuts the windows and proofs every part of the house safe as the storm looms on the horizon. Meanwhile, Alcee Labarille, one of the men that she had feelings for in the past, and with whom she shared passionate kisses, stops by and tells that he needs a shelter to protect himself from the storm. She welcomes him but worries about her husband and son. Calixta is soon seized by the feeling of passion and desire and she kisses Alcee. Afterwards, they make love passionately and this makes Calixta forget about her worries. When the storm dies down, Alcee leaves and her husband and son came in. She welcomes them happily. Alcee and Calixta return to their family lives with a fresh and more content point of view.

Chopin continues to write on women's sexuality explicitly in order to depict the complexities of married women, which is still seen as the most neglected part of women's lives. However; Chopin boldly shows the sexual desire of a woman by associating her with nature, which is the most outstanding part of the story. Sandra M. Gilbert describes "The Storm" as "so revolutionary in its implications that its author never attempted to publish it in her lifetime" (Gilbert 1983, p.17). Emily Toth in her *Unveiling Kate Chopin* states that "so certain was Chopin that this story would be unacceptable to readers in her own

day that she did not even try to get it published." (1999, p.206). By questioning the marriage institution of her time, Chopin is really bold in expressing the sexual desire of women. It can be argued that Chopin desires to be the voice of the women after her, as she is aware that this story will not be published. Even though she is torn between the conventions and her own beliefs concerning sexuality, she ultimately chooses to reveal her own beliefs. Parallel to this, Carl Degler states that "in assuming that women had sexual feelings, these writers are offering clear, if unintended, testimony to women's sexuality." (Degler 1956, p.1472). Chopin proves that females should experience sexuality to the full, thus offering an unequivocal affirmation to women's sexuality.

In this part of my dissertation, I will delve into the sexual life of Calixta, who, as opposed to Edna, goes on living in her dull marriage after the passionate sexual affair with Alcee Arobin. Chopin tries to show Calixta's spiritual change and psychological recovery after the sexual affair she experiences. Chopin demonstrates that a married woman can go on living her life happily even after she has had an extramarital sexual relationship because she has a sexless and unhappy marriage.

The first sentence of the story reads: "the leaves were so still that even Bibi thought it was going to rain" (Chopin 1969, p.342). This is the tranquillity before the storm, and it can also be interpreted as the description of Calixta and Bobinot's marriage. Even Bibi, their four-year-old son, can understand that they have an unhappy and dull marriage. Though not much is said about their marriage, Bobinot is described as sitting "stolidly" (p.342), which presumably shows his dullness. In the description of Calixta, there is this sense of discontentment: she feels stuck in her marriage and life, and that is why she focuses on her menial tasks, "she sat at a side window sewing furiously on a sewing machine. She was greatly occupied and did not notice the approaching storm" (p.342). Being furious can be interpreted as the equivalent of sexual dissatisfaction. She is so busy that she does not understand that sexuality is as natural as the storm. Even their bedroom is described as boring, "the room with its white and monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious". It is dim because of the monotonous marriage and it is mysterious because it will keep the mystery of her passionate affair. This mysterious affair starts when

the storm approaches as Calixta “felt very warm and often stopped to mop her face on which perspiration gathered in beads. She unfastened her white sacque at the throat” (p.342). Calixta’s unbuttoning her jacket foreshadows the sexual encounter. As the storm is the symbol of sexuality, Calixta is not aware of her sexual desire, as the sexuality of women is underplayed for the sake of the sanctity of marriage. However, Chopin does not condemn Calixta’s actions; instead, by telling every point boldly, she casts what Calixta does in a favourable light. According to Allen Stein in her article ‘The Kaleidoscope of Truth: A New Look at Chopin’s The Storm’ “Chopin not only does not disapprove of the relationship but actually portrays it as a healthy affirmation of what it means to be a human” (2003, p.52). Chopin does not show any disapproval of Calixta’s action; rather she sees it as natural and human. The narrator, on purpose, juxtaposes her perspiration and her growing warmth with the imminent storm in that she uses the storm as a metaphor for Calixta’s growing lust. The danger and the tension in the air are associated with Calixta’s tension and warmness. Calixta hurriedly closes the windows and doors when she realizes the situation, and this can also be associated with her sexual lust because the thing that she is going to experience should be kept secret considering the limitations of her marriage. While she is trying to gather the clothes outside, she sees Alcee Laballiere, her ex-lover whom “she hadn’t seen very often since her marriage, and never alone” (Chopin 1969, p.343). Never seeing him alone shows the society’s repressive view of women very clearly. Calixta accepts him into her house, “Come long in, M’sieur Alcee. His voice and her own startled her as if from a trance, and she seized Bobinot’s vest. Alcee, mounting to the porch, grabbed the trousers and snatched Bibi's braided jacket that was about to be carried away by a sudden gust of wind” (p.343). Alcee 's grabbing the trousers of Bobinot shows that Alcee succeeds her husband Bobinot and that Calixta rejects all the social and marital constraints which have been imposed upon her for years.

Chopin portrays Calixta’s sexual desire in many ways. As the storm’s intensity increases, she needs to put something beneath the door. “’My! what a rain! It's good two years since it rain' like that,’ exclaimed Calixta as she rolled up a piece of bagging and Alcée helped her to thrust it beneath the crack” (p.343).

Calixta, by saying it is high time they had rain, reveals her own sexless life. 'Thrusting beneath the crack' is a phrase which has sexual connotations. Though here Alcee helps her to thrust the crack, actually it is Calixta who starts the sexual intercourse. As opposed to the beginning, the narrator depicts Calixta as more attractive, and it seems that that is how Alcee sees her at that moment. "She had lost nothing of her vivacity. Her blue eyes still retained their melting quality; and her yellow hair, disheveled by the wind and rain, kinked more stubbornly than ever about her ears and temples" (p.343) She is depicted as a vivid woman, her eyes have the quality to melt anyone who is looking, and actually this shows the melting of the ice between the two and the excitement that they feel as the storm becomes severe. The narrator emphasizes the change in Calixta's appearance compared to the beginning of the story. The narrator uses vivid colours to give her the contentment that she feels for having her ex-lover at home alone.

When they first see each other, the social mores that they live by are paramount, considering the desire they feel; however, when Calixta says "if this keeps up, Dieu sait if the levees goin' to stan it" (p.343), she symbolically indicates that she cannot resist the growing force of sexual desire anymore. She begins to look out of the window and in order to suppress her passion, she thinks of Bibi, "If only I knew where Bibi was" (p.344). While Calixta is watching the incessant storm outside, she gets afraid on account of the lightning and she finds herself in Alcee's arms. A blinding bolt lightning breaks the lovers' nervous tension, and they begin to make love; however, when Calixta says "the house will go next" (p.344), she implies that, as the woman is the symbol of the house, she is going to lose herself, and she does. According to Janet Beer, the breaking of the storm is also the breaking of the sexual tension. (1997, p.61). When the storm breaks, the house in which she is locked and entrapped will go, which means that she will let everything go as it is. Chopin refers to the song "which provides a motif for the tale: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can be floods drown it" and the sex here described (is) neither pornographic nor ridiculous" (p, 61). The association of Calixta's intercourse with water recaptures Edna's suicide at the sea. The two women reach to peak in their adulterous affairs with embracing the sensuous feeling of the water. The usage of water may symbolize

the ejaculation which Beer finds essential for Calixta as well and the narrator explicitly elaborates the scene in which she is described as warm and hot. The narrator likens her lips to pomegranate, and by making her keep silent, she wants us to hear the voice of the storm which is in parallel with what they feel, the voice of the storm itself represents Calixta's delightedness. (Chopin 1969, p.344). The red colour can be associated with lust and passion and simultaneously he makes her remember their kiss in Assumption, while the storm gets really violent outside.

> "Do you remember—in Assumption, Calixta?" he asked in a low voice broken by passion. Oh! she remembered; for in Assumption he had kissed her and kissed and kissed her; until his senses would well nigh fail, and to save her he would resort to a desperate flight. If she was not an immaculate dove in those days, she was still inviolate; a passionate creature whose very defenselessness had made her defense, against which his honor forbade him to prevail. Now—well, now—her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round white throat and whiter breasts. (p.345)

The narrator uses the word 'Assumption', which has the Catholic connotations to convey the passion that they failed to consummate in the past. The narrator makes Alcee use the same connotations when they have this adulterous affair. Chopin therefore mocks religious beliefs, showing her implicit endorsement of this adulterous affair. According to Anna Shanon Elfenbein "Chopin's reference to the assumption elevates the sexual experience to the status of a religious sacrament" and their passion during the intercourse sets up a "revelation of oneness of a man, woman and nature in an experience that precludes moral judgments" (1989, p.140). Chopin sees nothing wrong in this adulterous affair; rather she sees it as holy and essential as a sacrament. Seeing the man and the woman together as one also clashes with the society's gender roles.

The narrator focuses on the white color, as the 'immaculate dove' the 'white throat' and the 'white breast' Calixta. This is also in parallel with Cixous's insistence that there is a good mother's milk in her, which shows the everlastingness and plentitude of the woman body. This plentitude is reinforced when the narrator depicts her lips free enough to be tasted which thus parallels with Cixous's core on exploring the beauty of the feminine unconscious. Calixta's defenselessness is because of the male language around her; however, while having the defense during the intercourse can be interpreted as the

creation of Calixta's oral language, it can be elucidated that by using such sexually explicit language Chopin already wrote using her own language. Instead of being silenced, Chopin sounds Calixta and liberates her sexually to have a better life.

In addition to the interpretation considering Cixous, the term 'immaculate' also has religious connotations, alluding to the doctrine of "Immaculate Conception" (the conception of Mary without a "stain") and thus defiantly inverting the castigation of sexuality as the "original sin". Chopin uses the white color, which means 'impurity', when the adulterous affair is taking place. By linking the adulterous affair with religious terms, Chopin finds a moral rationale for the affair itself.

When Calixta reminds him of their first kiss and how they missed the opportunity to share this passion with each other, which increases their eroticism, she tries to play with prevalent ideas on what colors represent. By linking the two opposites together, she questions the common belief about what purity is. In addition, it also means that Calixta puts all conventions and restrictions behind her. According to Beer, "Chopin makes it clear that the two can only enjoy each other because they are married. The woman here is not finished but begun by marriage" (1997, p.62). With the marriage, she is freer now, so she wants to be the active part of the intercourse and Chopin boldly recounts every detail of their sexual intercourse,

> When he touched her breasts they gave themselves up in quivering ecstasy, inviting his lips. Her mouth was a fountain of delight. And when he possessed her, they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery. He stayed cushioned upon her, breathless, dazed, enervated, with his heart beating like a hammer upon her. With one hand she clasped his head, her lips lightly touching his forehead. The other hand stroked with a soothing rhythm his muscular shoulders. (Chopin 1969, p.345).

In being boldly explicit about sexual relationships, and by particularly questioning the sanctity of marriage, she shows that female sexuality should be as free as she depicts it to be. As Helene Cixous states, Calixta is the symbol of bodily liberation because by taking active role in the sexual relationship, the narrator depicts her powerful enough to use her body. Her body is heard because as Calixta is depicted more passionate than her lover. "The generous

abundance of her passion, without guile or trickery, was like a white flame which penetrated and found response in depths of his own sensuous nature that had never yet been reached" (p.345). By giving Calixta the full autonomy during the sexual intercourse, Chopin gives her a thorough control over her body, thus Cixous's call for generosity and anonymity is achieved because with Calixta it is clear that she frees the New Woman from the already entrapped women. With this open sexuality, Cixous urges the women to speak the language that comes out of their bodies and warns them not to have any feeling of lack and shame. Parallel to this Emily Toth shows that Chopin "had come to feel that there was no shame in sexual desire only in hypocrisy and indeed nothing less than a celebration of guilty love" (1999, p.206). Chopin explicitly shows Calixta as the passionate and willing participant of this intercourse, especially when she likens her mouth to a fountain of delight. Chopin uses the word "penetration" for Calixta, although it is mostly associated with male sexuality, which shows that Calixta has an active role in this intercourse.

According to Per Seyersted, in this work Chopin tells us that sexuality "is neither frantic nor base, but as healthy and beautiful as life itself" (1996, p.166). The beauty of sexuality and passion is shown when the narrator compares it to giving birth, "Her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright, was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world" (Chopin 1969, p.345). The word 'birthright' is significant, showing that a woman also has the right for physical pleasure just as men do. Chopin criticizes marriage and thinks that it limits the opportunities of women sexually, physically et cetera. No morality or any act of shame is seen in the story and Beer goes on to say that

> As in the *Song of Solomon,* the sexual act, as described, is there as a given, there is no arbitrating moral voice. The explicit account of their love-making is the center piece of the tale; it has to stand on its own because its very celebration of physical intimacy marks it off from the other aspects of both Calixta's and Alcee's lives which receive attention (1997, p.61).

Beer associates the openness of Chopin with the song, and lovemaking should also be at the center according to her. Chopin always makes Calixta laugh to show that her pleasure is at its peak. She makes her laugh both during the intercourse and after her husband and son come back to show that she feels no

regret or shame. When the intensity of the storm gradually decreases, their intercourse comes to an end. When the storm stops, there is the sun again indicating the rebirth and the liberation of a woman, "the rain was over; and the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems". The sun is rebirth for Calixta because the world is not boredom; instead, it is a treasure trove of gems. Both Calixta and Alcee return to their own lives and Clarisse, the wife of Alcee, is away. The world she returns to is filled with happiness, joy, and most importantly relief. Parallel to this Chopin's Edna also tastes the sensorial delirium of life when she has an adulterous affair just like Calixta, which can be interpreted as a revenge taken from patriarchs around them and in this way De Beauvoir's idea that adultery is a way to take revenge is artfully achieved.

Though she does not commit adultery Clarissa, Alcee's wife, by being away from her husband suggests that women should not deny their sexuality and should not be oppressed by the limitations of their marriages in the patriarchal society. Clarissa has "the first free breath since her marriage seemed to restore the pleasant liberty of the maiden days" (Chopin 1969, p.347) and Calixta "for the first time has the birthright" (346). Chopin acknowledges that "everyone was happy" (p.348). Calixta no longer feels stifled: "When the three seated themselves at table, they laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Labarille's" (p.346). Calixta and her family are happy and they laugh, their boring and unpleasant life is transformed into a joyous one. Chopin's last touch to Labarilles shows that Calixta still feels the passion and delight, and as a consequence she laughs. Chopin shows that Calixta returns to her life and she is more vivid, active and happy after her passionate affair, while Edna could not overcome the experience and dies. Briefly, Chopin throws into relief the different transformations that the female world experiences.

3.3 The Hidden Adulterous Affair in 'Her Letters'

This is another short story written by Kate Chopin in 1894 and it was published in Vogue in 1895. In this story there is an unnamed wife and husband, and, though the setting is unclear, the time is most likely to be the late nineteenth century. There is a pack of letters which the wife hides from her husband as

they are the letters she exchanges with another man. The letters reveal her hidden adulterous affair. As the wife is ill, she tries to destroy the letters; however, she cannot. She dies and leaves them for her husband to destroy. Her husband discovers them and decides to destroy them but he is tortured throughout the story questioning why she chooses to hide that secret.

Chopin problematizes the hidden passionate affair and the confinement of the female sexuality; she tends to have a liberal opinion on sexuality, especially for her time. 'Her Letters' is Chopin's first story "to deal explicitly with unfaithfulness, and it is her first to present an unapologetic adulteress" (Evans 2001, p.121). The wife in this story hides this passionate affair from her husband, and the concealment of this secret festers and results in her fateful illness. The conflict is structured between the social expectations in which the wife's personhood is subordinated and the female desire that is repressed and neglected. She is prevented from being sexually and socially independent., besides it is vital to state that it is her choice both to break up with her lover and to stay away from her husband. As opposed to Calixta, who continues her life more vividly, the wife in 'Her Letters' dies at the end, which can be interpreted as a happy death because rather than executing the destruction of her treasured letters by herself she leaves them to her husband.

In Kate Chopin's time, female sexuality was considered negligible; moreover, sexuality was only acceptable under the sanctity of marriage. Chopin in this story emphasizes that women should take possession of their own bodies and be the active participants of their own sexual desires and power. According to Janet Beer, "writing about sex was actually one of the ways in which Chopin could distance herself, as an artist, from the pieties of the age" (1997, p.41). Chopin in this sense wants to distance herself from religious beliefs and finds sexuality something to cling to for both men and women, "So in writing about sex she had to locate a means by which to communicate a sense of profound importance of the erotic in the lives of both men and women" (p.61). She underlines the importance of sexuality and passion in this story, though 'Her Letters' is not as explicit as 'The Storm'. Chopin is against the idea of sexual passivity, which was prevalent among the women of her time.

> As a general rule, a modest woman seldom requires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved of his attentions. The married woman has no wish to be treated on footing with a mistress. (Pykett 1992, p.15)

In her book *The Improper Feminine*, Lyn Pykett explains the central ideals of the construction of womanhood—they are expected to be sexually passive and be perfect mothers happy with their domesticity. Chopin, on the other hand, underlines the importance of sexuality in life, and she does not act against marital infidelity as she finds marriage to be a limitation upon the female. The letters that the woman has are the only proof of her passionate adulterous affair. The story opens with an unnamed female who is about to die, and she tries to get rid of the letters that she and her lover have written to each other which "was four years ago, and she had been feeding upon them ever since; they had sustained her, she believed, and kept her spirit from perishing utterly" (Chopin 1895, p.281). The word 'feeding' means that the letters become a source of life for her. It is clear that they break up, and she asks for the letters back. Though her aim is to destroy them, she cannot, as they keep her spirit fresh. As in 'The Storm', it is implied that the marriage she is in makes her mind and spirit perishable, and this suggestion can be seen in the depiction of the husband, "The husband is loyal to her and he wants to believe that she is also loyal to him. He knew her to have been cold and passionless, but true, and watchful about his comfort and his happiness" (p.284). Loyalty does not mean anything to the wife; a cold and passionless life is one lived in vain for her. Her marriage is just like those of the women in *The Awakening* and 'The Storm'— sexless and cold. The narrator locates the eroticism that the wife has never experienced in her marriage with that lover.

In the character of the wife, Chopin depicts the unhappiness in marriage, and the suggestion is that that this hidden relationship is the only thing that keeps her alive in what is otherwise a soulless cohabitation. Having such a cold and unhappy marriage, it is clear that as De Beauvoir states women get revenge through adultery and in fact it becomes the part of the marriages of the time. Instead of having the narrator and her husband as the focal point in the story, the letters and her adulterous relationship is stressed throughout the story. By not naming the husband and the wife in the story, Chopin enumerates that it is

the upheaval of the women. Beer also thinks that "Chopin portrays discontented wives, husbands and wives who are attracted to women and men other than their spouses, casual sex, straightforward lust and obsessive love which can be beyond both reason and endurance. (1997, p.42) Chopin portrays the wife as a female who has nothing apart from these letters in her life, showing that she is unhappy in her marriage, just like Calixta and Edna. The wife realizes that it is time to leave the treasure, which are the letters. She knows that it would be disastrous if anybody, which she means her husband, if he found them, stating his loyalty for her in years. (Chopin 1895, p.281)

Her discovery of the letters is similar to finding a treasure; however, she knows that if her husband finds them, there will be chaos and he will be dismayed. The wife states that her husband is really loyal to her, but as she is not, she does not want him to see the letters. She decides to burn them in the fire and then she regrets having done so and while she is throwing the letters away, she comes to her senses and begins to search for the one filled with love and desire. When she finds it:

> She laughed with pleasure, and held it to her lips. But what if that other most precious and most imprudent one were missing! in which every word of untempered passion had long ago eaten its way into her brain; and which stirred her still to-day, as it had done a hundred times before when she thought of it. She crushed it between her palms when she found it. She kissed it again and again. With her sharp white teeth she tore the far corner from the letter, where the name was written; she bit the torn scrap and tasted it between her lips and upon her tongue like some god-given morsel. (p.282).

The symbolic presence of the lover is in the form of letters in the story. This is the climax of the story, as the unnamed wife finds relief when she sees the above-mentioned letter. She uses these letters as a means of psychological and physical relief. The passionate love that she feels is given when she puts the piece of paper where his name is written into her mouth. The female without a name finds the meaning of life with these letters. The letters are presented as if they are a human being. Chopin uses them as metaphors for her beloved. They exist as the most important part of the story; in fact, they are more important than the husband and the wife whom Chopin does not choose to name. We can say that Chopin does not find it necessary to name the husband and wife as they are lacking in passionate sexual relationship, she attaches much importance on

the letters because she finds them more essential to the wife's life. The passionate relationship between the unnamed wife and her lover can clearly be understood through the letters. "How desolate and empty would have been her remaining days without them; with only her thoughts, illusive thoughts that she could not hold in her hands and press, as she did these, to her cheeks and her heart" (p.282)

Chopin personifies the letters, and the unnamed wife cannot attach meaning to life without them. She becomes happy when she finds out that she has not destroyed all of them—their destruction would be the destruction of her selfhood. The man who has written these letters is dear to her, which can be clearly understood when the narrator says: "This man had changed the water in her veins to wine, whose taste had brought delirium to both of them. It was all one and past now, save for these letters that she held encircled in her arms." (p.282) Chopin associates love with sexuality, and the wife has the letters as the concrete proof of this love. Chopin clarifies that to have the delirium of life, passion and eroticism are required, which Chopin's Adele never experiences. As Beer shows, "there are no limits to her respect for the many and various forms of desire but neither does she shy away from telling the stories of those in desperate need of escape from unwanted physical proximity of a lover or husband" (1997, p.42). The characters that Chopin creates are so comfortable in having an extramarital relationship that the narrator in *Her Letters* is unable to destroy the letters and decides to leave them to her husband and "asks him to destroy it unopened" (Chopin 1895, p.283). Leaving the letters to her husband can be interpreted as a revenge for her sexless and passionless marriage. Just like the wife, Chopin does not prefer to use the word 'husband', it appears for the first time at the end of the story though she has mentioned him before when she says he is always good to her, the word 'husband' appears for the first time in the story though she has mentioned him before when she says "in a manner he was dear to her" (p.281). Chopin obviously does not mention him in order to show the real centre of her life, because the core of the story is the letters rather than the people. Chopin gives central place to her passion, to her extramarital life. The letters are left to her husband but he believes that "she had made no mistake; every line of his face—no longer young—spoke loyalty and honesty,

and his eyes were as faithful as a dog's and as loving" (p.283). The unnamed wife is depicted as a passionate woman when she talks about her lover. When it comes to her husband, she is not. He gets rid of the letters, just as she wants, with the disturbing idea that "there is but one secret which a woman would choose to die with her" (p.287). This idea tortures him throughout the story and he chooses to end his life. Of course, it can be assumed he actually knows that the letters are about his wife's secret life.

In this way Chopin wants to show how the women of the time are unhappy in their marriages and how natural it is for them to protest it with an adulterous affair. The unnamed wife resorts to an affair, but she obviously chooses to remain married because of the social constraints. Chopin is in favour of her sexual freedom as "the unfaithful wife is given, there is no moral comment, no intervention in the text which would suggest that the narrator had any opinion at all about the woman's conduct" (Beer 1997, p.46). Chopin supports women in their sexual rebirth as she finds this liberation the signifier of the identity. As the extramarital affair is what they cling to throughout their life, we can say that it is a way for living. Parallel to this sexuality is seen as equal to having an identity. For Chopin, in order to free women from their confined marriages and to have their own identity, they should fulfil themselves sexually, even if it means they have extramarital affairs.

3.4 Desire versus Restraint in 'A Respectable Woman'

A Respectable Woman is another short story of Kate Chopin's, published in 1894. In this story Mrs Baroda, a lady from the upper classes lives with her husband Gaston Baroda. Mr Baroda is expecting a visit from an old friend of his, Gouvernail, which disturbs Mrs Baroda. She says that she does not want him near the house because of his bad reputation. When Gouvernail is at the plantation, she realizes that she likes him even though he has no traits that Gaston has. One night while she sits at the bench, Gouvernail comes and he starts to talk about the old college days that he shares with Gaston, and suddenly she realizes that she is attracted him. Mrs Baroda excuses herself from his company because she is "a respectable woman" and she does not want to make

any mistake. Then she leaves the city until Gouvernail departs, and she tells her husband that she is looking forward to his next visit.

Chopin actually mocks the idea that Mrs Baroda seems to obey the moral standards of her society, only to discover later on more about her needs and pleasures. Chopin in 'A Respectable Woman' deals "indirectly with topics she might not otherwise have been able to discuss", like "the erotic yearnings of respectable white women" (Evans 2001, p.247). Chopin problematizes the conflict that the character experiences between desire and identity in this story. Mrs Baroda oscillates between her own sexual drives and her identity and morality as a woman belonging to an upper class society.

Mrs Baroda is sure that she will not like Gouvernail, and, in her mind, he is depicted as 'tall, slim, cynical; with eye-glasses, and his hands in his pockets**'** **(**Chopin 1894, p.255**).** She believes that he is not a "society man" or "a man about town" (p.255). The narrator's focus on his being a society man shows how the society of the time attaches importance to appearances rather than plunging into the quest of seeing the inner side of human beings. Moreover; Mrs Baroda states that she has not meet him in person as he is a society man which clearly shows that Gouvernail does not belong to the upper classes so it can be said that she does not like him because of her identity as a woman in this society. On the other hand, she first meets Gouvernail, she is attracted to him and she finds that she really likes him though she does not find the features that her husband possesses in him. (p.255). Mrs Baroda associates him with her husband when she welcomes him. The narrator, stating that she does not know the reason why she likes him, discloses that Mrs Baroda tries to stop herself from feeling tempted as she is a respectable woman. It also shows how rigid the regulations of the society are for the women especially if they belong to the upper class. It is very important to note that the women at that time as De Beauvoir states are made to see the men and their beliefs from the perspectives of their husbands. With the temptation for the unknown, Mrs Baroda can be resembled to Edna; however, in contrast to Edna, she cannot actualize what she has in her mind as she is living in the world of appearances. Chopin does not lag behind when she depicts her unconsummate passion towards Gouvernail. She does not comprehend what he says, she just focuses on his physical being. Not the words

but the tone of his voice is of great value for her. She wants to touch him, but she cannot, she desires to be closer but she cannot. However, she cannot go further because of being a respectable woman and she prefers to leave without appearing too rude in order to escape the passion that she yearns for. (p.257).

Chopin's explicit language mocks with Mrs Baroda's insistence on being a respectable woman, she chooses to leave him without being rude, showing that how she emanates is of great importance to the society. In fact, Mrs Baroda is physically aroused by Gouvernail, which shows that she desires him; she knows that if she goes further, she will step outside the respectability of a married woman. Mrs Baroda thinks about the idea of committing adultery; however, as opposed to Edna and Calixta, she does not realise it physically. Even when she imagines kissing him and drawing him nearer, she cares about the requirements of being a respectable woman. Chopin makes her character experience emotional rollercoasters; however, she appreciates her strong will to make decisions. In addition, she portrays her sexual drive favourably, as it is a way for Mrs Baroda to shape her female identity. As Violet Harrington Bryan remarks, Chopin is a writer "whose interest is always primarily the internal world of her women characters as they search for a voice and space for themselves" (Bryan 1993, p.55). Her withdrawal from any adulterous affair despite her feelings shows how she attaches importance to the society around her rather than her own internal world. Thinking about her passion and the society at the same time shows that she stays in between; however, with intense eroticism, she shows that she is on a quest to find a voice for herself in a society "where men attempted to control female sexuality in their own interests" (Freedman 1982, p.206). The women are not expected to have control over sexuality considering the time. However; Mrs Baroda is described as "a very sensible one; and she knew there are some battles in life which a human being must fight alone" (Chopin 1894, p.258). With the emphasis of loneliness, Mrs Baroda claims her autonomy in her marriage and in her sexuality, thus she rejects the marriage which is resembled to a slavery by De Beauvoir. While a woman is expected to become the property of her husband in a marriage because the marriages are all like a business deal which does not make them different from prostitution, Mrs Baroda though she does not actualize the adulterous

affair itself, thinking out of the conventions of a marriage makes her different from the other women around. Though Mrs Baroda's marriage is not explicitly depicted as sexless, it can be said that they enjoy the life just because of being well-off and apart from a kiss there is nothing showing their eroticism and passion. She opts out of the realms of a married woman of the time as she moves from the standardized woman to the New Woman.

In spite of this control over women, their sexual awareness cannot be prevented as it is natural. According to Janet Beer "the simple fact of the physical presence of the man is again what awakens woman's sexual interest as Gouvernail's silences and indifference seem hardly designed to attract her". (1997, p.50). Gouvernail "made no direct appeal to her approval or esteem" in fact, he does not exert any extra effort to please her unlike her husband. In so doing she is attracted to him and becomes aware of her sexuality, though she does not experience it physically. It is courageous to think about it in a world where females have no sexual voice. To create a voice for the women, Chopin brings the white colour into focus with the white gown that Mrs Baroda wears and with her white scarf (1894, p.256), to make the readers believe that what Mrs Baroda wishes to experience is as pure as white. Chopin, in fact, uses the white colour when she depicts Calixta in 'The Storm' as well to mock with the idea of pureness that white colour represents and to unearth that this experience is guileless and unexceptional.

Being aware of this guilelessness at the end, Mrs Baroda, when she hears the possibility of Gouvernail's visit next summer, she says, "I have overcome everything! you will see. This time I shall be very nice to him" (Chopin 1894, p.258). Even though she could not take revenge just like Calixta does, Chopin gives a hope that she will give another chance to be nice to him, which signals her will to find her self-identity rather than being identified only by her husband. Gilbert and Gubar attack the society which the women find self-identity only in marriage and with Mrs Baroda the rejection of the conventional marriage and the welcome of the self- identity with the idea of extramarital affair is achieved. With this achievement, we can say that Mrs Baroda experiences some transformations compared to the beginning of the story. While she has nothing to look forward to at the beginning of the story, she is looking

forward to seeing Gouvernail again, thus instead of having no expectations as Friedan claims for the domestic women, Mrs Baroda is now awakened enough to dream about the future.

Mrs Baroda feels suffocated since she has not succumbed to Gouvernail and her sexual attraction to him. Now that she has overcome everything, it can be inferred that she leaves the door open for a future passionate relationship. By having this hope at the end, we can say that eroticism outweighs the society of appearances. The society and its regulations that oppress the women are negated with Mrs Baroda's resolution to be better with Gouvernail. Thus, at the end of the story Chopin gives Mrs Baroda the chance to follow through her passion and desire, along with paving the way for the other women to follow their passion.

In all of her works, Chopin does not resolve the entrapment of women by liberating them sexually as all her characters for whom she assumes liberation in a way still stay in their marriages. With their adulterous affairs, only momentary satisfaction can be achieved not an ever-lasting one. It is essential to state that the characters feel the in betweenness of the writers as well, because of the fact that they are aware of the liberation but they cannot go out of the social limitations frame. They are explicitly unhappy in their marriages, they look for happiness outside, but cannot continue without being trapped in their marriages. Showing that the women are still in need of social security, Chopin does not choose to define the women with sexuality, she just shows it as a way for relief, it is not an utmost liberation for them While Chopin does not choose to liberate women from their marriages totally, Edith Wharton does not see marriage vital for women and she chooses to keep Lily single to show that the infantilization of women in a society where everyone is made to believe that marriage is vital for women is a more outstanding problem to handle.

4. ENTRAPMENT IN SINGLE LIFE IN EDITH WHARTON'S THE HOUSE OF MIRTH

4.1 Entrapment in Single Life in *The House Of Mirth*

The House of Mirth was written by American novelist Edith Wharton in 1905. It tells the story of Lily Bart who is well-born and beautiful, but is, however, impoverished among the New York upper-crust society. Lily has been seeking a marriage partner who can afford to give her monetary strength in New York upper society. Having lost her father and mother successively, she is left to live with her wealthy aunt, Mrs Peniston who helps her. Lily, having two main goals in life which are marriage and wealth, fails to achieve either because her true love Lawrence Selden does not have enough money to present her the prosperous life that she wants. She frequently misses opportunities in making prosperous matches because she herself maintains close relationships with married men. Upon embarking on an unsuccessful speculation on the stock market, she takes some sleeping pills and ends her life.

Edith Wharton does not only problematize women's inability to maintain an independent existence outside the marriage, which leads to Lily's entrapment in single life but also discloses the hypocrisy among the members of New York upper-crust society. In this final chapter of the dissertation, Lily Bart's journey from infancy towards her adulthood and her death, along with the social dictates of the time that come to bear upon her, will be analysed. Elaine Showalter in her *A Jury of Her Peers* states that "through Lily Bart Wharton was judging and rejecting the infantile aspects of her own self, the parts that lacked confidence as a working writer" (Showalter 2010, p.314). This autobiographical bent in the novel can be seen as an attempt by Wharton to unpack her own infantile aspects through Lily. In so doing, Wharton both tries to fulfil her own will in Lily Bart's character and tries to meet the expectations of society, which signals the in limbo situation of the writers along with the characters they create.

Wharton lived and worked at a time when "successful women writers were [considered to be] the worst examples of vulgarity" (Showalter 2010, p.315). She wrote at a time when merely the fact of being a woman writer entailed rejection and censure from all aspects of polite society. The novel itself was written to condemn and criticize the cruelty and the degeneracy of Wharton's society. This society is hypocritical and ostracises anyone who do not meet its expectations. Thus Lily herself becomes the victim of this hypocrisy. Wharton clarifies how marriage and money are exalted in the society and how these two can bring an abrupt end to Lily along with her own infantile attitude. In spite of the fact that Lily is naïve, she is also entrapped both socially and financially which can be understood through Wharton's derisive statements. Wharton recognizes the greed endemic in the society, along with the double standards of morality that operate. Wealth plays the most important role in that society and it determines the fate of the individuals. In *Edith Wharton's Arguments with America*, Elizabeth Ammons notes that

> The culture at large boasted symbols of progress like the world-famous Woman's Building or the Amazonian Gibson Girl, announcements each of the modern woman's freedom from Victorian strictures. With this enthusiasm in the air, Edith Wharton sounded a sour, dissenting note. (1980, pp..2-3)

Wharton looks to separate herself from the pontifications of late Victorian ideas surrounding the birth of the modern woman, despite her work being exactly in pursuit of the same quest. In the world Wharton creates, Lily tries to find freedom; however, the freedom that she wants to find is shown to be a false freedom as she seeks it either through marriage or money, or ideally, both. Even though Lily is presented with several opportunities to get married, Wharton makes Lily reject this again and again, which is deliberately done to cast aspersions upon Lily's limited and repugnant morals.

Marriage, money and social appearances are interrelated issues that Lily deals with throughout the novel. Lily adopts what she has learnt from her mother about these issues because she is single and she is entrapped in her single life. In Lily's world marriage is seen as a vocation and as a necessity for women. As Susan Goodman points out, at that time "not much separated the business of marriage from the business of prostitution" (Goodman 1990, p.49). It is of great

importance to note that Millett emphasizes that wives give sexual consortium and they get financial security in return. This is what Lily is looking for throughout the novel. Because of the fact that marriage is seen as necessary, throughout the novel it is used as a symbol of contrast in order to emphasize her entrapment in single life. From her relationships and the social surroundings, around her, Lily is repeatedly taught that the only target in life for a 29-year-old girl like her is to find a rich man in order to marry. According to Linda Wagner, this kind of social conditioning is inevitable for all but the richest women in society as "the social system is so defective that no woman can survive it unharmed unless she has her own economic power" (1990, p.50). Lily is in need of economic power because she does not have her own work and money and financial security and the only way to have this considering the time is marriage.

Young single women such as Lily also have a shelf-life. She confirms this and betrays a little anxiety when she says "I've been about too long, people are getting tired of me; they are beginning to say I ought to marry" (Wharton 1905, p.10). In fact, she is also beginning to feel bored, because she does not prefer having a single life to fit in that society. Because marriage is seen as the profession for women and Selden answers "Isn't marriage your vocation? Isn't it what you are all brought up for?" (p.10) From the point of view of Selden, Wharton ironizes the institution of marriage in her own society and criticizes its governing logic which shows that the women of the time primary purpose is to reinforce the iniquities of that institution, compelled, as they are, to do so by the social forces around them. Lily is brought up to fulfil the needs of this institution and even after her mother's death, it is clear that she follows her precepts in terms of marriage.

Mrs Bart, Lily's mother, teaches her to marry a rich man because Lily represents her only chance to become rich again. Being a woman at that time requires a marriage with a rich man, which can be interpreted as the entrapment of women at that time. Her upbringing and training she gets from her mother have taught her that she must do her best to meet her goal of marrying a rich man. But Lily is not quite so hard-headed as her mother and she is described as sentimental; because she likes flowers, pictures because she is of the opinion

that the possession of such tastes ennobled her desire for worldly advantages. She would not indeed have cared to marry a man who was merely rich: she was secretly ashamed of her mother's crude passion for money. (p.39) However, she does not wish to marry a man just because of his well-being and Wharton makes it clear she has the feeling of embarrassment because of her mother's passion for money. In fact, Mrs Bart does not want to live "like…pig[s]" (p.32); she wants to live with money. By contrast, Lily seems more emotional, but by showing her sentimentality, Wharton emphasizes her naivety and her entrapment in her mother's own ideology. Though depicted differently from her mother; in fact, the two share the same material, and expensive, tastes: "Lily was naturally proud of her mother's aptitude in this line: she had been brought up in the faith that, whatever it cost, one must have a good cook, and be what Mrs. Bart called "decently dressed." (p.32).

Lily is conflicted by her mother's legacy. Though she professes shame regarding her mother's eagerness for money, elsewhere Lily betrays that she is actually proud of her. She finds herself ambivalent in the face of social conventions and material wants, and frequently she comes back to her mother's tenets. While Lily's mother looks for bracelets; Lily is likened to a bracelet, an adornment for her mother just as a piece of jewellery is; moreover, Lily's value is not just in her beauty, but also in the potential wealth her marriage can bring—not just as a daughter but as financial asset replete with potential returns. If she had been a married woman, Lily would not have felt her mother's effect on her so strongly; however, the rub is that in losing her mother's influence she would immediately come under that of her husbands. A polar opposite of Chopin's Edna, Lily is presented as too puerile to develop an identity born from within herself, and must always be shaped and conditioned from without.

Lily tries to fulfil the dreams which her mother could not. Mrs Bart cannot escape her obsession with money, costing out every material item that is part of the conversation: "Lilies-of-the-valley," she said calmly, "cost two dollars a dozen in this season" (p.35). Mrs Bart does not want to accept that she is poor and she sees Lily as a gateway to wealth. Lily's economic entrapment begins at home and then continues in all of her relationships. Lily relentlessly tries to fit

in with her friends and keep up with the demands of her upper-class society, yet "she ends up being the greatest fool" (Lekesizalin 2014, p.170). As Elizabeth Ammons points out "even the title of the book, though taken from a Biblical passage, suggests a mercantile firm" (Ammons 1980, p.25). Lily is also depicted as manufactured by wealth – as if she is a costly piece of art, "she must have cost a great deal to make" (Wharton 1905, p 32). For her mother, widowed by Lily's father, Lily comes to be seen almost entirely in financial terms.

> "Only one thought consoled her, and that was the contemplation of Lily's beauty. She studied it with a kind of passion, as though it were some weapon she had slowly fashioned for her vengeance. *It was the last asset in their fortunes,* the nucleus around which their life was to be rebuilt. She watched jealously as though it were her own property and Lily its mere custodian; and she tried to instil into the latter a sense of the responsibility that such a charge involved (p.39)

Mrs Bart sees her daughter as an ornament and Lily is expected to get married for a luxurious and comfortable life. Lily herself is too naïve to understand the significance of marriage and the social dictates around her. She misses her first marriage opportunity with Herbert Melson because she "had no definite experience by which to test the quality of her feelings. (p.74). Wharton implies that Lily does not know how to love someone, she feels that it is love however, she fails to marry Herbert before the novel begins, which shows that this society is not one to foster successful love marriages, on either side; ten years later at the age of twenty-nine, her seeking for love match seems naive. Lily's description of Herbert is physical and superficial, not so far from her mother's way of describing her. Moreover, in attaching importance to emotions and love, she shows herself still unaware that in order to live in this society she has to "accept its definition of her, and repress her individual self" (Sapora 1993, p.18). Lily is thus defined in society by her single status. Dale Bauer in her *Feminist Dialogics: A Theory of Failed Community* suggests, "Lily manages to retain her own identity during the performance rather than becoming the figure in the portrait" (1988, p.97). However, I would argue that in fact Lily does not have an identity to retain; she has to adapt herself to what the society needs, and, in contrast to what Bauer thinks, Lily indeed becomes the figure in the portrait of New York society. In becoming the figure in the portrait, she in fact, becomes the women with the expected features of the time. When the narrator

steps into Lily's subjectivity, we can see that even her imagination is childish because her preference would have been for an English nobleman with political ambitions and vast estates; or, for second choice, an Italian prince with a castle in the Apennines and a hereditary office in the Vatican (Wharton 1905, pp.39-40).

Her mother maintains that Lily's main problem is lack of visibility: "people can't marry you if they don't see you -- and how can they see you in these holes where we're stuck"? (p.40). But early in the novel, Lily's mother dies while on a visit. Before her demise she warns her daughter to free herself from this life by marriage. "Don't let it creep up on you and drag you down. Fight your way out of it somehow, you're young and can do it" (p.34) Lily integrates her mother's understanding of the world and her society's view of women into her own attitudes. However, she cannot fight that way without a father to meet the needs of his family. Mrs Bart always sees men as money-makers and she measures all the men according to their wealth. She knows that for a woman to be independent and powerful in the society the women need marriage and that's why she is limited as she has no other way to go. Lily could not fight with the social indoctrination that sees all the women as marriageable girls. She sees that married women, like Judy Trenor and Bertha Dorset, utilize a great deal of money, power and status through their marriages.

Lily is trapped in her single life and by virtue of being single she does not lead a desirable nor rich life. Yet even at the age of twenty-nine she is in no rush to confirm her security by marrying swiftly when she has the opportunity to: "Lily did not want to join the circle [of married women and couples] about the tea-table. They represented the future she had chosen, and she was content with it, but in no haste to anticipate its joys" (p.56). The narrator implies that she has no haste, because Lily is childish and she cannot marry. Wharton shows that Lily still does not know the requirements of this society; she is too dupe to understand this society. In fact, with the possibility of marrying Percy Gryce, it is clearly seen that she loves the luxury that wealth brings but she wants to have her own standards and live accordingly. "If she did not marry Percy Gryce, the day might come when she would have to be civil to such men as Rosedale. If she did not marry him? But she meant to marry him--she was sure of him and

sure of herself" (p.65). Lily's repeated assurances that she is sure she is going to marry Percy Gryce ring hollow, despite her supposed inner conviction, but Percy is young, rich and eligible and considering her economic problems she begins to consider the privileges marriage to him will render her. The feeling that she will marry Percy Gryce lessens the burden on her shoulders and relieves her because with this marriage she will have a life that she is pleased with. She will have the life that Judy Trenor and Bertha Dorset already have. (p.56) What's more "instead of having to flatter, she would be flattered; instead of being grateful, she would receive thanks (p.56). She wants to marry Percy Gryce because she sees marriage as business; her first thoughts are of the material enrichments it will bring her and the elevated social status she will be able to wield afterwards. She looks forward to being able to look down on the likes of Judy Trenor and Bertha Dorset, those who appear comfortable in terms of money and impress Lily. But Lily's musings come to nothing. Just as she decides that she must marry him, he tells her that he has just got engaged to Evie Van Osburgh, leaving Lily to contemplate her thwarted plans. Lily fails in following her mother's advice Therefore, as Linda Wagner-Martin thinks Lily is a conventional character as "a woman at the turn of the century like Lily was seen as unfeminine, inappropriate, and unseemly" (1990, p.57). Lily is always in pursuit of a rich marriage to meet the conventions of the society; Wharton shows that Lily is feminine and an ideal woman of the time.

Having failed to secure a match with Percy Gryce, the next possibility that emerges is Selden, an intellectual. Lily admires him, but Selden does not have the money to invest in her. During their stay at Bellomont, the two enjoy a conversation with each other about the meaning of existence. In the process, Lily asks him if he wants to marry her. He laughs and replies, "No I don't want to, but perhaps I should if you did" (Wharton 1905, p.84). As Dimock points out, "Selden calculates his love as if it were on a balance sheet, proportion[ing] his expenditure to anticipated returns" (1985, p.786). He sees that Lily's values are not his own, assumes that with her material desires she could never be seriously interested in him as a husband. Selden clearly suspects that Lily is not trustworthy enough for a marriage and after he hears about her dealings with Gus Trenor, he totally gives up. Later, he tries to pursue Lily seriously, but by

then it is too late to proceed as Lily fears she will end up living “like a pig” if she marries Selden. Wharton makes clear that the attraction between Lily and Selden is real, and that with him Lily has the opportunity to make a genuine love match. Selden wishes to love Lily, if only if he is sure that she will love him back. But Lily will not venture it, and, in the language of exchange, he will not take a risk with his emotions, particularly as he has no wish to be part of the society she craves. According to John Clubbe, “Lily has set up a limited personal space for receiving love” (1996, p.547). Clubbe asserts that Lily has more space for money; that’s why she does not marry Selden. What’s more, she has already circumscribed her future environment “[b]ecause she could not figure herself as anywhere but in a drawing-room, diffusing elegance as a flower sheds perfume” (Wharton 1905, p.201). Lily imagines her future as full of comfort and elegance. She wants a man who will support her woman incapable of becoming an adult. Because of her yearning for luxury “she disdains the shabby-genteel quality of Selden's flat almost as much as she scorns the expensive grossness of her aunt's interior. Lily perceives herself, not as an affectionate domestic helpmate, but rather as a self-willed objet d'art” (Clubbe 1996, p.548). Lily appreciates luxury, and is prepared to pay dearly for it. Therefore, she does not want to accept her love for Selden and she tries to dismiss the simple truth of her feelings for him in order to continue conforming to the rules of the society around her. In so doing, Lily curtails her chance of happiness with Selden and instead follows the dictates of society.

When Jack Stepney gets married, Lily compares the ease with which he marries with the difficulty that she has while trying to find a suitable man, “All Jack has to do to get everything he wants is to keep quiet and let that girl marry him; whereas I have to calculate and contrive, and retreat and advance, as if I were going through an intricate dance, where one misstep would throw me hopelessly out of time” (Wharton 1905, p.55). Her frustration shows the difference between the genders in matrimonial pursuits. But Lily also makes mistakes she is not aware of Men always want to take advantage of her financial vulnerability which, in turn, also underlies the fact that in reality she is not socially acceptable to the upper echelons of New York’s finest. This social disturbance leads to her economic entrapment.

Much later in the novel, knowing that in the past Simon Rosedale had wanted to marry her, she contemplates the match again. Though she had rejected him before, under increasing financial pressure her first thought is about her financial situation, which causes her to realize that even though she finds him boring, if he were to ask her again then she would have to marry him. In an attempt to get him to make a proposal, Lily proffers. “I am ready to marry you whenever you wish” (p.295). However; Simon Rosedale declines to renew a proclamation of his feelings by saying “My dear Miss Lily, I'm sorry if there's been any little misapprehension between us—but you made me feel my suit was so hopeless that I had really no intention of renewing it” (p.296). He tells her that he is still in love with her, but the gossip going around about Lily makes a match between them impossible. “’I don't believe the stories about you; I don't want to believe them. But they're there, and my not believing them ain't going to alter the situation’” (p.297). When Lily retorts asking him to consider if the stories are not true, and whether it would change things, Rosedale answers:

> “’I believe it does in novels; but I'm certain it doesn’t in real life. You know those as well as I do: if we're speaking the truth, let's speak the whole truth. Last year I was wild to marry you, and you wouldn't look at me: this year--well, you appear to be willing. Now, what has changed in the interval? Your situation, that's all. Then you thought you could do better; now’ (p.297).

In this way, Rosedale is telling Lily that she is a fantasist, that she lives in novels, in her dreams. But in reality the standards of society leave Lily in between, though she clearly states that she wants love. Because of the rumors going around, in a society where women are defined either “good” or “bad” (Sapora 1993, p.17), Lily is assumed as “bad”, if not by Rosedale then by the society, and it is clear he is not willing to sacrifice their support in order to marry her. “The quickest way to queer yourself with the right people were to be seen with the wrong ones; and that’s the reason I want to avoid mistakes.” (Wharton 1905, p.224) Wharton tries to show the society’s perspective on Rosedale’s rejection; a social climber, he does not want to waste everything including honor, pride and the sanction of the society by marrying someone at the heart of so much social scandal. In the past, Lily “would not indeed have cared to marry a man who was merely rich” (p.40). However, being unaware of her limitations around her, she continues unaware that she has limited options

for a better future. She fails to recognize herself as a commodity that men will purchase rather than marry for love.

Lily is repeatedly described in terms of an artistic creation, replete with the hidden violence and toil integral to every manufactured product. When Selden first encounters Lily, his description emphasizes that everything about her seems to be external – outside, yet inside she is naïve and unknowable, because she does not know herself. Every word used to depict her is mostly related to the appearances which can be called external, the narrator asserts that no matter how beautiful she is, the inner side "is applied on vulgar clay" and her coarse configuration will not make her material fine, instead it just transforms her into a worthless shape (p.6) Lily's upbringing teaches her to believe that she could solve everything with her appearance, and she is taught to use her beauty as capital. "Lily's sexual attractiveness is undeniably a material asset in her struggle to improve her social and financial position through marriage. But ironically it is also a liability as long as it is not backed up by money and status" (Lekesizalın 2014, p.171). According to Lekesizalın, just like Gerty Farish, Selden's cousin and Lily's best friend, Lily can only marry someone with money. She is beautiful; however, without money she will always lack security and status. The burden of her beauty is significant. She remembers how her mother, after they lost their money, fiercely laid the responsibility for their future on her looks: "'But you'll get it all back—you'll get it all back, with your face.'…The remembrance roused a whole train of association, and she lay in the darkness reconstructing the past out of which her present had grown'" (Wharton 1905, p.32). She is made to believe that she has been made to be looked at. As Ruth Bernard Yeazell suggests in 'The Conspicuous Wasting of Lily Bart', everyone in the novel is a "looker-on and appearances count the most" (Yeazell 1992, p.731). People at all levels of society are watching Lily as she is brought up to be watched. Yet her exalted beauty and her confidence in it is harshly criticized. As Yeazell argues, everyone is a looker-on in that society, and what the society sees is above everything. According to Yeazell, when Lily chooses to burn Bertha's letters instead of abusing them she resists being the member of this society and she is conscious of the triviality of this world, in fact "consciousness in *The House of Mirth* primarily defines itself by negating the

world of appearances" (Yeazell 1992, p.731). The world of appearances is what governs Rosedale's rejection, and Lily's tragic flaw – her fundamental "mistake is failing to see that not everyone is to be duped by her 'overvalued assets', her looks and manipulative strategies" (Lekesizalın 2014,p.171). Lily's stock has been valued too highly in a fickle and fast-moving marriage market. She makes the mistake of believing her own hype and supposes that she can solve her worldly problems with her physical appearance; however, when she is among the New York upper crust, she understands that nothing really matters save money and rank. Although she wants to turn her beauty into capital, she always fails to do so. That causes a permanent dilemma for Lily, caught as she is between her own childish sensations and her desire for wealth throughout the novel. According to Tricia Farwell "some scholars have found love depicted as a single unified concept that wealth corrupts, yet that is not case." (Farwell 2006, p.24). In fact, love in *The House of Mirth* is the love of money; no real romantic love is possible under the strict standards of New York society. According to Annette Kolodny, "as a woman and an "ornament" Lily had no education and had previously to her misfortune never worked a day. She was then delimited by the lack of formal or classical education, and constrained by the social and aesthetic norms of her day" (Kolodny 1986, p.48). Limited by society and her mother's total faith in Lily's beauty, Lily finds herself unable to negotiate a vicious matrimonial environment run on a ruthless maintenance of wealth and social status.

Of course, Wharton satirizes the folly of giving the utmost importance to appearance, saying "Miss Bart was a figure to arrest even the suburban traveller rushing to his last train" (Wharton 1905, p.3). By focusing so much on Lily's external beauty at the beginning sets the scene for a society where appearances count more than the realities. In this vignette, Wharton also satirizes the New York class structure, with a picture of the middle class man rushing home from work being stopped in his tracks by a vision of Lily. Physical appearance, Wharton implies, may be enough to sustain a loving middle class relationship, but a man from a wealthy neighbourhood does not figure in this image, implying that physical appearance alone will not suffice in securing a place for Lily in the upper echelons of New York society. As we have seen, Selden too

was overwhelmed by her external features, to the point where he wondered if such physical beauty could exist without internal beauty. Lily herself is contradictory in this regard: during her first visit to Selden's flat, Lily exclaims "How delicious to have a place like this all to one's self! What a miserable thing it is to be a woman." (1905, p.7). Is it the independence of having a room of one's own that attracts her, as the pigeon house attracted Edna? A desire to be off the merry-go-round of courting and resentment that her future security depends upon attaching herself to a man? Yet the tone with which she expresses herself seems superficial and petty, and as we have seen, Selden presents the opportunity for her to have such a place, yet she opts not to marry Selden.

The narrator presents Lily as different from society: she is a woman "who prided herself on her broad-minded recognition of literature, and always carried an Omar Khayyam in her travelling-bag, was attracted by this attribute, which she felt would have had its distinction in an older society" (p.75). Wharton tries to convey that Lily longs for more sensations than her present life affords to her. Elizabeth Ammons discusses Wharton's point of view on the females at the time the novel is written,

> Typical women in her view - no matter how privileged, nonconformist, or assertive (indeed, often in proportion to the degree in which they embodied those qualities) - were not free to control their own lives, and that conviction became the foundation of her argument with American optimism for more than twenty years. In her opinion the American woman was far from being a new or whole human being. (1991, p.3)

Ammons states that, through her fiction, Wharton elaborates her argument that American women of her time are often limited, just like Lily. Despite Lily's supposed nonconformist behaviour, in fact Lily is desperately conformist and entrapped in her conformability. While she adopts some small personal affectations which may give her the feeling of liberation, she is neither free nor in control of her own life, because she is still controlled by her mother's precepts. Because of this, Lily cannot become a new woman as she is still an infant, still defined by her mother. The narrator depicts Lily as "the victim of the civilization which had produced her that the links of bracelet seemed like manacles chaining to her fate" (Wharton 1905, p.8). The image of the bracelet is

crucial, because it shows that Lily, despite all adornments, is the victim of the sparkling world around her; this world puts Lily in handcuffs.

Lily is used to living in comfort, and the thought of having to move down a rung in society is unconscionable to her. After the death of her father, both Lily and her mother begin to pay longer visits to their relations as Mrs Bart having been left with no money at all, does not have sufficient funds to keep house. Fearful that this will come out to her friends and relations, Lily's mother is desperate for Lily to live the life she yearns for and that she could not live, Lily's mother is desperate for Lily to live the life she yearns for and that she could not live because for Mrs Bart "to be poor seemed to her such a confession of failure that it amounted to disgrace; and she detected a note of condescension in the friendliest advances (p.32).

To the reader, Lily is presented as a free agent "who has the power to make her own decisions, but Wharton shows time after time that Lily is essentially powerless in her society" (Wagner-Martin 1990, p.52). The only power she can utilize is her beauty and this is shown to be a superficial, and ultimately toothless, power. Lily's status of limited freedom makes her a "marginal" character that is restricted in her choices and actions. In the first scene of the novel in Selden's apartment, she implies her powerlessness by having tea with him in order to escape the routine; however, immediately the regulations of the society come to her censure and destabilize her status as an eligible lady, when as she is caught red-handed by Simon Rosedale and questioned over her actions. Lily then complains "why must a girl pay so dearly for her least escape from routine? Why could one never do a natural thing without having to screen it behind a structure of artifice" (Wharton 1905, p.17)? The truth is that she cannot escape from the restrictions of society; she is trapped and there is no way out for her. Behaving in opposition, or even differently, to what society expects means being an outcast in the society. As Wagner- Martin suggests, "Lily is unlike the typical protagonist and it is her failure in the social game that actually makes her heroic" (1990, p.10). Her lack of economic security makes her unable to contend with the society, and because Wharton does not make her marry, she is entrapped in the social role assigned to her as a single woman. Lily aspires to have the life of Bertha Dorset and Judy Trenor, but lacks

awareness that beauty and youth are transitory and that she may not have time to make good on her physical appearance. The fact is that looking beautiful and wearing nice clothes is costly and she needs a partner to fund them. “If I were shabby no one would have me: a woman is asked out as much for her clothes as for herself” ((Wharton 1905, p.13). Pertaining to this idea is that the society that Lily lives attach more importance to the frame, rather than the internal beauty as nobody prefers a begrimed woman. The perception of the society is that the women should be well dressed. (p.13). Apparent from above, Lily mirrors the society in her thinking and what lies under that statement is that men look only to appearances and not for any substance underneath the artificiality. The society expects a woman to get married if they do not have the capability to keep themselves well, and Lily tries to adapt the styles and trends of the time rather than creating her own style.

Besides appearances, one more thing that counts in Lily’s world and that is the stock market; the novel is a great depiction of New York high society and Lily is the willing victim of that society and her misfortune is to have a father who fails both in health and in business. She begins to live with Mrs Peniston who is one of the members of this high society and is depicted as “a woman belonged to the class of old New Yorkers who have always lived well, dressed expensively, and done little else” (p.42). Mrs Peniston is the member of upper-crust New York society and Lily enjoys membership of it by proxy when she begins to live with her after her parents’ death. A social class that thrives on artifice, Lily becomes a member in a play in which upper-class society people try to fool each other to show off, and this is dramatized by Lily’s involvement in gambling. Lily begins to gamble with her income when she attends socialite parties because she is among a group of people whose dignity is determined by their wealth. So, making and maintaining money is the way of life in that society. As Lionel Robbins put it, “Economics is the science which studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses” (1932, p.16). Everyone in the book is conditioned by their relationship with money, either having it, making it or losing it, and the fate of the characters is determined by these relationships. Thus, while Lily’s father loses everything on the stock market, and by doing so condemns his daughter to

the story of her fate, Gus Trenor wins and is depicted as having everything and as using this privilege against Lily. Likewise, Simon Rosedale primary purpose is to raise his social stock so that he can hold his own amongst the "good" people of upper class society, and even the prospect of a life with Lily does not tempt him from his course once she becomes the subject of rumour.

As Lily's beauty cannot make money, she begins to gamble among these men with the little income she has in order to show off in that society; however, she ultimately pays dearly for it. She tries to manage her assets throughout the book, but feeling like she needs help, she contacts Gus Trenor and Simon Rosedale, upon which her money begins to lose its value. She tries to invest her money in stock market and it was a time when stock market is doing very well in USA. As she is unaware of the market around her, she gets some supervision from Trenor, yet she was too genuinely ignorant of the manipulations of the stock market to understand his technical explanations, or even perhaps to perceive that certain points in them are slurred (Wharton 1905, p.97).

In this competitive society, she naively thinks that her money could rise threefold; she could pay all of her debts, however it is not the case. "She understood only that her modest investments were to be mysteriously multiplied without risk to herself; and the assurance that this miracle would take place within a short time, that there would be no tedious interval for suspense and reaction, relieved her of her lingering scruples" (p.97). Actually, on her investment, her assets begin to lose their value. She tries to get 'tips' from Mr Rosedale, and taking into consideration her obsession with money, she realizes that she has to give something in return to these men and because of that "she felt herself ready to meet any other demand which life might make. Even the immediate one of letting Trenor, as they drive homeward, lean a little nearer and rest his hand reassuringly on hers, cost her only a momentary shiver of reluctance" (p.98). She accepts every favour that they want, everything around her is a deal made with money, the only thing that she wants is the assurance that her stocks are safe and doing well. When she gets her first cheque of thousand dollars, she begins to feel more confident and she dares to make new purchases. The physical "transaction" that she had let Gus indulge in "had justified itself by its results: she saw now how absurd it would have been to let

any primitive scruple deprive her of this easy means of appeasing her creditors" (p.99). In fact, Lily is a classic example of a gullible investor of the time, dreaming of becoming rich through naïve speculations, and her naivety is clearly demonstrated when she gets the news of new cheques from Gus. She thinks that "one trifling piece of good fortune should give wings to all her hopes" (p.100). She thinks that she can get back Percy Gryce from Evie after having the money, which is the sign of naivety. This also shows that if she has enough money, she will have whatever she wants. With wealth, she believes that she can reach all her aims. However, she does not realize that she is tricked by Gus, who says that "I don't know I can promise you fresh tip every day. But there's one thing you might do for me; and that is, just to be a little civil to Rosedale" (p.108). Gus wants to use Lily in order to get tips from Rosedale, and she thus understands that the two men have fooled her. Gus's expectation is to have her in return for the money that he gives her, but she when tells him that she can pay him back, Gus answers saying, "Ah--you'll borrow from Selden or Rosedale--and take your chances of fooling them as you've fooled me! Unless--unless you've settled your other scores already--and I'm the only one left out in the cold" (p.170). Gus thus gets angry and make advances to her with an immoral intention.

Lily is trying to make money from the stock market and in this way she seems to challenge the belief that only men bring home the money while women look pretty and keep track of the couple's social currency. However, instead of earning money, Lily stays in a disadvantaged position. As Shari Benstock states, "Lily is the instrument of Edith Wharton's attack on an irresponsible, grasping, and morally corrupt upper class" (Benstock 1994, p.309). Wharton unmasks the harsh realities that her society has. Lily can be viewed as childish and naïve enough not to understand that Gus Trenor is actually mocking her. He uses her as a tool to make his money more. After being left without money, Lily decides to go on a tour with Bertha Dorset in order to get away from the gossip. Bertha Dorset invites Lily to come in order to use her as a distraction: she wants to divert her husband's attention from her as she is having an affair with Ned Silverton, "Lily's only safeguard is that Bertha needs her badly oh, very badly. The Silverton affair is in the acute stage: it's necessary that George's attention

should be pretty continuously distracted. And I'm bound to say Lily does distract it" (Wharton 1905, p.220). At last when her husband begins to understand that she is cheating on him, she puts Lily on the spot and accuses her of having an affair with her husband, effectively expelled her from the ship saying, "Miss Bart is not going back to the yacht" (p.253). As a wife of a rich man, Bertha wins and she can save her marriage thanks to Lily; however, Lily is discarded and becomes the subject of a new gossip. Wharton shows how Bertha is adept at hiding her extramarital affair with Ned Silverton; in fact, she concocts story accusing Lily of seducing her husband, George Dorset. People like Bertha Dorset can do whatever they want because they do not have to pay anything for their mistakes, and this shows Lily's entrapment even when she decides to lead a single life.

In this Bertha ensures Lily's unfortunate downfall because, as Susan Goodman states, "at the time, society believed that any woman disobedient of rules had collaborated in her own destruction" (Goodman 1990, p.50). On account of the fact that she is believed to be disobedient, she is excluded from the upper- crust of New York society. "Judy Trenor and her own family have deserted her too – and all because Bertha Dorset has said such horrible things" (Wharton 1905, p. 236). In spite of being a member of the upper class, she is instantly rejected by the society that produces her. Not only Bertha Dorset but also Judy Trenor acts in solidarity to ostracise Lily from the society. In fact, married women guard their husbands jealously, ensuring a monopoly of both their affections and their money. Interestingly, however, it is the wealthy females who have the affairs in this novel, often with younger, less wealthy men who live off the married women's money in exchange for company. As opposed to *Herland*, *The House of Mirth* does not show the impressive effects of female solidarity—Lily is left to her own resources. Even though it is known that Bertha's version of events is a rumour, nobody in that upper-class society questions it. Susan Goodman observes that everything in the society is "essentially fixed" (1990, p.151). Lily is unable to disproof the rumour around her; she realizes that the powerful ones rule the society: "Where a woman is concerned, it's the story that's easiest to believe. In this case it's a great deal easier to believe Bertha Dorset's story than mine, because she has a big house and an opera box, and it's convenient to be on

good terms with her" (Wharton 1905, p.262). She is also married; Lily is left powerless in the society. In parallel to this, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have remarked how women are "depicted either as monsters or angels in the male literary tradition" (Gilbert & Gubar 1991, p.132). Wharton uses the man's point of view in this sense to rebel against the society she lives in. As Showalter states in her 'The Death of Lady (Novelist)' that "by portraying Lily as "bad" (1985, p.136), she arguably writes like a man. In fact, Bertha is the "bad" woman, but everyone believes Bertha as she is married, and the society she lives in expected women to marry in order not to be questioned. It can be clearly understood from Ned Silverton's statements: "when a girl's as good-looking as that she'd better marry; then no questions are asked. In our imperfectly organized society there is no provision as yet for the young woman who claims the privileges of marriage without assuming its obligations" (Wharton 1905, p.183). According to Ned Alstyne, a girl like Lily should marry in order to be safe and, all the women are expected to dutifully discharge the obligations while enjoying the privileges of marriage. In order for a woman to feel independent, she should marry wealthy man and accept the conventions of marriage as well as its gains. Married and wealthier, Bertha is the one who is safer; Lily does not have anything allowing her to be more powerful than Bertha. As a result, instead of trying to protest her innocence, she withdraws from the society, understands that she cannot live in such a society as single and unmarried because "the truth about any girl was that once she was talked about she was done for; and the more she explained her case the worse it looks" (p.263). Lily gets jammed between the social dictates around her and her own independent self. Bertha unscrupulously causes Lily's exclusion from society just so that she can hide her own extramarital relationship with Ned Silverton. Lily "never thought of preparing a version in advance as Bertha did—and if I had, I don't think I should take the trouble to use it now" (p 262). This shows that Bertha is a manipulative woman, and Lily does not have the capacity or the standing to rival her. Not only Bertha but also the other women and men in the society do their best to maintain the social class they are living in. According to James W. Gargano,

> The calculating Bertha Dorset holds on to her fortune and her cowed husband, and the Brys and Rosedale are ready to pump their new-

> made millions into the perpetuation of a system that cruelly snubbed them. Goodness and the freedom to achieve it are commodities too fragile to survive in such a civilized social state (1972, p.139).

Wharton does not make any distinctions between women and men in the society in terms of associating them with money. It is not to the freedom but the naivety of Lily that is futile in such a society. Women and men equally contribute to the perpetuation of the norms of this society. It can be inferred that they need this society to survive as their hypocrisy cannot be hidden in a better society. According to Annette Larson Benert, "women control what happens inside, inside the relationships; while men control what happens outside, including, ultimately, access to it." (1990, p.27). This means that Lily has nothing, as she does not have a home and she does not own a house; she is single and aware that being single is difficult in the society she lives in. While living at Mrs Peniston's house, she admires Selden's place. Lily is thus obviously aware of the difficulties a woman has in such an unequal and hypocrite society.

When Lily gets hold of Bertha's letters to Selden, she decides not to blackmail Bertha with those letters. According to Goodman, blackmailing Bertha would be "a form of living suicide to which she could not contract." (1990, p.50). In this decision, Lily shows that she values her own self more than she does her social circle; however, she cannot do the same for the other social conventions, which shows Lily's naivety. Goodman sees it 'as a form of living suicide' because according to Moddelmog "New York allows divorce only for adultery" (1998, p.339). In this respect, Lily wants to protect Selden more than Bertha as she seems to better understand the meaning of true love, which is "the passion of her soul for his" (Wharton 1905, p.360). According to Deborah Esch, "Lily's ultimate triumph over her desire to take revenge on Mrs. Dorset's establishes her sisterly solidarity" (2008, p.97). Lily is clearly not as vicious as Bertha; she nevertheless fails because she does not know how to manipulate like Bertha. Wharton criticizes both the society and the women themselves for this as Bertha plays an important role in bringing about Lily's death.

Mrs Peniston is also another female figure that represents the money-oriented society around her. Mrs Peniston gives Lily some allowance; however, it seems to her natural that Lily should spend all her money on dresses, and she supplements the girl's scant income with occasional "handsome presents" meant

to be applied to the same purpose. Lily, who is intensely practical, prefers a fixed allowance, but Mrs Peniston likes the "periodical recurrence of gratitude evoked by unexpected cheques, and was perhaps shrewd enough to perceive that such a method of giving kept alive in her niece a salutary sense of dependence" (Wharton 1905, p.43). Lily gets some money from Mrs Peniston but Mrs Peniston is canny enough not to make it fixed as she tries to keep her dependent to her. Even the relationship between relatives is defined with money. After being ostracized from the society and being still single, there is only one chance for Lily to have money, and that is Mrs Peniston's legacy. However, she is disinherited because of playing cards because Grace professes that "'Everybody knows she is crazy about bridge and among Lily's friends it's quite the custom for girls to play for money" (p.147) Grace Stepney undermines Lily by referring to her gambling, yet Wharton here tries to show that playing cards is not unexpected in Lily's environment, and she criticizes the New York upper-crust society in this regard. This shows how Grace manipulates the situation and sabotages Lily's expected legacy from Mrs Peniston. She also says that Lily is "accepting attentions from men like Gus Trenor and George Dorset" (p.147). She spreads this rumour to Mrs Peniston to make sure that Lily will disinherited, leaving her the only heir of Mrs Peniston. Stepney manipulates everything so mischievously that she manages to convince Mrs Peniston. Adding to the rumours, she says "And I'm sure there is no truth in what people say; but she has been spending a great deal of money this winter" (p.147). Because of the fact that Mrs Peniston helps Lily financially, Stepney makes a point of telling everything to her. As Deborah Esch states *The House of Mirth* goes beyond any of its predecessors in its portrayal of a war of woman against woman" (2008, p.90).

In contrast to *Herland,* in which the females work for the betterment of womanhood, in the *House of Mirth,* they work for the money which fosters their society. The females are at war with each other; the cause of this war is mostly money. Grace spreads all the rumours circulating around, ultimately receiving the majority of Mrs Peniston's fortune by doing that. Everybody in the society, including her aunt, finds Lily guilty because of the prevalent perception of the society which ranks women below men and presents them with a severely

restricted lifestyle. Not only Grace Stepney but also Judy Trenor has a role in bringing about Lily's end. Grace reveals that "Judy Trenor has quarrelled with Lily on account of Gus" (Wharton 1905, p.147). According to Min-Yung Lee "Judy's main emotion is "hatred" toward any other woman who might give a more impressive house party while she remains indifferent to her husband and marriage" (Lee 2008, p.44). Judy does not mind her husband's extramarital affairs; in fact, that is the case for all the married women of the time as they guard their husbands carefully for the sake of keeping their own economic status while tolerating their husbands' infidelities.

Judy is the character who causes Lily's death because of the extravagant parties she arranges at Bellomont. She wants Lily to marry Percy Gryce, but she fails to do so. Judy's background differs from other female characters in the novel. She is in a constant competition everyone in the society, which is clearly echoed in Lily's statements: "though she remained haughtily at Bellomont, Lily suspected in her a devouring eagerness… to learn exactly in what measure Mrs Wellington Bry had surpassed all previous competitors for social recognition" (Wharton 1905, p.163). Judy has nothing apart from competing with the other women in the society "because she could not sustain life except in a crowd" (p.46). Judy feels herself better than the crowd and "she knew no more personal emotion than that of hatred for the woman who presumed to give bigger dinners or have more amusing house-parties than herself" (p.46). That is the reason for Judy to befriend Lily, as she does not see her as a rival, and she is also "backed by Mr Trenor's bank account, which almost always assured her ultimate triumph in such competitions" (p.46). Lily does not have a husband to back her up like Judy, so when Judy hears about the money given to Lily by her husband and the rumours going around with George Dorset, she ends the friendship with her, which drags Lily to her fateful death. Though Lily has fallen from the society because of these female rivals, there are other female characters who try to help her, like Gerty Farish.

Gerty Farish can be interpreted as Lily's best friend throughout the novel; she is a polite and sensitive woman who does a lot of charity work and helps people. She is by no means typical of the New York high society. She is an independent woman whom Lily feels a kinship to. However, Lily also ventriloquizes the

snobbish and cold judgment of society regarding Gerty, "'But I said *marriageable*—and besides, she has a horrid little place, and no maid, and such queer things to eat…But we're so different you know: she likes being good, and I like being happy" (p.9). In this series of cruel and haughty little jibes, Lily judges her according to the dictates of the society that she learns from her mother and from the people around her; however, in reality Lily knows that no one in this society is good to her like Gerty, particularly as Lily represents a source of particular pain for Gerty. Gerty is love with Selden, her cousin, and she feels he loves her too, but is heartbroken when she discovers that he loves Lily. What makes her heartbreak more intense is her certainty that Lily's capacity to love Selden is impossible. "Lily might be incapable of marrying for money, but she was equally incapable of living without it, and Selden's eager investigations into the small economies of house-keeping made him appear to Gerty as tragically duped as herself (p.188). Instead of ending her relationship with Lily, because of the faith she feels towards Selden and Lily, she chooses to suffer silently. We can read this as Gerty being the mother figure that Lily never has; however, Lily does not understand the depth of Gerty's feelings towards her. Gerty is the only character who clearly shows that Lily is an infant and she should be treated accordingly. Gerty knows Lily better than anyone else in the novel and she is certain that Lily would not be happy marrying Selden. Lily unknowingly hurts her friend's feelings and "she hated Lily Bart and She wanted happiness—wanted it as fiercely and unscrupulously as Lily did, but without Lily's power of obtaining it (p.189). Gerty confesses that she wants happiness just as Lily wants it, but lacks Lily's power to obtain it. For the sake of Lily's happiness, she tries to forget him, as she recognizes Lily's dilemma more than anyone in the society. The narrator reflects on the emotions of Gerty questioning how the appearance is essential to the society she is in, and assertively asks whether Selden picture Lily's interior or not. Gerty scrutinizes the world just as Lily does she realizes how Lily's prejudices deeply affect her, she sees that "all she wanted was the taste of new experiences: she seemed like some cruel creature experimenting in a laboratory (p.188). As argued above, not the interior but the exterior is important in Lily's society. Gerty knows the realities of Lily's life and that she cannot love Selden, even if she wanted to, because her financial situation will not permit her. But in spite

of the fact that Gerty knows this, and in spite of her pain, she does not withdraw herself from helping her friend and never abandons Lily. “Having once helped Lily, she must continue to help her; and helping her, must believe in her, because faith is the main-spring of such natures. (p.275). After several breakdowns Lily goes back to Gerty and Gerty, being her best friend, thinks that she has to help her. She discloses to Selden just how hopeless Lily is. Gerty utters that Lily is addicted to luxurious life, and she in fact rejects all kinds of uncomfortable life, she is not made to believe that there is life outside that she is not aware of. Now that she has nothing that she cares for, everyone who make her believe in the idea that there is no life out of comfort, it seems to Gerty that “if someone could reach out a hand and show her the other side--show her how much is left in life and in herself”. (p.314) This entreaty from Gerty is of great significance. It reveals the depth of Lily’s social alienation and the extent to which all her values are in jeopardy. Gerty worries about how Lily has become the mirthless person of her own society. In telling this to Selden, in a way she is asking for help for her helpless friend. However; Selden does not comprehend the extent of Lily’s hopelessness, till the very end when he finds Lily lying motionless in her bed. If Selden had had the friendliness and the faith that Gerty has for Lily, Lily might well have been saved. However, the novel will not end with the emergence of a New Woman.

Gerty’s relationship with Lily demonstrates a real sense of female solidarity and her empathic nature in turn frees the reader to feel pity for Lily’s naivety and her gullibility Gerty loves Lily; she always puts her ahead of her own desires without ever receiving appreciation. Being a mother figure for Lily, Lily comes to Gerty when she feels the need of a mother.

> “-Hold me, Gerty, hold me, or I shall think of things," she moaned; and Gerty silently slipped an arm under her, pillowing her head in its hollow as a mother makes a nest for a tossing child. In the warm hollow Lily lay still and her breathing grew low and regular. Her hand still clung to Gerty's as if to ward off evil dreams, but the hold of her fingers relaxed, her head sank deeper into its shelter, and Gerty felt that she slept.” (p.194).

Wharton also deliberately likens her to a mother, and as Sarah Way Sherman points out “this scene is powerfully emotional and maternal” (2013, p.162). Lily wants to be held just like a child wants to be held by their mother. “Lily’s

demand to be held is not that of adult demanding erotic pleasure, but that of a child demanding comfort. The needs of a troubled child supersede the desires of the adult woman. Lily needs mothering most of all" (p.162). Lily finds Gerty comforting; it is this comfort that she has been looking for right from the beginning. With Gerty, Lily fills a gap that was always open in the absence of a mother who loved her for her sake rather than for the sake of her beauty.

With Nettie, Lily finds another mother figure whom she admires for the affection that she gives to her daughter. Nettie Struther is one of the few women in the novel that Lily truly respects, and despite the differences she perceived in their social standing, Lily becomes envious of the family that she has. Lily knows Nettie Crane as a "poor little working girl" who is "one of the discouraged victims of overwork and anaemic parentage" (Wharton 1905, p.364). Observing that Nettie is sick and exhausted, Lily gives the 'Working Girls Club', Gerty's charity, enough money to sponsor Nettie's trip to a holiday home in the mountains. "The episode of Nettie Crane's timely rescue from disease had been one of the most satisfying incidents of her connection with Gerty's charitable work" (p.364). First, Lily financially supports Nettie Crane, and then towards the end of the novel, Lily finds herself in need of support. Nettie is a model of happiness and comfort for Lily; as opposed to what she has been taught and what is all around her, Nettie proves that happiness can be achieved without money. Watching Nettie cradle her child after being invited back to Nettie's house, Lily recognises "[t]he strength of the victory [that] shone forth from her as she lifted her irradiated face from the child on her knees" (p.367).

On the other hand, Nettie, who has assumed that Lily is always happy, is shocked to realise that Lily is feeling hopeless and that she can feign happiness no longer. "You in trouble? I've always thought of you as being so high up, where everything was just grand. Sometimes, when I felt real mean, and got to wondering why things were so queerly fixed in the world, I used to remember that you were having a lovely time, anyhow" (p.364). That Nettie cannot believe that Lily is unhappy shows how successfully the world of the upper-crust New York society performs its exuberance to the classes below: just like Lily, this performance is external – artificial. Lily is now genuinely unhappy and as she

supported Nettie once, she confesses that she is the one who is in need now. “It will be my turn to think of you as happy and the world will seem a less unjust place to me” (p.365). Lily and Nettie help each other when they are in the worst positions.

Nettie invites Lily to her kitchen where she can show her baby, Marry Anto'nette, named in honour of Lily, and offer her some milk. This visit has a profound effect on Lily because she gets “her first glimpse of the continuity of life,” and “a vision of the solidarity of life” that Selden’s lofty talk of the “republic of the spirit” failed to provide (p.337). Although Nettie does not “have the heart to go on working for herself,” later, she found the “strength to gather up the fragments of her life” and create a home that symbolizes “the central truth of existence” (p.372). When Lily recognizes that Nettie’s home is “extraordinarily small and miraculously clean” (p.360), there is none of the haughtiness that has characterized her tendency to judge other’s domestic spaces; indeed, it seems that Lily finds a comfort in Nettie’s home that she has been searching for throughout the novel. Based on mutual trust, Nettie and her husband George have built a shelter for themselves and their child against the world outside: “It was a meagre enough life, on the grim edge of poverty, with scant margin for possibilities of sickness or mischance, but it had the frail audacious permanence of a bird's nest built on the edge of a cliff--a mere wisp of leaves and straw, yet so put together that the lives entrusted to it may hang safely over the abyss” (p.372). Wharton shows that Nettie has formed a family where one can find companionship, encouragement, and love. Lily wishes for the home she lacks, and for the mother that she lacks. Such a vision of the solidarity of life had never before come to Lily. She had had a premonition of it in the blind motions of her mating-instinct; but they had been checked by the disintegrating influences of the life about her” (p.372).

Once cast out of her social group, Lily cannot secure a place in a new one; she finds Nettie’s house and her hospitality a kind of haven of solidarity which she has not seen from the other females like Bertha Dorset or Judy Trenor. Furthermore, she realizes that no matter how terrible her fall into poverty might be, her past life is empty and meaningless: “All the society men and women she knew were like atoms whirling away from each other in some wild centrifugal

dance: her first glimpse of the continuity of life had come to her that evening in Nettie Struther's kitchen" (p.372). Wharton criticizes the society that she lives in and she sees that Nettie has found peace and happiness in the world even though she is poor; however, "Lily Bart is a name which lives in American Literature among people by whom *The House of Mirth* has been forgotten" (Hoeller 2000, p.101). The first time that she feels happiness is when she is at Nettie's home. Until the visit at Nettie's house, Lily has seen everyone around her as business partners and every personal interaction to be in some way a financial transaction. Moreover, only when she sees the love Nettie feels towards her husband, does she comprehends that real happiness and affection towards a husband and perfect affection towards a child can be possible. With this flawless love, Lily sees that her love for Selden has the potential to be like Nettie's, but in the same thought, she realises on the other hand, she does not have the capability to love that way. That is the fallacy of Lily, she is full of lofty aspirations, but she is constantly held back by her societally conditioned, but solidly internalized, personal failings.

Lily finds this simple domestic setting a blissful haven after the succession of bad experiences she has endured throughout her life. "The poor little working-girl who had found strength to gather up the fragments of her life, and build herself a shelter with them, seemed to Lily to have reached the central truth of existence" (Wharton 1905, p.372). Lily sees that Nettie is really happy with her own fragments of life and this is the most critical thing that a person can achieve. "As she held Nettie Struther's child in her arms the frozen currents of youth had loosed themselves and run warm in her veins: the old life-hunger possessed her, and all her being clamoured for its share of personal happiness" (p.373). Indescribable happiness and her absolute hopelessness are crystalized in this scene. It is Nettie, now, who has the life that in fact Lily yearns for; she has a husband who is in love with her and a baby. According to Goodman, the baby is named "after an actress who reminded the mother of Miss Bart, [and, as such] the baby represents the potential of what Lily herself could have become with the love and the protection of a mother" (Goodman 1990, p.58). Lily feels "as though the child entered into her and became a part of herself" (Wharton 1905, p.367). This scene can be interpreted as Lily's wish for infantilization, to

go right back to the beginning of her existence, but this time with a mother like Nettie rather than one like Mrs Bart. It is a useless fantasy.

Nettie's role in Lily's life does not bring a solution to Lily's situation; however, Elaine Showalter interprets their encounter "as the strongest moment of female kinship in the novel (Showalter 1985, p.146). Though Lily cannot be saved from her predicament, Nettie's baby exists as the hope for women in the New American century, where the limits of Victorian hypocrisy can be left behind.

Showalter observes that *The House of Mirth* ends not only with a death but also offers a vision of a new world of female solidarity, a world in which Gerty Farish and Nettie Struther will struggle hopefully and courageously. Lily dies - the *lady* dies -- so that these *women* may live and grow (Showalter 1985, p.145). Thus Showalter suggests that Gerty and Nettie will be the hope for the coming of the New Woman. Of all the characters in the novel, Nettie and Gerty Farish are the two women who act in solidarity and try to help Lily in all senses. As Elizabeth Ammons writes,

> "In the arms of the ornamental, leisure-class Lily lies the working-class infant female, whose vitality succors the dying woman. In that union of the leisure and working classes lies a new hope-the New Woman that Wharton would bring to mature life in her next novel" (Ammons 1980, p.43).

With the death of Lily, who ultimately fails to part herself from the society she lives in, Wharton brings a new hope to the females like Gerty and Nettie. According to Restuccia, "[t] hese young women, unlike Lily, after all, will continue the progressive efforts of women even if they are bound by male laws and power structures." (1987, p.232) Restuccia finds Gerty and Nettie to be "socially crucial" but "intellectually unappealing" (p.232); nevertheless, they are not entrapped in the world of economic power that is prevalent in New York society and therefore energise the tragic end of the novel with new hope for the New Woman of the twentieth century. According to Goodman, "hope for the future lies with the daughters of women like Nettie Struther, who have the chance of growing up to be useful as well as ornamental" (1990, p.59).

Nettie and Gerty exist outside the realm of Lily's social world. As we have seen, in that world all the women are to be looked at, which costs money, and so the single women are expected to secure rich husbands. Entrapped in her

obsession with her own beauty and her search for wealth and money, Lily is unable to escape defiant though she is, she is not a New Woman as she is both externally and internally bound with societal chains. Wharton criticizes the artificiality and superficiality of the society, and highlights its vulgarity by using the language of economics to describe her world and emphasising the dominance of the fickle stock market.

The House of Mirth does not end happily; here, as in Chopin's works, the characters which defy society through their actions ultimately end up dying, and, as Singley writes:

> Lily dies not only because she fails to escape her fate or vanquish her competition but because she rejects – sometimes inadvertently, sometimes deliberately – the shallow, materialistic values of her society. *The House of Mirth* thus combines a purely deterministic outlook with a more idealistic one. (1995, p.69)

Lily lives in a society Clubbe defines as being "[r]ich in material cost, but poor in spiritual soul. Lily, who knows what she dislikes, yearns for the luxury her counterparts embody, but gradually realizes that they may not, after all, satisfy her" (Clubbe 1996, p.559). Towards the end of the novel, Lily realizes that richness and the materialistic point of view does not satisfy her and since she behaves according to the needs and environment of the society she is surrounded with, this leads to her death. Amy Kaplan, in her book *The Social Construction of American Realism,* comments:

> Lily's desire for aloofness depends upon her attachment to the setting from which she wishes to be distinguished. Throughout the novel, Lily's identity is described in relation to a background against which she can outline herself, or a mirror in which she can be viewed. Yet each attempt to ignore that dependence contributes to her further decline. (1988, p.91)

At the end of the novel, it is clearly seen that she is both socially and economically entrapped. Unable to remove herself from her circumstances, Lily commits suicide in a reverie of despair. As Kaplan points out, Wharton stresses the plight of women at the turn of the century through Lily's death.

> Women like Lily at the turn of the century were still struggling to articulate and cope with the knowledge of their paradoxical position within an ideological terrain that was both determined by their material reality and constantly reproduced ideology of gender in which they lived (1988, p.91)

Lily's struggle has been for herself, but her example can act as a warning to the likes of Nettie and Gerty. Lily brings her tragic end on herself because of her wish to be a part of this society, in which everybody has to pay dearly for everything; starting her speculation with inflated stock (her beauty) she becomes the victim and the loser of the fluctuating markets of New York high society at the end. Though she does not warn anyone that she is going to commit suicide, Lily takes overdose of sleeping pills and dies.

> I have tried hard--but life is difficult, and I am a very useless person. I can hardly be said to have an independent existence. I was just a screw or a cog in the great machine I called life, and when I dropped out of it I found I was of no use anywhere else. What can one do when one finds that one only fits into one hole? One must get back to it or be thrown out into the rubbish heap--and you don't know what it's like in the rubbish heap" (Wharton 1905, p.359).

Lily Bart is infantilized throughout the novel; however, realizing that she cannot maintain living in that society she commits suicide. This is the most important incident in the novel as it openly demonstrates that Lily has reached maturity. Only in this quotation can it be seen that Lily starts to interpret the society around her. According to Amy Kaplan "her withdrawal from the economic surrounding leads to her demise" (1986, p.449) and this can be interpreted as a release from money-oriented society. She recognizes how insignificant she is in her society, how being able to fit into only one place has left her unable to fit anywhere now that she has 'fallen out' of place, and she is left feeling hopeless. Her fatal flaw is to believe that total success is achievable. It leads her to risk everything – her money and her reputation – and losing both brings about her death. According to Lekesizalın "[h]er tragedy is hidden in the fact that she is easily overcome by the illusion that she has the power to fulfil her wishes" (Lekesizalın 2014, p.173). Realizing at last that wanting does not make something so, she takes her final desperate option, which is death. Her decision to commit suicide has been seen by some as a final victory, as she wins "in her determination to become a responsible adult by her final rejection of her empty self" (Sapora 1993, p.20). Her recognition of her own superficiality allows her to choose to opt out of the superficial society that has made her so, and to leave the stage free for genuine, substantive and real women struggling for their independence like Lily and Gerty. In fact according to Wolff "Lily is never seen

as a competent, adult woman, Lily is regarded as a commodity, a beautiful object of art, but she is also often imaged as a troubled, helpless child, longing for shelter, for escape from humiliating contingencies" (1974, p.94). Having no shelter according to Diana Trilling "Where, as for Lily Bart, society poses but a single alternative to a woman, to live by its laws or die by its laws, any ingenuity that would wish to triumph over the preordained destiny is at best merely a delaying tactic" (Trilling 1962, p.128). Lily dies by the law of the society; however, with her death she evades a worse fate. According to Robin Beaty "For Lily, and perhaps for Wharton, some fates are worse than death, especially a life in the actual marketplace (1987, p.272). Wharton chooses death for Lily to release her from the capricious vicissitudes of the market, but not until Lily has reached adulthood, identity and self-knowledge. According to Goodman;

> "Through a painful process of establishing limits, by saying no to Gus Trenor, no to Mrs Hatch, no to George Dorset, no to Sim Rosedale, no to blackmail, and no to even well-intentioned Gerty Farish and Lawrence Selden, Lily gives birth to herself…. The struggle that kills her will make an independent woman artist though it may take three generations" (Goodman 1990, p.59).

Lily, who is trapped between her own conditions and the wealthy environment of the time, dies at the end of the novel; however, in a way Wharton cannot find a better way to release her than death. Diana Trilling realizes the parallel between Lily Bart's decline and "the inevitable defeat in a crass materialistic society" suggesting that Lily is somehow a relic (Trilling 1962, p.16). However, in contrast to Trilling, I would argue that Lily is not defeated. Depicted as an infant throughout the novel, Wharton shows that she becomes an adult when she decides on suicide upon realizing that she cannot live in such a society. Lily's death is not a failure, but a moment of maturation. According to Carol Sapora Baker she triumphed "in her determination to become a responsible adult by her final rejection of her empty self (Sapora 1993, p.20). Lily's struggle mirrors the struggle of Nettie, Nettie's daughter, Gerty and many women of her time. Both Edna in *The Awakening* and Lily in *The House of Mirth* must give way in order for the New Woman to emerge. "The woman, in each novel, must suffer to bring forth her new self and she must be strong enough to be her own parent, to nurture that new and helpless being" (Wershoven 1987, p.37). Poignantly, both

women see the two daughters of their friends before they decide to take their own lives, and so their death enables them to leave the stage for these children to live in a society which provides better options and increased opportunities for independent women.

5. CONCLUSION

In the *fin de siècle* works I analyse in this study, the female characters experience entrapment within the traditional gender roles of American patriarchal society. There are numerous ways they experience it: in passionless and sexless marriages, in the social expectations surrounding motherhood and even in life as a single woman. The inner convolution of women's lives arising from their subservient position in relation to men, men's perception of them as the objects of desire, their emotional distress in their passionless marriages, their struggles to go along with the societal codes, the confining nature of marriage and a domestic life and their motherhood are some reasons for their entrapment. However, I come to the conclusion that these novels demonstrate that there are some possible ways to liberate the entrapped women from the limited society in which they live.

The contribution of this work to the field of feminist studies is that Gilman, Chopin and Wharton complement each other as each emphasizes different kind of entrapment of women. They all wrote almost at the same time, Gilman redefines motherhood and marks a new epoch in it; however, she does not choose to talk about sexuality. In order to make up for Gilman, Chopin touched on the issue of sexuality as a way of remedy for women in their afflicted marriages, yet this thesis has proved that she could not manage to get some of her female characters out of the marriage bond. Being in limbo, Chopin does not choose to redefine the women outside the social conventions of a marriage. To compensate for Chopin, Edith Wharton, in a society where marriage is seen vital for women, depicts Lily as an unmarried women and touches on her infantilization in a depraved society. As seen from above, any subject that is not resolved by one is resolved by the other; as a result, it can be concluded that the full liberation cannot be wholly achieved by analyzing just one or two of them.

While one could argue that women writers often seem to imply that such liberation is not possible, as many of the heroines choose to die rather than persist in their rebellions, it is possible to see their deaths as victories which pave the way towards a better life for women in the future. The death, though it seems tragic, in fact it is a way to avoid the restrictions of patriarchal society, in this way these writers create the "New Woman". Still others, particularly in Gilman's fiction, go on to live their lives happily, depending on the solidarity and support of the women around them.

As the first chapter presented, Gilman liberates the women by making their domestic duties, especially motherhood, collective and professional.

Kate Chopin, as shown in the second chapter, accepts sexuality as a legal issue to deal with and stresses the importance of sexuality and the exploration of sexual desire for women. It can be concluded from her point of view that sexuality, even when produced within the institution of marriage, is natural; in other words, she believes that sexual fulfillment is key to individual happiness. Though it is clear that extra-marital activities and relations are not the solution to marriage problems, they are presented as indicators to other possibilities. From this part, I came to the conclusion that sexuality is defined by the marriage conventions of the time; however, sexual liberation is natural to human beings especially to women who have been historically denied access to this part of their subjectivity. Sexual fantasies, new methods for sexual expression, sexual relationships and their possibilities are of great importance in a woman's journey to liberate herself.

In addition to the entrapment women experience by having to tie their fate to men in order to secure their future and the potential avenues of liberation from such restrictions, the third chapter focuses on Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, which exposes and criticizes the hypocrisy of upper-class New York society. It can be concluded that Wharton reveals the strict social rules of conduct for a woman, by showing Lily's summary casting out by the society. However, it is obvious that the members of this society are the ones who do not follow these rules. Being a member of this society, it can be deduced that Wharton exposes her own disturbance at the hypocrisy she sees around her, and uses the character of Lily to expose the fecklessness of the upper echelons of

New York society. Lily as a single woman who tries to marry a man with wealth and money is a symbol for futile quests; Wharton thus paints a profoundly depressing picture of the female existence at the turn of the century New York. Depressing though it seems, her death make inroads into the emanation of the New Woman.

With this hope of New Woman, what can be concluded is that no matter how overwhelming it is for them to put up with their ongoing entrapment, ensnarement and the scorning, all these characters representing the new trend are now able to take up the initiative to bear the torch of female's utmost hope to see the cult of womanhood and its aspects therein even far more liberated than they extrapolate.

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