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**Nezávislé hrdinky New Yorku a jejich feministické postoje
v zobrazení Edith Whartonové a Candace Bushnellové**

**Independent Heroines and Their Feminist Attitudes in New York City
as Depicted in the Fiction by Edith Wharton and Candace Bushnell**

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Anotace

Na základě klasických románů Edith Whartonové, bestselleru současné autorky Candace Bushnellové a teoretické literatury o feminismu bylo provedeno bádání v oblasti vývoje feminismu ve Spojených státech amerických a jeho projevů v beletrii. Základem pro tuto práci byl vývoj feminismu a jeho dopad na moderní společnost. V práci dále následuje pohled na postoje různých žen v dnešním New Yorku a různé prostředky, které v závislosti na jejich životních postojích používají v boji proti stále silné šovinistické patriarchální tradici. Práce se dále zabývá společenským postavením žen v letech 1890 až 1920, stejně tak, jako v moderní době. Za úvodní kapitolou, která se zabývá dějinami feminismu následuje srovnávací studie beletrizovaných ženských postav v New Yorku v době minulé – skrze dílo Edith Whartonové a současné – v díle Candace Bushnellové. Závěr této práce je věnován otázce nakolik tyto autorky skutečně zobrazují měnící se role žen a jejich postoje, obzvláště vůči mužům a manželství.

Abstract

Based on Wharton's classic novels and Bushnell's contemporary bestseller as well as on theoretical literature on feminism, research was conducted on the development of feminism in the United States and its expression through fiction. The evolution and impact of feminism on modern society created a ground for this thesis. A presentation of the status of various women in modern New York and the different means they possess and use in their fight against the still strong chauvinistic tradition of paternalism follows. The thesis then deals with the social status these women had in America between 1890s and 1920s, as well as with the status they have had in modern times. An introductory chapter dealing with history of feminism is followed by a comparative study of the fictionalized New York female characters in the past times – as depicted by Edith Wharton, and the present times as shown by Candace Bushnell. The thesis concludes by showing how close these authors realistically depict the changing roles and attitudes of women, especially towards men and marriage.

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1. INTRODUCTION

New York City is the birthplace of many modern movements, the heart of American economy, the starting point of the emancipation as well as home to most powerful, richest and most influential women in the world. It is also home to the great abyss between the number of single eligible women and single eligible men. This city of endless possibilities is probably the only place in the world where women have the same possibilities as men – never and nowhere before has emancipation developed to such an extent. During the course of years many artists lived or wrote about the Village, but only the very few depicted social standards and struggle for independence from the female point of view. This work concerns with the independent heroines of New York – as depicted by Edith Wharton and Candace Bushnell.

Before we take a deeper view into social and feminist issues the two faced together with their characters, I shall make a brief overview of some of the particular similarities and differences in their work and background, which shall be dealt with in greater detail later in separate chapters. History of women's movement plays a tremendous role in their views and attitudes, which is why it shall be dealt with in the following chapter.

2. GROUND AND THE BACKGROUND

Since there are several foundations they both gathered from, one that seems most obvious is the city itself – the Big Apple, and especially its heart, the residence of many rich and powerful – the Island of Manhattan. However, as soon as we make out a similarity, there is immediately a difference that stands out in the form of their origin. While Wharton was a born and wealthy New Yorker, Bushnell, like many others looking for fame and fortune, moved in – from Glastonbury, Connecticut.

Even though they came from distinct backgrounds, they do share one view – their view on morals and moral standards in society they lived in. Another thing they have in common is surely their main characters, heroes or heroines of their work. All of these women share many things – from their life energy and strong personal opinions to their opinions on moral issues of their time, which are quite often very different from the expectations imposed by society. One aspect stands out in particular – the issue of women's independence.

2.1 Questions and Issues

While in Wharton we usually see the main issues depicted in the form of one main female, Bushnell realized that, in order to show so many different characteristics and different points of view, she would have to choose more than just one subject – therefore she usually recasts the one into four women – sometimes with even very different views themselves.

When it comes to personal life, there are no doubts about the richness of experience. Both of these authors, living in different times and coming from different backgrounds, experienced life in a very different way – but with a very similar outcome. Wharton, for example, could hardly have experienced the number of relationships,

including their kind, in the way Bushnell has, because that would have brought her to an even higher level of social pressure than the one she had experienced. Here on one hand we have cocktail parties, dates, train-wreck affairs and premarital intercourse, while on the other hand we see tea parties, aspiring looks across the room, disappointments from rejecting a formal invitation, shocking touches and sometimes maybe even a kiss. No matter how preposterous the comparison of these two authors may seem at first, when focusing on relationships there is one more parallel that distinctively connects their lives – the quality of their relationships. It is difficult to say but if Bushnell had experienced relationships in the amount and manners Wharton had, then, now we probably would not have such an interesting work to ponder about. To summarize the issue, we could say both authors were as involved as was allowed by their age and social surrounding.

The New York jet set surely brings these authors together. With riches and fame in all their works the rise, and sometimes the fall of heroines are depicted. While in Wharton we usually see the power of aristocracy unwilling to accept new members, and is, even more frequently trying to disregard its current ones in order to become even more powerful and influential, in Bushnell there is the contrast between “old” and “new money”. The question of money is not as crucial as it was at the turning of the century, but its amount still does play a great role. Questions like “*What’s your age ceiling with men? - 50. – Factored in millions and millions of dollars?*”¹ would have seemed quite pointless in the 1900s when arranged marriages no longer officially existed, but the whole matter was still settled by internal family deals. The equation, or at least the official one seemed quite clear: “money plus influence equals a good family, equals an ideal husband, equals an ideal relationship”. However, the equation today is no longer that simple. The first constituents have in many cases, lost their significance in modern-

¹ Sex and the City Season 2, *The Man, the Myth, the Viagra*, dir: Victoria Hochberg, 1999

day New York, and having been replaced with an unknown so that more to anything specific the equation now appears to be “*what plus what equals relationship?*”²

The clear and comprehensible statements of the older days have been replaced with the foggy questions of the post-modern days. The classic Wharton questions of what shall be done and shall I go back to my husband or have an affair with my admirer have evolved into many mutations in Bushnell, e.g. the already mentioned relationship equation or even “*What if he’s gay and he doesn’t know it yet?*”³ However, this does not trivialize Wharton’s questions – after all they were the ground for the present day ones, but they were asked in a different manner, again at the level approved of by the time.

Another point that puts the two authors on a scale is the issue of a happy ending. In both cases the final aims are represented by the “happily ever after”, which starts with the wedding, continues with having the perfect children and an ideal marriage. In Wharton we never even get this far, but the target ideal always seems to be hanging somewhere in the air. In Bushnell, again, the evolution continues and the happy ending always seems so close, but is nowhere to be found in the end, or is to be found but eventually falls apart. The question of ending up alone is being raised many times over and is often used as a scarecrow for women.

The issue of strong, smart and independent women trying to follow their own way goes back from the Wharton’s works, where such women are punished whenever they differ from the ideal of a perfect wife. This problem then evolves in Bushnell as well, and is represented by the two lines – the family-oriented women, who are still today to some extent perceived as the right examples to follow, and the career-oriented women who are no longer shunted from social life, but at the age of forty-five, with no

² Sex and the City Season 2, *Ex and the City*, dir. Michael Patrick King, 1999

³ Sex and the City Season 2, *Evolution*, dir. Pam Thomas, 1999

husband or children, end up being pitied by society or even worse, displayed as a deterrent.

I have a friend who has always gone out with these extremely sexy guys and just had a good time. One day she woke up and she was forty-one. She couldn't get any more dates. She had a complete physical breakdown, couldn't hold on to her job and had to move back to Wisconsin to live with her mother. Trust me; this is not a story that makes men feel bad. ⁴

Could we, in fact, after a complex comparison of the two come to the answer of the eternal question of "What women want?" This is also one of the main topics that shall be dealt with later.

One of the few questions that separate Bushnell and Wharton is clearly the topic of sexual identity. Since the turn of the century, with its protective legislation and many limitations to women's rights, the age still gave us some very specific and clear views on male and female roles. After the women's movement and the Second Wave in the 60s, even though the Equal Rights Amendment had not been passed, the situation changed in many ways. Since 1922 women were officially allowed to vote, and later they could also work at the same positions as men, earn as much as men, and eventually, control their bodies as men.

Even though all these changes took their full effect in the 60s, the role of the main bread-bringer of the family was shaken to the core. Traditional roles ceased to apply – the father was no more the only person working in the family and the mother did not have the upbringing of children as her main focus anymore. Traditional boundaries were formally eliminated and people very frequently crossed the formerly-stated gender borders – at first doctresses became doctors, lawyeresses became

⁴ Sex and the City, p. 28

lawyers, and eventually stewardesses became flight attendants, nurses became nurturers, businessmen became businesspeople and chairmen became chairs. Sexual experimentations of the 60s quickly became sexual freedom of any kind, free from any social limitations and judgments. That is why it is difficult to imagine Edith Wharton feeling like “*Alice in Sexually-Confused-Orientation-Land.*”⁵ We also doubt she’d ask the frequent question of modern times – “Is he gay or straight?”⁶, let alone “*Is he a gay-straight man or a straight-gay man?*”⁷ or “*What if he’s gay and he doesn’t know it?*”⁸ The issue of sexual orientation, being one of the most crucial ones today, also plays a great role in Bushnell’s work. To what extent it influences her characters and their acts remains to be revealed.

⁵ Sex and the City Season 3, *Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl...*, dir. Pam Thomas, 2000

⁶ Sex and the City Season 2, *Evolution*, dir. Pam Thomas, 1999

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

3. A HISTORY OF WOMEN'S STRUGGLE

Trivial yet fundamental, the question of women's rights has haunted society since the dawn of time. Back from when the roles of men and women in the Middle Ages were clearly divided, yet came quite close in many matters – such as decision-making and work in, and out of the household, to the age of the indecipherable gap in which men left home to search for work and women stayed in and took care of the household, otherwise known as the Industrial Age, there came the Age of Enlightenment to set off a new sparkle in the emancipation process. Until the 19th century, the denial of equal rights to women met with only occasional protest and drew little attention from most people. Because women lacked the educational and economic resources that would enable them to challenge the prevailing social order, women generally accepted their inferior status as their only option.

At this time women and men shared the lack of numerous rights – such as the right to vote, hold property, the right to education, as they had been restricted to the wealthy few. With the Enlightenment philosophy came the change, since many political theorists and philosophers considered that “all men were created equal” and therefore were subjected to equal treatment under the law.

As the modern trends were evolving, the Industrial Revolution took place in Europe and North America. Before the boom in industrial development, most people worked in farming or crafts making, both of which took place in or near the home. Men and women usually divided the numerous tasks among themselves and their children. Industrialization led male workers to seek employment outside of home – in factories and other large enterprises, and the growing split between home and work reinforced the idea that women's “rightful place” was in the home, while men belonged in the public world of employment and politics. As women became more isolated, their

discontent grew by the year and struggle to change the legislation and general views resulted in two major waves of organized efforts. The so-called first wave began around the mid-19th century, when women campaigned to gain suffrage, or the right to vote. This wave lasted until the 1920s, when women in most countries were granted this right, along with the right to run for a political office.

3.1 The First Wave of the Women's Movement

During the Enlightenment, political philosophers in Europe began to question traditional ideas that based the rights of citizens on their wealth and social status. Instead, leaders of the Enlightenment argued that all white individuals were born with natural rights that made them free and equal. They believed that all inequities that existed among the people were the result of an inadequate educational system and an imperfect social environment. Philosophers of the time argued that these inequities would disappear with improved education and more developed egalitarian social structures.

Such radical ideas concerning the rights of citizens inspired the American Revolution in 1775 – however, the ideas had little impact on the legal and political status of women. Most Enlightenment thinkers did not even bother to deal with the position of women in society, and many of those thinkers to come inherited the opinion that the concepts of liberty, equality and political representation applied only to white men. One of them, who was also one of the most influential writers and educators of this period, French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau claimed that women were sentimental and frivolous. He also argued that women were naturally suited to be subordinate companions of men. However, in response to him and others who belittle

significance of the role of women in society, the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1791).

In this book she argued that just as men, women were rational by nature, but their inferior education often taught them to be silly and emotional. She argued that education should develop the natural reasoning capability in girls, supporting this statement with the notion that the best marriages were such, in which husband and wife were friends as well as legal partners, naming it “a marriage of equals,” an idea propounded by John Milton in the 1600s. She believed that equality in marriage could only exist where there is equality of education.

At this time the vast majority of married women in the United States, as in most Western countries in that time, had no legal identity apart from their husbands. This legal status, also known as *coverture*, prohibited a married woman from taking part in a lawsuit, sitting on a jury, owning property in her own name or writing a will. In disputes over custody over children, courts usually gave permanent custody to the father.

3.2 The Temperance Movement and Abolitionism

Another movement that inspired the early women’s struggle for emancipation was the 19th century religious reformation. Many middle-class women joined evangelical societies whose efforts focused on religious conversion, as well as on moral and social reform. These women, founding what was also known as the temperance movement – being named for their effort to abolish alcohol, advocated the improvement of the lives and the saving of the souls of prostitutes, an increase of wages of working women and the expansion of employment opportunities for women. They considered alcohol to be a primary cause of sexual violence, prostitution, promiscuity, adultery and the overall destruction of working-class families.

Many early American women's rights activists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Blackwell gained important diplomatic and organizational experience in this movement. Even though American women became members of social and moral reform campaigns, they gained the biggest influence due to their struggle to abolish slavery. Many early female abolitionists came from Quaker backgrounds and based their political work on Quaker traditions of equality for all people. Under the leadership of Quaker minister Lucretia Mott, they began demanding that women become active members in male abolition organizations, so by 1850 the majority of members in northern abolition societies were women.

Among the most influential female abolitionists were Sarah and Angelina Grimké. In their lectures at abolition societies, they described their personal experiences of the horrors of slavery. As women who spoke in public, they caused public commotion over the right of women to speak before an audience. Since at the time men had been considered proper public reformers, the sisters were charged that, by speaking publicly, they gained an "unnatural character." As their response the sisters made comparisons between the state of white women and African Americans – where both were seen as intellectually inferior and were denied access to decent education. Sarah Grimké claimed that men and women were created equal and that "whatever is right for a man to do, is right for a woman to do."

Another two women who experienced discrimination first-hand during an anti-slavery convention in London wrote a *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions*, which is often considered as the founding text of the American women's rights movement. Based in part on the *Declaration of Independence*, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton stated that men and women were created equal, and as such they were both born with certain natural rights. The document criticized men for

denying women the right to vote, the right to hold property, equal terms in divorce and custody of children. It also criticized limited access to higher education, which clearly expelled them from nearly all profitable employments. The church had also been the target of criticism, being condemned with excluding women from the ministry.

3.3 *The Right to Hold Property*

Many issues and limitations in women's lives at the time came from the existing legislation. State and federal laws in the 19th century banned women from owning property in their name, the fact which changed with the Married Women's Property Act in 1848, which allowed women to acquire and hold property independent of their husbands. This progressive law from the State of New York clearly established the idea of a married woman as a legal entity independent on her husband, therefore inspiring nearly all other states to eventually pass similar legislation.

3.4 *The Fight for Suffrage*

The right to own property was not the only right women lacked - the right to vote did not exist until 1920 either. The passage of the 14th Amendment in 1866 and the 15th Amendment in 1870 helped focus the women's rights movement on suffrage. The 14th Amendment stated that "*All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside...*"⁹

The 15th Amendment then added that "*the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account*

⁹ US Constitution Annotated [online]. c2005, [cit. 2009-04-13].
<<http://supreme.justia.com/constitution/amendment-14/03-citizens-of-the-united-states.html>>

of race, color, or previous condition of servitude”¹⁰. The 14th Amendment was perceived by activists as the means to give women constitutional equality and the rights of full citizenship, although it really concerned the former slaves. They insisted on expanding the 15th Amendment to include suffrage to women. Since the founding of National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890, the movement focused on the right to vote more than on anything else. This right was granted after thirty years of struggle, with the breaking text of the 19th Amendment, stating that “*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.*”¹¹

Besides solving the issue of women’s right to vote, it remains an interesting fact that, even though the law applied to women as well as to African Americans, in practice the vast majority of blacks continued to face restrictions on voting – such as literacy tests and other measures that made it difficult for them to register to vote.

3.5 Protective vs. Harmful Legislation

After women were given the right to vote by the 19th Amendment, members of the women’s movement aimed at getting other rights for women as well. Alice Paul and Lucy Burns founded the National Women’s Party in 1916 and focused their efforts on prohibiting all other injustice between men and women. It was this party that, in the early 1920s, struggled to pass an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, the amendment that would proscribe all sex-based forms of discrimination. The U.S. Congress, influenced by the National Women’s Party, introduced the amendment in 1923, but it failed to gain the majority of the votes. However, not everyone agreed with

¹⁰ MOUNT, Steve. The United States Constitution [online]. c2009, last revision 6th Feb 2009 [cit. 2009-04-13], < <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html>>

¹¹ MOUNT, Steve. The United States Constitution [online]. c2009, last revision on 6th Feb 2009 [cit. 2009-04-13], < <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html>>

the text, arguing that strict support of equal rights would bring the elimination of protective legislation for women, in particular harming the working-class women.

Besides the right to vote, in time a whole system of laws had been created to “protect” women from numerous forms of abuse at workplace. With the 19th century’s hunger for a larger workforce, pettiness went aside and many women were needed as a part of the industrial labor force. The increasing number also raised concerns of social reformers, especially about the impact of long hours and poor working conditions on women’s health. A limitation was made on the types of work women could perform. These were led by the National Consumers’ and Women’s Trade Union League. As a result, by 1908 the states had passed 19 laws that limited women’s working hours and the types of work they could perform.

Another big influx of women into the workforce came during World War I, when, with the lack of men who went to fight the war in Europe, 81 000 women started doing jobs only men used to do. This increase in the share of workforce pressured the Department of Labor up to the point where it was forced to establish the Women’s Bureau in 1920. The office itself then initiated the passage of legislation that was supposed to protect working women. Even though it is not current anymore, the issue of protective legislation for women has remained a controversial topic up to the present day.

Women opposing it have argued that special rules for women would slow down the fight for equality with men, claiming that labor legislation based on sex would encourage the known stereotypes in which women are perceived as weak and defenseless. Even worse, it would limit their options for employment and support the opinion that women’s rightful place is in the home. On the other hand, the party in favor

of the legislation argued it was necessary to keep the protective laws, because women were too subtle and fragile to do the same kind of work as men.

This was the first actual issue on which women amongst themselves had very different views. Therefore it was also the one that had been repeatedly challenged in courts of law. In the first appeal of *Ritchie v. People* in 1895, the Illinois Supreme Court found that limiting women's work to eight hours a day conflicted with their right to apply for specific jobs, and therefore violated the right to equal protection under the law, as given by the 14th Amendment. At another trial, *Lochner v. New York*, which was taken before the Supreme Court in 1905, it was found that all protective labor legislation had been unconstitutional. This decision was taken to court again three years later in *Muller v. Oregon*, where the American lawyer and later Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis claimed that women's role as mothers required them to be granted special protection in the workplace. Another trial decided about the minimum wage for women, where in *Adkins v. Children's Hospital* the Supreme Court stated that a minimum wage for women violated their right to freedom of contract. This issue was resolved with passing of the National Fair Labor Standards Act, establishing that the minimum wage for men and women are the same. All remaining protective legislation was abolished in 1969 by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

3.6 The Second Wave of Women's Movement

The second wave developed during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, when the struggle of African Americans to achieve racial equality inspired women to renew their own struggle, this time for ultimate equality. The debate for the Equal Rights Amendment was, once again, on the table. As suggested by Esther Peterson, director of Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, the first national Commission

on the Status of Women was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy. The commission issued a report in 1963 which focused on employment discrimination, inequalities in wages, unequal legal status and a lack in support services for working women.

However, considering that equal rights had already been guaranteed by the Constitution, the Amendment was, once again, off the table. Nevertheless, since it led to Equal Pay Act, the report cannot be perceived as a total loss.

This act equalized the wage amongst workforce, especially when it came to same positions. The financial reward was to be the same as well. Different earnings for different sexes doing the same kind of work were finally made illegal. However, the new act failed to address the widening wage gap between the sexes, which was caused by women with lower or no education who still remained in jobs traditionally held by women. For example, in 1963 the average female worker in the United States earned only 58.9 percent of the average male worker's income. Some progress was seen in years to follow, considering the fact that in 2003 a woman's salary was only 75.5 percent of a man's salary.

Focusing back on Equal Rights Amendment, the act had to wait another nine years to win congressional approval – being introduced as the 27th Amendment at the time. In order for it to become a law the amendment had to be ratified by at least 38 states legislatures. Many female groups and politicians, such as the National Organization for Women, established in 1966, after the first loss of 1963, campaigned and lobbied for the amendment to gain passage at the state level. Seeing the struggle and general support for the Equal Rights Amendment, the Congress extended the seven-year ratification deadline to ten years. Yet again the opponents of the ERA made their voice heard, arguing that a doctrine codifying equality would threaten to remove the

traditional differences between men and women and would blur the clearly stated roles which the sexes played in society.

The movement opposing ERA, otherwise known as STOP ERA, which was led by Phyllis Schlafly, claimed that the ERA would not give women any new rights which they did not already possess. The anti-movement won its battle in 1982 when the ERA was defeated – having been passed in 35 states ERA was short of ratification by three state votes.

3.7 The Year of Changes, the Year of Equals

It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer:

(1) to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or

(2) to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin...¹²

The lines above from Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act meant a huge difference at the time. Discrimination based on sex as well as race, color or ethnic origin was, after more than three hundred years, officially made illegal.

After the peaceful protests of African Americans, the act, which formerly focused only on racial and ethnic discrimination, received another dimension when

¹² The Equal Pay Act of 1963 [online]. c2009, last revision on Feb 17th 2009 [cit. 2009-04-13]. <<http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/vii.html>>

Howard W. Smith, a congressman for the State of Virginia, added the word “sex” in an amendment to the act. Not having great chances for ratification the mentioned congressman insisted on adding one more word in order to ensure its total loss.

Instead, “sex” initiated the campaign for the approval of the amended act by the Congresswoman Martha Griffiths and Senator Margaret Chase Smith and it was eventually passed on July 2nd 1964. In order to enforce execution of the act, Title VII also founded the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – the institution which women realized would not be sufficient if their voice was to be heard by the EEOC. Therefore, in an effort to increase women’s political power in the United States Betty Friedan established the National Organization for Women in 1966.

In its early years the organization focused almost exclusively on achieving the rights of women as individuals. It was helpful to professional women but failed to gain any larger mainstream influence. It was not until August 26, 1970 Women’s Strike for Equality, a massive demonstration honoring the 50th anniversary of woman’s suffrage, that the popularity of the organization expanded dramatically. Even though the act existed, many institutions tried to avoid it. Therefore, in order to assure compliance with the law, National Organization for Women, together with Women’s Equity Action League, demanded that the Department of Labor investigate colleges and universities that received federal funds. As a result of the investigation, the Department of Labor brought more than 360 institutions to court in that year alone. This effort resulted in Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, stating that

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...¹³

¹³ Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972 [online]. c2009, [cit. 2009-14-13]. <<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/regs/statutes/titleIX.htm>>

As it is obvious from the quote, this title prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program receiving federal funds.

3.8 Reclaiming the Right to Their Own Bodies

Amongst many other limitations the one to control the power of their own bodies was the issue that struck each woman down to her very own and deepest personal core – the thing in which men had no insight whatsoever – control of female reproductive organs. Women’s efforts to control their own reproductive systems have been an important part of the Women’s Rights Movement since the 19th century. Predicting what the outcome of the battle would be if they took all the issues out in the battlefield at once, at first they advocated the practice of “voluntary motherhood” – the right in which a woman had the right to refuse to have sexual intercourse with her husband if she did not want to become pregnant. The campaign changed the legal status in which the husband had the right to have sex with his wife anytime he wanted, while the wife was obliged to obey – she did not have the right to refuse, therefore a trial in which a woman is suing her husband for rape would have very little legal ground. Women at the time, again, had no rights, and therefore, very little choice.

The tide for the control of their bodies was beginning to turn around 1910, when Margaret Sanger and Emma Goldman began advocating birth control in the United States. Basing her claims on her long experience as a nurse among the working class men and women, Sanger observed their struggle as their families continued to get bigger and bigger, enlarging their existential issues with every new child that was brought in the world. She advised young working-class Americans on birth control options through *The Woman Rebel*, a magazine which she personally edited and

published. For this work she was indicted with criminal charges in 1914. She argued against ignorance about birth control, as well as the preposterous Comstock Law of 1837, stating:

I saw that the women of wealth obtain this information with little difficulty, while the working man's wife must continue to bring children into the world she could not feed or clothe, or else resort to an abortion.

I saw that it was the working class women who fill the death list which results from abortion, for though the women of wealth have abortions performed too, there is given them the best medical care and attention money can buy; trained nurses watch over them, and there is seldom any evil consequence. But the working woman must look for the cheapest assistance. The professional abortionist; the unclean midwives, the fake and quack -- all feed upon her helplessness and thrive and prosper on her ignorance. It is the Comstock laws which produce the abortionist and make him a thriving necessity while the lawmakers close their Puritan eyes.¹⁴

Sanger turned the public opinion in her favor, and charges against her were dropped. As a result she founded the American Birth Control League, the organization which changed its name into the Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 1942. Finally, the Comstock Law, which made it illegal to send any contraceptive devices and information through the mail, was finally abolished in court in 1938.

As Sanger claims, numerous evidence show that the phenomenon of abortion is not new – they have been widely performed by doctors, midwives and pregnant women throughout history. However, by the late 1800s the majority of U.S. states made performing or obtaining abortion a crime – except to save the life of a pregnant woman. As of this we may see that a woman, with no control of her own body, had a legal status of a “child-producing instrument”. In *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* the Supreme

¹⁴ MSPP [online]. c1999, last revision on Nov 26th 2002 [cit. 2009-04-13].
<http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/secure/documents/speech_comstockery_in_america.html>

Court for the first time announced that states cannot restrict abortion in the first two trimesters of pregnancy.

According to the declaration, states could only interfere to protect the life of the fetus once that life could be sustained outside the womb. The law also allowed individual states to enact laws to restrict abortion after viability – except when abortion is necessary to save the life or health of the mother. In *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* of 1989, the court also limited the validity of *Roe v. Wade* by upholding a notorious 1977 Missouri law that banned the use of public employees or facilities in performing abortions unless the mother’s life was in danger.

Coverage of abortion expenses from Medicaid funds was also left to individual states. For example, in 1977 the Supreme Court allowed states to limit the use of these funds for payment of “elective” abortions, i.e. those that are not medically required. The law was further upheld by the Supreme Court in 1980 and it restricted the availability of federal Medicaid funding for abortions that were seen as medically necessary.

Some other laws were also banned – especially those requiring a woman to receive the information about risks or consequences of an abortion 24 hours prior to the procedure itself. Also a federal policy imposed in 1991 that prevented health-care providers receiving federal funding from engaging in any activities that promoted abortion was revoked in 1993 by President Bill Clinton.

Just as in the question of protective legislation, the female public has been split into two parties: pro-life and pro-choice. Since the current legal state became pro-choice with legalization of abortions in 1973, pro-life supporters have worked continuously to reverse the decision. They have lobbied on both individual and wide-range support levels and have asked state and federal officials to place restrictions on women seeking

abortions, as well as on doctors providing them. They have had numerous demonstrations outside abortion clinics, where their rights to peaceful and organized demonstrations have been kept, as long as they keep an eleven-meter buffer zone around the facility. Despite their struggles to put a ban on abortions, women's right to choice still has not worn off amongst the American public.

3.9 Present State and Trends in Women's Rights

Dealing with numerous issues, from property rights and the right to vote to protective labor legislation, Equal Rights Amendment that lost the ratification by three states, Civil Rights Act of 1964, which barred employment discrimination based on sex as well as race, color or ethnic origin and the abolishment of the old Comstock Law in 1938, when courts lifted all federal legal prohibitions against birth control, we may realize the following fact. The women struggle for equality and independence has come a long way, where, at the end of it, women are equal to men in each and every term. *Rex mortus, vivat rex!*

However, the reality of equality is close but we are not there yet. Recent data are still pointing in direction of insufficient equality. While women made up about 32 percent of the world's labor force in 1990, the percentage of women in positions to make important decisions was far lower. In 2002 women held only 15.7 percent of corporate executive positions in the 500 largest companies in the United States – an increase of only 7 percentage points since 1995. In the mid-1990s women comprised only 1 percent of executives in the 1,000 largest corporations outside the US. However, the recent statistics do show a trend leaning towards a positive rise. Looking at the labor force participation rate, in 2007, 6 out of every 10 women aged 16 and over were labor

force participants, compared with 7 out of 10 men. 59.3 percent of all women were in the labor force, while the percentage of men was 73.2 percent.

Focusing on the active workforce population, the unemployment rates in 2007 were even slightly lower for women, settling at 4.5% than for men, whose unemployment rate reached 4.7 %.

While we still see men as the ones more likely to have two or more jobs, the statistics do prove us wrong, with multiple job holders totaling 7.6 million in 2007 the number is equally split in half with 3.8 million women and 3.8 million men.

Even though much progress has been made so far, the median weekly earnings for women who were full-time employees still have not been equalized - reaching \$614 or 80% of men's \$766. Nonetheless, the trends among the persons aged 16 to 24 seem much more optimistic, with women's earnings reaching 92% of men's earnings of \$443.

In the new millennium women for the first time outnumbered men in some well-paid positions – working as financial managers, human resource managers, education administrators, medical and health services managers, accountants and auditors, budget analysts and real estate brokers they accounted for 51% of all workers in high-paying management. Besides these jobs they also kept the majority in some traditionally women's positions – preschool, kindergarten, elementary, middle and secondary school teachers and registered nurses.

Unfortunately, while the 20 leading occupations of employed women still include secretaries, registered nurses, cashiers, retail salespersons, waitresses, accountants, receptionists, maids, childcare workers, cooks, hairdressers and cosmetologists, the number of women working in these positions is still much higher than the trend mentioned above, with the average weekly earnings reaching from \$614, for the position of a secretary, to \$341, the weekly salary of a cook.

On the other hand, the top ten occupations with highest median weekly earnings among women were pharmacists, CEOs, lawyers, IT managers, software engineers, psychologists, physical therapists, management analysts, computer programmers and human resource managers, with weekly earnings high above average, ranging from \$1,603 to \$1,073.

Speaking of traditional jobs, we generally say that jobs requiring technical dexterity and/or physical force are the ones least likely to be occupied by women – but even here, whilst trying to break the numbers in traditionally women’s jobs, as well as attracted by the higher entry-level wages and a career ladder with pay between \$20 and \$30 per hour, more and more women are applying for nontraditional occupations for women. According to the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, the number of those jobs we consider untraditional for women is slowly dropping, with more than 20% of architects, computer programmers, announcers, detectives, security guards, engineering technicians, chemical engineers, chefs and head cooks being women we slowly cease to perceive these occupations as distinctly men’s – making the line between traditional and non-traditional jobs even thinner.

3.10 Political Involvement

Even though the majority of the political scene still consists of men, some of the most important positions are taken by women. One of these would certainly be Nancy Pelosi, who is at the time the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Although it may not seem as an important function when compared to the President or the Vice President, it is exactly this woman who would become the President in case Barack Obama or Joe Biden were unable to fulfill their duties.

The position of the United States Secretary of State has also been occupied by women in the recent years. From President Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and George W. Bush's Condoleezza Rice to present-day Obama administration, where this position is taken by the woman who was in the top position to become the President in 2008 elections – Hilary Clinton.

3.11 *Unresolved Issues*

Looking at the background of history of female struggle for independence as well as at the present statistics, we need to face the inevitable question: If the struggle is over, why are the present numbers still low? Who or what is holding back all those powerful-women-to-be? Whether it is seeing the price they would pay for social independence as a threat or being pushed down for being “too emotional”, the issues of smart, educated and capable women are reflected in the work of both of these authors. Who is the enemy within that makes them feel guilty about having more money and influence than men. Why are smart women, to some extent, social outcasts in both authors? Why are there many toxic bachelors but no toxic “bachelorettes” and has the complex web of social statuses and mating rituals led us to “the end of love in Manhattan”? Why are relationships “religion of the 90s”. Even though terms like “working-class” are obsolete today, why does “dating outside our caste” present such a problem? Finding all the answers to these and many other questions asked by these authors is beyond human powers, but reaching at least a few to help us overcome the remaining issues may be considered a success.

4. A MUTATION WALKS AMONG US

In order to get the wider perspective on the views of truly emancipated women, we are first going to focus on the group of women that reach off the focus of our target group. These are tales of the young, yet sometimes experienced women, who were raised to think by their pretty appearance that New York was their oyster. The stories of beautiful girls in Wharton are usually limited to them ending up married, playing a nice part in their rich husband's collection of trophies, smiling politely and nodding at topics debated during tea parties – the ones that reach far beyond their own universe or knowledge, or lack of it, if you will. On the other hand, almost a century later, as we expect the evolution that continued, probably to make them more educated and smart, apart from being pretty, the tide turns – escalating to even duller forms of life, the type of women whom Bushnell refers to as “models”.

Dealing with the issue of models in terms of attitudes of independent heroines of New York may seem preposterous. However, exactly these women have a great share in forming these attitudes in modern times. While in most cities their existence is limited to billboards and television commercials, in a city like New York these women roam the street, creating a dense atmosphere for women with other interests.

While their natural habitats and hierarchy are described in details with wit in *“Meet the Guys Who Bed Models!”*¹⁵ their stories are to be revealed a few pages later. In the former we discover that models are *“...loved for their beauty and hated for everything else – their stupidity, their flakiness, their lack of values, their baggage,”*¹⁶ They inhabit a sort of parallel New York universe, which has its own planets – *“Nobu,*

¹⁵ Sex and the City, p. 31

¹⁶ Sex and the City, p. 32

*Bowery Bar, Tabac, Flowers, Tunnel, Expo, Metropolis,*¹⁷ satellites “*various apartments, many near Union Square that the big modeling agencies rent for the models*”¹⁸ and goddesses “*Linda, Naomi, Christy, Elle, Bridget.*”¹⁹ They live in a symbiosis with the certain characters named “Modelizers”, i.e. “*Men who are a step beyond womanizers, who will sleep with just about anything in a skirt. Modelizers are obsessed not with women but with models,*”²⁰ with the symbiosis being indirect and including many factors, it is defined as follows.

The promoters have a relationship with the agencies. The agencies know the promoters are “safe” – i.e. they’re going to take care of their girls, entertain them. In turn, the promoters need the modelizers to take the girls out. The promoters don’t always have the money to take the girls out to dinner. The modelizers do. Someone’s got to feed them. The modelizer meets someone like Mr. Roque. Mr. Roque wants girls. The modelizers want girls and they also want to hang out with Mr. Roque. Everyone is happy.²¹

As defined by the book, in order to better understand their actions, the described species may be split into three types:

One: The new girls in town. They’re usually really young – sixteen, seventeen. They go out a lot. They might not work that much, they want something to do, they need to meet people, they like photographers. Two: The girls who work a lot. They’re a little older, twenty-one and up, they’ve been in the business for five years. They never go out, they travel a lot, you almost never see them. And three: The supermodels. They’re looking for a big-time guy who can do something for them. They’re all obsessed with money, maybe because their careers are insecure. They won’t even look at a guy who has less

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 32

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 32

²⁰ Ibid., p. 32

²¹ Sex and the City, p. 37

than twenty or thirty mil. Plus, they have the ‘big girl’ complex: They won’t hang out with any girl who’s not a top model, and they ignore other models or bitch about them.²²

Being restricted to magazines and billboards in normal cities, in New York, where the species roam the streets, these women make huge competition to those women who have not devoted their lives only to looks. If models could cause otherwise rational individuals to crumble in their presence, it makes one wonder how powerful beauty really is. “*Do you have to be a supermodel to get a date in New York?*”²³ Because “*...being beautiful I like having a rent-controlled apartment overlooking the part: completely unfair and usually bestowed upon those who deserve it least,*”²⁴ the expectations claimed upon the “Pretty” seem quite obvious. They are reversely formed through their attitudes, which are expressed in the following lines – their point of view, or their “Tales”.

The other, flashier and shinier side of living in New York is introduced– “*what’s it like to be an extremely beautiful young woman in New York City...what it’s like to be sought after, paid for, bothered, envied, misunderstood, and just plain gorgeous – all before the age of twenty-five.*”²⁵ The view is presented with a dissection through the first two types of models as mentioned above, in the form of three different women – Camilla, a twenty-five year old who began modeling at sixteen and says she “*feels old,*”²⁶ Shiloh, a seventeen-year old model who had a breakdown three months ago, and Teesie, a twenty-two year old model who just recently moved to New York. Since there are a handful of women like these in New York they create a sort of a secret club, an

²² Sex and the City, p. 38

²³ Sex and the City Season 1, *Models and Mortals*, dir. Allison Maclean, 1998

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Sex and the City, p. 105

²⁶ Ibid.

...urban sorority, with just a few requirements for membership: extreme beauty, youth (age range seventeen to twenty-five, or at least not admitting to being over twenty-five), brains, and the ability to sit in new restaurants for hours. ²⁷

As it is clear, the term brains may come to us as a shock, but without skipping to any premature conclusions, the term is also defined from a model's point of view. Stating they are culturally literate, they continue saying "*I read. I'll sit down and read a whole magazine from cover to cover.*" ²⁸ In a city like New York at this point it may seem that their possibilities are endless. They are the ones who get the biggest share "*of attention, invitations, gifts, offers of clothes, money, private airplane rides, dinners on yachts in the South of France...*" ²⁹ being the ones who occupy too much space, making it more difficult for women of brains to even get to the point at which they can amaze with their wit and humor. These are the women who are accused of causing the imbalance in the man-woman curve in New York – with the seemingly endless possibilities, conquering the City seems like an easy task. Or does it?

Putting the focus on their stories the reader learns that their experience is far from ideal. They are truly treated as icons, objects of beauty that are hollow on the inside. Yet the worst part is that they embrace these roles and continue to play the actual part. Therefore they completely meet the expectations put upon them – sit, smile and speak back when asked a question. Sometimes they do make some effort, which more often than not ends with lighting their own cigarettes.

Their experiences with men are quite versatile – ranging from older men that say "*You're too young to realize that you want to sleep with me and by the time you're old*

²⁷ Sex and the City, p. 106

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

enough to realize it, you'll be too old for me to want to sleep with you" ³⁰ to being offered various gifts, ranging from plane tickets to flights on private jets, and sometimes even liposuctions. They sometimes even dated the same man, comparing what gifts they have received during their time together. To support the myth of being nothing more than an empty shell, they even claim that the man *"...loves to step in and take care of everything. Men are needy, and we're the goddesses that give to them,...a man should provide for his girlfriend."* ³¹

Realizing that many needs they possess may be satisfied through the phenomenon of admired appearance, they truly create a complete opposite to women who struggled for independence for so many years. They eventually state *"...I don't buy this whole feminist idea. Men have a need to be dominant – let them. Embrace your femininity."* ³² However, the idea of giving birth is apparently not a part of the "femininity". It is out of the question, for the experience itself would disrupt their flawless façade. Therefore it leaves us to the conclusion that the term does not involve more than being beautiful – the state that serves to make someone's collection complete, apart from a big mansion and an expensive sports car. Being seen by the outer world as the ones who lack intelligence is understood as an act of pure envy, the act which is usually performed by women who are outside their wider "sorority". *"Women just assume that I'm an idiot. That I don't know anything. That I'm stupid. That I'm with Hubert for his money. You get spiteful and wear an even shorter skirt and more makeup."* ³³ In the end, they reach their ultimate truth, the truth filled with pity for those who are not them; for those women who consider them stupid. *"It's so sad and shocking. It's so telling of where*

³⁰ Sex and the City, p. 107

³¹ Sex and the City, p. 110

³² Sex and the City, p. 111

³³ Ibid., p. 111

women are in their lives... they can't stand if it seems like another woman has it better."³⁴

Looking back at Edith Wharton, we may find that no woman was described as exquisitely or astonishingly beautiful. We do see the rise and fall, but within its boundaries, the scale of beauty does not create poles as strong as in Bushnell, where the clear polarization of women into "models" and "civilians" stands out from the text. Whoever the second term may include, women who are not seen for their beauty first are left behind its borders; a disadvantage at the starting point that turns into an advantage with the progress of time. In the fight against them, civilians with their brains and sense of humor, eventually win the battle, where "*...after a while you start looking for someone who can make you laugh.*"³⁵

We know very clearly what our expectations are when we encounter someone extremely beautiful – no matter if it is a man or a woman – the outcome is the same. We end up looking at them, maybe even staring, searching in vain for the flaws we could identify with – the ones that are not to be found. Hence we continue looking for something else, and as they speak their shallowness astonishes us, confirming our previous expectations even more, making them fit the cast in every detail. This fact also clearly stands out in Bushnell's work, pushing the poles even further away, because they share a mutual playground of relationships. We do know or at least suspect what eventually happens to representatives of "civilian" pole – they end up married, single or divorced, but usually with their developed careers, and, sometimes, with breakdowns. Which way does the other pole go, though? What happens to these Aphrodite-like tamers, with their salads and a glass of hot water with squeezed lemon, these creatures

³⁴ Sex and the City., p. 111

³⁵ Sex and the City, p. 39

of the catwalk who make men that “hunt” them feel “...like an old man at twenty-nine?”³⁶

We do know about one type, the so-called goddess, who ends up in the star dome, looking for a grown-up Ritchie Rich to secure her aging beauty, but what about the two others? With the rise of their star, some of them turn downwards, and eventually burn out, while others may evolve into our next species, also unspoken of directly by Wharton, but seen from the present-day point of view, it is clear they evolved from our prototypes of the independent women, Lily Bart and Countess Olenska. Speaking of evolution and its outcome, this is clearly not one of the breeds originally intended by the Nature – for their sole purpose is divine beauty. In terms of Darwinism we are more likely to see them as an unwanted mutation of women’s movement – the International Crazy Girls.

4.1 Omnipotent or Powerless?

To return to the power of beauty, when dealing with men – women relationships and roles, another issue must be raised – the issue of female sex. While there is no doubt about the power women have when it comes to sexuality, the question of modern times is: To what extent are they allowed to use it? While the answer to this question used to be clear once upon a time, the issue changed with the evolving social standards. Since marriage is no longer considered mandatory in order get to involved in sexual intercourse, when seen from the modern point of view, the issue itself may seem obsolete. However, the moral bond was left behind. Back in Wharton’s time, the problem was nonexistent, since premarital intercourse was viewed by society as an act of disgrace, or at least seen in clearly double standards. While it applied to women in its

³⁶ Ibid., p. 39

full extent, and as unfair as it had seemed, it had absolutely no impact on men. Nonetheless, little changed once the couple got married, since women in wedlock had almost no rights at all. Still in the early days women were not even allowed to refuse the intercourse if they did not want it – they were obliged to obey their husband’s wishes every step of the way. Yet, even then there was a specific sort of women who knew how to use their female powers in order to get what they wanted – and not just with men. The character of May Welland in *The Age of Innocence* could be just one example. No matter how innocent she may present herself, she is the mistress of manipulation and deception. All the way through the progress of thirty three chapters, May Welland is presented as a pearl of her New York high-society upbringing. She is beautiful, proper and innocent – and therefore a perfect wife to be for Newland Archer. She seems childlike and carefree, but we soon realize that she is much wiser than Newland when it comes to complexities of a relationship. She is very cognizant with social rules and she knows Newland must conform to the dictates of their community – this she uses to the fullest extent to manipulate him. At the moment she realizes the danger of losing him to Countess Olenska, her cousin, she announces to her opponent that she is pregnant. Knowing that Countess Olenska is a decent and honorable person who would never allow herself to be the reason Newland left his wife and baby, May’s victory is guaranteed. However, her pregnancy is not revealed to Newland for another two weeks, in another moment of threat, just as she senses he is preparing to leave her – by going on a long journey, far away from everything.

‘As far as that? But I’m afraid you can’t, dear...Not unless you’ll take me with you...that is, if the doctors will let me go...but I’m afraid they won’t. For you see, Newland, I’ve been sure since this morning of something I’ve been so longing and hoping for – ‘...there was a long pause, which the inner devils filled with strident laughter; then May freed herself from his arms and stood up. ‘ You didn’t guess – ?’ ‘Yes –

I; no. That is, of course I hoped –“” They looked at each other for an instant and again fell silent; then, turning his eyes from hers, he asked abruptly: ‘Have you told any one else?’ ‘Only Mamma and your mother.’ She paused, and then added hurriedly, the blood flushing up to her forehead: ‘That is – and Ellen. You know I told you we’d had a long talk one afternoon – and how dear she was to me.’ ‘Ah – ‘ said Archer, his heart stopping. He felt that his wife was watching him intently. ‘Did you mind my telling her first, Newland?’ ‘Mind? Why should I?’ He made a last effort to collect himself. ‘But that was a fortnight ago, wasn’t it? I thought you said you weren’t sure till today.’ Her colour burned deeper, but she held his gaze. ‘No; I wasn’t sure then – but I told her I was. And you see I was right!’ she exclaimed, her blue eyes wet with victory.³⁷

With the social rules so strict, Newland is standing on the crossroads – with leaving his wife and a child, resulting in complete social expulsion on one hand, and seeking his dream with the woman he admires on the other. The choice to be made is quite clear when seen through the eyes of an early 20th century gentleman and he chooses to stay with his pregnant wife. However, he does hold on to his memories and fantasies of what might have been.

When focusing on characters in modern times where strict social laws have loosened, or in many cases completely vanished, we are facing two manipulative characters that are using the power of female sexuality to its full extent. In order to see them in a clearer light and as a little less shocking we must first take some general facts into consideration before we put them under the microscope. First of all, in modern times men and women have become equal opportunity exploiters. This means that over time women now, just as men before them, have the right to use every means at their disposal to achieve power. Put through the words of a simplified equation money is

³⁷ The Age of Innocence, p. 342-343

power and sex is power – ergo getting money for sex is simply an exchange of power. The type of woman that appears in *Sex and the City* and uses the equation to the fullest extent is called “The international crazy girl” and is described as follows.

...like a constantly migrating, brightly colored bird – she’s always on the go....This woman travels from one international hotspot to another. And when she gets tired of the party season in London, when she’s had enough of skiing in Aspen or Gstaad, when she’s sick of all-night parties in South America, she might come back to roost – temporarily, mind you – in New York.³⁸

We can imagine this woman looking like a glamorous movie star, wearing a white fake-fur Gucci coat, black leather pants custom-made at New York Leather, with the only thing missing being the limousine. However, this shall be taken care of by prevailing upon some wealthy-looking businessman, who is supposed to help her with her bags, because he could not resist “...as virtually no men are able to resist *Amalita*.”³⁹ Besides her floral name, we soon find out that she possesses a tremendous power of the female sex: “*Her sexual power is like this amazing, dazzling force that can change your life, you think, if you can touch it, which you can’t.*”⁴⁰ This type of women have, soon after the first wave of women’s movement had begun, realized that there is no need to stand in the darkness anymore. There is no need to play innocent and proper, no need to hide their powers, when they can achieve much more through their public display. Everywhere they appear they cause a commotion and become the immediate center of everyone’s attention.

At just that moment, Amalita walked in. There was quite a stir at the door as the maitre d’ embraced her. She was wearing a tweedy Jil Sander suit (the skirt alone cost over a thousand dollars) and a green

³⁸ Sex and the City, p. 47

³⁹ Sex and the City, p. 47-48

⁴⁰ Sex and the City, p. 48

cashmere shell. ‘Is it hot in here?’ she said fanning herself with her gloves. She removed her jacket. The entire restaurant gaped. ⁴¹

The rules do not seem to exist for these women as there is not anything off limits. Married, divorced, engaged...the only criteria seem to be the richer, the more famous, the more powerful the better. Yet as we find out, the rules do not equally apply to everyone.

Righty was the lead guitarist in a famous rock band. ‘He wants me to go on tour with him. Brazil. Singapore. I told him I’d have to think about it. These guys are so used to women falling at their feet, you have to be a bit reserved. It sets you apart. ⁴²

Apart from Amalita, another “party girl” in focus is Ray, a late-seventies model, who moved to L.A. to pursue an acting career, but like Amalita, ended up with a child which was “...rumored to be the offspring of a superstar.”⁴³ After introducing these remarkable characters, when comparing them to emancipated women who have careers, day jobs and salaries, these women have none, so we must wonder – how do they survive?

She takes gifts. A Bulgari watch... clothing, cars, a bungalow on someone’s property... and cash. She has a child. There are lots of rich men out there who take pity. These actors with their millions. They’ll write a check for fifty thousand dollars. Sometimes just to go away... women like Ray and I, we don’t want to work. I’ve always just wanted to live. ⁴⁴

⁴¹ Sex and the City, p. 49

⁴² Sex and the City, p. 52

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Sex and the City, p. 54

After finding out their duties, we might find an actual name to their calling – a professional girlfriend, if you will. However, where is the difference between being a professional girlfriend and just playing professional? Where does morality end and immorality begin? There is no actual line drawn between the two, which is why most upstanding people in New York refer to these women simply as “*Euro trash*”⁴⁵. However, their life is not as simple as it seems – they very often end up with no money, wondering what they were going to do next. The biggest problem, though, seems to be the fact that they will never be on the same level as the men they are with. To them they are mere employees, “*But at least you might walk away with some cash.*”⁴⁶ Their looks is all they possess and keeping up is more and more difficult – from the massages, facials, plastic surgery to the clothes they wear – so another question is – is there any future? Readers would logically suppose that, because they have no careers or anything else besides their looks to rely on, they would eventually get married for security – either that or end up like their “colleagues” in detox, rehab, A.A. or in the “bughouse”. Later in the novel Amalita is, once again, found sharing a cheap apartment with a student, with deep regrets and no money “*I shouldn’t have slept with this guy, I shouldn’t have slept with that guy. Maybe I should have done things differently.*”⁴⁷ However, in the end she did turn to a career in consulting, whatever this term may represent.

⁴⁵ Sex and the City, p. 51

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 51

⁴⁷ Sex and the City, p. 225

4.2 *Neither Black nor White*

The literary representation of various forms of female powers now can be generally divided women into two types, according to the usage of these powers – the intellectuals, or the emancipated, and the not necessarily nonintellectual but certainly the non-emancipated kind. While the first kind makes a living on their own, often achieving fame and success, the other kind usually relies on their husbands' money for survival. But what happens to the third type – the kind of women who have neither the intellect nor the looks, yet successfully pretends to be intellectual in order to maintain a life with high standards. This woman is very well aware of her proximity of falling into the abyss of working-class women. Because of this fear, she has no scruples that would stop her from using whatever means she can in order to get what she wants. While the world of Bushnell is black and white when it comes to distinguishing women, this kind of character, who is somewhere in the grey zone, stands out in Wharton. It is the character of Mrs. Amyot from *The Pelican*.

Here we see the destiny of a widowed woman in the 19th century – the woman who, because she already has one child from the previous marriage is not able to get married again. Facing the existential crisis, she is trying to use her intellectual background to become “intellectual” as well, so she starts to give lectures. “*Mrs. Amyot had two fatal gifts: a capacious but inaccurate memory, and an extraordinary fluency of speech.*”⁴⁸ There was no topic that was not covered, and later passed on, through her distorted memory. In short – she considered that, since she came from an intelligent background, she could use that to her advantage – making herself look as smart as her predecessors. Since the story is perceived through the eyes of a man, when the narrator is asked about the character's appearance, it is found that “*She is excessively modest*

⁴⁸ Short Stories, p. 46

*and retiring. She says it is actual suffering for her to speak in public. You know she only does it for the baby?”*⁴⁹ However, her alibi is far from being so noble as to support a child, for as we learn from one of their further meetings a few years later, *“There was the baby – he was a big boy now, and boys were so expensive! ...she had plenty of flattery – people were so kind, and everyone knew that she did it for the baby.”*⁵⁰ However, if she was such a clear fraud to the narrator, why was everyone still visiting her lectures? The answer here is quite simple – because of common ignorance and the fact that her appearance had become a social occasion, or better yet, an obligation.

...When she had become so fashionable that it was a part of the whole duty of woman to be seen at her lectures. The subject of discourse was clearly of minor importance ...to the throng of well-dressed and absent-minded ladies, who ...lost themselves in the study of each other’s apparel. Mrs Amyot ...evidently represented a social obligation like going to church.⁵¹

Later on we can track the decline in her popularity as her audience become more educated and demanding. Earning a living as a fraud is not that simple anymore. A few years later the narrator finds her lecturing in the south. *“One had to take tickets, you know, because she’s a widow and does it for her son – to pay for his education ...everybody is sorry for her, and we all simply ruin ourselves in tickets.”*⁵² Nonetheless, the noble cause of her lectures – supporting her son, is later revealed as an illusion when the narrator meets the offspring, who is now a full-grown man about to confront his mother about her acts: *“The others think I’m a little boy, but he’s known you for years, and he must have known how old I was. He must have known it wasn’t to*

⁴⁹ Short Stories, p. 45

⁵⁰ Short Stories, p. 49

⁵¹ Short Stories, p. 50

⁵² Short Stories, p. 55

pay for my education!”⁵³ The son eventually leaves his mother without any answer – here we may only speculate about the reasons for her acts. However, she used her social status to raise pity, an act that is excused at first, but later condemned by the narrator.

The certain satisfaction comes in revealing the fraudster who pretended to be an emancipated woman, but was in fact only abusing her position of a single mother in order to gain profit. In this sense, her acts are no better than Amalita’s in Bushnell. Both of these women do share a certain link. They are each without a husband and with a child, and they are both unwilling to take the harder road of working to become independent. Amalita uses her powers in a sexual way to temporarily find someone rich and famous in order to get at least some money out of the situation, while Mrs. Amyot uses her capabilities to fool others into thinking she was an intellectual, who is, therefore, able to give lectures. They both use the means which are available at their respective times. If she had behaved the way Amalita did, Mrs. Amyot would, at the time, never be far from a prostitute. On the other hand, with very little pity left in modern times, it is very unlikely for Amalita to be able to pass on any kind of knowledge just by studying certain area of history for a mere week. However, the endings are quite different. Unlike Bushnell, where in the end Amalita redeemed herself by taking up a job, Wharton has a tragic outcome of a fraud being exposed. At this point the character, having lost her image, has no more possibilities left. Once again, the present is much more considerate and flexible than the past.

⁵³ Short Stories, p. 58

4.3 Marriages of (T)Reason

Since this is one of the key elements to define the “happily ever after” that women in both Wharton and Bushnell seem to be longing for, it most certainly requires our full attention. Even though the issue of arranged marriages vanished at the turning of the century, at the time question of its complete elimination is at least disputable – most of all because young women and men were directly and indirectly being forced into wedlock by their parents. They did seemingly have the choice, but marrying someone from the lower caste was considered unacceptable by society. As far as we know, the presence of arranged marriages was formally abolished at the time, but the implications made by Ellen Olenska, a victim of an unsuccessful arranged marriage to a very rich Polish Count Olenski, leaves very little to be misunderstood. Here, after just arriving in New York, while attending a most formal party that was organized to welcome her back into the society she breaks social rules by leaving one gentleman to seek the company of another. Sitting down she began to talk to Newland

‘...are you very much in love with her?’ Newland Archer reddened and laughed. ‘As much as a man can be.’ She continued to consider him thoughtfully, as if not to miss any shade of meaning in what he said, ‘Do you think, then, there is a limit?’ – ‘To being in love? If there is, I haven’t found it!’ She glowed with sympathy. ‘Ah – it’s really and truly a romance?’ ‘The most romantic of romances!’ ‘How delightful! And you found it all out for yourselves – it was not in the least arranged for you?’ Archer looked at her incredulously. ‘Have you forgotten... that in our country we don’t allow our marriages to be arranged for us?’⁵⁴

It is therefore quite clear what lies beneath the merger of the Archers and the Mingotts, the two of the sturdiest branches of New York family trees. While the

⁵⁴ The Age of Innocence, p. 54

Mingotts were a little more progressive and able to tolerate Ellen's unconventionality, the Archers were much more traditional – for example the mother and sister of the family always relied on Newland, who was to remain “their strong right hand” in terms of security. When considering the situation surrounding Countess Olenska, their main focus seems to be placed on what inappropriate clothes she had been wearing and on how she should have changed her name from Ellen to Elaine to make it sound more Polish. Later through the work we know how the relationship triangle between May, Newland and Ellen ends – in an official marriage which we shall, perhaps rather than arranged, call the marriage of reason, where the reasoning actually changes place, going from Newland at the beginning, to May at the turning point of announcing her pregnancy to Ellen at the very moment she feels threatened, and later, to announcing the same news to her husband just as he is about to leave her. To conclude our issue from the past, we may clearly state that the arranged marriages did exist, but with the formal abolishing they gained another form – the form of the marriage of reason, where the agents themselves were persuaded by the family into believing they should get married to the specific one in order to make the family influence even greater. Now let us go back to the present, where after many years of struggle for female emancipation, in the age of independence the marriage of reason does not seem to need to exist anymore.

After dealing with the characters of Amalita and Ray, clearly opportunists for whom this kind of marriage would not present any kind of obstacle, in this topic we shall turn to our target object of focus – the emancipated women, embodied in the character of Carrie Bradshaw who appears in *Sex and the City* the book and television series. Not being the only independent woman who makes a living on her own, she was chosen mostly because of her central relationship that the work is later revolving around – the relationship with a rich businessman known under a mysterious name of Mr. Big.

While clearly stating that, due to his previous failed marriage, he does not wish to get married into what he would again see as the death of romance, Carrie still wants to pursue this goal. Disappointed, she began the quest which would lead us to the very top of the evolution of marriage of reason. While trying to think about how to include freedom into the secure future of a marriage, she puts together two completely different things – like peanut butter and chocolate – into a new concept, which somehow seemed strangely genius in the end: marrying a homosexual. In the book Carrie is replaced with an insignificant character of Suzannah Martin, a childhood friend of Stanford Blatch.

...I want to turn over a new leaf. We're such good friends, we should really think about getting married. That way, I can get my inheritance, and with your money and my money combined, we can live the way we've always wanted. Suzannah was a forty-year-old sculptress who wore dramatic makeup and large pieces of jewelry. She had never seen herself in a traditional marriage anyway. 'Separate bedrooms?' she asked. 'Naturally,' said Stanford... He and Suzannah were sitting on the couch in front of the fire. Suzannah was smoking a cigarette...'You really are the perfect wife, you know,' Stanford said. 'I can't imagine why you're not already married.' 'Straight men bore me,' Suzannah said. 'Eventually anyway. It always starts off fine, and then they become incredibly demanding. Before you know it, you're doing everything they want, and you have no life left.' '...Good night,' she said. Stanford leaned forward and gave her a chaste kiss on the cheek. 'Until tomorrow,' he said, giving her a little wave as she walked to her room.⁵⁵

The pure symbiosis of the two in a marriage, with profits on both sides, rules clearly stated and the nonexistent expectations. Yet, we have the chaste kisses, just like in the Victorian time, still between a man and a woman, but this time between a homosexual man and a heterosexual woman, and without any cruel intentions, a

⁵⁵ Sex and the City, p. 203-204

relationship simply cannot get more chaste than that. This theory certainly does sound good on paper, but what about putting it into practice? Is it really possible to make such a marriage to take place? With the number of single and successful women in New York this is not far from reality. *“In a city of great expectations, is it time to settle for what you can get?”*⁵⁶ When asked how she felt when she got married, a certain character responded with *“I feel like an enormous weight has been lifted,”*⁵⁷ so perhaps exercising the above mentioned would not be the worst thing that can be done to take the pressure off. After all, expecting a relationship based on honesty and communication in order for it to have any chance of succeeding seems adorable at twenty-five, but after so much experience, is expecting the same at thirty-two not just obtuse? Later on in the series, one couple decided to give it a try.

In the fifth season of the series a certain couple – Bobby Fine and Bitsy Von Muffling announce their wedding. After a conversation with Bobby, a humorous piano bar legend, it is concluded that he is clearly a homosexual, especially for the way he expresses himself – *“Mr. Broadway has to tinkle before he can tinkle,”*⁵⁸ and he does not improve the impression later on, when he meets Stanford Blatch’s boyfriend on whose stomach he mimes grating cheese. At this point the question is raised: Why are these two getting married? Is he marrying her for the money? Is that all there is to modern relationships? However, the fact is that Bob never admits being homosexual, which directly collides with everyone’s opinions based on his impression. Why do they not admit the fact that they are getting together because they are getting older or because they want companionship? Since sex is not glue that keeps the relationship together *“All married couples stop having sex eventually”*⁵⁹, then what difference does

⁵⁶ Sex and the City Season 5, *I Love a Charade*, dir. Michael Engler, 2002

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

it make if Bitsy gets married to a homosexual or a heterosexual? But how difficult is it to make a relationship happen if there is no “zsa zsa zsu”⁶⁰ or the feeling of butterflies in the stomach, as Carrie calls it? In terms of relationships, with both of them being rich and successful, they are clearly not getting married for material or financial reasons. Knowing they would both grow old and perhaps end up alone, the thing they are looking is clearly companionship – so is this the new marriage of reason? However the shocking part as presented by the series is not the marriage itself but the fact it is being presented as a marriage of love

I find the love façade the most offensive part. Bitsy should say ‘I’m getting older, I want companionship...’but don’t print invitations and call it love.... Just think about the wedding, it’s like there’s a pink suede elephant in the room and nobody’s allowed to talk about it.⁶¹

Perhaps if we are speaking about the women in New York in their late forties Bitsy has found the recipe – “*Maybe we should stop looking for a great relationship and settle for a fine one,*”⁶² and how do we decide when a flaw metamorphoses into a problem, or at least the one that cannot be overcome? The answer is very particular and in Charlotte’s case there seems to be an answer “*She can marry a gay guy and you can’t marry an Episcopalian?*”⁶³ Therefore, in modern times, where after the point of reaching certain age, sexual orientation clearly ceases to play the role in choosing one’s life partner, the starting point of any kind of relationship, whether it is a companionship, friendship or a sexual relationship, and more importantly what makes the relationship last is the “zsa zsa zsu.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Sex and the City Season 5, *I Love a Charade*, dir. Michael Engler, 2002

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Apparently this feeling cannot be exchanged with any amount of money, which is found in one of the episodes where Samantha Jones starts seeing an older New York icon who resembles Donald Trump. “*He’s vibrant, powerful and generous...and he’s just looking for someone to have a little fun with. You know the saying – all cats look the same in the dark.*”⁶⁵ However, apart from all the gifts and the power, Samantha did not mind about the money. Missing the butterflies, she found herself back in reality and ran out of his town house.

Creating a brief, yet sufficient summary of the point that evolution has achieved when it comes to a marriage of reason is very difficult. Reaching back from clear expectations that were going to be achieved through such during the turning of the century, the present-day attitude towards it that can be seen in Bushnell, as our representative of a modern female author, is much more complicated. As it may be seen from Samantha’s and Bitsy’s examples, money does not play any role, while on the other hand, an overcome factor, such as religion, is going to play a major part in life of the least emancipated in the quartet – Charlotte York. However, the key factor that reflects the reality of pretty much any modern relationship, which is also the essential ingredient that our modern heroines are looking for, is equal life companionship.

⁶⁵ Sex and the City Season 2, *The Man, the Myth, the Viagra*, dir: Victoria Hochberg, 1999

5. THE TRUE HEROINES

After dealing with the side characters who are quite important to get the entire impression of the time and the setting, we shall now proceed to the very core characters, the independent women who I would like to call the true heroines. What attributes do they possess to be designated heroines? When analyzing their roles in the plot in a narrow focus, there are some characteristics that stand out without any regard to their age, looks or social status. It is their attitude that makes them stand out from the crowd. In some characters it is weaker and in some it is stronger, but the final analysis is that they create, more or less, a contrast when compared to the society and its expectations.

The number of characters whose attitudes are expressed varies by these two authors, probably because their perception is more easily defined when compared to the rest of the women in society. While in Wharton we see the main two independent women, Countess Olenska of *The Age of Innocence* and Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth*, the main attitudes are presented by the four central characters, who gained more importance with the series than with the book itself – Charlotte York, Carrie Bradshaw, Miranda Hobbes and Samantha Jones, also known as the Great Four of *Sex and the City*. Dealing with these heroines and their issues of independence, social roles and sometimes breakdowns and falls to name a few, is too complex to be done within one section. Therefore, the investigation of these issues and attitudes shall be divided into several parts. First I would like to define all the others, i.e., the issue of manhood in women.

5.1 *Same Tracks, Different Rules*

Firstly, no matter how progressive our modern society may seem, even today male and female roles are distinctly divided. Throughout the course of history these two roles appear to be as two rail tracks running parallel to each other. Each track is created from different bolts, sleepers and rails and therefore allows different trains to run on them. In these particular elements different social roles, habits, expectations, education may be found, and through them the resulting behavior and ambitions manifest themselves. Each track was seen as a ground of moral and social stability and violating those foundations meant social isolation.

However, besides this menace the one Edith Wharton dared not to go straight down the expected track with her social background. Instead, she decided to cross to the opposite one and proceed with those very aspects that were at the time expected by society only of men. With the expectation of understanding from the readers' perspective, she sometimes even took the role of a male character – and presented the woman's perspective as seen through the eyes of a man. Even in one of her most important works – *The Age of Innocence*, the narrator is a man who gives us his view of a newly arrived outsider, the long-gone Countess Ellen Olenska, who creates a stir merely by attending the opera in the best balcony with one of the most distinguished families of New York City.

...As for the cause of the commotion, she sat gracefully in her corner of the box, her eyes fixed on the stage, and revealing, as she leaned forward, a little more shoulder and bosom than New York was accustomed to seeing, at least in ladies who had reasons for wishing to pass unnoticed.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *The Age of Innocence*, p. 14

5.2 The Acts of Countess Olenska

After marrying a Polish count and living in Europe for a number of years, she has determined that her husband was too much of a scoundrel for her to bear. She has left him and has returned to New York to seek a divorce. In light of the rules of propriety, her situation is scandalous and risks the good name of her family. When contrasted to May Welland she represents nothing but sophistication, worldliness and tragedy. Having lived outside New York Countess Olenska has acquired “Bohemian” tastes.

...with brown hair growing in close curls about her temples and held in place by a narrow band of diamonds. The suggestion of this headdress, which gave her what was then called a "Josephine look," was carried out in the cut of the dark blue velvet gown rather theatrically caught up under her bosom by a girdle with a large old-fashioned clasp. The wearer of this unusual dress, who seemed quite unconscious of the attention it was attracting, stood a moment in the centre of the box, discussing with Mrs. Welland the propriety of taking the latter's place in the front right-hand corner.⁶⁷

Moreover, she has become an independent woman. Her disgust for New York rules intrigues Newland, who is sent to talk her out of getting a divorce. They spend time together and realize they are passionately in love with each other. Yet, Countess Olenska is unwilling to bring pain to her cousin May, to whom Newland is engaged, and when May reveals her pregnancy to the Countess, she decides to return to Europe and cease being a distraction or temptation to him.

⁶⁷ The Age of Innocence, p. 9

5.3 Abilities and Inabilities of Lily Bart

Another character – Lily Bart has a similar posture towards life. Raised by a mother who had taught her the price of everything and the value of nothing and a father who had lost and unsuccessfully tried to rebuild a family fortune, Lily is told by her mother that it is her duty to use her beauty and manners to marry into wealth.

She remembered how her mother, after they had lost their money, used to say to her with a kind of fierce vindictiveness: "*But you'll get it all back—you'll get it all back, with your face.*" . . .⁶⁸

However, she has two main inabilities – to manage money, which she learned from her mother, and to understand men – which can be attributed to the fact that her father was always away at work in order to pay for his wife and daughter's extravagances. At the beginning of *The House of Mirth* Lily is depicted as a shallow young woman. Despite her shallow nature at the beginning, throughout the novel she displays the desire to act in ethical fashion. She refuses the sexual advances of Gus Trenor, even though accepting these would mean that her bill would be paid in full.

He rose, squaring his shoulders aggressively, and stepped toward her with a reddening brow; but she held her footing, though every nerve tore at her to retreat as he advanced.

"Pay up?" she faltered. "Do you mean that I owe you money?"

He laughed again. "Oh, I'm not asking for payment in kind. But there's such a thing as fair play—and interest on one's money—and hang me if I've had as much as a look from you--"

Trenor caught her up with a sneer. "I don't doubt you've accepted as much before—and chucked the other chaps as you'd like to chuck me. I don't care how you settled your score with them—if you fooled 'em I'm that much to the good. Don't stare at me like that—I know I'm not talking the way a man is supposed to talk to a girl—but, hang it, if you don't like

⁶⁸ The House of Mirth, p. 32

it you can stop me quick enough—you know I'm mad about you—damn the money, there's plenty more of it—if that bothers you . . . I was a brute, Lily—Lily!—just look at me—"⁶⁹

She also declines to defend herself against Bertha Dorset's accusations, believing that such an act would only elevate her charges. In the end she refuses to blackmail Bertha – an act that could have resolved all her financial and social problems.

Making a comparison within Wharton's two characters is quite difficult in itself, but what distinctly connects them is their independence and moral maturity. The main sin, which the two mentioned characters committed was that they refused to take the usual roles expected at the time – they did not marry. Even if they did, in case of previously mentioned Countess Olenska, the marriage, just like Wharton's, was an unhappy one and ended in divorce – a 19th century fiasco, particularly at the level of society that Wharton's characters lived. Unlike May Welland, these characters did not even wish to get married for financial security – instead what they were looking for was true companionship and love. Because of the way they expressed their attitudes, this was nowhere to be found – both characters end up alone, and in the case of Lily Bart even hitting the social level of manual labor and a life in workers' the slums.

At that time, women were brought up to see themselves as decorative objects designed to be collected and displayed by men who could afford them. The only salvation of ambitious women was through marriage, clearly by becoming someone's property – the vision which Wharton experienced, portrayed and despised. Here we can state that both of these very strong women mixed with some male roles. Since the society was unfavorable to such a role, they paid a very high price for being independent. Crossing onto the other track on which she could use her talent and

⁶⁹ The House of Mirth, p. 153-154

sensibility, Wharton usually depicts men as the ones who fail their women – a concept perceived as such in the light of the 19th century, or perhaps from the view of the 21st century, those women, having been more talented and possessing stronger personalities, overshadowed their husbands. This situation throws the balance off the clearly stated tracks, since the man was conventionalized to be the leading figure of the relationship. However, this claim is not always valid, as it is shown through one character in *The Age of Innocence* – Newland Archer.

5.4 A Man in Need, a Woman Indeed

Being one of the main characters of the novel, he is a young man, who has grown up in New York society. After his father's death, he has lived with his widowed mother and unmarried sister and has been engaged to May Welland. Seeing her as innocent, he imagines that he will educate her and show her the ways of the world. He perceives himself as educated and erudite, but he does not realize how much his own thoughts, choices and experiences are limited by his environment.

...intellectual and artistic, Newland Archer felt himself distinctly the superior of these chosen specimens of old New York gentility; he had probably read more, thought more, and even seen a great deal more of the world, than any other man of the number.⁷⁰

Newland, with his seemingly progressive views, may be seen as a prototype of a young man in the depicted society, but as we are to later find out, the strength of his personality still falls very short of the borders of New York society. Though he has a position of a lawyer, he is not serious about his career, a phenomenon which was quite common among young men whose families were so wealthy.

⁷⁰ The Age of Innocence, p. 8

The greatest change in Newland's acts is seen when he meets Countess Olenska, to whom, in spite of his initial arrogance, he is drawn to because of her mysterious and unconventional ways. She helps him see the hypocrisy and artifice of old New York, while he attempts to help her understand the complex demands of social manners, though he is rather unsuccessful in this endeavor. He falls deeply in love with her, but their love fails due to his propriety and responsibility, or in a certain way we may even say – weakness to confront and fight the views and judgment of high society.

His struggle is essentially between his individual desires and the good of his community and family. In choosing to stay with his wife, who is at the time pregnant with their first child, he nevertheless treasures his memories and fantasies of the other path he could have taken in life. When pondering about Newland, why is it that the word coward gets into our minds more than once? Therefore the inevitable question needs to be asked: Why did he not choose the life with Countess Olenska?

The more radical ones in feminist attitudes may imply that he did not choose this path because he would have been overshadowed by his hypothetical wife – but it is not that simple. Having been raised in a New York high society, living off his parents', or to be more exact – his father's money, with no serious career he would follow, we could easily compare his prospects to the ones Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth* had. Therefore, the only way of securing a certain financial future is through acceptable marriage. Yet, how come that we see Lily Bart as a moral heroine, while we see Newland Archer, once again, as a coward? It is quite simple: because Lily Bart was a woman, ergo truly had no other prospects besides marriage, while Newland was a conformist who cared too much about the way society would see him if he were to leave his pregnant wife and pursue a life with a married Polish Countess. While Lily Bart committed sins in the views of the society she lived in, and dared to pay the ultimate

price for being a coquette and not getting married for financial security, Newland was too weak to take this challenge. Even though the impact on his life would be tremendous, if he had chosen his life with Countess Olenska, his destiny would certainly not have been nearly as tragic as the one Lily Bart experienced. With the power to fight social expectations and yet remaining afraid of using this power is an act much more cowardly than not having the power and not fulfilling the expectations.

This is what makes him a male character untraditional for the time depicted – he is a man with power, who is in fact powerless, because he is too afraid of the consequences that would come from using it.

5.5 Wharton's Attitudes

If we focus back on more powerful women in specific relationships, Wharton clearly opposed the thought of wasting one's life just for marriage, which she regarded as the greatest sin for women that cannot be retracted. She saw these kinds of marriages as oppressing and putting women in denial through financial life security and standing in society. Self-sacrificing one's own freedom for marriage, an act itself seen as having great value at the time, was unacceptable to her. This attitude is clearly reflected through the main two characters – Lily Bart and Countess Olenska. Can these heroines crossing tracks be seen as grasping at life, existence which is created by the very person, rather than by society or are these individuals perceived more as desperate entities unable to adjust themselves to the requirements of the society?

This issue of male privilege taken up by women also continues in Candace Bushnell, where in a different time definitions of these privileges have altered but the tracks still remain far apart.

5.6 *New York, New Age, Old Issues*

In post-modern times, where nothing is even seemingly simple anymore, this old issue is approached by Candace Bushnell. Since finding parallels in the evolution of women's movement would be quite impossible in a conservative small-town environment, Candace has, just like Wharton before her, taken it to one of the most progressive and liberal cores of not just American, but the entire cultural society – the City of New York. Here she found it was impossible to have only one character carry the burden of modern society. Yet it was more likely to be understood if the characteristics were divided amongst several protagonists based on their position on a male to female evolutionary line.

The main goal is to present accurate representations as it is seen from different points of view, where each character possesses a certain amount of traditional vs. liberal, or intersections of male vs. female roles.

When applied to our four main characters in the Bushnell novel – Samantha, Miranda, Carrie and Charlotte, each one of these women possesses these roles to some extent. Therefore, in the order they are named above, Charlotte is an almost 100% traditionalist: her main life goal is getting married, having children and being the perfect wife.

5.7 *Traditionalism of Charlotte York*

The word “perfect” is indeed used repeatedly throughout the series, as Charlotte is always trying to find the “ideal” husband, a Prince Charming, with his noble origin, perfect apartment with the view of Central Park, a great summer mansion in the Hamptons, great manners, and of course a lot of money. Charlotte echoes the past times almost like a Victorian, if you will. She is always trying to keep to the enormous

amount of rules in order to get what she wants – the perfect marriage. The physical part of the relationship is not of the highest importance, but after getting married she is put on crossroads as the problem of her husband's impotence starts to reveal itself. This side of a relationship is not as trivial to her as it originally had seemed. Coming from a rich Connecticut family, the issue of mixing casts is unacceptable and momentary bursts with the lower cast are just a fling for her. Looks and behaviour are everything to her and she refuses to start a real relationship with someone who is smaller than her, bald or even uncircumcised.

At the beginning of each relationship, Charlotte creates enormous unrealistic expectations and pressure which eventually blows up into her face. Pursuing her life goal of getting married, after being involved in wedlock, she grows yet another ambition – having a baby. Out of the four characters, she is the only one who faces this problem at the time, and she deals with the problem even before it has appeared.

Even though she has an undemanding job as a small art gallery manager, a job that deals with arts which have traditionally been considered more within the female domain, she decides to make a radical and unexpected move – to quit her job to become a stay-at-home mother. Here her traditionalism reaches its highest point, since she is willing to give up everything she has achieved so far in order to create a home for her husband and her future child. Shortly after doing so she discovers that she is reproductively challenged. Soon afterwards, due to different expectations from life, her seemingly ideal marriage to a rich doctor of Scottish ancestry falls apart. At this moment she meets a group of influential lesbians, and even though she felt safe in their environment, she, unlike Samantha, is still a captive of her morals. The group subsequently abandons her for not wanting to take further steps in becoming a member of their society.

5.8 Indecisiveness of Carrie Bradshaw

Carrie narrates most of the book and the television adaptation. She still possesses some traditionalist roles. Sometimes she wishes for the perfect marriage, while on the other hand she is afraid of all the things she might be giving up. Getting involved in relationships with various types of men – from jazz musicians to writers and furniture designers is quite usual for her, but it is either the physical or the mental connection that always fails her. She refuses to cope with these failures and therefore decides to end it completely. Even though she may seem open to new experiences, she quickly judges people she finds difficult to identify with.

Still having a much more dominant female than male side, she presents the perfect image of a confused modern New York woman. Yet she is not a born New Yorker, though she is dearly in search of her own identity, independence and happiness. This image is so versatile that most women readers/viewers had no problem identifying with her, so the novel and the series met with enormous commercial success. One of the main points of the work revolves around the central relationship, which is represented by Carrie and Mr. Big.

After many break-ups and get-togethers, the couple is always running round in circles, trying to find the simple answer to the difficulties that make their relationship much too complicated. Here Bushnell draws an unclear distinction between simple and complicated women, where the second types are not willing to submit completely to their partner; put more clearly they could not be “tamed” by a man.

Through her job as a columnist she keeps asking key questions that are always closely connected to the particular situation. Some of them are quite crucial and they shall be dealt with later on in direct comparison of the characters.

5.9 Firmness of Miranda Hobbes

Another character who crosses the imaginary tracks much more often than the previous two examples is Miranda. Possessing a Yale law degree, she works at first at a big law firm in Manhattan and is later promoted to partner. She has a very firm moral ground to stand on and would never cross it by doing what Carrie does – e.g. having an affair with her married ex-boyfriend.

This is the character who carries the burden of being punished for her own success. During the process of purchasing an apartment with her own assets, she faces prejudice that the money needs to originate from her husband or a father. Miranda undergoes a panic attack when facing the issue of being stigmatized as a single woman. When involved with a blue-collar man, she finds that success indeed can be an obstacle in the lopsided man-woman ratio in New York. When a man is more successful, powerful and has more money, it works to his advantage, while with women it is often a problem. Therefore, she deals with the issues of a modern caste system, and wonders whether it is possible to date outside the social level that she belongs to.

Miranda also finds it difficult to see herself as “sexy”, claiming this is what she is trying men to see only after she wins them over with her personality. Through the image of Miranda, the readers and viewers learn that surprisingly as a shy, co-dependent woman, you are more likely to end up in a relationship than by being a successful and independent one.

5.10 Open-Mindedness of Samantha Jones

The last central character is the least traditional and the most progressive and liberal one. She is not just crossing the tracks, but completely running on the opposite ones – her name is Samantha Jones. Having no prejudice whatsoever and an ego that is

quite unexpected in a woman, she is an exact opposite of Charlotte. When contrasted with her, Samantha has no problem when it comes to having casual sexual intercourse or experimenting by being a lesbian. Nonetheless, we need to realize that she is not willing to sleep with any person that comes along her way. She has no remorse afterwards, yet she is not a slut – the kind of behavior usually done by men. In her opinion men and women are equal opportunity exploiters: “...*sex is power, money is power, therefore getting sex for money is simply an exchange of power...*”⁷¹

However, there is always a certain border that she will not cross – the action which would give one side much more power than the other. For example, in a situation where Carrie is facing the threat of being evicted and not having the money to buy her own apartment, Samantha sees Mr. Big’s gesture of loaning money to Carrie as an inappropriate one and advises her to refuse it. When facing this dilemma, Carrie herself was leaning towards taking the money, while Miranda and Samantha strongly advised her not to do so, offering her their own help. It is an interesting fact that Charlotte did not even try to offer help, even though she is the richest of the four and does not even need to work for a living. However, after having an argument with Carrie, she decides to let go of her broken marriage with Trey, sell her Tiffany wedding ring and use the money to help the friend in need.

Unlike Charlotte, Samantha despises marriage, seeing in it a pointless institution intended for insecure women who are not able to succeed by themselves. Therefore, having sex with a married man presents no obstacle to her, but the act itself is purely conscious and physical, hence, there is no remorse on her side. We may also realize that a lot of her attitudes come from her strong sense of self-esteem; she believes that what she is doing is right and without any prejudice she is always open to new experiences –

⁷¹ Sex and the City Season 1, *The Power of Female Sex*, dir. Susan Seidelman, 1998

both life and sexual, as in one situation, where she gets involved in a ménage-a-trois with two homosexuals or in another one where she rediscovers herself as a lesbian – very briefly, of course. When it comes to men, it does not make any difference if they are black, white, rich, poor, young, old – to her they are all the same toys to have fun with and when it comes to relationships, far more important than emotional involvement is sexual fulfillment. Looks are also important to her, but it is her self-confidence that defines her and makes her attractive. Even though she does not see any flaws in herself, when visiting a plastic surgeon she feels like a child in a candy shop. More than fanatically pursuing perfection, she is just looking for smaller alterations to liven up her day. Being open-minded and keeping good relationships with the public is of key importance to her, as she owns a successful PR company.

In order to summarize the description of these main four characters in *Sex and the City*, the evolution of the women's movement is directly seen within this group of four. Moreover, it is sometimes not very distinctly divided upon the basis of male attitudes within the female characters themselves. In feminist terms Samantha is the most male and Charlotte is the least male character, but this statement is not always true, because individual attitudes develop within each character – e.g. Samantha has not evolved past having emotions and Charlotte has very briefly learned how to make the first move when meeting men. *“After making the first move Charlotte was too embarrassed to go back. She realized she could be that type of man but she could never be that type of woman.”*⁷² Therefore, after introducing the characters we shall now proceed to the main question that Carrie Bradshaw asks, for this question influences most of their plans and behavior.

⁷² Sex and the City Season 3, *Boy, Girl, Boy, Girl...*, dir. Pam Thomas, 2000

5.11 *Can We Have It All?*

Since birth modern women have been told we can do and be anything we want: be an astronaut, the head of an Internet company, a stay-at-home mom. There aren't any rules anymore and the choices are endless and apparently they can all be delivered right to your door. But is it possible that we've become so spoiled by choices that we've become unable to make one? That a part of us know that once you choose something – one man, one great apartment, one amazing job, another option goes away. Are we a generation of women who can't just choose one from column A? Did we all have too much to handle or can we have it all?⁷³

This interesting concept of obtaining more possibilities life has to offer is not a new one and it can be found in both Wharton's life and fiction. If we care to look at her unhappy marriage, into which she got involved clearly in order to fulfill the requirements of high society, as well as her early writing on house decorations, she was determined to get more out of life. For this reason, and because of the pure bleakness of her marriage, she decided to get divorced and get involved in social life ever since that personal event, for example by getting actively involved in World War I by helping Belgian refugees – for this she was even awarded the Legion of Honor by the French government. Getting more out of life than marriage has to offer can also be found in her being surrounded by friends and in particular her special friend Walter Berry, to whom her relationship still remains unclear to this day.

In Bushnell, the issue of possibilities for women is represented by Carrie, who gets at the time involved in an "ideal" relationship with Aidan Shaw, a rising fashionable furniture designer. Having felt that it was a relationship with an almost certain future, she starts to feel scared and is dragged back to her previous relationship

⁷³ Sex and the City Season 3, *All or Nothing*, dir. Charles McDougall, 2000

with Mr. Big, the relationship which ended with him marrying a “twenty-something” supermodel named Natasha. She felt the need to take advantage of both worlds that were offered to her – the world of domesticated safety with Aidan and the adventurous world of a raw physical relationship with Mr. Big. However, just as in real life, it is impossible to have it all. Both her love affair and her serious relationship fall apart and she ends up nearly evicted as “...*the lady who literally lived in her shoes...*”⁷⁴ What both of these authors very realistically depict is the very dangerous walk down the slippery slope of “having it all” and a very hard emotional and financial fall after having slipped on that same slope. While in Bushnell, Carrie is to some extent a character who is standing on her feet and earning her own money, Lily Bart has no such ability. Ending up in debt and excluded from the family inheritance, she falls straight down to the bottom, where she eventually dies. However, even in the most difficult moments of their being, neither of these characters crosses their moral boundaries to get out of troubles – Lily does not blackmail Bertha for money and Carrie refuses to accept money from Mr. Big.

⁷⁴ Sex and the City Season 4, *Ring a Ding Ding*, dir. Alan Taylor, 2002

6. HYPOCRISY OF MANNERS

The setting in the novels which present the main focus of this work is not unique, but with few exceptions it avoids the lower-class society. In Candace Bushnell's depiction of New York life, the focus is put on the upper-class and sometimes on the high-society, while in Edith Wharton it is almost exclusively, with the exception of the environment following Lily Bart's fall, placed within the environment of New York City aristocracy. Even though the main goal of this work is to deal with its female heroines, the importance of the setting cannot be ignored, especially not because it oscillates so much through different social classes.

The society depicted by Wharton is so closed to outsiders and revels in its elite membership. In this closed community, matters of reputation, manners and decorum are highly valued, and the dignity of one's family name is of highest importance. Every event, from a wedding, a ball to a night at the opera is subject to specific rules of propriety. For example, when May and Newland announce their engagement, they are expected to make a series of social calls, because the New York rituals were quite inflexible and rigorous in such matters. Misbehavior in choosing a dress, making a gesture or any mishap in the choice of wording can have enormous consequences. This is the environment in which all the main characters in Wharton's fiction have been reared and educated, and while for example Newland feels comfortable in it, he regards it as stifling and narrow-minded.

Social expectations expressed through good manners, politeness and keeping the required façade of enjoying the company of others dominate all the interactions between the members in *The House of Mirth*. The artificiality of the good manners of the elite characters in the novel demonstrates how bad their manners actually are. Lying,

cheating, stealing, spreading rumors and adultery are quite common in this circle. Recognizing this, Lily at times longs for the realness and honesty of her relationship with Selden, but is held back because he does not possess the finances she requires.

7. OLD MONEY, NEW TRICKS

Apart from the very issue of possessing money and wealth, with the end of the American Civil War in 1865 and flourishing of the North with the post-war fifty percent rise in wealth, another topic which is dealt with by Wharton is the wealth that is giving way to new money. Possibly even more than on the problem of wealth itself, the focus is put on social acceptance towards the newly rich in New York. In *The Age of Innocence* this trend is represented through the character of Julius Beaufort, who has become a millionaire. Although the tight social circle of rigid New York does not favor outsiders, he is allowed in by virtue of his marriage to Regina Mingott, a member of a highly respectable family. In *The House of Mirth* this issue is most visible with the fall of the Barts and the rise of Rosedale, which significantly defines Lily's behavior. This is one of the reasons why she is not able to leave desire for money and wealth behind her. This directs her into playing the same manipulative games as the other members of this society do, just in order to get what they want.

This issue is also dealt with in *Sex and the City*, where in modern New York the majority of the rich would fall under the definition assigned to "new money" in Wharton. Nonetheless, the abyss between the classes, if you will, is never as big as it was in Wharton's time. There are various tradesmen, businessmen, whose behavior is never contrasted to the old and wealthy New York Scottish clans of McDougals. Even its members, e.g. Trey McDougal, besides having an enormous fortune, still have real jobs. When Charlotte York, one of the main four characters of the television series, meets Trey and his highly possessive mother Bunny, her non-aristocratic upper-class origin is never an issue, but she is still carefully reminded that she is "...*marrying*

history.”⁷⁵ However, mingling with a husband of an aristocratic wife can be very dangerous, as Samantha Jones finds out. Having been caught “in flagranti” with an aristocrat’s husband, she loses all her public favor due to the wife’s influence and as an owner of a public relations company almost ends up unemployed.

⁷⁵ Sex and the City Season 4, *Sex and the Country*, dir. Michael Spiller, 2001

8. SO MANY MEDIA, SO MANY CUSTOMS

Apart from the mentioned social issues, which along with their comparison create the main focus of this thesis, the final issue which needs to be dealt with is the issue of passing and interpreting the message through various media. The first comparison that shall be dealt with is the one silver screen adaptation that follows the book quite closely – Terence Davies' *The House of Mirth*. However, in a narrower focus the film missed the sense of Lily Bart's tragic habit of behaving unacceptably against her better conscience, until it was just too late. The progress of unavoidable fall is followed very closely throughout the entire novel, but we may notice it is almost missing in the film version. Although the tragic climax is there, the tragic expectation is perhaps not seen as clearly enough.

While in *The House of Mirth* the book is followed quite closely, in the adaptation of another Wharton's novel as shown in Martin Scorsese's 1993 version of *The Age of Innocence*, the disparity from the original is quite larger. The original text is quite closely followed in terms of the storyline and the themes. However, there are some differences in characterizations, and here the film suffers from problems common to that medium. The characters in the film version are necessarily simplified and polarized, while the reader is given a much deeper insight into the nature and history of the story and characters. Naturally, due to problems of the medium, much of the textual nuances that Wharton bases on are lost. In *The Age of Innocence*, a single moment can contain a world of meaning, and for the reader to understand the exact meaning Wharton carefully analyzes the very nature of the glances characters exchange. In addition, Wharton adds physical details with a significance that may not be immediately apparent – e.g. fashion, in particular Countess Olenska's forsaking of different styles of

her time may slip unnoticed by modern audiences unless their significance is commented upon. For example, in the film version Scorsese deals with this problem by introducing a third-person narrator.

As for the characters, the movie version shows Manson Mingot's mansion on the outskirts of town, but the film is never introduced to the fact that Mrs. Mingot dislikes the high society, and therefore lives there to get away from it. Mrs. Mingot also played a more comical role in the movie than she did in the book. The decorations in her apartment made her seem like a slob more than an eccentric. Other characters were also treated differently in the film version – e.g. the Van Der Luydens. Nevertheless, they did represent a higher level of social status than the rest of the elite, but the movie made them seem boring and inaccessible, which is not mentioned in the novel.

The character that receives a somewhat fair treatment in the movie is Newland Archer; that is if we omit his initial arrogance when he sees Countess Olenska for the very first time at the opera. However, his relationship with May is not portrayed evenly either. In the film, Newland seems ready to give up May for Ellen the first time he sees her, whereas in the book they have a strong relationship even after Newland sees Ellen the first couple of times. Unlike the novel, the movie also portrays Newland as having distaste for the conventions of his class right from the start, most likely to increase the dramatic element. His wife, May Welland is also portrayed in the film as quite childish and helpless, while in the novel she is introduced as sheltered, so that she may be shaped to the form of choice.

When it comes to the other focus of this work – Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City*, the disparity between the television series and the book is the largest of the three. When looking at the range of six seasons, it is quite clear why this disparity is so substantial. The basic plot still remains consistent throughout the entire work – it is the

narration in the form of a third-person, a woman who is passing on the city experience to the receiver. It is hard to say who the readers imagine the narrator to be. We would probably see the author Candace Bushnell herself telling the story, while in the television series this role is taken by Sarah Jessica Parker, who stars as Carrie Bradshaw. The close following the book is seen in the first season with direct speeches which are addressed towards the viewers, especially when asking core questions that both the novel and the series revolve around. However, later in season one the concept of the series itself starts to develop on its own and greater focus is placed on the four main characters – Samantha, Miranda, Charlotte and Carrie. Therefore we notice a clear divergence from the plot of the novel. The series then focuses on details in relationships among these women. These details are also usually mentioned in the novel, but are not explicitly dealt with. For example, the concept of marrying a homosexual for companionship is mentioned in the novel, but in the series it takes on a hypothetical form – the one it has in the book, and later on, in the fifth season it actually takes place, consequently asking questions that shake the fundamentals of human relationships to the very core. The progress of the series creates a clear story, in which Charlotte gets married, then divorced, Miranda has a baby from a one-night stand with her ex-boyfriend, Samantha has breast cancer and Carrie has an affair with Mr. Big, who is married at the time.

Most of these events are mentioned in the novel in some way, but they are spread over many different characters. Expressing them is quite important, but the very number of the characters would be too confusing for a television show that is to speak to a large audience, who can identify with a limited number of characters. That is why these characteristics were molded into four different characters and their behavior in these events are closely watched. To summarize the similarities and the differences, we

can definitely say that more than following the novel closely the series has developed it.
Its popularity is indisputable but its qualities are to be tested with the progress of time.

9. SUMMARY

In the twenty-first century, the new era of progress and the age of equalities, no matter how much we wish to see it from such an optimistic point of view, a historical sense of irony prevents us from doing so. Before contemplating about the cause of inequities which we believe have haunted us since the dawn of times, a deeper thinking about their origin needs to be done.

Long before we could grasp the written law in our hands, there used to be an unwritten one which defined different roles within each gender. Yet in another age of changes its mutated form, known as protective legislation, was introduced in writing and through its powers significantly limited the possibilities of women. This thesis follows these limited choices, as defined by society and law, as well as their evolution, or in many cases their extinction in modern times as they find expression in the fiction of Edith Wharton and Candace Bushnell.

Another issue is about those women who dared to break the rules. They are the ones who committed an act of remarkable bravery and for this they were called heroines. Disturbing social customs and decorum at the turn of the century, whether it is by refusing to get married for financial security or simply by having Bohemian tastes, as well as the consequences such behavior resulted in, are presented in the work of Edith Wharton.

Seen from modern perspective most consequences have vanished. Yet, what is left are issues followed by questions, e.g. why does money in a woman present a problem, while with a man it works to his advantage; and many more which have prevailed from the past times. These questions raised through the evolution of women's

emancipation that have led to modern times are expressed in the work of Candace Bushnell.

After a long pondering through which this thesis focuses on swapping traditional roles in men and women, it is impossible to give an unambiguous answer to the questions asked in the work of these writers. Similar to cutting off the head of the Hydra, a Greek mythological monster that grew two new heads with decapitation of each, giving one answer is followed by another two questions. However, based on a diachronic to synchronic dissection of one issue in particular perhaps one final answer could be given.

The topic of women ending up alone is, directly or indirectly, dealt with in each one of these works. We find out that Countess Olenska ends up alone, Lily Bart dies alone ignominiously, Carrie Bradshaw in the novel ends up alone, while their male counterparts are more often than not, happily or unhappily, married in the end. Again a question needs to be asked: what is it that makes these attractive, desirable and intelligent heroines end up alone? Some might say they were desperate and incapable of finding a husband, while others might say they were too demanding. However, individuals claiming this are the ones who, in order to validate their own social existence, very frequently got married in their early twenties and subsequently divorced in their early thirties. Despite succumbing to the pressure of society, just like these women who were single in the end, neither the married ones found what they had been looking for – marriage of equals. Instead of getting involved in a marriage of unequals, these powerful heroines possess the inner strength to fight the strong social prejudice present even today and stay single. Back in the 1900s, Edith Wharton showed us that staying single does not necessarily mean feeling alone, for she created a strong circle of

friends around her, and even in her own life she preferred being divorced to being remarried or unhappily married to someone whom she was not equal to.

Apart from presenting a brief history of women's struggle for equality, establishing what roles men and women had in the past and showing what means in fighting inequities different types of women have possessed, another one of the aims of this thesis is to expose some relational complexities, which are always based on individual truth seen from different viewpoints. For example, what is security of a marriage for some could be a cage for others, and while some birds enjoy the limits imposed in exchange for security others lose their grace and perish. Therefore one issue that both of these authors view the same way is that the individual happiness does not need to be found within boundaries of a marriage.

However, the fiction that this thesis addresses does not speak against marriage, but it does speak against those individuals who tend to oversee the inequities which could be waiting for them in one. Not all the habits from being single can be kept in a marriage, for even the most equal marriage would be doomed without compromise; but how does one know when compromise has turned into compromising? Once again, there is no unambiguous answer, because there is no clear limit to where one personal liberties end and another individual's oppressive powers begin. However, equality cannot exist if we do not see where it has ended.

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