Marriage and Sexuality
in
Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*,
D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*
and Erica Jong’s *Fear of Flying*

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INTRODUCTION

Marriage and sexuality are not often discussed together in the context of studying literature. Marriage is rather a well-trodden topic of discussion due to its abundance in literary works. Sexuality is a quite recent focus in literary studies, but while many universities started offering numerous courses on the literature of sexuality since 1970’s, its separate field did not have enough contribution, in my view, to the subject of marriage. Though psychology, sociology, biology and history of culture and arts do have a lot to say about their interconnections, literary studies tend to overlook the importance marriage and family have in the formation and production of alternative sexualities.

That’s why the major aim of this thesis is to look more deeply in the way how marriage and sexuality interact in light of three literary works from different time periods, each coloured by its own cultural context and development, scientific and scholarly change and historical realities. It is sometimes not so easy to see the obviousness of fact that marriage itself is an institution that regulates human sexuality by the state with the help of the law, the state represented by the humankind that creates the law, the set of rules, obligations, rights and standards, according to which each citizen is supposed to fulfil him/herself. In this context, this project’s goal is to analyse marriage’s contribution to the production of sexuality, its variations and forms by viewing artistic literature of three different periods of late nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* in light of the fin de siècle, decadence, bohemian culture, the New Woman and first-wave feminism; D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in light of 1920’s culture of freedom and sexual expression, changing attitudes towards gender roles and positivism of sexual discourse; Erica Jong’s *Fear of Flying* in light of 1960’s-1970’s sexual liberation, second-wave feminism and popularisation of sex and private life.

Art often can say and express humankind’s needs, yearnings, worries and preoccupations that are not so easily communicated through law and public relations. Literature as part of art is one of the ways to address audiences with important issues and problems of the time. But in my analytical approach it is vital to refer to the major philosophical, sociological and historical works that contributed to the society’s change and development in the field of marriage and sexuality. Historical realities and even personal experiences of the authors also play important roles in deciphering the meanings of the literature studied. Thus, the interdisciplinary attitude towards the topic of the thesis is maintained through constant
reference to the theoretical works. Michael Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, especially volume 1, *The Will to Knowledge*, represents my major philosophical and sociological support for the whole thesis. The idea of sexuality’s production and multiplication through its control and repression by regulatory state systems and sexuality’s taking its beginning in the family and marriage through education, pedagogy, upbringing, hygiene, questions of parenthood, control and resistance between parents and children all inspire my following analyses. Bertrand Russell’s *Marriage and Morals* serves as another major philosophical work, especially for its contribution to demystification of the ideals of romantic love, which are important for all three novels in the context of marriage, and to the ethical discourse of free love and sexual pleasure. Tony Tanner’s wonderful theoretical work *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* has greatly impacted my analyses of extra-marital relations in the novels discussed, especially its focus on unfaithfulness in the relationship as part of the relationship and discussion of alternative spaces. Historical books *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* by John d’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman and *A Cultural History of Sexuality* by Gert Hekma are major support resources in connecting social history to the literary analysis. Sexological works, particularly, Havelock Ellis’s *Sex and Marriage: Eros in Contemporary Life* and William H. Masters and Virginia E Johnson’s *The Pleasure Bond: A New Look at Sexuality and Commitment* give more insight into the nature of marriage and marriage-like relationships and help to orientate each literary work in light of certain discoveries in the science of sexology, which, for the most part, focused on the maintenance of the married couple. Imelda Whelehan’s *The Feminist Bestseller* and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* with their discussions on femininity and female autonomy, including sexual autonomy, are of great importance to the last chapter’s view of alternative outlooks. In this connection, queer theory is slightly touched upon, and the work of Michael Warner *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, And Ethics of Queer Life* contributes to the queer view of extra-marital relations of Erica Jong’s novel. *Intersections Between Feminist and Queer Theory* by Diane Richardson and Janice McLaughlin point to my initial reason for choosing queer theory in the thesis’ late discussions. While discussing Chopin’s *The Awakening* the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson, particularly his *Self-Reliance*, is applied, and for D.H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* I use D. H. Lawrence’s personal opinions and his *A Propos of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover”* in extensive analysis of Lawrence’s view of impersonal relationships in the context of the problem of sex and marriage.
The structure of the thesis is quite simple, each chapter dedicated to one of the literary works analysed, while each chapter is divided into three sections. These sections vary slightly from chapter to chapter in their topics of discussion.

Thus, the first section of my analysis of Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, called “Marriage as Arrangement”, looks deeply into the way marriage is constructed for Edna. The ideals of true womanhood, motherhood, modesty, abstinence in sex, romantic spirituality of love, cult of duty and obligation, the separate sexual spheres are themes in this section. The myths of female passive maternity-oriented sexuality are represented by Adele Ratignolle. The stimulation of modesty and withdrawal in marital sexual relations by the propaganda of birth control is represented in cold and dry relations between Edna and Leonce, each living in his/her own homo-social worlds. This sterility of marriage is gradually realized by Edna’s observations and experiences, mostly held in her head. Edna’s confrontation with the system of arranged marriage takes place often in her own thoughts and in her gradual detachment from home and turn to the outside world. This detachment is socially very easy to her, as the member of the middle class she has no other function for the society but its decoration and entertainment. Edna’s gradual realization that she needs to search her own identity, not constructed by the social roles, is welcomed but only outside home and family.

The second section of *The Awakening*’s analysis, “Freedom, Confinement and Desire at Home”, discusses the details of Edna’s marriage and its discontents. There I mention that marriage as well as life outside marriage can be both interpreted as illusion and reality. What is the reality, Edna’s grim lonely marriage or her repetitive realizations of what life means to her feelings and sensations, remains the question, but my focus on this duality and ambiguity leads to the certain understanding that both are important for Edna’s personal growth: living is learning through experience, which includes positive and negative experiences. Edna’s constant escape from one stage of life into another represents her wave-like life movement, necessary for her development as autonomous personality. Indecisive ambiguity is the essence of her struggle between personal freedom and expression and her attempt to fulfil her social responsibilities. This section analyses Edna’s numerous awakenings while she still lives with her husband, these awakenings serve her as outlets to potential self-expression and demystification of stereotypes. Marriage is discussed in light of patriarchal control, and Chopin is one of the first feminist voices against sexual slavery of women kept in ignorance by what is given to them by the male world.

In the third section, entitled “Desire Outside Home. Idealization of Relationships and Recognition of Reality”, I discuss Edna’s interactions with the world outside marriage, which
is quite multifarious: homo-social relations with Adele Ratignolle and Mlle. Reisz, which can be interpreted as sexual as well due to Chopin’s ambivalence; romantic infatuation with Robert Lebrun, which tests Edna’s ability to distinguish illusion from reality; and sensual connection with Alcee Arobin, which opens new sensations and feelings to her. All of these relations critique the exclusivity of marriage, which suppose to embrace all needs and longings of the married person. Edna receives more knowledge on life, love and sexuality from these connections rather than from her husband. I also confront in this section Edna’s initial state of ignorance in marriage and continuous development and access to knowledge through her extra-marital encounters. Thus, the relationships with Adele Ratignolle, Mlle. Reisz, Robert Lebrun and Alcee Arobin, each unique in their quality, send her impulses to discover her own body, its sensations and reactions towards the world and other people. With Robert Lebrun she discovers the myth of romantic love, with Alcee Arobin the danger of obsession and addiction to sensuality. Learning what the reality is, a world full of difference, contradiction and inconsistency, turns to be a final lesson to Edna. In the context of extra-marital relations, which enrich Edna’s life, I confront the pressures of marriage as institution at the end of the nineteenth century and alternative relationships, which are open to possibilities of change.

The chapter on D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* focuses more on relationships outside marriage, but the first section, “Relationships of Personalities and Power” discusses marriage as the haven for personal security in light of post-World War 1 historical realities, self-imposed and self-deceiving mechanism of romanticism of love relationships (Clifford and Constance’s), female ignorance about sexual life; through Clifford’s character the section analyses how personal security satisfied through recognition given by one’s spouse can lead to a relationship based on power and gratification of one’s own ego. I go beyond traditional class debate of the novel and look deeper into philosophical outlook of married people (Clifford and Connie, in particular) based on functionalism of life, love and sex: while love’s function is to be there in the shape of salvation and support for each other, sex’s function is to get progeny, but, not less important, thrill and entertainment. Married life is ordered life, its essence is to follow the rules that are applied to it by the institution of marriage. This section also sets focus on Constance’s other functional relationship, which is extra-marital, the one with Michaelis, and on Mellors’s married life with Bertha. The two relationships have a lot in common and serve Lawrence’s critique of masturbatory self-gratification in sex. Thus, the bodies reduced to tools to receive satisfaction from each other strip any sexual relationship from its spirituality and other qualities. This section focuses as well on the issue of mistrust.
and insincerity in relationships that necessitate disconnectedness in human relations. The questions of being true to one’s partner and one’s body and soul at the same time for the sake of mutual happiness are part of the discussion. This truth necessitate openness and ability to accept each other the way they are. Lawrence’s critique of modern relationships’ inability to follow private and natural needs is central in this section. I analyse here the way unsatisfied desire can turn into negative addiction or glorification of pain.

The second section to *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, entitled “Relationships of Connection and Integrity”, brings into discussion the central theme of the novel, the impersonal relationships, represented by the natural union of Connie and Mellors, the gamekeeper. These relationships are best achieved through sex, and body is not the tool, but a medium of aliveness and communication with the external world. The body is the connection channel between two creatures, regardless their personalities, class or gender. Sex between Connie and Mellors is described as spiritual, but it is also presented as a way from ignorance to knowledge about body’s reactions and possibilities. The importance of touch and non-verbal communication are analysed here in light of Connie and Mellors’s instinctual relationship. I discuss also the role of submission and letting go for successful sexual relation in terms of neutrality of gender, losing oneself in terms of ceasing mental observation in order to connect on more unconscious level with another being. In interpreting different meanings to Lawrence’s explicit sexual scenes in the novel, I come to the conclusion that Connie and Mellors’s sexual relation is, according to Lawrence, natural marriage between two human creatures, having its failures and mistakes. This unofficial marriage, paralleled to rigid modern relationships, is different in the sense that it constantly changes, develops, allows partners to make mistakes and learn new things as each sexual act represents a new and different lesson.

Final section in the second chapter, “Reconciliation of Personality, Impersonal Connection, Sensuality and Reality”, challenges the first two sections in its confronting the issues of inconsistency between impersonal relationships and the human beings having personalities and personal attachments. Escapism of Connie and Mellors into the place outside society, invisible and afraid of looking at the reality of their situation in the context of their illegitimacy cause the question of how to reconcile their desire to live as impersonal beings to reach the spirituality of their unique union, but at the same time to attain personal self-development which can be granted through their social life. I also discuss the issue of sensuality as powerful sexual drive appropriating functional sex, which goes against impersonal sexual experience that demands losing each other for the sake of attaining mutual crisis. The possibility of regular simultaneous orgasm is also at question, because it excludes
other ways of sexual satisfaction and spiritual connection that can be interpreted as positive and necessary for human beings. The analysis of Mellors’s dual gender nature, having both masculine and feminine traits, which have to be faced rather than denied, though opposite in themselves, is the initial point for my discussion of possible reconciliation of different elements in the human love relationships. Thus, the most representative in the context of this reconciliation is the issue of divorce, which remains unclear until the very end of the novel. Its worthiness and ethical nature is questioned rather by the reader, because Lawrence does not seem to be too critical towards it in light of 1920’s high divorce rates.

There is more focus on questioning of traditional marriage values and, particularly, monogamous relationships in the chapter on Erica Jong’s *Fear of Flying*. The issues of personal and sexual autonomy and possibilities for self-development and change are central to the discussion of marriage and sexuality in Jong’s novel.

In the first section, “Marriage as Escape Into Legitimacy and Escape From Loneliness. Looking for Love”, I connect the problem of marriage as the institution recognizing personal relationships on the legal and economical levels to its attractiveness through attainment of social status and protection from the state. Another big issue of the section is the attachment of legal security to emotional security inside marriage through the ideal of romantic love and its inconsistency in connection to sex life: side-effects of such relationships as possessiveness, marital violence and rape, psychological abuse and centricity of values are discussed in that context. Through my critical analyses of Isadora’s two marriages and relationships with the protagonists’ parents I also involve the issues of control and patriarchal one-dimensionality. Here I analyse the production of sexual alternatives through sexual repression inside marriage, appropriating Foucault’s view on cultures’ sexualization. In this section more than in other chapters I discuss the value of sex inside marriage and their variations thanks to the possibility to see the difference between two different husbands of the main protagonist. Love’s confusion with security and fear of loneliness makes marriage more a union of two friends rather than lovers: I question the meaning of Isadora’s love search in her relationships with both husbands.

The second section, “Extra-Marital Affairs as Escape Into Adventure and Escape From Control. Living Your Life”, is a study of Isadora’s longings associated with her lovers, real and imagined. Extra-marital activities, particularly sexual ones, turn out to be the outlets for novelty, fun and pleasure that married couples can lack. The connection of these activities with the motives of risk only stimulates their realization. Thus, it has something to say about marriage’s classic insistence on inflexibility and following the rules, which spouses are often
tempted to break. I analyse the invention of a new field of sexual expression, zipless fuck, which is privately enjoyed by Isadora in her head. This innocent fantasy gives a lot of reasons to reconsider mental and physical fidelity to one’s spouse, the difference between adultery committed in the head or in real life. Noticeable is my discussion of Isadora’s real extra-marital affair with Adrian in connection to what it has to offer and add to the meaning of her marriage: in the context of her affair with another man, she becomes a more desirable and fascinating wife for her husband, who is stimulated to do something as novel and surprising as he would had hardly done without the lover’s inclusion. Extra-marital affair with Adrian is given the value of gaining self-knowledge and knowledge on reality and truth against false romanticism offered by marriage, but it also indicates the possibility of fanatical obsession and addiction to either restriction or freedom of life. Extra-marital relations turn to be analysed in terms of human connection and communication exchange in different forms and variations.

“Other Possibilities and Alternatives to Marriage. Creating Your Life” is a section that directly challenges the issue of monogamy in human relationships, legitimised by the state institution of marriage. Representing marriage as the state’s regulation of human relationships, I engage the debate about discriminating and delegitimizing other forms of human connection in light of Jong’s novel. Fear of Flying does not approach the possibility of non-monogamous relationships directly, but many episodes, scenes, characters and discussions turn towards this reconsideration. In this section I discuss alternative relationships’ advantages and side-effects in light of marriage, and the point of their connection is the ability to allow each partner to seek change and self-development, which are described as very important throughout the novel.

All three works chosen for the discussion of marriage and sexuality share a critical attitude towards marriage and encourage the open and positive discourse on sexuality. The times that these works are written (1890’s, 1920’s and 1970’s) are some of the most radical in the history for the issues of human relationships, sex, personal autonomy and freedom. Kate Chopin’s work links nineteenth century feminism to its twentieth century variation in Erica Jong’s novel, while D. H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover contributes to the discussion not only of female freedom and expression, but sexual freedom, regardless of gender. Lawrence’s work is chosen deliberately in my analysis to view the issues of love relationships from the perspective different to a feminist one. Though in my project I put a great value on feminism for the possibility to discuss the current topic in terms of reconsideration and multiple interpretations, I do include other values to counterbalance and challenge the issue of
free sexuality, female sexual independence and philosophy of personal growth through knowledge, and self-development. Particularly, Lawrence’s concept of impersonal relationship goes often in an opposite direction than Chopin’s and Jong’s insistence on self-awareness and self-realization. But thanks to both *The Awakening* and *Fear of Flying*’s ambiguity, which is part of feminist and queer thinking, it is possible for my thesis to bring two opposite views on marriage and sexuality without creating dissonance and clash. On the contrary, some of Lawrence’s values, expressed particularly in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* find echoes in the works of Chopin and Jong: the desire to submit and lose one’s identity in the unconscious, reconciling personal growth with impersonal experience, the side-effects of loving personalities etc. And it is worthwhile mentioning that neither Chopin nor Jong are considered classic feminists, which is reflected in their more neutral approach towards gender problems, and in their stronger emphasis on sexuality. Though sharing certain feminist views, these two women-writers do also share certain values with the men’s world, thus, not segregating the sexes and not creating the sex and gender wars. Through these hetero-social and homo-social friendly attitudes they create the bridge between feminist, patriarchal, men’s and other-oriented ways of thinking. In that sense, it is very valuable to connect Lawrence’s much discussed novel of sexuality with the two women-writers of different epochs, who dared to discuss matters of conjugal life and sex as courageously as the male writer.
I. KATE CHOPIN’S THE AWAKENING

“Check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth’s. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no law less than the eternal law [...] I shall endeavour to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife, - but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way [...] I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I must be myself. I will not hide my tastes or a versions.”

(from “Self-Reliance”, Ralph Waldo Emerson)

“Long enough have you dreamed contemptible dreams, 
Now I wash the gum from your eyes, 
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life. 

Long have you timidly waded, holding a plank by the shore, 
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer, 
To jump off in the midst of the sea, and rise again and nod to me and shout, 
and laughingly dash with your hair.”

(from “Leaves of Grass”, Walt Whitman)

The nineteenth century abounds with literature about marriage with a focus on adultery. Many of us read Gustave Flaubert’s Madame Bovary (1857) or Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina (1870’s), and others perhaps know more of Theodor Fontane’s Effie Briest (1894). Ibsen’s plays Doll’s House (1879) and Hedda Gabler (1890) are still some of the most often played in the theatre world, Strindberg’s Miss Julie (1888) and The Dance of Death (1900) are more alternative, but have still an enormous impact on twentieth century literature and film. Hawthorne’s Scarlet Letter (1850) is a masterpiece of American literature. British Victorian novels by the Bronte sisters (Wuthering Heights, 1847, and Jane Eyre, 1847) and George Eliot (Middlemarch, 1872) raise the question of marriage, though in more subtle ways. Add to these the legacy of George Sand’s work (1830’s-1860’s), the Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century (especially Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Gordon Byron) all dealing with the freedom of expression; the transcendentalist movement led by the American philosopher and thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson in the 1830’s-1850’s, which insists on self-realization; the liberating poetry of Walt Whitman in the mid-century; the work of Charles Darwin and Thomas Henry Huxley connected with natural selection and evolution (1850’s-1880’s); the American women's suffrage movement; increasing radical changes in art towards the end of the century, such as Impressionism and Expressionism, focusing on the artist’s
response and perceptions rather than on objective reality; rapid economic, industrial and scientific development influencing the structure of the society’s culture and organization, including family as one of the most important institutions meant to be preserved and romantically cherished during the epoch; colonial expansion of the second half of the century bringing itself to its peak of atrocious racism, self-interest, profit-making and demand-supply philosophy. All of these events had a great impact, partially or wholly, on the circulation of the literature of marriage in the middle-class environment.

Marriage and family for the nineteenth century person was a shelter from the competitive world of trade, crime and “darwinian” yearning for survival, all these dangers outside home which were finely described and narrated about in Charles Dickens’ novels. Moreover, I would agree with Stephanie Coontz, who discusses the 19th century family idealization as a reaction or an “attempt to limit the transformation of personal relations into commodity relations, to reserve one arena of life free from the competition, conflicts, and insecurities of an expanding capitalist democracy”¹. However, for women marriage had a double value of security in the dominantly patriarchial society, because often they could achieve their financial stability and social status only through marrying someone. And the home as a place for relaxation and peace was looked upon through men’s eyes. For women, home meant work, represented by the sentimental fiction of american women-writers of the 1850’s-1860’s, like Harriet-Beecher Stowe.

According to Michel Foucault, marriage was the main site for the production rather than repression of sexuality, and especially in the nineteenth century, when medicine, psychiatry, pedagogy were involved in the analysis of the family structure. He argues against a repressive analysis of sexuality, typically viewed by scholars in connection with Victorian culture, and he demonstrates instead “the deployment of sexuality” based on “the Christian notion of the flesh, and its development through the four great strategies that were deployed in the nineteenth century: the sexualization of children, the hysterization of women, the specification of the perverted, and the regulation of populations – all strategies that went by way of a family, which must be viewed, not as a powerful agency of prohibition, but as a major factor of sexualization.”². This analysis will be applied to my project further in this work.

¹ Mary E. Papke, ”Verging on the Abyss: The social fiction of Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton”, Greenwood Press, NY, 1990, p. 10.
Among many representatives of literary accomplishment of the 19th century, Kate Chopin (1850-1904) stands out uniquely as a very different writer. Mostly an author of various short stories, she has been for many decades neglected or even viewed as an unimportant writer. The main reason for this is perhaps her novel *The Awakening*, written just in the final years of the 19th century, the novel that caused Kate Chopin basically to stop writing. Strong negative criticisms led to the obvious fact that her wonderfully crafted novel, raising many important family, marriage and sexuality issues, has been forgotten up until the 1960’s. Since the 1970’s the number of positive reviews, analyses and theses on this unusually multifaceted writer have radically increased and are continually growing in contemporary scholarship’s enthusiasm and eagerness. One of the main reasons in its interest for the contemporary reader is her ambivalence and creation of open spaces for further interpretations and discussions of the ways how people relate and connect to each other.

Particularly for my analysis, *The Awakening* is unique in the way it sheds light on marriage, family, human relations, individuality and sexuality coloured by the fin de siecle society. Its particularity is not just in questioning the position of a person inside the family and society, but in displaying both the advantages and side-effects of married life, extra-marital relationships, romantic love, family construction and children-parent relations, sexual desire and gratification, artistic pursuit and the search for the self-realization, sacrifice and ego-assertion and many other parts of the sophisticated web of relations among humans. Basically, viewed from the late 19th century average person’s mind, the flaw of the novel is that it does not try to judge the wrong people and wrong actions. It does not give you a moral lesson the way Charles Dickens or even Gustave Flaubert does. It has a more impressionistic attitude, and Kate Chopin prefers to situate her values and opinions on the shore, an important place in the novel itself, neither on the land, nor in the midst of the sea. Looking ahead, she allows the reader to swim a bit further into the possibilities and changes that can happen, but often she points back to the established and widely-known codes and stereotypes, which had an enormous impact on our lives, however, without giving any lecture on life, she leaves the audience in the midst of their own reflection and judgement.
1. Marriage as Arrangement

One of the most important concepts in the 19th century was the concept of true womanhood. People tended to talk about true love, true passion, true vocation, true behaviour, true manhood, so true womanhood was not something specifically new, it was just part of the idealization of society’s constructions. Woman has been always, since many ages ago, considered a delicate, fragile, mysterious, unknowable, pure creature, however only under certain condition of her being kept in protection and chastity. Otherwise, woman’s nature was popularized in Christian societies as that of the evil one, that one that yields to seduction of the devil, the example always being Eve from the Bible. Woman was often the reason for man’s insecurity in the myths created by his own unsuccessful experiences and rich imagination, and taking into account that for a long time the society was patriarchal, it was mostly in power of men to decide the position of women.

In the 19th century the cult of true womanhood became more complex and explicit in its manifestation and expression in light of economic and cultural developments. The separation of economy from the home led to the creation of separate sexual and social spheres for a man and a woman. Thus, the woman was supposed to lead a domestic life, take care of home, children, servants, the man was to bring money and prosperity, was involved more in city life rather than family life. This led to the assignment of the social roles that each sex was supposed to fulfill and satisfy in the eyes of society. Barbara Welter describes true womanhood of the late 19th century in the very clear message: “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbours and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife – woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power”.

So is Edna Pontellier, trapped in the frame of female roles that are supposed to constitute her womanliness. Starting from her earliest role of a daughter to a strict Presbyterian father, which we find out from her conversation with Adele, she “…was running away from prayers, from Presbyterian service, read in a spirit of gloom by my father that chills me yet to think of”. Edna’s attitude towards the prescribed role of an obedient daughter is to revolt it. One of

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3 Mary E. Papke, ”Verging on the Abyss: The social fiction of Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton”, p. 11.
the most important events in her life was when she was walking across the green meadow in Kentucky and “felt as if I must walk on forever, without coming to an end of it. I don’t remember whether I was frightened or pleased. I must have been entertained.” This event is set against her father’s gloomy service in the church as an antithesis and evoked in the novel when Edna watches the sea and accepts Adele’s warm caress, which triggers one of the first of her awakenings that follow in succession in the course of the novel. We are not told a lot about the daughter-father relationship in the text, and the father appears only once, but we get to know him as a military man who “wore his coats padded, which gave a fictitious breadth and depth to his shoulders and chest.” The gap between Edna and her father is shown in the lack of communication between them; they hardly speak with each other in the text. His rigid countenance and arrogant pose seem to be more important than playing with his grandchildren whom he “motioned […] away with an expressive action of the foot, loath to disturb the fixed lines of his countenance, his arms, or his rigid shoulders.” When the Colonel, as he is called several times in the novel, is flirting with Mme. Ratignolle, Edna cannot comprehend the arts and reasons of coquetry. But this is exactly what her father expects from a beautiful woman, like Adele, to do in front of an important man, like him. And in his reproaching Edna for not attending her sister’s wedding, he judges her for the lack of “sisterly affection and womanly consideration.” It seems Edna violates the expectations of both the role of a daughter and a role of a sister.

Edna’s behaviour as a wife is similar. We see her in Chapter I from her husband’s point of view, Leonce, as an approaching sunshade that indicates his awareness of Edna as his private property, which is emphasized later when he complains about her doing a “folly” by bathing in the sea and reproaches her of burning her delicate skin “beyond recognition”. In response to her husband’s dissatisfaction Edna surveys her arms scrupulously, which indicates the fact that the body she possesses is her own property, and it can be conceived as separate and independent. But observing her own body and arms reminds her of the rings she wears on her fingers and she reaches with her hands towards her husband to get the symbols of possessiveness and Leonce’s legal property, her wifehood as represented in her ringed hands, an indication that she belongs to someone else rather than to herself. What is very crucial and sometimes underestimated by scholars is Edna’s daring reaction to putting her rings on – she laughs and exchanges the smiling look with Robert, her to-be lover, while the rings sparkle on

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5 K.C. "TA", p. 60.
6 K.C. "TA", p. 120.
7 K.C. "TA", p. 121.
her fingers. Isn’t it a pointer to the fact that she does not take her wifehood seriously? Or is it some kind of a hysterical laugh of a person caught up in possession by the other? In any case, this kind of behaviour is not what a wife is supposed to be, a moral guardian and a pure angel.

When it comes to Leonce’s behaviour, it is more typical of the 19th century man and husband, he does not stay long with his wife, he prefers to go to Klein’s hotel to play a game of billiards. There he spends most of his spare time, while the rest of his time he travels to New Orleans for his business. Homosocial worlds of men and women alienated spouses to the degree of two subjects that hardly knew each other; they lived together for practical reasons, mostly economical and social in character. There is no indication in The Awakening of any degree of affection or emotional care between Edna and Leonce. It seems purely a marriage-arrangement. We don’t follow Leonce’s trips, but taking into account the historical realities of the city life we can only imagine what opportunities were open for him, particularly prostitution of the red-light districts. It is a well-known fact that the disparity in women’s and men’s education led them even to a further segregation. 19th century middle-class culture seemed to encourage the image of a bestial, uncontrollable male sexuality versus female passive sexual desire, mostly associated with maternity or the yearning to have a child, so well-accepted by the society: “We teach the girl repression, the boy expression, not simply by word and book, but the lessons are graven into their very being by all the traditions, prejudices, and customs of society”9, says Alice Stockham in her sex education manual for women.

Here lies the double standard of the 19th century masculinity, because at the same time men were supposed to show how they could manage their control over their desires and passions through withdrawal and restraint. Here the image of Edna’s rigid father is important again, however Leonce certainly has features of this double standard. In the beginning of the novel he takes it for granted and as a norm to leave his wife for a game in a men’s club. Most of the time in the novel Leonce practices withdrawal in his attitude to his wife, which was very often a method of birth control in the 1870’s-1890’s, propagated by feminists in the programme of “voluntary motherhood”, which meant that it was up to a woman to decide the time when to get pregnant. 19th century abounds with manuals on sex education which strongly oppose other sexual communication rather than that of the two spouses, and even if they indulged excessively in sexual activity within their family it was still considered unnatural and lustful. Masturbation was condemned and was supposed to lead a person to “disease, social stigma,

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and tainted offspring” according to John Ware. Men were advised to practice self-control before and after marriage. There was a myth about the body as a closed energy system, which had to be taken care of and not wasted in vain. Women were idealized as dormant with no sexual passion, and women who did not fit this model were considered “fallen”. According to Eliza Duffey’s source What Women Should Know (1873), women’s maternal instincts were much stronger than sexual passion.

In the context of the concept of sexual abstinence and sexual passivity it is worth analyzing the scene in The Awakening, when Edna rests on the hammock after she has learned how to swim where “no woman had swum before”. It is important to note that she does not want to stay either with Robert, the one who taught her to swim, or with her husband, Leonce, who insists on her coming to bed. Edna, on her part, insists on solitude. When Robert asks her if she wants him to stay until her husband comes, she just says “If you wish” and sends him to bring her her shawl, which she does not use. Instead they sit in silence and Chopin describes the scene sensuously: “No multitude of words could have been more significant than those moments of silence, or more pregnant with the first-felt throbings of desire”. It is the very realization of her own desire, thought to be dormant according to the society’s teachings and advice, that make Edna immerse deeply into her own emotions and thoughts. She is situated between the role of a proper woman and her own feelings about the whole event.

More significant is her refusal to reply to her husband’s complaint about her lying in the hammock so late in the evening and her symbolic refusal to his invitation to the conjugal bed. The reader gets into her thoughts, in which she compares her previous life to the moment of revelation she is in: “Another time she would have gone in at his request. She would, through habit, have yielded to his desire; not with any sense of submission or obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinkingly, as we walk, move, sit, stand, go through the daily treadmill of the life which has been portioned out to us”. Edna goes on lying in the hammock, while Leonce cannot just leave her alone there and situates himself not far from her smoking his cigars and drinking wine, perhaps speculating on the strange behaviour of his wife, strange in the sense that it does not fit the expectation of a true and proper woman. And as long as there is no affection, communication, or understanding between them, there is no real solution to their marital problem. Some critics blame Edna more than Leonce in her lack of communication with her husband, because Leonce at least tries to talk to her, he asks

11 K.C, "TA", p. 73.
13 K.C, "TA", p. 77-78.
questions and even offers her a glass of wine, a hint to a reconciliation and an attempt at conversation.

But the dreaming in the hammock is temporary, she awakens to the reality and still yields to “the conditions which crowded her in”\textsuperscript{14}. This can be viewed as self-deception, escape from herself, her refusal to discuss the problem or the inner yearnings with her husband. However we cannot judge her for the lack of courage if we consider the dangers and consequences of opposing her husband. Moreover, Leonce, not being a negative, but rather an average husband, still seems to look at his wife as his possession, not having her own will or desire to activity.

Another concept of constructed female sexuality for the preservation of marriage is the cult of maternity, idealized in the novel in the image of Madonna-like Adele Ratignolle, the “embodiment of every womanly grace and charm”, “the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams”\textsuperscript{15}. When Edna, fascinated with Adele’s beauty and warm communication, invites her to go to the beach, Adele manages to take her needlework with her, which shows her utter devotion to domestic work. In the first chapters we see Adele for the first time with children clinging to her skirts. The Ratignolles display the domestic harmony and ideal of a family life, while Edna is depicted quite early in the novel as not a mother-woman. Her children are said to be quite unspoilt and independent: “If one of the little Pontellier boys took a tumble whilst at play, he was not apt to rush crying to his mother’s arms for comfort; he would more likely pick himself up, wipe the water out of his eyes and the sand out of his mouth, and go on playing.”\textsuperscript{16}. Edna is alienated from her children by the nanny, but in spite of her laissez-faire mothering techniques and attitudes, we witness her devotion and love towards them in some chapters, like in the scene when she comes back from Cheniere Caminada. After she hears all the news about her boys during her absence from Madame Ratignolle, she takes one of them in her arms and starts “to coddle and caress him, calling him all manner of tender names, soothing him to sleep”\textsuperscript{17}. However, the children are sketched dimly in the text, and the reader almost does not perceive their presence, obstructed by the nanny and Edna’s preoccupation with her own self-realization.

Edna is reproached by her husband in her neglect of the children in the Chapter III of the novel, when he comes back from the men’s club, but the reproach is derived not from the fact

\textsuperscript{14} K.C, "TA", p. 78.
\textsuperscript{15} K.C, "TA", p. 51.
\textsuperscript{16} K.C, "TA", p. 50.
\textsuperscript{17} K.C, "TA", p. 87.
that the children are neglected, but rather from the accumulation of dissatisfaction and inattention from Edna’s side towards himself: “If it was not a mother’s place to look after children, whose on earth was it? He himself had his hands full with his brokerage business. He could not be in two places at once; making a living for his family on the street, and staying at home to see that no harm befell them”¹⁸ – this is what Leonce says after he discovers that one of their boys has a fever, which shows Leonce’s logical interpretation of Edna’s wifely and motherly neglect as perhaps triggered by the feelings of envy in reaction that his wife had previously enjoyed bathing in the sea with Robert and other villagers, but does not enjoy him telling her anecdotes and gossip. “He thought it very discouraging that his wife, who was the sole object of his existence, evinced so little interest in things which concerned him, and valued so little his conversation”¹⁹. His ego and self-esteem is not fed with attention from his “sole object”, he gets angry, envious of her getting satisfaction with others (her bathing and laughing with Robert), but not having any ability to give him some pleasure. He uses his authoritative power on his wife, like a capricious child that does not get what it wants and makes a fuss instead. Does he expect Edna to be like the model of an ideal wife and mother, like Adele Ratignolle?

Here I would want to discuss another significant feature of the 19th century social construction, the idealization of romantic and passionate love. Bertrand Russell gives some of the most captivating accounts on romantic love taking shape during the Middle Ages as that one that “regards the beloved object as very difficult to possess and as very precious”²⁰. The belief in unattainability or difficulty of obtaining the fair lady of the highest respectability because of the numberless barriers of morality and convention was an important part of romantic love. Russell writes of this love by citing an example of the romantic poet Shelley and the importance of obstacles for the survival of romanticism: “Romantic love as it existed in Shelley depends upon a state of unstable equilibrium, where the conventional barriers still exist, but not quite insuperable; if the barriers are rigid, or if they do not exit, romantic love is not likely to flourish.”²¹. Russell writes that since the French Revolution the idea of marriage appearing out of romantic love was taken for granted by many 19th century couples. This kind of marriage was strongly opposed to one of parental choice, but marrying without previous sexual experience with each other, however sharing the romantic attachment, led to the disillusionment of romance and passion, which are transient. Combined with lack of proper

²¹ Bertrand Russell, ”Marriage and Morals”, p. 46.
sex education, especially among women, basing one’s marriage on romantic love was a gross mistake. According to Russell, marriage goes beyond the feelings of husband and a wife, it is an institution whose purpose is not simply romantic, but rather more practical and realistic, like rearing the children, sharing economy and dividing labour. Moreover, to keep marriage romantic, the husband and wife would have to try to be unattainable for each other for years to be romantically idolized, which is quite impossible. However, in the Victorian times the society made many efforts to preserve this romanticism in families through the system of sexual abstinence and the division of social and sexual spheres.

The relationship between Edna and Leonce has no sign of romanticism. We are not given the account of their previous married life and engagement, but for Edna marriage represented an escape from her obsessive romantic dreams about the cavalry officer and tragedian, unattainable desired lovers, an escape into reality, an attempt to accommodate herself to the limitations of her reality. Moreover, she marries Leonce, a Creole, in her opposition to her strict Protestant father, from whose authority she is symbolically running away in her childhood memories. Marriage is conceived as a means of shelter, place to hide, place of security and safety for Edna. It is indicated in the novel that she was certainly charmed and flattered by his attention, but is that enough reason to marry?

As for Leonce, he is more likely brought up by the idea that there must be romantic passion and intimate mutuality between the spouses. He expects Edna to react to him flatteringly and enthusiastically only because their marriage is the contract of their feelings and emotions; it is simple enough for him. Obviously, he is extremely hurt when he finds out that his wife does not take any interest in his impressions of the game at the men’s club, because he sees in it a sign of fading or lack of affection and romanticism in Edna towards him. Since they have been married for six years, we are supposed to understand that this is the first time that Edna dared to show her indifference towards her husband, which becomes more radical in the scene when she lies in the hammock and refuses to go to her room.

Class and race systems of the late 19th century is another aspect connected with the problem of middle-class marriage. Compare Edna’s and Mariequita’s behaviours when they meet each other on the boat to Cheniere Caminada. First of all, Mariequita is not so much influenced by the society’s demands of respectability, she is barefooted, has “the sand and slime between her brown toes”22, she teases Robert and Beaudelit, the boat-steerer, at the same time, she expresses, even though in spanish, very openly and directly her opinion of

22 K.C, ”TA”, p. 81.
Edna. Nobody cares about her look or behaviour, because she is from the working-class and is of creole-spanish blood, which makes her less important for the white middle-class society. Notice that most black women as well as men present in the novel, quadroons and servants, are hardly visible not because they are in nature like this, but because they are not so necessary for the assertion and presentation of the middle class. So, Edna must worry about her social status, her financial stability, her acceptance among people through taking a scrupulous attention to the way she talks, dresses, behaves herself, and the way she satisfies her roles given to her to perform.

Here lies the problem, because Edna is not longer willing to live according to the above-mentioned standards, but chooses to direct herself independently.

2. Freedom, Confinement and Desire at Home

Central to the problematics of marriage in the novel is the duality of illusion and reality. Most of the text describes Edna’s dreams, fantasies, memories and thoughts, which cause her self-awakenings and place her as a personality in this world and from which she awakens back into grim domesticated reality, where she spends most of her time passively slipping through the routines assigned to her roles. In her last conversation with Dr. Mandelet she mentions that “perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one’s life”\textsuperscript{23}. What is the illusion is not objective in the novel and can be interpreted in different ways. For Edna, while she confronts the happy union of the Ratignolles, the perfect marriage evokes “an appalling and hopeless ennui…[…]…that colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment,… […]…in which she would never have the taste of life’s delirium”\textsuperscript{24}. The idea of two people being ideally happy together as “one” is presented as the illusion rather than fact or reality. It is perhaps fulfilling for Adele and her husband, but it is clearly not what Edna desires for herself. Marriage is rather represented for Edna as the act of passing by, the state of sleep, total self-effacement by the social roles. Margo Culley writes in her essay on Edna’s solitude that “to discover solitude in the midst of this connectedness is surely among the most painful awakenings, because the entire social fabric sustains the dream and

\textsuperscript{23} K.C, “TA”, p. 171.
\textsuperscript{24} K.C. “TA”, p. 107.
illusion”. Little by little, through communication outside home and family, she realizes that all her married life was lived in this dream. In the beginning of the novel, after spending obviously satisfying time with Robert at the shore, she laughs while putting on her wedding rings offered by her husband. In Leonce’s reproach of her neglect of the children, she does not answer. After learning to swim and while resting in the hammock, she refuses to comply to her husband’s demand that she goes to her room for a sleep. While enjoying the romantic trip to Cheniere Caminada with Robert, she implies that she has slept all her years through: “How many years have I slept “ she inquired. “The whole island seems changed. A new race of beings must have sprung up, leaving only you and me as past relics.” She daringly abandons her reception day, the duty of every respectable wife and the means of helping progress her husband’s business connections and reputation, without any excuse to the outrage of Leonce. Right after her husband abandons her in utter fury, Edna becomes the most rebellious in the novel, when she throws her wedding ring and strives to crush it with her heel unsuccessfully, and flings the glass vase instead into pieces, the symbol of female virginity. She spends most of her spare time in the atelier painting or visiting the most despised woman in the city, Mademoiselle Reisz, and is again reproached by Leonce for her neglect of household duties. Her father’s visit sums up her determination to leave the luxurious house and to start her new life alone, in which she indulges in the activities that question her as a woman of the 19th century image. She spends her free time walking alone in the streets of New Orleans, the privilege assigned only to men; she meets new men without being accompanied with another woman; she flirts with Alcee Arabin, the most scandalous and promiscuous man in the society; and organizes the extravagant and sensuous dinner party without consulting her husband.

I agree with Larzer Ziff’s analysis of Edna’s marriage as “an episode in her continuous growth” started from the very childhood when she escapes her father’s authority and finds herself in the tall blue grass of Kentucky meadows, continued through her realization of “the dual life – that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions”, further through her youthful romantic infatuations with the cavalry officer, the young gentleman engaged to marry a young lady and the the picture of the tragedian, and through Leonce’s

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devotion and attention to her and their incidental marriage consisting of the “world of reality”, with “no trace of passion or excessive and fictitious warmth”\textsuperscript{29}. Important to note here is that Edna mentions that she met Leonce “in the midst of her secret great passion”\textsuperscript{30}, supposedly for the tragedian, for she even thinks that marriage with the imagined lover would have been “the acme of bliss”\textsuperscript{31}. Thus, she implies that her relationship with Leonce is based not on mutual love and passion, but rather on devotion, worship and dignity of position. Moreover, Edna’s family opposition to her marrying a Catholic concludes the final motive of her choosing Leonce for a husband.

I would like to add to the interpretation of marriage as personal growth the motive of escape, first from father’s home, then from romantic obsession,finally from her husband’s home, and again from the romantic illusion with Robert. This is a wave-like, circular development that Edna Pontellier goes through in the novel.

In this connection it is worthwhile to analyze the image of the sea and the home in \textit{The Awakening}. Sea pervades the whole text and contains some of the most important symbolic features connected with Edna’s experience of her awakening. First of all, the sea makes Edna think, to contemplate on her life, it evokes her memories, it triggers her to act, to stop being passive. Thus, when Adele asks her what she thinks of when Edna looks at the sea, she remembers walking through the tall grass, a pivotal moment in her life; after she learns to swim, she becomes more determined and self-decisive in her behaviour and the next day sets off on a trip to the island with Robert. It seems the sea gives enormous power to Edna, it gives courage and it evokes space beyond the confines of the home. Sea as opposite to home represents Edna’s struggle between her personal feelings and freedom of expression, on one hand, and social responsibilities and duties, on the other hand.

However, the sea represents also the dangers of losing oneself and even death. That is why Edna sees the vision of death when she realizes she is going further from the land in her first swim. She is seized with fear and even acknowledges it to her husband later: “I thought I should have perished out there alone”\textsuperscript{32}. Realization of her power and ability to swim in the waters of possibilities and at the same time of danger and of the presence of fear and death makes her rethink the whole situation while she is lying in the hammock and constantly bothered by her husband’s demands and reproaches. It is a philosophical and symbolical

\textsuperscript{29} K.C, ”TA”, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{30} K.C, ”TA”, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{31} K.C, ”TA”, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{32} K.C, ”TA”, p. 74.
return from the sea’s inspiring and seductive invitation for self-discovery and knowledge to the stability, support and safety of the home.

In chapter XVII we find the image of the Pontelliers’ charming home in New Orleans, “a large, double cottage, with a broad veranda, whose round, fluted columns supported the sloping roof”\(^{33}\). The house is painted “a dazzling white” and contains “the softest carpets and rugs”, “the cut glass, the silver, the heavy damask which daily appeared upon the table were the envy of many women whose husbands were less generous than Mr. Pontellier”\(^{34}\). Richness of the house represents the inhabitants and shows their status and respectability, therefore the reception day is an important duty, and it is a wife’s duty, carelessly neglected by Edna. As Martin Heidegger points to in his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”, “it is through building that Man builds a place for himself in the world, an identity, a history”, and he distinguishes two aspects of it: construction and preservation, “building is exclusively male and patriarchal, whereas preservation is or can be female and matriarchal”\(^{35}\). Thus, Edna is set in the house to preserve what is earned and bought by her husband; literally speaking she herself has nothing of her own in that house, she, as the middle class lady, is denied the access to the streets to earn her own money and make her own contribution to the family, and thus, she is caged at home like a domesticated bird. As we see, the relationship between Edna and Leonce is extremely unequal both financially and socially. Even if the wife is supposed to display the riches of the house at her reception day, it has nothing to do with her, she is just a manager, not a creator; she does not decide, but follows the instructions and advice of the husband. So, home is the symbol of confinement wonderfully paralleled in the novel by the bird image.

The green and yellow parrot that appears in the beginning of the novel is chosen by Chopin for many reasons. First of all, it is caged, like Edna in her conjugal home at Esplanade street. Secondly, it is a colourful bird, like women that were supposed to dress themselves in the most luxurious fabrics and charm the man’s eye. Thirdly, it speaks some spanish, some french and some incomprehensible language, “the language that nobody understood”\(^{36}\), basically like Edna and many women who try to speak for themselves and go beyond their prescribed roles. Finally, it repeats insistently “Go away! Go away!That’s all right!”, parallelling Edna’s thoughts and yearnings and foreshadowing her leaving. The parrot’s repetetive shout is a constant reminder for women to think of their imprisoned lives. It is also a pure imitator of

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others, like many women parroting their husbands’ demands and remarks. In a wonderful essay by Joyce Dyer he makes several comparisons between the parrot and Edna, which is important to note here in the context of the representation of marriage: “Like the domesticated parrot in the novel, Edna is vulnerable when she is free. She has been cared for too long by an owner and taught a language not her own. Also like a parrot, Edna has had her wings clipped so often that she will spend all of her remaining days trying to recover the strength and imagination it takes to soar”\(^{37}\).

The impossibility of finding her own identity outside the home, family, marriage and assigned roles of wife and mother, lacking support and solidarity from others for her endeavours to live independently and the way she decides, not having enough strength and courage to oppose the strictures of the prejudices and to fight her own fears, Edna stumbles on her way to freedom and self-expression and falls into depression. She does not realize that she has many more lessons to learn, and one of them is that “individuals are caught in the fabric of social living, a weave that often constricts but ultimately forms the self…[…]…we must find the self at home…[…]…if we are to find the self at all”\(^{38}\).

Leonce is not presented negatively, he is “neither buffoon nor tyrant; he is, rather, a responsible Victorian husband and father who, having contracted a perfectly suitable arrangement with Edna, finds her changes puzzling”\(^{39}\). He is the one who tries to communicate with his wife. He sends his attentions to her by all possible ways. For instance, his regular parcels of sweets from New Orleans while he is on a business trip win him the reputation of the most generous husband in the world. He cares for his wife’s health when he observes that her skin has been burnt because of long walks on the shore, and when he objects to her staying long out in the evening lying in the hammock for the reason that she can get cold or that mosquitos will bite her delicate skin. He even offers her a glass of wine, the sign of his partial acceptance of Edna’s will to stay out longer and even of his attempt at understanding and helping her, his solidarity with her, which she refuses. If only Edna opens up everything she has inside her to her attentive husband, would he go on trying to understand her? We are left only to speculate, because Edna never reveals herself to her husband, even when she abandons her weekly reception day, she does not give a clear explanation and clue


\(^{38}\) Katherine Joslin, ”Finding the Self at Home”, from ”Kate Chopin Reconsidered: Beyond the Bayou”, ed. by Linda S. Boren and Sara de Saussure Davis, Louisiana State University, 1992, p. 179.

\(^{39}\) Bonnie St. Andrews, ”Forbidden Fruit: On the Relationship between Women and Knowledge in Doris Lessing, Selma Lagerlof, Kate Chopin, and Margaret Atwood”, from “Kate Chopin’s The Awakening”, ed. by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 1999, p. 53.
to her behaviour, so it is not surprising to find Leonce puzzled with her silent wife, acting ridiculously in his practical eyes.

One of the most important scenes in *The Awakening* to analyze the image of Leonce is his conversation with Dr. Mandelet about his worries of his wife. His answer to Dr. Mandelet’s inquiry about his health is rather self-assured: “I’m never sick, Doctor. You know that I come of tough fiber – of that old Creole race of Pontelliers that dry up and finally blow away”\(^{40}\). A great importance is taken of the race and ancestors of Edna as well to assure that her illness has nothing to do with hereditary irregularities, which were properly avoided. Leonce confesses to the doctor of his quick temper and patience for the sake of saving Edna’s feelings and keeping up his own appearance of a respectable man and husband. We see him in this interview with Dr. Mandelet as a nervous man, “leaning forward and whirling his stick between his two hands…[,]…throwing himself back in his chair”\(^{41}\), interrupting the doctor, using swearing words (*Parbleu*). At the same time he does not seem to be presented as a very smart man. His trust in his wife and belief in her innate “tacit submissiveness” do not make him suspect his wife in opposing him seriously. He rather prefers to see her sick. Her declaration that a “wedding is one of the most lamentable spectacles on earth”\(^{42}\) is perceived by him as one of her mad whims, easily corrected and fixed by the doctor. His utter trust in the doctor and close following his advice to leave Edna alone for a while shows his easy eagerness to remove part of his burden-like responsibility for his wife.

Leonce and Edna lack all possible conditions to make their union happy. Bertrand Russell wrote that the use and respect of these conditions could make “marriage to be the best and most important relation that can exist between two human beings”\(^{43}\). There is no “feeling of complete equality on both sides”, Edna is questioning her wifely duties and inferior financial position, and Leonce does not feel he is treated well and just by his wife in answer to his care for the family, for instance; there is “interference with mutual freedom”, Leonce objecting against Edna’s painting activities, quitting reception day, lingering too late alone in the garden, sunbathing and walking the beach without limits etc, while Edna seems to indulge into pleasure and rest activities without thinking and considering her husband’s thoughts and demands; there is no “complete physical and mental intimacy” between them, there is no single kiss or hug exchanged among them, even though Leonce turns to Edna, while she seems to be colder and less attentive to him as she recognizes certain realities in her self; there

\(^{40}\) K.C, "TA", p. 117.
\(^{41}\) K.C, "TA", p. 117.
\(^{42}\) K.C, "TA", p. 118.
is hardly “a certain similarity in regard to standards of values”\textsuperscript{44}, Edna goes astray from the conventional reasoning of her husband that comply with the needs of the society and law, attracting herself to exploration, experience and getting of knowledge. Referring to Russell’s positive view of marriage’s possibilities, I think that both Edna and Leonce could find the ways to improve their decaying relationship, and, in my opinion, Edna is on her way “to understand that whatever the law may say, in their private lives they [husbands and wives] must be free”\textsuperscript{45}.


Dale M. Bauer once noticed that “Edna wants to feel and articulate desire as private property, as a language to which she has access”\textsuperscript{46}. It is from this point of view that I would like to analyze Edna’s urge for the world outside home, her interactions with it and the nuances of this world. Primarily I will focus on the connection with the homosocial world, particularly Edna’s communication with Adele Ratignolle and Mlle Reisz, the romantic love and fantasy in connection to her relationship with Robert Lebrun, the impersonal attraction and sexual drive towards Alcee Arobin, and the importance of nature and landscape, particularly the sea. The problem of jealousy, change of personality within time, sexual selection, body awareness, difference and alternativeness as well as the tension between freedom and security will be dealt in this section in relation to the theme of marriage and extra-marital relations.

Michael Worton mentions that “in Chopin’s world, women have no male other to whom they can relate: the men are usually distant or absent and offer no dialogic otherness, nor even the potential for such dialogue...[...]...where women struggle with their solitude and where they essentially seek not so much sex or sensuality or even independence but someone with whom to dialogue in difference”\textsuperscript{47}. This is precisely the world of The Awakening, the world filled with different personalities that offer communication and closeness to Edna, something that she misses with her husband Leonce in her claustrophobic and isolated marriage. She seems to be attracted to everything new and different from what she used to know, and as we

can note what she used to know was not made up by her own mind, but was given ready to her by society, her father and then her husband. There is a vital importance to her turning to difference for her further development as an independent personality.

From the first pages of the novel, Edna is immersed in the world of the “female colony”, Grand Isle, the resort, where people rest, where women rule. Madame Lebrun owns the cottages at the resort that she uses for income, the mother-women prevail among the inhabitants, since most fathers leave their wives for work and business in New Orleans or they socialize in men’s clubs, as Leonce does.

In this typical 19th century system of homosocial worlds, where women and men spent most of their time apart from each other, Edna finds her first connection outside family with a woman, Adele Ratignolle, who “was the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm”48. There is a great deal of idyllic description of the appearance and gentle character and behaviour of Adele, which points to Edna’s almost ecstatic admiration with this Madonna-like figure, thus, a romanticized image. The ideals of true womanhood and motherhood, all represented in Adele, contrast with Edna’s self-awareness as not a mother-woman. It creates no conflict, but a rather growing connection between the two women, which is the most permanent relation that Edna has among her extra-marital encounters, a relation based on some instinctive mutual understanding and sisterly solidarity and empathy. Tenderness is a big element in this relationship. Notice how Edna observes Adele at her sewing: “Never were hands more exquisite than hers, and it was a joy to look at them when she threaded her needle or adjusted her gold thimble to her taper middle finger as she sewed away on the little night-drawers or fashioned a bodice or a bib”49. Madame Ratignolle lays her hand on Edna’s, clasps it warmly and even strokes it with the other hand. Edna mentions once in her reflections that “the most obvious was the influence of Adele Ratignolle”50. It is not only the beauty and the charm of this warm Creole that affect Edna, but “the candor of the woman’s whole existence, which every one might read, and which formed so striking a contrast to her own habitual reserve – this might have furnished a link”51. What makes Adele so definitely attractive in the eyes of Edna is her ability to enjoy her womanly position in this world, to be open and sincere with the others, to be even proud of her achievements, mostly measured in her motherly qualities and abilities, and to be happy about her prescribed and chosen place.

The gentle caress received from Adele’s hand causes Edna to remember her youthful romantic infatuations, perhaps the most pleasurable moments she has experienced in her life up until this conversation with Adele. The feeling that somebody listens to her and understands, the communication that she lacks at home is the essence of Edna’s attraction to Adele. But it gives a rather more complex meaning to Edna, it makes her for the first time realize what it means to be in relation to another person, to perceive another person and to have herself perceived not through the given roles, but by the very quality of each personality, by being who one is. During her walk on the beach with Adele, Edna has a revelation that she can think and feel for herself regardless of the rules and demands imposed on her by her father and her husband: “She had put her head down on Madame Ratignolle’s shoulder. She was flushed and intoxicated with the sound of her own voice and the unaccustomed taste of candor. It muddled her like wine, or like a first breath of freedom”\(^{52}\).

Adele is the only person in the text who appreciates and encourages Edna’s endeavours for painting, while Leonce blames his wife for spending too much time for that nonsense and neglecting her household duties. It is clearly explained in the novel that “she [Edna] sought the words of praise and encouragement that would help her to put heart into her venture”\(^{53}\). Adele provides for Edna the community that supports the growth of her thought and personality, that listens carefully and draws herself into a different mode of communication.

However, if Adele helps Edna to develop herself, she also makes her regress by means of her spiritual influence. The problem is that Adele, in spite of her being drawn into Edna’s personality, is the model of respectability, the social construction that is needed for success and public acceptance, and she does impose this model on Edna as well by advising her to be more careful in living alone and being infatuated with Alcee Arobin, one of the most promiscuous men in New Orleans. Note as well that Edna is determined to go to be with Adele during her birthgiving despite her desire to talk and stay with Robert. A sense of duty, promise or strong commitment? Note as well how powerful is the impact of the torture-like scene of birthgiving and Adele’s warning “Think of the children!”, which has a crucial consequence for Edna’s decision “to swim far out, where no woman had swum before”\(^{54}\), to isolate herself even more into solitude and shelter herself in the sea, far away from human communication, which proves to be intolerable and hard to accept for Edna’s further development. At that stage Edna is in need for another level of communication, which she

\(^{52}\) K.C. "TA", p.63.  
\(^{53}\) K.C. "TA", p. 106.  
\(^{54}\) K.C. "TA", p. 73.
does not find among humans, and also because she is in constant change and progression, which requires connection with newer personalities.

Adele Ratignolle is not the only woman Edna feels connection to. She could actually find her salvation in Mlle Reisz, an artist-woman, who lives on her own, who is almost an absolute opposition to the ideal of womanly qualities. None likes her either at Grande Isle or in the city because of her disagreeable manner and ugliness, and it is said that she “had quarreled with almost every one, owing to a temper which was self-assertive and a disposition to trample upon the rights of others”55. What could attract Edna in this frigid woman full of skepticism towards the outside world and misanthropic inclinations? It is exactly the same thing as with Adele, the spiritual, almost ecstatic connection through Mlle. Reisz’s artistic talent. Edna’s reaction to Mlle. Reisz’s playing piano is full of new passionate emotions and sensations: “…the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her”56. This is another of the most pleasurable moments in Edna’s life, something new, something very different from what she had before. In her turning to difference she learns new things, new emotions, new levels of communication, and Mlle. Reisz is giving to her this newness of experience.

This misanthropist works as an impetus for further exploration of life and inspires Edna to put more effort and will to learn swimming, to start painting, to seek emotions in the world around her. It is very interesting that the next day after Mlle. Reisz’s playing the piano, Edna is finally able to swim alone, independently, without fear, realizing her own powers and the abilities of her own body. Afterwards, she is drawn to self-examination, she is not interested in conversation with either Robert or her husband, she wants to lie alone in the hammock and reflect on what she is experiencing. The peak of her exultation is her romantic trip to the island Cheniere Caminada with Robert Lebrun, the ultimate pinpoint for her self-realization and understanding of impulses and passions sent to her by Mlle Reisz.

However, it is important to note that Mlle. Reisz’s frigidity and avoidance of physicality, romance and sensuality contribute even more to Edna’s curiosity and life-learning. While in New Orleans, Edna is consumed with desire to find the address of the disagreeable woman and to meet her. Symbolical is the image of Mlle. Reisz’s shabby apartment on the last floor, with plenty of windows through which one could observe the panoramic view of “the crescent of

55 K.C, “TA”, p. 70
the river, the masts of ships and the big chimneys of the Mississippi steamers”\textsuperscript{57}. Perhaps this idyllic cozy image of a dingy little apartment evokes Edna’s desire to move out from her big house on Esplanade Street into a little pigeon house to live there by her own.

Edna visits her quite regularly, listens to her playing piano and gets some snatches of news about her beloved Robert from his letters sent to Mlle. Reisz. Edna’s value in these visits is expressed in her own words: “She says queer things sometimes in a bantering way that you don’t notice at the time and you find yourself thinking about afterward”\textsuperscript{58}. It is precisely what Mlle. Reisz does to Edna, making her think and reflect, exposing her to challenges in life and giving her lessons on strength and self-assertiveness: “The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth”\textsuperscript{59}.

Still, Mlle Reisz is manipulative in her teachings to Edna, which makes her seem like the authoritative artist attempting to mold her pupil. What she lacks is the ambiguity in her advice to Edna. Note, for instance, Mlle Reisz’s hiding letters written from Robert in Mexico. The purpose is certainly to teach Edna how to control her own passions and desires and to direct her life forces and abilities towards something greater and more challenging. She wants Edna to be strong enough to resist sensuality and love, to go beyond these fatal and foolish, in Mlle Reisz’s mind, inclinations, which bring nothing but blockage to further development in its very sequence of biological necessities of birthgiving, childrearing and household management. Mlle Reisz is an absolute feminist, she has her own reasons for that, but it is unwise and unjust of her to demand the development of the same outlook on life of Edna, who herself is rather inclined to the philosophy of relativity of morals and modes of life.

Edna situates herself in “the state of betweenness”\textsuperscript{60}, which is symbolically represented in the novel by the image of the seashore. Trui Vettes notes in her article that “on the edge of both sea and land, it [the shore] is the ultimate borderline and yet its very nature constantly refutes the very notion of edges, lines, borders, margins, and boundaries…Forever between, neither fixed nor fluid and yet always both…The shore, endlessly shifting, is also a place of possibilities”\textsuperscript{61}. So is Edna Pontellier, clinging to both Adele Ratignolle, the gentle mother-woman and to Mlle Reisz, the disagreeable artist-woman, as her women-friends, but she does

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{57} K.C, “TA”, p. 113.
\bibitem{60} Trui Vettes, “Beyond the Veil: Scarlet Women and Gray Gentlemen in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, Kate Chopin’s The Awakening and Jane Campion’s The Piano, from “Exploring Feminine Space: five essays on women’s writings”, ed. by Marysa Demoor, Studia Germanica Gandensia, No. 38, 1995, p. 15.
\bibitem{61} Trui Vettes, “Beyond the Veil”, p. 15-16.
\end{thebibliography}
not prefer the communication of one of these to the other one, because she likes being with both of them. She does not plunge into being absolutely and exclusively devoted either to Adele or to Mlle. Reisz; she does not listen to only one of them or one more than the other. It is precisely Edna’s own will and desire to be in this state that makes her develop her own personality and relations with her husband and other people, makes her awaken and realize what is her relation to others. This realization makes Edna reconsider the excusivity of marital relations. Marriage itself cannot give her the fulfillment of all these needs and longings she quench from her communication with these two women, in particular. Her development in all her forms depends not only on her relationship with her husband and children, but to a great extent, on her other connections. Notice that Leonce does not manage to arouse his wife sensually and sexually as Adele Ratignolle and Mlle Reisz can do. However, that does not make Edna a lover to both women, they are important people that add meaning to her life, which does not end in itself in marriage. Kate Chopin questions the institution of marriage as satisfying all the romantic, practical, spiritual and personal ideals.

In Edna’s romantic connection with Robert Lebrun, she is only in her initial stage of learning the possibilities of life and its limitations. As we have noted above, in her positive reaction to everything new and different from her marital experience, Edna enjoys connecting herself to these alternatives, one of which is Robert himself, even though this connection has a different origin and explanation than Edna’s friendships with Adele and Mlle. Reisz. What Robert offers her is to experience the romantic and passionate love in real life that Edna had the chance to long for only in her contemplative youthful dreams about the cavalry officer and the tragedian.

One of the main features of the romantic love is unattainability of the beloved. In Bertrand Russell’s words about the historical cultivation of romance we can find some explanation to the Edna/Robert infatuation: “Romantic love, as it appears in the Middle Ages, was not directed, at first, towards women with whom the lover could have either legitimate or illegitimate sexual relations; it was directed towards women of the highest respectability, who were separated from their romantic lovers by insuperable barriers of morality and convention. So thoroughly had the Church performed its task of making men feel sex inherently impure, that it had become impossible to feel any poetic sentiment towards a lady unless she was regarded as unattainable. Accordingly love, if it was to have any beauty, had to be platonic.”

Even though Edna and Robert live in the end of the 19th century, the ideal of romantic love

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works according to the same principle as described by Russell. On the night when she learns how to swim, Robert tells her a story about the spirit of the Gulf that puts Edna under a spell; not realizing where the impulses come from, Edna wants to stay alone and cuddles herself in the hammock during the night; we find out that she could not sleep the whole night: “They were troubled and feverish hours, disturbed with dreams that were intangible, that eluded her, leaving only an impression upon her half-awakened senses of something unattainable”63. Here is another characteristics of the romance, the unsatisfied desire.

For preserving the romantic quality of love it is in the lovers’ interest to keep each other unattainable. Edna is married and should not fall in love with another man; to keep their desires unsatisfied, there is hardly even a symbolical description of physicality between Edna and Robert, the trip to Cheniere Caminada with Robert provokes in Edna for erotic contemplation and autoeroticism, but not for active participation and the sharing of emotions, but to keep the barriers of morals that forbid their connection. That is one of the main reasons why Robert leaves for Mexico and why Edna’s restless love towards him grows more powerful with distance.

The reason for all these necessities in romantic love is to sharpen, to strengthen and to excite the desire and connection. As long as one keeps to these rules, of course unintentionally, one experiences a dream-like or a fantasy-filled world of spiritual pleasure. That is what Edna experiences with Robert, something opposite to her dull, routine-laden conjugal life with Leonce. What Robert does is to encourage Edna’s plunge into the world of dreams and fantasies, to pull her further from reality. When she wakes up from a long and sound sleep on Mme. Antoine’s cot and wonders if she slept many years, Robert creates the fairy-tale to please Edna: “You have slept precisely one hundred years. I was left here to guard your slumbers; and for one hundred years I have been out under the shed reading a book”64. In my opinion, this is a misleading act, bringing nothing but disillusionment in the end, however it is a vital step for Edna’s understanding of what is illusion and what is reality. Interestingly, she jumps from one state of illusion into another one within the progress of the whole story, which seems to persuade the reader that one is attracted magnetically to the falsified world rather than the authentic one. Thus, Edna enters the marriage with Leonce with the idea that it will save her from the romantic obsessions of her earlier youth, from the authority of her strict father, and will sober her up to reconcile with the dullness of real life. When it comes to her idealized relationship with Robert, she instinctively succumbs to the

magical explanation to her behaviour and, thus, escapes from the responsibility for herself, from facing the truth and essence of her relations to her husband versus her could-be lover.

However, there are different factors that make the attentive reader understand Edna’s succumbing to the dream world. First of all, we know that she was brought up entirely by her Presbyterian father, then, her husband does not seem to be a very emotional and listening partner, the absence of strong, affectionate feelings from her spouse makes her seek for nurturance from people outside her family, in Adele, in Mill Reisz, and finally in Robert Lebrun. All these people give each her or his understanding of certain of Edna’s needs and desires, which remain unnoticed in Leonce’s eyes, for instance.

I also agree with Cynthia Griffin Wolff’s analysis of Edna’s restlessness and seeking satisfaction outside home in Freud’s terms. Using Freud’s term of “oceanic feeling”, Wolff explains Edna’s behaviour as the desire for “limitless fusion with the external world…[…]…sense of oneness with a nurturing figure has given him [individual] sustenance sufficient to move onward to more complex satisfactions.”\(^65\) According to Freud, we all have this drive towards the total fusion with another person, which provides the feeling of ultimate fulfillment. But this is also a feeling of total ego-annihilation, like being foetus or newly-born child, who do not have yet any personality of their own, but purely enjoy being part of the mother or being nurtured and comforted by her. But then the child grows and acquires its own ego, habits, desires and ambitions that can go against the mother. If the mother tries to persuade her child to behave differently, and uses blame, punishment, moralism and threat, then this feels like invasion or possession in relation to the child. Wolff gives a very appropriate explanation to the irrationality, indecisiveness and cyclicity of Edna’s behaviour in this context: “On the one hand she must resist invasion, for with invasion comes possession and total destruction. On the other hand she must resist the equally powerful impulse to destroy whatever separates her from the external world so that she can seek union, fusion and ecstatic fulfillment.”\(^66\)

The sea plays a great symbolic role in representing this total union. It can be interpreted as well as one of Edna’s extra-marital relations, it is her metaphorical lover, the ideal, the perfect relationship. Notice that it is actually Robert who introduces Edna to the sea; it is thanks to him that she learns how to swim, and the most ecstatic moments in the novel are expressed during their magical journey into the world of romance at Cheniere Caminada. Both sea and


\(^{66}\) Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "Thanatos and Eros", p. 235.
Robert, at least Robert before he leaves for Mexico, represent that longing for fusion that gives the ultimate pleasure in life. The sea is described and displayed in the most sensuous and sophisticated ways: “The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace”\(^67\). It is the contradiction of the sea’s symbolism that strikes so strong in the reader the feeling of ambiguity, for the sea is simultaneously the symbol of death, the disappearance of ego, and birth. But the sea is also the source of acquiring knowledge and experience, situated outside society, and through connecting and crossing it, it has lots of mysteries and puzzles buried deep down in its waters.

In these terms, it is easier to explain the tension between freedom, manifested by the will for independence and self-realization, and security, represented by financial stability, conformity to the society’s rules and views etc. It is important to remember that in the 1890’s middle-class women risked losing property, financial security, home and public reputation in the case of divorce, adultery and other extra-marital adventures. So, in comparison with the working-class girl, who had almost nothing to lose of her scarce property, Edna, as part of bourgeois society, could end up in the position of the domesticated bird released from the golden cage into the wilderness. Hardly she could survive, if not assisted, like in the case of Lily Bart in Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth*.

Some of the vital moments in *The Awakening* are in chapter XIII, in which Edna, at Cheniere Caminada with Robert, gets tired and is invited into Mme Antoine’s bedroom to rest. Chopin devotes so much time and focus to describing Edna’s solitude and the pleasure of physical self-discovery. Note what a lesson it is for her to discover her own body: “She ran her fingers through her loosened hair for a while. She looked at her round arms as she held them straight up and rubbed them one after the other, observing closely, as if it were something she saw for the first time, the fine, firm quality and texture of her flesh. She clasped her hands easily above her head, and it was thus she fell asleep”\(^68\). Note as well how much she eats and drinks after the sleep, how hungry she is for satisfying her newly-discovered sensations: “Edna bit a piece from the brown loaf, tearing it with her strong, white teeth. She poured some of the wine into the glass and drank it down”\(^69\). After that she and Robert enjoy a feast made up of sizzling broiled fowl. This is a quick step forward for Edna’s development as a human being and in her relation to Robert, who even though finds himself

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\(^{67}\) K.C. "TA", p. 176.
\(^{68}\) K.C. "TA", p. 84.
\(^{69}\) K.C. "TA", p. 85.
“gratified to discover her appetite”\textsuperscript{70}, still warns her already at that stage that “the sun will be gone in two hours”\textsuperscript{71}, thus reminding her of her duty to return to her marital responsibilities. The split between them starts there and complicates itself when Robert decides to move to Mexico, with the intention, to my mind, to test their romanticized love through suffering. He leaves Edna also for the reason to make himself more available and suitable for her in the public eye, thus, to earn his wealth and become more respectable and acceptable in the society than he is at present.

It is also worthwhile to note that this kind of “oceanic feeling” mentioned above is temporary, transitory, as well as the romantic love, the fact that is discovered by Edna nearer the end of the novel. Left dissatisfied about the impossibility of making the romance with Robert real, she is also left to the multiple possibilities to find out why. Edna becomes even more self-assertive, indulges in her painting endeavours, gets extremely intolerant of her husband’s claims and moves out of the “doll’s house” to start her own independent life. This life is full of challenges, which contribute to shaping Edna’s awareness and understanding of life and reality. Thus, she chooses to do what she wants without consulting the rules and codes of society’s demands and expectations, which she starts to despise: “She began to do as she liked and to feel as she liked. She completely abandoned her Tuesdays at home, and did not return the visits of those who had called upon her. She made no ineffectual efforts to conduct her household en bonne menagere, going and coming as it suited her fancy, and, so far as she was able, lending herself to any passing caprice”\textsuperscript{72}. This is the time of Edna’s strong opposition to conventions, the time when she meets another lover, Alcee Arobin.

Meeting a man like Alcee Arobin seems to be the right time for Edna, the man with “a perpetual smile in his eyes, which seldom failed to awaken a corresponding cheerfulness in any one who looked into them and listened to his good-humored voice”\textsuperscript{73}. Easy-going in his attitude, never demanding, never having any expectations, Arobin simply enjoys the company of Edna, while she gets intoxicated with his attention and light manners. Edna is plunged into the fever of the horse races as well as into the excitement of the new relation, which is chosen by both of them not for any particular reasons, but out of whim, out of the desire to connect to each other, out of personal decision to select the partner one feels good with. The body awareness is finally at its full understanding in Edna’s mind when she chooses Arobin for connection, it is the stimuli for her sexual selection in Darwinian terms, the difference being

\textsuperscript{70} K.C, “TA”, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{71} K.C, “TA”, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{73} K.C, “TA”, p. 127.
here that it is a woman’s ability to choose a sexual partner as well as man’s. In chapter XXV we see Edna experiencing the game “flamed in her cheeks and eyes, and it got into her blood and into her brain like an intoxicant…[…]…Arobin caught the contagion of excitement which drew him to Edna like a magnet. There is no romance, but there is an attraction perceived on a purely physical level. The relationship Edna and Arobin create is of the kind that has no certain rules, no consequences, but it flourishes in its spontaneity and immediacy. The intimacy they experience is based on sharing their sensations; it is a kind of impersonal love, they are enjoying each other for whom they are.

For Arobin it is perhaps easy, for Edna it is a new revelation that romantic love and affection can be divorced from erotic and sensuous love, when she realizes that if she goes further with Arobin it can feel like a betrayal towards her romantic friend, Robert Lebrun. She tries to justify her devotion for Robert in order to ignore Arobin’s approaches, which she prefers to categorize as obsession: “Alcee Arobin was absolutely nothing to her. Yet his presence, his manners, the warmth of his glances, and above all the touch of his lips upon her hand had acted like a narcotic upon her.”

But soon Edna herself understands her escapist behaviour. The relationship with Arobin has far more important consequences for Edna’s life: she chooses to move out of her marital house, to belong to no one but herself after realizing that her own body and feelings belong only to her. She comes to the conclusion that the whole of her personality then is her own, not her husband’s, neither her children’s. Moreover, thanks to her sensuality being uncovered by Alcee Arobin, Edna can look at her romantic beloved, Robert Lebrun, in a physical light. When Mlle Reisz asks her why she still loves him, Edna has the reply ready: “Because his hair is brown and grows away from his temples; because he opens and shuts his eyes, and his nose is a little out of drawing; because he has two lips and a square chin, and a little finger which he can’t straighten from having played baseball too energetically in his youth.”

Edna embraces the sensuality in her as in any other creature alive, but she soon realizes that by immersing herself totally into the physical world, she is alienated from the spiritual one and from the world of relations to others. Arobin’s kiss, the “kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded…[…]…a flaming torch that kindled desire” is the ultimate moment for Edna’s understanding of life’s contradictory essence, its reality, “a monster made

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77 K.C, "TA", p. 139.
up of beauty and brutality”. Thus, Edna is uncertain, almost clumsy in her efforts to situate herself in a position where she can feel comfortable and pleased in life. She wants be able to enjoy the pleasures and possibilities life can provide to her, to take care of her own desires, impulses and ambitions, but not to fall foolish into illusory world of fantasies and dreams, represented in fairy-tale relationship with Robert Lebrun and the self-deceiving marriage with Leonce; not to trample on lives of those who are dependent on the relations with her and not to let them feel abandoned and neglected, like her children and her husband; not to lose herself in total sublimation of physicality, sensuality and impersonal love, discovered in her spontaneous relationship with Alcee Arobin. Edna finds out that each new relation she acquires can bring her up to newer and newer acquaintances in her never-ending pursuit of knowledge and development. Edna sees that her self-development leads her to alienation first from her father, then from Leonce and her children, followed by Robert Lebrun, Alcee Arobin…The horror of this reality, which she cannot manage to acknowledge in its limitations, like, for instance, frigid Mlle. Reisz had done, is that if she follows her drive for knowledge and exploration of life forces and contradictions, there will be no end of her acquiring new relations and new lovers, neglecting her old ones. Edna comes to the point of questioning her self-assertion and hunger for more knowledge.

At one of the final moments in the novel Edna looks at Adele Ratignolle with compassion for her biologically prepared role of a tortured mother, who yields to the role in total lamb-like obedience without questioning, blaming or complaining, without seeking for explanations of life’s mysteries, and remaining sincerely happy and glad in the position given to her. Maybe life without knowledge is what can be the best solution for a human being? Why to struggle to find out? Why to make efforts to become someone in life? These questions wander in Edna’s head in the end of The Awakening. It seems there is hardly anyone who can understand her in real life, except herself. Even Robert Lebrun turns out to be the one who wants to possess Edna as Leonce did, he wants to marry her, which goes totally against Edna’s newly-developed value of independence, sharing love for the sake of love without bonds of contracts, something she learnt from Alcee Arobin. It is significant to note that despite her excitement of having Robert return from Mexico, after hearing the news of Adele’s birthgiving, she quits him for attending her friend’s biological torture. Despite her saying ”I love you, only you; no-one but you…[...]…We shall do everything to each other.

78 K.C, "TA", p. 139.
Nothing else in the world is of any consequence”\textsuperscript{79}, Edna still contradicts herself by leaving for assisting Adele.

I would dare to call Edna a human being who discovered the ability to love in multiple ways, but not yet being able to explain herself, or rather explaining herself from the scarcity of knowledge she has, influenced to a great extent by the culture. Instinctively she feels she loves Adele Ratignolle as well as Mlle. Reisz, Robert, Arobin, her children, her self, she even loved somehow her husband Leonce in the past. But it is clear that each of these personalities are loved in difference, for something the other does not have. Edna is compared in the very end to “a bird with a broken wing…[...]…beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water”\textsuperscript{80}. Unfortunately, she is exhausted in her search for meaning of life and her behaviour, stumbled upon their irrationality and contradiction, lacking power and determination to move on in her exploration, she sees the only desirable relationship left for her, that one with solitude, and she succumbs to it and the metaphorical representation of all her turbulence, restlessness and desires, the sea. The sea is perhaps her ultimate and most ideal lover, which can satisfy her longing for eternal fusion with everything and everyone, and which soothes and comforts her: “The voice of the sea is seductive, never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander in abysses of solitude”\textsuperscript{81}.

Failure to realize herself either inside or outside marriage is explained by the fact that Edna Pontellier did not find the support and help for her further development among her connections and relations, did not find the feeling of solidarity for her new values, the ones with whom to share her newly-developed language. However, each of the persons she makes connection with contributes his or her part to Edna’s self-development and understanding of life. What appears to be an existential problem is that Edna remains alone to make her own decisions and choices, often these are triggered by the influence of some of her friends and lovers or by the cultural and social codification of human behaviours and actions. Edna is confused in this web of rules, laws, opinions and her own longings.

Kate Chopin was certainly radical in her representation of unsatisfied woman inside the marriage a the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. First of all, she raised the question of a woman being able to construct her own views, to protest against the sets of rules which entrapped her position as a private property in arranged marriage, in which the practical ideals of

\textsuperscript{79} K.C, "TA", p. 168.
\textsuperscript{80} K.C, "TA", p. 175.
\textsuperscript{81} K.C, "TA", p. 175.
procreation and providing progeny to the humankind existed side by side with the romantic ideals of eternal love and passion between the two spouses. It is in a certain kind a protest against woman’s position in marriage as an object that is necessary for giving an offspring, protest against woman’s feminine roles connected with birthgiving, childrearing and household managing, the roles tightly connected with the necessity of marriage for a woman as her ultimate goal in life. The Awakening sees other alternatives for any woman rather than marriage. Study, independent income, career, art can also be certain goals for a woman to pursue in life. But Chopin insists on something more general and important than labelling goals and motives, desires and ambitions. What is needed for each individual to feel oneself independent and in connection to others is freedom to be able to decide for oneself without pressure and surveillance, education to be able to learn about realities and fantasies of life, experience to be able to see for oneself in practice what a particular thing is in itself. The marriage represented in Chopin’s novel poses a question if it can provide a good ground for each individual’s development and integrity, if it can be expanded and be more flexible in light of late 19th century’s laws and public view, if its exclusivity of relations is necessary, and if it is manageable and sustainable to include other realtionships that could be as important as marriage itself. Such problems were probably looked upon as some horror of existence at that time, but for contemporary readership The Awakening provides a lot of questions that oscillate between individuality and relationships, questions which make us think about the possibilities of rearrangement of conjugal relations.

Sexuality became more accepted as part or even the major part of the marriage problem within the 20th century literature, but already in Kate Chopin we find this foreshadowing of sexual ambivalence. To be one with one’s self is perceived through connection with one’s body and its impulses and sensations in The Awakening. For centuries it seems humans learnt to hide themselves, to be someone else or to be the ideal model of something rather than to be them selves. Marriage imposed certain model for the spouses to follow, thus, to be what it says to be. Edna in Chopin’s novel violates this imposition through allowing herself to be sexually and sensually attracted and excited in her extra-marital relations, be it a woman or a man, the touch, the kiss, the talk or just hearing the music or observing the sea. These sensations and ability to feel oneself and be with oneself are very important issues connected with the theme of sexuality in and outside marriage. Can an exclusive union of two people with all necessary obligations and roles take into consideration each partner’s inner world of feelings, sensations, desires, needs and thoughts? How our psychological, spiritual and physical ones can be compatible with our social ones?
II. D. H. LAWRENCE’S LADY CHATTERLEY’S LOVER

“Marriage is the clue to human life, but there is no marriage apart from the wheeling sun and the nodding earth, from the straying of the planets and the magnificence of the fixed stars. Is not a man different, utterly different at dawn, from what he is at sunset? And a woman too? And does not the changing harmony and discord of their variation make the secret music of life? […]…is there not, throughout it all, some unseen, unknown interplay of balance, harmony, completion, like some soundless symphony which moves with a rhythm from phase to phase, so different, so very different in the various movements, and yet one symphony, made out of soundless singing of two strange and incompatible lives…?”
(from “A Propos of Lady Chatterley’s Lover”, D. H. Lawrence)

“One may fully accept, and even assert, the sacredness of marriage; one may view with repulsion the idea of marriage as a merely a lightly undertaken experiment. Yet the approaches to marriage are rightly experimental. It is by making experiments on the path to marriage that the danger may be avoided of making marriage itself a tragic experiment. Life, indeed, is full of experiment just because it is full of experience; the two words are really in substance the same. What in the end is an experience was in the beginning an experiment. We must put to the trial the road of life we select to follow, we must put to the proof whatever we meet along that road; we must at every point test ourselves. That trial and that proof and those tests are necessarily experiments carried out in the laboratory of life; they are the experiment that in the end, make up the sum of our experience of life.”
(from “Sex and Marriage: Eros in Contemporary Life”, Havelock Ellis)

Already before WW1 one could notice a big change in the cultural life of Europe: after the decadent 1890’s people ventured into futuristic ideals of changing the world through new ways of living. One may connect this trend to the fact that more people gained their economic independence in the context of increasingly developing industrial society, among whom women were gaining more freedom from the millennia of social superstitions and sexual inequality. The concept of the New Woman from 1890’s developed itself even further in the beginning of the twentieth century, a period known for its gender crisis and disappearance of sexual difference: the destruction of the nineteenth century system of the separate sex spheres put into question the whole traditional system of masculinity and femininity. Women more persistently claimed their own rights and equality, which certainly frightened the men, who were for centuries assured of their own superiority and power.

One may also claim that the reason of turning to new ways of life at the dawn of the twentieth century was the disillusionment with the failed attempts to restore class equality and justice, so much fought for since the French Revolution of 1789. Accumulated dissatisfaction with 19th century human existence combined with the development of new technologies and sciences brought people to the brink of WW1, which had an enormous impact on human consciousness of the twentieth century.

Gender role change in the context of WW1 was perhaps one of the most important consequences for the new philosophy of personal life, which touched as well upon marriage.
and sex: never before had women stayed so long at home alone without their husbands, sons and fathers, who never before died in such numbers at the machinery-ridden battlefields. It is hard to understand for us now, knowing WW2, the Holocaust, nuclear bombings, Cold War and terror attacks of the second half of the century, what a change it meant for women of 1910’s to find out that their husbands died or were shipped home crippled physically or mentally. What WW1 showed to the world was that machines and the greed for power and self-assertion ruled the world.

As Cornelia Schulze writes, “The war had emasculated men and empowered women, and the use of sexual metaphor for the description of war experiences was widespread”\(^1\). One of the consequences of WW1 was that women became more self-aware and self-assured. Men, crippled or struck down by the war, became even less masculine in light of women’s increasing ambiguity of their gender role. Thus, after the gender role change, men assumed that they had to assert somehow their masculinity to balance it with the potent modern femininity. That’s why in post-war years and the 1920’s “aggression, destructiveness and readiness to commit violent acts became the dominant characteristic of masculinity”\(^2\).

Despite this male hysteria of masculinity loss, the changes had their advantages in the context of relationships. Now both women and men entered the hetero-social world of communication, which enabled both sexes to mingle starting from school age. Psychology and sexology developed into more serious fields of sciences thanks to Freud and Ellis; people started to get more positive and more scientific information on sex, love, relationships and family life.

The content of marriage or any love relationship was not anymore limited to the question of spiritual union, regard, respect and duty, but included emotional compatibility and sexual enjoyment as far more important conditions for a happy relationship. This was a big step forward and important change of the marriage type since Kate Chopin’s time, whose female protagonists could not find ultimate fulfilments in particular relationships assigned to them, but rather found satisfaction in searching for alternative connections. Ben Lindsey introduced the concept of “companionate marriage” in its new definition, which was based on the recognition of a female sexual desire as important as a male one, the availability of birth control for a couple’s possibility to enjoy sex without worried thoughts of unwanted pregnancies, the healthiness of sexual expression that can be enjoyed apart from procreative

\(^2\) Cornelia Schulze, ”The Battle of Sexes in D. H. Lawrence’s Prose, Poetry and Paintings”, p. 39.
motives, the recognition that youth can experience sex before marriage, and easier divorce procedures based on mutual consent. Thus, marriage became more flexible in its new form, it welcomed new channels of expression and allowed more freedom for both partners.

Despite its ideal, this kind of marriage had also a lot of difficulties to face in the 1920’s. One of the British writers of the epoch entered this marriage of equality and recognition and drew a lot of inspiration from it for his great literary works, in which possibilities, difficulties, successes and failures of human love relationships were analysed with sophisticated details and straightforward remarks. It was D. H. Lawrence, who, perhaps, was the greatest in projecting the traumas of post-WW1 and the 1920’s into his literature and recording the development and the psychological state of human relationships.

D. H. Lawrence’s time saw a more demanding marriage than in 1890’s. Kate Chopin in her works sketched more possibilities outside marriage simply because marriage itself did not include a lot of conditions of human mutuality: many of Chopin’s women are set in marriages based on practical and pragmatic reasons, the performed roles of wifehood and husbandry. D. H Lawrence’s women and men see themselves facing the troubles of maintaining their relationships that have to embrace truly romantic ideals and sexual expression at once, their attention is turned more on each other than on the world outside. In this sense, these two writers differ in their approaches, Chopin looking more for connection with the world and the others and finding it, in a certain degree, in extrovert communication, while Lawrence focusing his eye on all aspects of particular love relationships and battling with its inconsistencies and problems, hardly allowing himself to take a look outside the introversion of these relationships.

D. H. Lawrence’s literature represents the search for the balance and harmony of humans in themselves and in their relations to other humans, a scrupulous analysis of the nature of connection and individuation, of masculinity and femininity, the self-conscious will and the unconscious being. It is literature that in its speculation on the modern dilemma of human relationships represents the struggle for solutions and possibilities for a peaceful and meaningful living experience. Marriage and human relationships in the context of sexuality are the central themes in many of D. H. Lawrence’s works, each of them recording the changing attitudes of the author’s and his contemporaries’ values and principles.

One ought to point to the fact that most literature written by D. H. Lawrence is affected by his personal experience, subjective opinions and his sensitive reaction to contemporary life, which does explain some “preaching” quality of his work, however, that does not lessen the depth of his insight into certain areas of human life, which hardly any other author had
endeavoured to display any time before him. It is exactly Lawrence’s direct treatment of the
most vulnerable themes, such as sexual pleasure and sex in marriage and other relationships;
it is his deliberate attempt to make readers to look at sexual life and its connotations positively
and without shame or fear; it is the whole set of confrontations and inconsistencies that fill his
novels and short stories, reflecting the controversial nature of a human; it is a constant feeling
in his books of a struggle to come to terms with the solution, that’s what gives him a status of
a unique writer of English literature.

Though *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* has been criticised by many critics and other writers for
many different reasons, it is nevertheless the subject of my discussion in this chapter, focusing
on the issues of personal relationships and power struggle, human connection and integrity,
the reconciliation of sensuality, love and tenderness and the nature of impersonal
relationships.

1. **Relationships of Personalities and Powers**

Curiously, one of the phrases left by D. H. Lawrence in his posthumous papers is about
personality: “*Persona*, in Latin, is a player’s mask, or a character in a
play…[…]…personalities and egos…are quite reasonable, which means, they are subject to
laws of cause-and-effect; they are safe and calculable: materialists, units of the material world
of Force and Matter”3. Of course, we do not think of this meaning anymore in our times, and
no one thought of that meaning in Lawrence’s time, but its original meaning is crucial in
understanding Lawrence’s treatment of personal relationships and in shedding light on what is
truth and what is falsity.

One of the aspects of the personal relationships is its necessary inclusion of romantic love,
so incessantly presented to the audience through cinema, books, pop-songs and advertising,
but Lawrence asks us if it is really a romantic love or is just a desire for security and some
certainty that someone there is waiting for us in love. In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* the
relationship of Constance and her husband Clifford is not presented at all as romantic, but
perhaps the spouses deceive themselves by the mirage of false romantic notions of dignified
spiritual marriage of two souls clinging to each other. We find out on the first pages of the

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3 T. H. Adamowski, "The Ego, Sex, and Existentialism", from "D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady: A New Look at Lady
novel that Clifford “was shy and nervous of all that other big world which consists of the vast hordes of the middle and lower classes, and foreigners…[…]…He was, in some paralysing way, conscious of his own defencelessness: though he had all the defences of privilege…[…]…Therefore the peculiar soft assurance of a girl like Constance Reid fascinated him. She was so much more mistress of herself in that outer world of chaos, than he was master of himself.”

This need for dependence, for someone’s helping hand in the hostile world, that is what Clifford truly wants of marriage with Constance. So, Clifford looks at Constance as his salvation from his isolation and separateness from the world: “Too much death and horror. A man needed support and comfort. A man needed to have an anchor in the safe world. A man needed a wife.” This fear of life and insecurity presents him as a childish man in need of a strong mother-like woman to take care of him, which Constance literally does in her wife duty, but also out of her own falsified desire for “this intimacy which was beyond sex and man’s ‘satisfaction’”.

Connie’s determination for spiritual union divorced from the life of the flesh and sex is explained earlier in the novel by her bad sexual experiences in Dresden with German lovers: “But that is how men are! Ungrateful, and never satisfied. When you don’t have them, they hate you because you won’t. And when you do have them, they hate you again, for some other reason.” She decides to resign from foolish misunderstandings of bodily functions, and instead settles with Clifford in favour of “the roused intimacy of these vivid and soul-enlightening discussions”.

Basically, that is all the Chatterleys’ marriage is originally made of, insecurity and ignorance. In time complications and problems arise, but they never face them, their marriage is taken for granted, each hiding his and her own fears and problems from each other. Falsity of their personas maintain their artificial relationship.

One of the first complications of this relationship is that the insecure and damaged ego must be satisfied not only through proper attention and care, but also through its recognition, which can be achieved through the feeling of power. As a reaction to his fear of outer life, Clifford wants to control that life, to dominate it by all possible means, as if in compulsion to save himself from all dangers it represents. This compulsion becomes especially obvious if

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we take into consideration his physical inability. That’s why he ardently turns first to a writing career and intellectual life and then to the management of the mines, which give him temporary reassurance and satisfaction.

Interesting in this context is Clifford’s attachment to the literature of Racine and Proust, excerpts of which he reads to his wife. It seems Racine appeals to him, because “one gets all one wants out of Racine. Emotions that are ordered and given shape are more important than disorderly emotions…[…]…The modern world has only vulgarised emotion by letting it loose. What we need is classic control”\(^9\). This rigid functionalism becomes Clifford’s philosophy of life. Thus, he pursues to preserve the form of their marriage despite its barren content in the same way as he strives for his self-preservation. Life is functional for him, so, thus, everything has its own function, deprived of deeper meaning. Such is his attitude to life, class, marriage and sex. It is most representative in the fact that he asks Connie to find a man to make a child for them, a heir to the Wragby estate. Since sex has a function of arousing sensations for impotent Clifford, it has nothing to do with immorality. But he prefers to shut his eyes on the possibilities of sexual relationships, because the real fact is that he wants an offspring to his family, a desire to preserve his own class, family and himself, a desire to pursue his own will.

Perhaps, Lawrence is at his greatest at representing this modern view of sex equating it with intellect: “Since only the intellect is important sex is merely a side-show, simply a matter of excitement and sensations and whether you get your thrills from intellectual conversation, as Clifford does, or from sex, as some of his friends do, is really of no importance”\(^10\). For Clifford’s friends, such as Tommy Dukes, sex and talk are synonyms: if we can freely exchange ideas and thoughts with a person we find interesting, why not exchange emotions and sensations? For Lawrence it seems to be a big dilemma of his time, reducing sex to talk, excitement and thrill. Even though sex can be interpreted and performed in these ways too sometimes, it is not the whole nature of it, and that is what Connie and Mellors’s sexual relationship will come to counter-represent in the novel.

This interpretation of sexual life is quite harmful for the marriage of Clifford and Constance in their contempt for it in favour for intellectual connection. It is not only Clifford’s fault here as Lawrence tries to represent, but Connie’s too, since she passively accepts all the ignorant knowledge on private matters of life without obviously expressing any

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dissatisfaction with it before her meeting Mellors. Her philosophy becomes stoicism, especially after the consummation of experimental sexual relations with Michaelis.

Connie and Michaelis’s sexual affair is a functional one, each of them getting what they want from each other: a thrill of sexual satisfaction, which becomes too self-indulgent and masturbatory: “But then she learnt soon to hold him, to keep him there inside her when his crisis was over. And there he was generous and curiously potent: he stayed firm inside her, given to her, while she was active, wildly, passionately active, coming to her own crisis. And as he felt the frenzy of her achieving her own orgiastic satisfaction from his hard, erect passivity, he had a curious sense of pride and satisfaction”\(^\text{11}\). At this point of the story Connie still does not discover the connectedness of two human bodies, where there is give and take. Instead the bodies of Connie and Michaelis are used as tools to satisfy each other’s vital needs. It is not to say anything is wrong about masturbation or functional sex, both can be in some degree quite agreeable to people, but it is the fact that Connie learns nothing new from this relationship. She does not develop, sex becomes monotonous and machine-like. It is the fact that she loses all her hope in vitality and the positivism of sex life, when she discovers the side-effects of this consummation. And Lawrence here is very strong in his opinion that “masturbation excludes mutuality and the reciprocity to be found in sexual intercourse, the reaching out to another person, and thence to the rest of the natural world”\(^\text{12}\). This relationship is similar to the one that Edna experiences with Alcee Arobin in the end of Chopin’s The Awakening, with its stress on animalism and sensations of the body. However, Chopin does not represent it in negative light, she chooses it as part of Edna’s individual development and gaining knowledge on human complexities. Lawrence caricatures Michaelis as a hopeless and almost incapable of giving a true sexual satisfaction to Connie beyond masturbation, Connie herself is rather regressing in her development after her consummation with Michaelis and gets disappointed in sexual life, finally resigning from it.

Even though Connie is presented to us in very modest colours as a rather simple woman craving for her small amount of satisfaction she cannot physically get from her own crippled husband, Michaelis, her temporary sexual lover, plays a very passive role that reminds the readers of the insecurity and fears of Clifford: “He was the trembling, excited sort of lover whose crisis soon came, and was finished. There was something curiously childish and defenceless about his naked body: as children are naked…[…]…he seemed so doubly naked

\(\text{11}\) D. H. L., “LCL”, p. 29.
\(\text{12}\) Sheila MacLeod, ”Lawrence’s Men and Women”, London, 1985.
and like a child, of unfinished, tender flesh, and somehow, struggling helplessly.” Repeated “child” and “naked” in pejorative connotations create a disgustingly ironic picture of a rather feminine teenage boy with the problem of premature ejaculation, and if Connie does not look ridiculous in this episode it is only due to Lawrence’s sympathy and even identification with her character.

Another woman in the novel is situated in a similar position as Constance, in her brief affair with Michaelis. It is Mellors’s wife Bertha, in her marital sexual activity told by Mellors himself in the most negative ways, which annoyed many feminists that tagged Lawrence a misogynist in the following decades of the twentieth century. Though Mellors’s telling of his marital sexual activities is extreme in misogyny, it is not the ground to blame the author for introducing the theme in representing the character’s emotional turmoil with his wife. Despite its often cited misogyny, the image of Bertha is very important in understanding the personal relationship based on functional sex. The power and demand for sexual domination, and selfishness in the sexual act is what Bertha desires mostly in her newly-won female independence. What men of previous centuries did to women now becomes the activity of a woman like Bertha, to assert her own female will, and it is best done through the clitoral rape, which reduces Mellors to the same child-like state as Clifford’s and Michaelis’s, men unable to satisfy a woman, not because it is entirely their fault, but also because it is the fault of aggressive women like Mellors’s wife: “She had to work the thing herself, grind her own coffee. And it came back on her a raving necessity, she had to let herself go, and tear, tear, tear, as if she had no sensation in her except in the top of her beak, the very outside top tip, that rubbed and tore.” In Mellors’s nightmarish memories Bertha is using his body for her most mechanical and selfish physical satisfaction, exploiting Mellors’s phallus she pleases her clitoris, as insatiable creature. This view is thwarted and rejects any other possibility to enjoy each other’s satisfactions and orgiastic crises.

Wanting to get what one wants for one’s own fulfilment without respect and reverence for one’s partner is the ultimate tragedy of the personal relationship, and all of Lady Chatterley’s Lover’s characters are involved sooner or later in it, but this is precisely where Lawrence’s critique of human relationships is aimed at. When Connie asks if Mellors was always right with his wife he discloses another problem of the relationship, mistrust, which becomes Mellors’s blocking line from connection with the world and people, from initiating a relationship with Constance, from promising any commitment and love to her whenever she

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asks for it. This is also a small hint to the reason why Bertha is so insatiable and violent in marital relations with him. We are not given fuller details of Bertha/Mellors’s marriage, but it is well-known that trust is one of the most vital conditions of the stable and peaceful relationship.

Clifford is also mistrustful towards other people, which makes him as equally disconnected as Mellors. It is clear in the landscape structure of the novel: Wragby includes wood, where the gamekeeper lives in his small cottage, but they are ultimately separated from each other. Tevershall village with its ugly mines is the product of Wragby owners, and now it is Clifford who manages the lives of mine workers, but he is hardly seen among them, the village itself seems to be another world, however it starts just at the end of the Wragby park. The atmosphere of deadness is spread through many pages of the novel, and Lawrence blames for it our mental life or consciousness, which alienates us through scientific explanations and self-important intellectual reflections: “The world of our little consciousness, which we know in our pettifogging apartness. This is how we know the world when we know it apart from ourselves, in the mean separateness of everything”\(^{15}\). This “apartness” is applied to the sexual relationships of Mellors and Bertha and Clifford and Constance, but it is so deep in human beings that even the engaging warm-heartedness of Connie and Mellors is sometimes disturbed by scrupulous analyses and judgements.

Perhaps, patience, desire to learn and to experience and openness to each other is even more vital than the art of love itself. Havelock Ellis, the leading sexologist of Lawrence’s day, treasures the value of sincerity in relationships and marriages, which can bring peace and understanding for the both parties: “Men and women in marriage are beginning to realize that we are passing out of the stage where marriage was founded on a fiction. They are facing the facts of jealousy for what they are really in the long run worth, and they are no longer terrified even at the bogey of adultery, when it can be viewed from the standpoint of two partners who are united in an erotic comradeship which nothing can destroy because it is based on the equality and independence of each in an attitude of mutual sincerity”\(^{16}\). *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* shows how many of its protagonists stumble through self-assertion and power struggle on their way to mutual understanding and equality, some of them never having the chance to experience them. Even the most sympathetic character of the novel, Constance, seems to have


\(^{16}\) Havelock Ellis, ”Sex and Marriage: Eros in Contemporary Life”, ed. by John Gawsworth, Greenwood Press Publishers, 1977, p. 82.
little enthusiasm in her endeavours to create the relationship based on sincerity and independence with her husband or Michaelis.

It does not seem that Clifford and Constance make any of these efforts to better their relationship, neither Michaelis with Connie nor Mellors with Bertha seem to be completely sincere and open to each other. Hence comes the anger and hatred with the dissatisfactions they face. Connie is the only character in the novel who always expresses her woes in tears. These negative feelings inside the relationships can be partially explained in light of some meanings in Elaine Scarry’s book *The Body in Pain*, in which she claims that “a state of consciousness other than pain – such as hunger or desire – will, if deprived of its object, begin to approach the neighbourhood of pain…[…]” conversely, when such a state is given an object, it is itself experienced as a pleasurable and self-eliminating physical occurrence. The interior states of physical hunger and psychological desire have nothing aversive, fearful, or unpleasant about them if the person experiencing them inhabits a world where food is bountiful and a companion is near”17. In this context, it seems to be important to maintain the relation of mutual sincerity in a relationship with truth to one's own body and mind. As long as partners realize that something cannot be consummated, they prefer to hide it instead of telling to their beloveds in most cases, thus risking the dangers of starving themselves to the point of self-mutilating pain, being false to themselves and to their respective lovers. These relationships can lead to their self-destructions, as in the case of Clifford/Connie, Mellors/Bertha and Michaelis/Connie. Pain and falsity accompanies their unhappiness.

Clifford does not get the possibility to enjoy the sexual connection with his wife, so he turns his passion in a negative direction towards the glorification of spiritual union, death and doom, towards Proust-like mental observations and a functionalistic approach to living and being, all of this wearing out Constance to boredom and inability to enjoy life from her own standpoint. Thus, she turns to a clumsy self-gratifying affair with Michaelis and then to nothingness in life. She is deliberately directing herself towards the painful existence of meaninglessness instead of the new attempts and enthusiastic search for the other possibilities in life: “Love, sex, all that sort of stuff, just water-ices. Lick it up and forget it. If you don’t hang on it in your mind, it’s nothing. Sex especially – nothing”18

When it comes to Michaelis, strangely enough, his desire to possess Connie as his wife is not satisfied because of the reality of facts and, moreover, because Connie does not express

18 D. H. L., “LCL”, p. 64.
any fancy of divorcing her husband for Michaelis’s sake. Thus, after their last sexual consummation he brutally blames Connie for holding herself to reach her own orgasm: “You couldn’t go off at the same time as a man, could you? You’d have to bring yourself off! You’d have to run the show!”19. Hypocritically finding her guilty in selfishness, while wanting possession and assertion of his own outlook for their living, Michaelis has built the road towards the destruction of their masturbatory relationship.

The same, perhaps, happens to Mellors and his wife, unsatisfied or wrongly satisfied desire transforms into pain and total isolation from humanity, at least on the part of Mellors, as we know. Hence his self-reserve and unwillingness to welcome any woman in his founded shrine of solitude, the Wragby wood. It is his long-yearned struggle for peace and independence that he tries to protect from invaders from the outer world, among whom Lady Chatterley becomes the closest one. He does fight his natural sympathy and impulses, which he feels for Connie, by projecting his past experiences on the screen of present life, resisting until the last moment, when he notices Connie’s tears: “And he stood up, and stood away, moving to the other coop. For suddenly he was aware of the old flame shooting and leaping up in his loins, that he had hoped was quiescent forever. He fought against it, turning his back to her. But it leapt, and leapt downwards, circling in his knees”20.

Transformation of desire into pain, as we can see in all these instances, is wilful and undertaken under each personality’s mental observation of the facts of reality. Deprivation does exist there due to the conscious detailed analysis of the situation, which becomes the excessive method in finding and telling the truth in the modern world. Science and logic are relied on in every instant of doubt and weakness. And the modern world trusts in it unscrupulously. Comparison of this way of living to the literature of Proust, whom Clifford admires, is quite fitting. Constance is the one to recognize the falsity and unfulfilling nature of it by expressing her dislike of Proust: “But he bores me: all that sophistication! He doesn’t have feelings, he only has streams of words about feelings. I am tired of self-important mentalities”21. Modern relationships were turned into co-existences, in which there was no ardent passion, tender intimacy, romantic love, because all this meant nothing anymore after one started deciphering the meaning of each of these notions.

Perhaps, one more problem of these relationships of personalities and power deserves to be mentioned here. It is our inability to be alone in a relationship. In some of his writings

Lawrence stresses the fact that human beings should be left in their natural *aloneness*, in other words they shouldn’t force themselves into conventional social life and relationships, but develop themselves on the way to *togetherness*. He discusses that this essential desire to be at the same time alone and learning to be together goes against the popular passion for the perfect relationships, which includes, among other things, total sublimation and absorption with each other, becoming what each of us expects us to be rather than being who we are and developing ourselves without external constraints and others’ pressures. We need each other, we are social beings rather than isolated individuals, we live best in societies and communities, but the secret of peaceful and harmonious relationships is this reverence and respect for each individual’s integrity and development, which can only happen in the context of social life rather than the life of a hermit. This is part of Lawrence’s message in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, and, as we can see, those marriages and relationships, which have welcomed the medium of sexual expression, but which are founded on the relations of purely personal achievement and power struggle, end up in hatred and disillusionment and inevitably fail. D. H. Lawrence wrote in this context that “no two persons can meet at more than a few points consciously. If two people can just be together fairly often, so that the presence of each is sort of balance to the other, that is the basis of a perfect relationship. There must be separateness as well”\(^\text{22}\).

2. **Relationships of connection and integrity**

What Lawrence displays in the relationship of Connie and Mellors, is not the promiscuity and glorification of adultery, as many ignorant readers would assume because of the long history of the novel’s ban, nor the drive to embrace one’s own self-fulfilment, nor even the ideal of relationship based on sexual activity. Maybe because of its plot focusing on the extra-marital relationship between a high-class lady and her gamekeeper and the detailed descriptions of their sexual connection, D. H. Lawrence already knew that the audience would not understand the issues suggested in the novel behind the scandalous surface and wrote an article immediately after the release of the book, “A Propos of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*”. In this powerful manifesto he demonstrates that all he stands for is the sacredness of marriage

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and sex and their relation to God and Christian religion: “And the Church created marriage by making it a sacrament, a sacrament of man and woman united in the sex communion, and never to be separated, except by death. And even when separated by death, still not freed from the marriage. Marriage, as far as the individual went, eternal. Marriage, making one complete body out of two incomplete ones, and providing for the complex development of the man’s soul and the woman’s soul in unison, throughout a life-time.” This sounds very much in great favour of marriage. But then comes the question: what kind of marriage? It is certainly not the ideal of the Victorian domesticity, duty and regard for each other.

Using a historical perspective, Lawrence does not offer the solution of the conventional relationship based on the connection of minds, the egoism of each partner, the ideal of living for the other, the demand and expectation of a “happy” and perfect marital bliss, the desire to know each other in the self-interest of control and security. For him as well as for Constance in the novel, to a great degree, the relationship based on personal attachment will lead to each personality’s death, “for knowing tends to mean controlling; being shocked by change; wanting the other person to be static, finished… […]…Only dead things stop growing and changing; so with relationships.”

The true relationship is that one which gives space for change and each partner’s personality, it is a relationship of toleration and sympathy, encouraging development and growth instead of blocking it through the self-assertive will. Thus, it is not personalities we are falling in love with or feeling attached to, but to our bodies and souls intertwined in the intricate pattern of our beings, which live on a much deeper level than ego and “I”. This love or attachment is impersonal and comes naturally out of the unconscious being. Its basis is immediate bedrock connection between human beings regardless of personal interests and the mental translation of the instinctive feelings and emotions.

The only way to distinguish impersonal feeling from personal one is through sex, according to Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover. The body plays an important role in human relationships, its senses and reactions caused by external life are the signals of its aliveness. Long before Connie engages in the life-refreshing relationship with Mellors, she realizes her body’s world, which was set apart from the world of the mind before. Through perceiving the silence and beauty of the wood’s natural world she engages in her body’s communication with it: “She liked the inwardness of the remnant of forest, the unspeaking reticence of the old trees. They seemed a very power of silence, and yet, a vital presence. They too were waiting:

obstinately, stoically waiting, and given a potency of silence”25. She seems to find the similarity between her inner mood and the wood’s atmosphere and soon she discovers the vital connection, which she lacks at Wragby. Embracing the world of massive trees and fragile flowers serves as a prelude to her shocking discovery of the life of a solitary human in the midst of this natural beauty: “Constance sat down with her back to young pine-tree, that swayed against her with curious life, elastic and powerful rising up. The erect alive thing, with its top in the sun! And she watched the daffodils go sunny in a burst of sun, that was warm on her hands and lap. Even she caught the faint tarry scent of the flowers. And then, being so still and alone, she seemed to get into the current of her proper destiny”26.

It is very curious to mark the shift from Connie’s resignation to nothingness to the rediscovery of the world outside her own life. She feels this world and is presented as communicating with it, almost blurred with the wave-like, windy and protective wilderness. The starting point for her relationship with Mellors is her watching him washing himself in the wood. No talk, no exchange of compliments, no gallantry, no promises, but just the view of “the clumsy breeches slipping away over the pure, delicate white loins, the bones showing a little, and the sense of aloneness, of a creature purely alone…[…]…the warm white flame of a single life revealing itself in contours that one might touch: a body!”27. It is simple, it is immediate and spontaneous, it is touching and tender, this causes Connie’s shock in her womb. While receiving this shock, she enjoys its pleasures for a certain time, because she is lost in her unconscious being, connected at the same time to the spirit of the wood and consequently to the spirit of this beautiful lonely creature (not to be mistaken, the spirit and flesh are not to be separated in Lawrence’s view, because what one sees and enjoys in spirit causes the reactions in the body itself, like, for instance, Connie’s moment of seeing Mellor’s naked body), but as long as she starts explaining her behaviour by using her reason, she ridicules herself for being foolish and degrades the meaning of what is seen: she is torn between unconscious connection to the gamekeeper and conscious rationalizing of causes and effects of her behaviour. The reader clearly understands the two modes of communication, one bringing people together, another alienating them from each other.

In the isolated life of Wragby this simple shock of connection turns out to be the only meaningful thing in Connie’s life, no matter how much she tries to pretend that it is unreasonable. However, the connection did not happen simultaneously, it is viewed only from

Connie’s perspective. Mellors does not notice the lady watching him. Despite this, the episode has a magnetizing atmosphere, as if demonstrating that in the unconscious world one reacts and communicates in different modes, which does not necessarily involve directly looking at each other or talking. That’s why the connection to the plants and trees is equated with the human connection.

Connie and Mellors’s relationship develops in its smooth natural way without forcing the standards of courting and even without proper conversation. Connie visits the gamekeeper’s cottage almost every day to see the hens and new-born chicks, the only event that warms her heart. Her wifely duties at home have been overtaken by the service of Mrs. Bolton, who gradually becomes a much more fitting “wife” to Clifford, because she has a peculiar combination of utter servitude and the persuasive strength of the matron, so much admired by Clifford himself. Thus, Connie’s wifehood and existence at Wragby becomes even more meaningless, while the connection with the forest, the chicks and the gamekeeper grow closer and more intimate until the compassion for her miserable apartness and nothingness and understanding of her vulnerability drives Mellors to give her nothing, but a touch, the cornerstone of Lawrence’s “blood-marriage”. It is instinctive and arrives from unknown sources. Nothing is planned, speculated or thought ahead here, the desire to touch leads to the action of touch, which is sex in itself for Lawrence. Notice how much attention is paid to the feeling of touching the body during their first love-making in the hut: “Then she felt the soft, groping, helplessly desirous hand touching her body, feeling for the face. The hand stroked her face softly, softly, with infinite soothing and assurance, and at last there was the soft touch of a kiss on her cheek…[...]…Then she quivered as she felt his hand groping softly, yet with queer thwarted clumsiness, among her clothing…[...]…Then with a quiver of exquisite pleasure he touched her warm soft body, and touched her navel for a moment in a kiss”28. It is interesting that Lawrence jumps from “touch” to the orgiastic moment right in a sentence, unrealistically abrupt, but perhaps with a point to show Connie’s initiation into the art of love, because, as we can see, she does not reach her crisis this time, she is rather described as in a state of sleep. This is the sign that she absolutely gave up her own will to self-gratification and plunged into the world of unconscious feeling. The first lesson of their relationship of connection and tenderness is learnt, and ahead awaits the future of possibilities and experiments.

One of the main conditions for the impersonal unconscious sexual relationship to happen is each partner’s ability to lose his and her own tendency to self-assertion and self-rationalizing. This happened to both Connie and Mellors before and during their first love-making because of its immediacy and spontaneity, so that some kind of strangeness is maintained between them. The next time they meet it seems Mellors is suspicious of his ladyship pursuing him, they finally have a talk about the dangerous affair they are involved in, at least as Mellors interprets it, about what people can find out and what kind of dirty scandal will pour on Constance’s reputation. It is his testing her through his mental observation and posing questions, because he wants to protect himself from the possible threats that Lady Chatterley’s physical attachment can bring on him. But Connie is unafraid and she stands for what she thinks and feels, she comes to the wood again to see him, because she wants to without any explanation, and she does not care about the scandal and her own status of a rich married woman being stained.

Their second love-making is not so fluent and impersonal, because of this uncomfortable talk, in which Mellors tries to withhold his self from potential involvement with the hostile world he had resigned from. But Connie serves as a connecting point to that world, and she herself alienates by trying to prove to him that she is a free modern woman, who does not care for the conventionalities of society and gossip. It results in her willing separateness in sex with him this time, when she stays again passive, but a meticulous, ironic observer of the love-making scene: “That thrust of the buttocks, surely it was a little ridiculous! If you were a woman, and apart in all the business, surely that thrusting of the man’s buttocks was supremely ridiculous. Surely the man was intensely ridiculous in this posture and this act!”

How interesting to notice this quick shift back from Connie’s first self-abandonment, even though itself not the most successful loving scene because of her sleeping passivity, to a total resentment of this “stranger” as she thinks of him afterwards.

It is worth mentioning here how many times feminist critics misinterpret the theme of female submission in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, coming to conclusions that the author wants to control women and that they can experience real sensual pleasure and orgasm only thanks to insistent yielding to the phallus. It becomes quite clear after reading Connie/Mellors second love-making why the woman needs to understand how to submit herself to the man. She has to do it not as a uniformly choreographed exercise, and it is not only a woman’s problem, but a man’s as well. We need to understand Lawrence’s insistence on submission in light of the

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historical realities of the 1920’s free women, asserting themselves on the pedestal of proud independence in all spheres of their lives, understandably and with all respect to their long-fought for and treasured autonomy, but does it need to be so strong and resistant as to alienate themselves from tenderness and connection? Moreover, this self-realization is built on self-conscious separation as a gender from the world of men. That’s why Lawrence focuses on a woman’s submission as the solution of the sex and marriage problem, however, we can claim that this concerns men as well. It is clear in the novel that Lawrence chose Connie, a woman, to become the focalizer of the author’s ideas and reflections, which adds more ambiguity to the novel’s issues of masculinity and femininity, which will be discussed further in the project.

What comes into question is how to build an unconscious relationship of connection of the two dissolved personalities. How to dissolve personalities? Their third love-making happens as unexpectedly as did their first one. It takes place in the forest, among the fir-trees, when Connie goes back through it from her visit to Mrs. Flint and all of a sudden meets Mellors, who almost forces her to have sex. Connie’s will refuses to yield, while her inner being is described as “strange and inert and heavy…[...] a strange weight was on her limbs. She was giving way. She was giving up”30. Perhaps without his insistence and force she wouldn’t know how to lose herself into unconsciousness and receive her first thrilling orgasm: “And then began again the unspeakable motion that was not really motion, but pure deepening whirlpools of sensation, swirling deeper and deeper through all her tissue and consciousness, till she was one perfect concentric fluid of feeling. And she lay there crying in unconscious, inarticulate cries, the voice out of the uttermost night, the life-exclamation…[...]…And they lay, and knew nothing, not even of each other, both lost”31.

This is perhaps their happiest and most fulfilling love-making, their reaching simultaneous orgasm, when their wills, selves and conscious world seem to be farthest away from them, they are completely stripped from their personas and both beings are united in the “two-in-one”, a term introduced by Lawrence himself that implies both the connection as fusion into one being, but yet consistent of two different bodies and spirits, each having their own particularities and integrity, each embracing the other, like in the natural world of plants.

Thus, to reach one’s complete fulfilment and wholeness of living, one has to submit one’s consciousness to the unconscious, and sex is the best medium to do that, however, as we can see in the further development of Connie and Mellors’s connection, nothing is easy, and they

will make more mistakes only to learn more about life, “one must live and learn”, as Connie reflects on her failures. They develop their selves inside the relationship as they could not by being alone, and this is in Lawrence’s statement that marriage is essential for the soul’s development. Marriage is not static and fixed, but constantly changing and allowing the growth of each of the partners, like we see it in Connie and Mellors’s connection. This is entirely the matter of desire, because nothing can be forced in impersonal relationships.

Lawrence does represent Connie/Mellors relationship as another marriage rather than an alternative to it and certainly not as a degrading adulterous affair. The difference from the actual marriages depicted in the novel is that, despite its illegality and lack of social recognition and integration, the sacred marriage of Connie and Mellors, started without any expectations and pragmatic observations, is founded in its entirety on their mutual physical and emotional consent, sincerity, eagerness to change and develop their connection. This is the marriage sanctified not by the inflexible law, but by the nature itself, coming from the sources that are difficult to define and register. It is fluent and ever-changing, having different seasons and periods, and both partners behave according to the seasons of their own bodies and spirits.

But we come to a point where we see some inconsistencies. Connie and Mellors can manage their relationship in isolation, away from the larger community. They hide themselves in the forest, but are they intending to live in hiding? It does contradict their whole principle of connection, because they still stay disconnected from the rest of the world, the Wragby and Tevershall village, Connie’s family and Mellors’s family, their relationship is not accepted by the world outside the protective forest, and nobody knows about them. It seems they shut their eyes upon the harsh reality in the same way as Clifford does. As a whole, the story of their union looks more like a fairy-tale, pastoral idyll, while people of Mellors’s class exist in a poverty-stricken state, Connie’s class refuses any responsibility for the lower-class’s sufferings and engages rather in capitalistic possessiveness. The forest itself is threatened to be replaced by the Mammon of the industrial invasion. How to reconcile their search for the balanced, natural relationships based on connection and integrity with the inescapable problem of personality and its struggle for its autonomy and with the reality of the outer world is the biggest dilemma in Lady Chatterley’s Lover.
3. Reconciliation of personality, impersonal connection, sensuality and reality

Havelock Ellis writes that marriage is based on not only different, but opposite elements, which are hard to reconcile: “On the one hand it is the manifestation of our deepest and most volcanic impulses. On the other hand, it is an elaborate web of regulations – legal, ecclesiastical, economic – which is today quite out of relation to our impulses”. But he adds some hint to their possible reconciliation: “The inner impulse is not without law, and the external pressure is not without an ultimate basis of nature. That is to say, that under free and natural conditions, the inner impulse tends to develop itself, not licentiously but with its own order and restraints, while, on the other hand, our inherited regulations are largely the traditions of ancient attempts to fix and register the natural order and restraint. The disharmony comes in with the fact that our regulations are traditional and ancient, not our own attempts to fix and register the natural order but inextricably mixed up with elements that are entirely alien to our civilised habits of life”\(^\text{32}\).

Lawrence’s concept of dual love, consisting of the masculine and the feminine elements, utterly different from each other, can be somehow connected to Ellis’s view of disharmony in marriage. Traditionally masculinity is associated with the urge of power assertion, protection, potency and activity, while femininity is a sign of passivity, tenderness, humbleness and submission. But what comes as a problem is that in modern times these two concepts are not so strictly divided, a man can have a mix of masculine and feminine features as well as a woman can. Remember the delicacy of Mellors’s body and softness of his touches, and the double life of his penis: “And only now she became aware of the small, bud-like reticence and tenderness of the penis, and a little cry of wonder and poignancy escaped her again, her woman’s heart crying out over the tender frailty of that which had been the power”\(^\text{33}\).

Lawrence’s preoccupation with these two concepts and his struggle for their balance is connected to his personal life, which we are not going to take into consideration in our analysis, but it’s worth knowing as part of the issue.

What should be considered is Mellors’s preoccupation with his own balance of masculinity and femininity in the context of class difference. Despite the fact that it is not money, reputation and position, but body that makes him a man, he frets uncomfortably about his financial weakness in front of the rich lady Chatterley. This is disharmony between his

\(^{32}\) Havelock Ellis, “Sex and Marriage: Eros in Contemporary Life”, p. 66.
instinctive connective relation with Connie and his conscious analysis of his situation in context of reality - what he has achieved in life and what is it he can give to her ladyship, hence his bitter reluctance to and fear of being just her lady’s fucker or a provider of a child to the Chatterleys.

However, he isn’t looked on in that way, as we can see it through Connie’s eyes; she chooses Mellors for his human qualities, she sees his uncertainty, anger with the outer world and helplessness, she feels compassion for him and the desire to be tender and helpful. One of the most beautiful moments of their connection is their pushing Clifford and his electric chair up the hill together: “All her soul suddenly swept towards him: he was so silent, and out of reach! And he felt his limbs revive. Shoving with his left hand, he laid his right on her round white wrist, softly enfolding her wrist, with caress. And the flamy sort of strength went down his back and his loins, reviving him. And she, panting, bent suddenly and kissed his hand”34. This is one of the closest moments of reconciling their impersonal connection with the reality of class consciousness, the link is solidarity and tenderness. By supporting Mellors physically Connie expresses at the same time her “blood-connection” with him and her conscious understanding of his humiliating position of the functional servant to her insensitive husband. Without words or conventional sentimentality, but with a simple touch.

But they still come back to their idyllic world of the protective forest, where they can forget everything and everyone for a while. In the course of the whole novel the lovers meet each other in the secrecy of the wood, they don’t make any particular plans how to move on with their relationship. Consequently, their idyll is an escape from reality, a journey into the innocence and solitude that bring happiness to the lovers through the medium of sensual awareness and tenderness. Reality is harsh and corrupt, they want to enter the world where they can be healed from its paralysing consequences by getting in contact with the forces of nature, to be refreshed from the burdens of Wragby and Tevershall worlds and to get insight into the state of reality, to understand it through a meditative way of living that is offered to them by the Wragby wood. Both Mellors and Constance search for reorientation and rebirth in this idyll, which is temporary, without them knowing it from the beginning. Escape must be followed by return to reality, which is the ultimate sign of reconciliation of the found meaning of life and the inconsistencies of the surrounding world. In Michael Squires’s tracing of Lady Chatterley’s Lover’s pastoral origins, he claims that “after the heroes’ regeneration, the forces of the novel merge into one unified thrust toward sustaining tenderness and sensual

awareness. Thus the novel moves in two directions at once: inward to the hut and upward from despair, toward withdrawal and toward elevation. Finally, it moves outward, to sustain victory.”

This move is gradual and is represented in Connie’s vague plans of divorcing Clifford and going to Africa or Australia to live with Mellors on her “six hundred a year”. Her arranged trip to Venice is also part of that move outwards. It is even more than that, it is a test of Mellors/Connie’s relationship, a kind of reverse version of pastoral idyll that Connie needs for her reflection on her relation to the gamekeeper. However, this trip is quite illogical, and that is why Mellors reacts angrily to it. If Connie is already determined to quit her Wragby life and wifehood, there is no need to travel to Venice, where she is supposed to get pregnant by some worthy species of aristocratic man like Duncan Forbes to provide a child-heir to the impotent baronet Clifford Chatterley.

The issue of divorce is introduced in the latter part of the novel. It has its double meaning in the context of reconciliation of impersonal love, personality and reality. Neither Bertha nor Clifford wish to grant divorce to their legal spouses despite the meaninglessness of their marital existences, Mellors doesn’t live with his wife and Connie is rarely seen with her husband, who enjoys the company of Mrs. Bolton, who at that point understands all the caprices and fears of this childish man. When it comes to Bertha, she reminds us of mad Bertha of Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre, never presented directly to the reader, she is told about through Mellors’s perspective full of twisted hatred for her and through the letters of Mrs. Bolton’s gossip-seeking chatter. The reader just has to trust these two subjective opinions on what is told about this woman. Mellors’s desire to kill his wife is certainly not the solution to the whole reconciliation of the matter: “This last time, I’d have shot her like I shoot a stoat, if I’d but been allowed: a raving, doomed thing in the shape of a woman!”

Though it is understandable to hear such violent exclamations in address of one’s spouse during the crisis in the relationship, it is not a true picture of Bertha, whom we never find out who she is. It makes the reader get more suspicious about Mellors’s ability to adapt to reality, he is getting darker in his mood towards the end of the novel, as if a secret hiding place in the ancient wood was the only possible place he could imagine living.

Clifford, on the other hand, is presented in a realistic way. His answer to Connie’s asking for divorce is a categorical no, because he follows his own inclination, and he is not

inclined to. Though he is displayed as a neurotic one-sided person, who wants only his way, almost like a spoilt child, still isn’t there a drop of pity for this miserable man now left alone by a woman, with whom she lived for several years? Lawrence seems to be as categorical as some of his characters in representing them, however we must understand that his point is to reduce characters to concepts rather than to particular human beings with their weaknesses, and we, as readers, start to realize it closer to the end of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, where the issue of the struggle to reconcile is given no particular solution.

Are Mellors and Constance better people than Clifford and Bertha? Are there no faults in them as well? Doesn’t it come to their thoughts that something is not good in them that their respective spouses react in such hostile ways? Is the divorce a solution to all their problems? Why do they think that their natural marriage of John Thomas and Lady Jane is the counter-example of a true marriage in context to their real false marriages?

One of the weaknesses, which one can expect from a work like *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, is its polarity in everything, from landscape symbolism to characterization and moral themes, however one could agree that life is much more multifarious. Thus, the struggle for reconciliation of principles that oppose each other becomes war in itself, because, as Lawrence recognized himself, it is very difficult to reach the desired reconciliation of opposites. That’s why the suggestions of submission and powerful assault become obsessive in the novel. Is marriage, as the most sacred representation of human connection, in Lawrence’s words, won by the victory of the right people over the wrong ones, fulfilled through obeying and inflicting? There are many questions arising as the novel approaches its ending, that is one of the problems of analysing it without recurrent references to historical and autobiographical contexts, which are wilfully avoided in this project, because they will themselves constitute an entire thesis. But there is certainly a value in this frustrating final attempt at the reconciliation. In itself the polarity, so much welcomed in the literature of the past, is our preferred way of looking at the world, unfortunately, and Lawrence’s oeuvre is part of that literature, but the difference is great in the fact that Lawrence does not take it for granted, his ideal is to reconcile and reach final peace of the perceived duality in human consciousness.

The more he tries to reach this goal, the more war-like the whole process becomes, so letting go, which is so often mentioned in the novel, is the ultimate way to avoid conflict and inconsistency. Unfortunately, Lawrence knew that human life is not so simple, and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is one of most realistic literary documents on the human dilemma of co-existence and relationships in that sense.
In this context, the scene of anal intercourse could be more apprehensible. The scene so much criticized for its meaninglessness, is of great importance, because it is a manifestation of reconciliation of opposites, though quite violent and inconsistent to the whole philosophy of sex and relationship earlier in the novel, as many critics would say, but one could also point to the fact that this “night of sensual passion” is only a further development of Connie/Mellors’s relationship. First of all, at this point Connie and Mellors feel safer to try functional sex, while they have learnt the art of the unconscious yielding of “two-in-one” connection. It becomes sort of a new lesson for Connie to learn, and she discovers not only another level of sexual connection with Mellors, which is described as “piercing thrills of sensuality, different, sharper, more terrible than the thrills of tenderness, but, at the moment, more desirable” 37. Through this act of chasing away the shame by sensual fire, Connie also enters a newer, more intimate state of her fundamental being connected and shared with a man: “She felt, now, she had come to the real bed-rock of her nature, and was essentially shameless…There was nothing left to disguise or to be ashamed of. She shared her ultimate nakedness with a man, another being” 38. This feeling is very close to tenderness caused by the unconscious source, but it is being more aware of, viewed from the standpoint of the conscious self. The word “ultimate nakedness” points to the fact that now she entrusts all her vulnerable being entirely to Mellors, thus, being most connected to him; a man is referred to as “another being”, which plays with the problem of femininity and masculinity being reshaped. It is like an experience of a revelation that now she has become a different woman: like in her previous lessons she found out that in losing herself she finds a new self, so is that method used in the anal intercourse that adds a new meaning to her womanhood. As Lady Chatterley’s Lover ends with an open solution, so remains Connie and Mellors’s sexual relationship, open for new possibilities that could reshape and transcend both Connie’s and Mellors’s gender roles and sexualities.

In Colin Clark’s words, Lady Chatterley’s Lover celebrates “two modes of sexuality: one that excludes the frictional and mechanical, or moves towards such an exclusion, and one that consciously embraces the mechanical” 39. This inconsistency puzzles many readers and scholars, but it is essential in understanding the novel’s struggle for the balance between the mind and the body, separated from each other for centuries. It is also important to understand in light of the lovers’ temporal idyll that “the experience of the unconscious is an occasional

act of renewal. It reconfirms the self; afterwards we return to singleness\(^{40}\). The relationship of Connie and Mellors alternates between the periods of intensive desire for togetherness and the need for being alone, this explains Connie’s determination to go to Venice and Mellors’s final letter to her in praise for chastity. This alternation allows them to be at the same time in touch with themselves and with the real world, it gives them opportunity to reflect and test their relationship, on the one hand, and to refresh themselves in the periods of deep connection, to learn more lessons of their sacred union, on the other hand. Thus, they can come back to the outer world again, filled with enthusiasm and the desire to communicate with others, while being at a distance with each other. This movement from place to place is required for the balanced life of one’s soul, mind and body, which all need closeness and distance at different times. It seems Lawrence “wants the polarity between two centres of consciousness which are related like planets; attracted to each other by a gravitational pull, but also kept apart in their own orbits. The other person remains unpossessable, in some senses unknowable, a door out from the solitary self, a perspective into the universe”\(^{41}\).

Chastity, suddenly mentioned by Mellors in his letter to Connie in the very end of the novel, could seem another strange inconsistency to some critics and readers, but seriously looking at the whole development of Connie/Mellors relationship one sees it changes all the time. Of course, one can say that the praise to be chaste is conditioned by their necessary separation, while waiting for their divorce procedures to be over. Partially, it is the cause, but not everything is said by this statement. Through chastity, if one reads some of Lawrence’s observations and opinions on it, Connie and Mellors learn the final lesson in the novel, that it keeps their desire for each other and connection alive: “I love this chastity, which is the pause and peace of our fucking, between us now like a snowdrop of forked white fire. And when the real spring comes, when the drawing together comes, then we can fuck the little flame brilliant and yellow, brilliant. But not now, not yet! Now is the time to be chaste, it is so good to be chaste, like a river of cool water in my soul”\(^{42}\). Chastity plays as important role in the relationship as the desire itself, because it enhances it and its fulfilment, while being a natural part in the lovers’ connection. Many readers think of chastity as an infliction on the human body and mind through force and repression of the impulses, but Lawrence’s chastity is there, because it is desired by both partners, from their deepest intuitive feelings. When the high time comes, then chastity will be replaced by the piercing fire of sheer sensuality or the desire

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\(^{40}\) Marguerite Beede Howe, "The art of the self in D. H. Lawrence", p. 137.

\(^{41}\) Michael Black, "The Literature of Fidelity", p. 193.

\(^{42}\) D. H. L., “LCL”, p. 301.
coming from the unconscious and mysterious sources. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* stresses the quality of sexual relationship, which includes the balance of different manifestations of desire and connection between the lovers, while quantity of sexual acts and seeing each other is not as important. On the contrary, Lawrence causes us to believe, through Connie and Mellors’ maturing relationship in contrast to their other failed relationships, that quantity can be even harmful and destroying (in this context, Bertha and Melors’s marriage is the strongest antithesis).

Thus, the realization that any love relationship should be based on the balance of impersonal connection, need for tenderness, sensuality and chastity, the necessity for development, experience and change, the respect for each personality’s integrity and understanding the duality of togetherness and singleness, can be felt by many readers as Lawrence’s ultimate and final statement on how the relationships should be managed between people in the modern times.

The problem for the reader is that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* ends without any conclusion, allowing to presume anything possible based on reading experience of the novel as a whole. Thus, the question of children and family life remains open, almost never discussed. This is perhaps the strongest weakness of the novel’s escape from reality, but it is understandable in light of Lawrence’s contemporary social life, in which people fought more for their personal freedoms and fulfilments and reacted a lot to the heaviness of previous century’s sterile compulsory domesticity of family life. However, Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* seems to be going the same way in its evasion of representation of Edna’s children, for instance, or the black and Creole servants and nurses, it is as one-sided in portraying Leonce, the husband of the main female protagonist, as Lawrence’s Clifford and Bertha. Both authors’ peculiar attention to the aspect of freedom and personal autonomy through sexual expression tend to neglect other realities of life, and this makes the reader suspicious.

In this sense, Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* is still at least burdened with the thoughts of these inconsistencies of her romantic and sensual obsessions with the realities of life and love, oscillating between her inner world and outer responsibilities, she faces her confrontation with the world in the social context. While Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* seem to be stopped thinking of any practical matters and social integration, lost in their sanctuary of unique connection. They are still both left not enough confronted or challenged to the social context of their reality. Their coward-like behaviour could be interpreted as very slow in their progress, but we could also call Edna’s leaving her husband’s house and starting her own life a hasty and unwise decision, the effect of the domesticated
bird being released is felt as a painful experience for her. Edna discovers very fast that individual freedom and sensuality are not only pleasure and happiness, but a personal existential responsibility and control over herself.

Another big difference between Chopin’s and Lawrence’s novels is that Chopin portrays the less sympathetic characters in a more neutral way, a kind of non-judgemental attitude towards them, while Lawrence often thwarts and exaggerates his conceptual protagonists up to the effect of caricature: Clifford is the most unjustly treated character, in this context. This effect does not create the readers’ increasing sympathy with Connie and Mellors, the trespassing and sensuality-driven couple, but rather makes them to question the righteousness of their true relationship. When it comes to Chopin’s Edna, thanks to her ability to think and observe, to reflect on the realities of her situation, including her motherhood, we, as readers, are gaining more compassion for her helplessness.

The problem that makes the ending of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* even more unrealistic is the ambivalent nature of divorce, its effects on marriages and love relationships. Both Connie and Mellors decide to divorce their spouses with the determination that it is the only way for their fulfilment of a new, radically different kind of relationship. Connie is looking for a new commitment, which can sustain her in all aspects of her being. Mellors, though not very keen on starting new commitments, still believes in something different with Connie, which is represented in antithesis to what he had experienced with his wife, Bertha. Notice that there is not a lot of information given to the readers about the beginning stages of love between Connie and Clifford and Mellors and Bertha. It seems that Lawrence stresses the originality of Connie and Mellors, in their own relationship, but, on the other hand, don’t they run away from the reality by pursuing divorce, in the same way as they were running away from it to the sacred Wragby wood? Both Connie and Mellors seem to be in their highest romantic moods in the end of the novel, the romanticism being triggered by the opposition of their spouses and the whole society against them. In that sense, aren’t they getting blind of where they are heading? Aren’t they putting too much expectations for their future living at a farm together? Imagining is totally different from living, their experiences in the wood can be totally different from what is waiting for them at a little farm.

Easy access to divorce on the ground of infidelity showed that marriage is not a state of the development, but rather a static state of the exclusive sexual love between two never-changing partners. As soon as one’s partner could have fallen in love with another person or could have had a sexual fling, there was no question about continuing their marital life: it was necessary to divorce, because love and sexual connection was not devoted to the same partner
and in the same way. Second of all, divorce was also a sign of fading romantic passion, which is natural in the process of human love relationships: as soon as one’s passion and desire for the other partner stopped being powerful and visible, there would be a question of divorce and finding passion with a new person. These notions that people stuffed their minds with in the context of divorce are examples of selfishness, impatience and lack of creativity in maintaining the relationships. Marriages are looked upon, in this way, as never-ending romantic pursuits, as institutions allowing people to date other people legally and pursue one’s own satisfactions based on deeply-rooted stereotypes.

There is not yet an institution of divorce in Chopin’s novel, but this makes Edna Pontellier a more ambiguous character in her attitude to her marriage and her other connections, Robert, Alcee Arobin, Mlle. Reisz, Adele. What one does not get from *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is the multiplicity of possibilities in the alternative relationships, tested and experienced by the main character of *The Awakening*, against the centricity and exclusivity of marriage. Edna challenges more, she is more courageous in her undertakings, and even more experimental than Constance or Mellors. With lady Chatterley and her gamekeeper one perceives some kind of persistent absolutism of their uniqueness and originality in contrast with other unsympathetic characters of the novel, while with Edna Pontellier one enters the world of endless possibilities and limitless expansion of self-development and self-knowledge, one finds connections and relationships, breaks them, restarts them again, questions them and looks for variations and alternatives.

Thus, the two novels’ metaphors of the forest in Lawrence and the sea in Chopin serve as two opposite outlooks of the philosophy of self and togetherness. Inwardness versus outwardness, framed hidden sanctuary of the hut in the forest versus limitless open space of the whirling, waving sea, one yearning for privacy and isolation from the corruption of the world, another for connection and communication with it.

But this does not mean that the two discussed novels are absolutely opposite in their standpoints. If in some ways they are very different, in others they have a lot of similarities, which have been already pinpointed above. Both Chopin and Lawrence agree that marriage cannot satisfy all personal needs and desires, that its structure has to be changed, that people’s views of it has to be challenged; sexuality for these authors is the medium through which one can foresee deeper understanding of oneself and one’s partner, something that indicates authenticity and way to fulfilment, the cornerstone of the profoundest human unions.
III. ERICA JONG’S FEAR OF FLYING

“Love from its very nature must be transitory. To seek for a secret that would render it constant would be as wild a search as for the philosopher’s stone or the grand panacea: and the discovery would be equally useless, or rather pernicious to mankind. The most holy band of society is friendship.”
(from “A Vindication of the Rights of Women”, Mary Wollstonecraft)

“Lovers who are free to go when they are restless always come back; lovers who are free to change remain interesting. The bitter animosity and obscenity of divorce is unknown where individuals have not become Siamese twins. A lover who comes to your bed of his own accord is more likely to sleep with his arms around you all night than a lover who has nowhere else to sleep.”
(from “The Female Eunuch”, Germaine Greer)

“In the modern era, marriage has become the central legitimating institution by which the state regulates and permeates people’s most intimate lives; it is the zone of privacy outside of which sex is unprotected. In this context, to speak of marriage as merely one choice among the others is at best naïve. It might be more accurately called active mystification...[...]

Even though people think that marriage gives them validation, legitimacy, and recognition, they somehow think that it does so without invalidating, delegitimizing, or stigmatizing other relations, needs, and desires.” (from “The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life”, Michael Warner)

The age of free love and sexual revolution of the 1970’s had been prepared by various protests and counter-establishment movements in the 1960’s, among which protests against Vietnam War, racial inequality, poverty in the richest country of the world; hippie culture against values of increasing consumerism and materialism; the first stirrings of women’s liberation in reconsidering the role of a suburban housewife and dominant patriarchal culture of society; and gay liberation played important roles in shaping a new way and philosophy of life, linked closely with the values of social justice, equality and respect for the individual autonomy.

Already in the 1950’s American consumerist society strongly felt inflexibilities and dichotomies of rigid institutions founded on ancient rules and rights. The appearance of the erotic magazine Playboy in 1953 and later a woman’s magazine Cosmopolitan, which became best-sellers all over the nation, criticized the most holy institution, the marriage, by inviting the readers to pursue their fantasies, dreams and desires, stimulating them to enjoy pleasures of life, accusing the American social system of depriving American citizens of their sexuality.

The rise of service sector or so called “pink economy” gave a lot of women possibilities of various well-paid jobs and independence. Women found more freedom to express their views, which often went against the centrist patriarchal system, from Mary Quant, the designer of the
miniskirt, to Betty Friedan who wrote the scandalous theoretical work *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) which sparked the beginning of the second wave of feminism (1967-1975).

Late 1960’s – early 1970’s saw a lot of women writers criticizing the long-cherished institution of marriage, domesticity, femininity, motherhood and gender discrimination. Among these works Sue Kaufman’s *The Diary of a Mad Housewife* (1967), Dorothy Bryant’s *Ella Price’s Journal* (1972), Alix Kates Shulman’s *Memoirs of an Ex-Porn Queen* (1972) were becoming popular novels written in the style of bildungsroman to emphasize the stark realism of the unhappy domestic lives of artistically inclined women trapped at home in the housewife and mother roles, which they endeavoured to defy. In imagining other identities women could have outside marriage, these novels were often in line with the feminist spirit of consciousness raising and reconsideration of the taken for granted values.

Since marriage for people of the 1950’s-1970’s was becoming more complex and demanding due to inclusion of often contradictory elements of romantic love, friendship, sexual passion and domestic drudgery, it was strongly criticized by fictional and theoretical feminist writers.

Though the Feminist movement was never one-dimensional and included different groups that opposed and conflicted with each other, it was its method to allow as many proliferations and deviances from the norm as possible, it was part of feminist philosophy to see multiplicity of opinions and views directed against centrist patriarchal law.

Since for feminists the female body was mystified, objectified and commercialised by the male gaze, they suggested the female look at it in the name of their autonomous right to own their bodies as they are. Since gender was closely connected to sexuality, these two themes pervaded the writings of most feminists. Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970) was one of the most important theoretical reconsiderations of the female body. No one, but a woman could explain to audiences how her body works, what she feels and thinks. What was considered pathological for centuries was finally discredited and theorized in light of works of Kinsey and later Foucault. The right to own her own body included as well the birth control and abortion rights, which were granted thanks to women’s movements.

In the midst of these social upheavals and revolutions one of the best-selling novels of the 1970’s appeared in 1973, *Fear of Flying*, which made its author, Erica Jong, a celebrity. An attractive, young Ph. D student, having written only a small collection of poems, produced an autobiographical saga of a woman’s adventure in and outside marriage with shocking depictions of sexual acts, use of obscene words, protruding female gazing at male bodies; this book stimulated a lot of talk for its celebration of sexual freedom, strong ambiguity towards
standards of life and its implication of bigamy and “unfillable” female sexual desire. The 
honesty and energy with which Jong wrote her first novel rendered it to be the most daring in 
comparison with her further novels. It seemed she absorbed into herself conflicts and 
rebellions of the late 1960’s and expressed herself with full directness and lack of fear. The 
main protagonist, Isadora Wing, which also was featured in Jong’s later novels, became its 
author’s nickname.

Critiquing marriage for not allowing women to embrace other identities, career and 
education-oriented; for its one-dimensionality when it comes to sexual desire, often turned on 
towards people outside marriage; for its barren content controlled by men, who dictated the 
rules of marriage, Jong at the same time seemed to criticize loose limitless sexual life with no 
control and responsibilities, so much propagated by hippie culture. However, intrigued and 
fascinated by both, it looked more that she searched for reconciliation and combination of 
these contradictory facets in life. By invoking her various fantasies of faceless lovers and the 
“zipless fuck”, Jong-Isadora searched for the alternative spaces and ways of life, in which a 
woman could combine identity of a housewife, mother, student, worker and a lover and in 
which sexual desire could be directed towards different people. In her study of shame, guilt 
and hard work ethic of human love relationships she peeled off all the layers that enveloped 
the myths of sexual exclusivity, legitimacy and security of marriage, pathological behaviour 
and blissful eternal mutuality “until death do us part” philosophy.

One of the most important issues Jong addresses in Fear of Flying is how to make 
marriage more flexible and satisfying for both men and women. Jong’s ethical respect for 
human sexuality and sexual autonomy as well as for personal attainment of happiness does 
search for its place in human relationships, marital, extra-marital, imagined or invented. Jong 
calls for a reconsideration of the way we look at love relationships and form the new kinds 
that can go with partners’ personal joy and longings.

This chapter will analyse both the attractions and disadvantages of marriage in light of 
Erica Jong’s novel. Through the following critical reading applying feminist and queer theory 
there will be the discussion of marriage as the haven for security, social status, attaining 
public respectability, state’s support and protection as well as the exclusive space for sharing 
sexual passion and romantic love and assurance against loneliness and outcast position. I will 
touch upon the history of marriage and its constant evolution, the value of friendship, spiritual 
and intellectual connection, woman’s expanding identity, public nature of marriage, various 
motivations in choosing the partner as well as various reasons to have failed relationships, the 
work ethic and side-effects of conflict of values. In all instances there will be emphasis on
how sexuality influences the main protagonists’ choices made in favour of marriage and against it. Further there will be discussion of an issue of non-marital affairs in light of Isadora’s romantic and sexual adventures with her imagined and real lovers. These relations will be analysed through the prism of marriage itself as legitimising institution, through the questions of sexual expression and social/sexual monogamy, the nature and history of adulterous passion, in the context of the necessity of the late twentieth century’s society to work towards pluralizing the forms of sex, intimacy and emotional commitments. The role of experience and gaining knowledge from the sources outside home and family is crucial in interpretations of sexual freedoms in light of 1970’s sexual revolution. The quest for an ideal lover and romantic love, the importance of risk motives and necessity for the renewal of one’s personality through extra-marital relations are some of the themes that will be discussed in the following chapter.

1. Marriage as Escape Into Legitimacy and Escape from Loneliness.
Looking For Love.

Isadora Wing tells us of her two marriages, one with Bennett Wing, her second husband, with whom she is presented to readers, and with her first husband Brian Stollerman, which is told as a subplot in the story. I will use chronology to dissect different stages of Isadora’s life, her husbands, lovers and relatives.

First of all, what is it precisely that attracts Isadora in her first husband, Brian? He was her first lover and first male friend with whom she had deep emotional and intellectual connection. Isadora finds him the most fascinating person, because “he could do more things in a day than most people can do in ten, and he always seemed to be jumping out of his skin. Naturally that appealed to me – with my own hunger-thump, my ravenous appetite for experiencing everything”¹. The surge of energy that communicates him to her in their initial pre-marital experience of mutual devotion, his enormous luggage of knowledge and love for history, literature and art, originality of his behaviour makes him a spotlight for Isadora, who compares Brian to other boys at Columbia College, who “never seemed to lose their

² E. J., “FF”, p. 207.
gawkiness, their schoolboy defensiveness, their total lack of appeal.” Thus, Isadora chooses as her best friend and potential lover the guy who distinguishes himself from the others, the one who can know a lot of things, who is funny and with whom she enjoys spending her time. Their first idyllic stage of romance is strengthened by their eager discussions of literature and reading poetry to each other on the bench in the local park. Is this mutual understanding from the first sight love? Is it spiritual merging? Platonic love? Or is it only a devoted friendship? Whatever we may call it, marriage is hardly the only consequence they could have for their unique relationship.

Their bench in Riverside Park where they read *Winter’s Tale* aloud to each other becomes the fetish object, a symbol of their special connection to which they tag all associations with it. As Germaine Greer notices in her famous theory book, “romance appears to hinge on records, books, knick-knacks, and, in one case which appears to the detached observer to be almost surreal, a park-bench.” In this sense, this romance is felt in terms of capture and blind obsession, which Isadora experiences and understands as consequences of Brian’s attractiveness. Having no prior knowledge on relationships, love and sex, as most typical ignorant girl of her age, she just accepts Brian’s courting as defiance to her parents, school and the conservatism of the state. Brian’s originality is what she falls in love with, not with him.

Brian is also the first boy Isadora experiences sex with. Notice the importance of risk and danger that are necessary parts for their sexual adventures and discoveries, doing their sexual plays “in Riverside Park, under the tables of the Classics Library…[…]…, on the couch in my parents’ living room, in the stacks at Butler Library….” Risk involvement is important for sexual activity, it stimulates the desire and makes sex appeal even stronger thanks to the prevention of it. Sex has associations with the sublime and losing control, which cannot be thought of without feeling of doing something against the permissible. The institution that forbids has an intimate relation with the person who wants to transgress the institution’s prevention. However, that is not yet sex, and Isadora is the one who initiates the real sex with Brian or “seduces” him, as she calls it. This does not end up blissfully and their first sexual act is doomed with feelings of guilt and doing something impure to their Eden-like life experience. Isadora-storyteller does show her irony of how seriously we are taking our first sex practices. Brian is presented as a sexual “fiasco” by losing his erection and failing sex

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with the prostitute, a birthday present from his dad. The feeling of guilt, in case of Brian’s thinking of failing his father’s expectations and in case of Isadora and Brian’s imagining that they ruin their pure platonic feelings with sex, is the consequence of their initial involvement with danger and risk elements, its opposite site in the scheme where prevention creates risk, risk excites desire, fulfilled desire creates guilt and regret in light of impermissible. This circulation is part of the production of sexuality thanks to repression and forbearance.

Parents represent heavy barriers that have to be overthrown for these two young adolescents. Thus, for Brian, as we can see, his father’s thorough sexual teachings do serve as turn off, and he finds instead power in the opposite direction, intellectual energy and connection with Isadora that is higher than sex: what he does before their first sexual act is to light “a taper on the night table”\(^5\). Isadora’s mother never taught her daughter in matters of sex despite the originality of her character and eccentricity of her own life of youth, and it is precisely Isadora’s curiosity in this matter that is triggered by her mother’s silence: “…I was furious with my mother for not teaching me how to be a woman, for not teaching me how to make peace between the ranging hunger in my cunt and the hunger in my head”\(^6\). Another reason for Isadora’s experimental behaviour is her mother’s continuous idealization of her daughter, levelling her to the image of the stereotypical “the most beautiful girl in the world”\(^7\), investing high expectations in creating artistic atmosphere for Isadora. Her mother shapes Isadora’s potential life, which she herself could not afford, in her view, the life of a free artist. Although Isadora is fascinated with her mother’s life and is gladly immersed in the world of art, she feels obviously pressed into the way her mother directs her.

The motive of children escaping the control of their parents is started at the very beginning of the novel, when Isadora observes the families in the aeroplane and the children looking “at their parents with a degree of cynicism and scorn which was almost palpable. I remember myself travelling abroad with my parents as a teen-ager and always trying to pretend they weren’t with me”\(^8\). This is also a symbol of control and desire to overcome it in different human relationships, including marriage and romance, a symbol of social control, which dictates various prejudices and stereotypes of different ages. Thus, in pre-protestant Christian times marriage was the way to prevent people from excessive fornication, while Protestants changed it into less sexual union and rather more of a comradeship of husband and wife, faithfulness of which was treasured in spirit rather than in body. However, after French

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\(^7\) E. J., “FF”, p. 167.
\(^8\) E. J., “FF”, p. 5.
Revolution of 1789 marriage had to include never fading passion and friendship, while the nineteenth century ideal of womanhood returned to the essence of marriage as sexual and spiritual moderation compared to ancient Greek patriarchal philosophy of priority in saving the passionate energy rather than spending it.

This wide-spread historic dependence on one-dimensional system of social regulation in intimate life is a metaphor of parental preoccupation and control of the offspring’s development. Economical and legal dependence is combined with intimate and emotional dependence in the institution of family and marriage, which due to their rigid and inflexible rules and content cause power and value conflicts from generation to generation, from personality to personality. Isadora’s picaresque adventures are spontaneous attempts at loosening the inflexibility and separating economical from emotional, at making space for autonomous personality and his/her respect for the partner’s autonomy. Isadora wants to own her own body and soul, to design her own way of living in a marriage: first she defies her mother’s idealization, later on her husband’s reliability.

In this light, it is more easy to understand Isadora and Brian’s yearning for marrying each other after sharing four special years of their free devotion to each other. This is motivated by their reactionary values against the majority, their parents, anything that goes against their actions; the values which they passionately share for the particular period, blindly assuming that they themselves will never change and split in their own thinking on life. As probably most first-time marrying couples, Isadora and Brian do not even realize that “marriage in its contemporary form binds our economic well-being to our needs for sexual and emotional fulfilment”\(^9\), or if they realize it, they gladly embrace it internalising in themselves what the institution of marriage has to offer.

Laura Frost’s exploration of the eroticised fascism and sadomasochism in literature can be applied to Isadora’s both marriages and even to her eventual search for lovers in the context of her wanting release from the control of the previous relationship and seeking devotion and obsession with the next relationship, from mother-daughter to Isadora-Adrian relations. Since “sadomasochistic fantasy is characterized by an opposition between restraint and release, submission and domination, dynamics that are analogous to the repressive/permissive opposition at work in characterizations of the fascist libido”\(^10\), this desire is part of Isadora’s life search and her constituent element in each of her relationships, let it be her mother who

\(^9\) "Intersections Between Feminist and Queer Theory", ed. by Diane Richardson and Janice McLaughlin, Basingstoke, 2006, p. 150.

restrains her from knowledge on sex and relationships, but at the same liberates her through encouraging artistic and independent inclinations; or her first lover and husband Brian who releases Isadora from virginity, ignorance on sex, satisfies her hunger for knowledge on life and art, but at the same time makes his own conditions, rules and ultimatums caused by the desire to possess and dominate, which Isadora submissively accepts through her reluctant marrying Brian.

Motivated by the fear of losing him, Isadora decides to marry him against her own will. Isadora’s first marriage to the most exciting person, Brian, turns out to be the biggest disillusionment in her life, going roughly against her and his expectations of continuous romantic idyll of spiritual connection: they have to maintain themselves financially, so Brian spends days and nights at work, Isadora pursues her Master Thesis and the rest of the time bores herself with the domestic housekeeping. Concentrating on the ethic of hard work, they both don’t see pleasures in life and hardly see each other during the day, each established his and her realm of a separate sphere. Is it all fault of economy? Or is it Brian’s obsession with it? Or is it self-orientation and its development’s priority over the previous immersion in each other on the romantic bench in the park? Obviously, life goes on, and each of them wants to pursue some other goals in their lives, which are situated outside marriage, for Brian in market research, for Isadora in literary studies, each of these justified extra-marital activities seem to create in its accelerated way more difficulties for maintaining the marital relationship itself. In comparison to institutionalised separate sexual spheres in The Awakening’s late 1890’s, where Edna and Leonce have little time for each other because of their legitimate priority of their social lives outside home, Isadora and Brian choose for themselves to have this way of life. This choice is motivated by their equal desire to develop their own personalities and advance on other levels of their lives.

In addition to their inability to spend more time together, sex gradually disappears from their marriage, leaving each of them lonely and dissatisfied. This marital absence of sex is less justifiable than Leonce and Edna’s in their practice of abstinence as the major method of birth control or Clifford and Constance due to Clifford’s impotence. The first married couple in Fear of Flying has more freedom and choice to regulate their sexual life than their predecessors. As Isadora-storyteller notices, “we had gotten married because we loved being together. Marriage took away our one reason for getting married”11. Isadora in need for expressing her sexual needs creates hopelessly her first sexual fantasies of “zipless fuck”.

daydreaming and imagining herself “sucking off each male member (hah) of the class” or “actually fucking professor Harrington Stanton…”12. These become her first variations on a theme, which develop during her second marriage on into complex sexual dreams imagined through reality. Gradually alienating from her husband and appropriating her fantasies to the books she reads, Isadora gets obsessed with the imagination, which gives her inspiration and power to write. Moreover, this is all happening in the mid 1950’s, the time of hundreds of sexual myths the young married couple absorbed in their heads to build up further their ignorance, which caused in most of the times their misinterpretations of each other and rise in various sexual problems. Isadora and Brian were those young married people, who were told that men reach their sexual peak at sixteen, women have right and wrong kinds of orgasms, and rape does not exist. In such atmosphere, Brian, already sexually damaged by his father’s experiment, finds himself “impotent” with his wife and like Lady Chatterley’s Lover’s Clifford puts all his energy into his work in need to compensate; Isadora, finding herself guilty in having no physical attraction for her husband and causing his lack of attention and problems in initiating sex with her. Moreover, she is faced with the problem of marital rape, when Brian starts showing first signs of mental disorder and shifts his interest for Isadora and attempts to prove his manhood and potency forcefully. Through snatches of his schizophrenic discussions and storytelling we find out about his deteriorating self-esteem and developing self-guilt. Particularly, the scene of their marital rape , when “he wanted to show me his power. He wanted to prove he could satisfy me. He hadn’t screwed me in about six weeks, but now he wouldn’t stop. He fucked like a machine, refusing to succumb to an orgasm himself but urging me to come again and again and again. After the first three times I was sore and wanted to stop. I begged him to stop but he wouldn’t. He kept banging away at me like an ax murderer. I was crying and pleading”13, shows Brian’s psychological dissatisfaction of not completing his sexual education, initiated by his father, shifting his libido into work ethic and power getting from knowledge and spiritual connection, long-awaited sexual self-discovery twisted into rape by directing his sexual energy into something else. He turns into a violent fascist who thinks he is God and everyone around him is wrong.

His final method to assert his righteousness is through blaming his wife in her lack of courage and inability to sacrifice herself for his sake and the sake of his imagined mission. He becomes blind to his own wrong-doings and switches all reason of his unhappiness in

12 E. J. “FF”, p. 213.
marriage and in life on his wife, who is an easy victim because of her close presence and masochistic submissiveness.

In the end, Isadora experiences the deepest feeling of guilt of not staying with her husband: “…if I stuck by Brian and tried to live with him again, I’d go crazy, or at the very least give up most of my identity. But if I left him alone with his madness and the ministrations of the doctors, I was abandoning him – just when he needed help the most. In a sense, I was a traitor”\textsuperscript{14}. It seems, she partially internalised all the blame blows received from Brian, but her common sense tells her she needs to live her own life: it is the matter of killing one’s own personality or trying to rebuild it. In both ways, Isadora is left with enormous portion of self-guilt after separation with Brian, hatred for her inability to be an ordinary wife who “cooks, keeps house, runs the store, keeps the books, listens to everyone’s problems, visits the cemetery, weeds the graves, plants the garden, scrubs the floors, and sits quietly on the upper balcony of the synagogue while the men recite prayers about the inferiority of women. She is capable of absolutely everything except self-preservation. And secretly, I am always ashamed of myself for not being her”\textsuperscript{15}. What is it if not internalisation of patriarchal values absorbed by Isadora thanks to her mother’s internalised preaching ideals and to her first lover and husband Brian’s conditional love relationship of complete dependency on each other?

Isadora’s guilt is not freely-chosen, it is imposed because of her lack of freedom to decide under discriminating circumstances. She does not realize that Brian is the leader and designer of their relationship, which she readily takes for granted, it does not occur to her mind to oppose his decisions, her personal autonomy is not counted. Brian’s mental disorder involves feelings of pity and extra care for him from his wife’s side. Isadora is presented, unlike Constance and Edna, during her initial stage of relationship life. Though there are some facts from Constance’s experimenting youth with German boys, Isadora, on the contrary, chooses devotion and romanticism for the basis of her friendship and following marriage with Brian. She is, unlike Edna seeing salvation from illusionary lovers and imagination in reality of marriage, plunges into relationship with Brian as a result of her idealization and elevation of him to the pedestal of the most original guy. The position of a romantic pursuit she chooses for herself is temporary, while deciding to marry under Brian’s ultimatum, disillusionment, which comes unexpectedly after the romantic stage, proves to destroy their expectations of having their pastoral idyll forever.

\textsuperscript{14} E. J., "FF", p. 230.
\textsuperscript{15} E. J., "FF", p. 231.
What is this haste to marry despite discovering unhappiness in marriage? Search for stability, security and protection in life after shattering experiences of the stormy marital conflict with Brian. Though Isadora experiments in her attempt to be a single girl while having a short affair with Charlie-the conductor, dissatisfied and afraid of being alone, soon she finds her “saviour and psychiatrist all in one”, “the solution to all [her] problems”\(^\text{16}\), Bennett Wing, her second husband. Marriage for them represented an escape from their disastrous previous relationships, a haven for mutual happiness in supporting each other’s wounds and suffering: “We’d both expected rescue. And there we were both clawing at each other and drowning together”\(^\text{17}\). Was this desperate clutch on security of marriage its fundamental basis? Did it save both partners from dangers of the world and pains from the past? Was it a certain guarantee against their loneliness?

The most important feature of the marriage is its acceptance and respect by the law and society, which treasure its holiness and exclusivity in comparison to other relationships: by entering it you entered a citizenship of trust and reserved for yourself a private place legally and socially respected, but also regulated through the system of inflexible norms, rules, promises and obligations. Attaining the status in the face of the parental apparatus of the society (parents, friends, relatives, colleagues) and gaining the respectability are the immaculate attractions of marriage: “It is always tempting to believe that marrying is simply something that two people do. Marriage, however, is never a private contract between two persons. It always involves the recognition of a third party – and not just a voluntary or neutral recognition, but an enforceable recognition. We speak of entitlements when the third party is the state and of status when the third party is others, generally…[…]…Marriage is nothing if not a program for privilege”\(^\text{18}\). The essence of this privilege is to blend with the others to cause no difference, variance or weirdness, which are treated often disdainfully and disrespectfully by the state and society, which wish to level all relationships under certain measurements. Thus the security of marriage becomes a metaphor of personalities’ prison, because “security is when everything is settled, when nothing can happen to you; security is the denial of life. Human beings are better equipped to cope with disaster and hardship than they are with unvarying security, but as long as security is the highest value in a community they can have little opportunity to decide this for themselves”\(^\text{19}\). The worst side-effect of such

\(^{16}\) E. J., "FF", p. 270.
\(^{17}\) E. J., "FF", p. 62.
\(^{19}\) Germaine Greer, "The Female Eunuch", NY, 2001, p. 270.
a relationship is its confusing emotional security of marriage with personal security, laying all
hopes and expectations of trust and fidelity, for instance, on one’s own partner, thus, escaping
one’s own responsibility to build up one’s own assurance and contribute with it to the
relationship itself.

This legitimacy Isadora finds in impeccable Bennett, believing in his authority of a
psychiatrist, a person who can cure her from all her troubles and fears, a person she imagines
she can fall in love in return to his warm support and arrangement of order in her life. The
attractions of Bennett are antidotes to Isadora’s first husband and previous lovers: silence,
rationality, supportiveness and encouragement, gentleness and even his sterile cleanliness.

In her reflections she notices that she “fell in love with Bennett partly because he had the
cleanest balls I’d ever tasted. Hairless and practically never sweats. You could (if you wanted)
eat off his asshole (like my grandmother’s kitchen floor)”\(^\text{20}\). Directly and without any
implications she states some of her sexual reasons to choose Bennett as her mate, which could
be interpreted through sources of evolutionary biology, and she mentions that sex life with
him was wonderful and getting more amazing while their marriage problems were escalating.
Notice as well that their sexual life becomes more intense with the inclusion of the extra-
marital encounter, Adrian, who sparks off Isadora’s fantasies and Bennett’s competitive
instincts. Bennett’s violent reaction towards Isadora’s flirt with Adrian culminates in the
infamous scene in which he finds the hiding lovers at the hotel room and, unlike Othello,
“stripped instead, and fucked me violently right there on the cot adjoining Adrian’s. In the
midst of this bizarre performance, Adrian awoke and watched, his eyes gleaming like a
boxing fan’s at a particularly sadistic fight. When Bennett had come and was lying on top of
me out of breath, Adrian leaned over and began stroking his back. Bennett made no
protestation”\(^\text{21}\). It is Bennett’s desire to control the relationship and the object of his obsession
and his belonging, Isadora, this desire reflects his usual behaviour as an authoritative man in
trying to explain off his wife’s pathological fantasies through psychoanalysis. His view of
himself as a spiritual initial giver, healer and teacher in the relationship providing what is in
need for his wife (security, encouragement and protection), turns out to be interpreted by him
as disrespectful, ungrateful and unrewarding from Isadora because of her sexual relations
outside his territory. But notice that, unlike *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*’s complicated issue of
the demand of divorce on the ground of unfaithfulness, in *Fear of Flying* there are certain
alternatives and no talk of divorce. Bennett’s desire to possess his wife is intensified with the

\(^{20}\) E. J., “FF”, p. 33.
inclusion of sexual extra-marital affair. Thus, the sexual value of Isadora is highlighted by her fling with Adrian, which attracts her to Bennett even more. Isadora’s body is then almost torn between the husband and the lover, and the problem is her lack of resistance and indecision. From feminist point of view she behaves according to the male’s perspective, because she allows to be swept away by both male partners, which makes her look more like Connie, in the sense of submissiveness. The problem for the feminist view arises when Isadora actually takes pleasure in having sex with both male bodies: and for Isadora it is a difficult choice as a modern woman between resisting sex for the sake of her own female identity or submitting to the pleasures the male body can naturally provide. The split between woman’s freedom as gender from patriarchal power and woman’s sexual liberation as expression is seen in Isadora’s ambivalent behaviour.

Though Isadora mentions that she believes in marriage and its major characteristic of having the best friend, who can be always loyal to you and understanding you, protect and support you when needed despite any differences and disagreements, she is still not seeing it as the ultimate bliss of life, because it does not welcome but restricts “all those other longings which after a while marriage did nothing much to appease…[…] the restlessness, the hunger, the thump in the gut, the thump in the cunt, the longing to be filled up, to be fucked through every hole, the yearning for dry champagne and wet kisses, for the smell of peonies in a penthouse on a June night, for the light at the end of the pier in Gatsby…”\textsuperscript{22}. What is interesting is that Isadora seems to be quite satisfied with sexual life with her husband Bennett, however this mix of romanticism and sexual yearning for something novel and stimulating is something she can find only outside her marriage. While discovering the imperfect body of Adrian, which becomes a metaphor for discovering novelty, she compares it to Bennett’s perfect clean beautiful body: “The best thing about making love with a new man after all those years of marriage was rediscovering a man’s body. One’s husband’s body was practically like one’s own. Everything about it was known. All the smells and tastes of it, the lines, the hairs, the birthmarks”\textsuperscript{23}. Despite feminist numerous criticisms of Jong’s adoration of the male bodies, it is Isadora who applies traditionally male authority to observe in detail the body of the opposite sex, to present it to the audience, and even to mock it. Thus, it seems, Jong’s focus on sexuality rather than on gender problem makes Isadora look at some times neutral through her ambiguity, at other reversing patriarchy with the female power to judge and describe the male world from woman’s perspective.

\textsuperscript{22} E. J., "FF", p. 9.
\textsuperscript{23} E. J., "FF", p. 95.
Despite Isadora’s belief in marriage as a union of two deeply devoted best friends, it turns out to be that Bennett does not share the same belief, and in the end they become almost enemies misunderstanding each other. Bennett starts switching all responsibility for the troubles in their marriage on his wife’s dreams of freedom and loosening their tight knot of possessiveness. Already in her sexual fantasies of the zipless fuck with the incognito men, dreams of having three husbands simultaneously and observing her mental and spiritual unfaithfulness towards her husband, Isadora goes beyond what is in the limits of her husband. The actual flirt and sexual act with another man, Adrian, is the culmination of their troubling relationship, in which it seems Isadora desires to advance further to explore unknown territories, while Bennett, seeing it, locks himself in his mind reserved for principles of sanity, moderation and hard work in marriage. Fundamentally different, one of them, who is more powerful by being situated on the “normal” side, supported by majority (Bennett), uses that power to preach, to teach, to point to the mistakes and failures of the other one, who is situated on the “wrong” side, unprotected and judged by the majority (Isadora). This makes the relationship’s conflict of values look like imposing of one value upon the other due to the fact that both of them stand for what they are and do not openly recognize each their own faults. In the context of this particular novel, Isadora is dissatisfied with Bennett’s interpretations by her gaining ability to find and see things for herself, not taking for granted what is given to her. Her feminist inclinations, for the first time, tend to direct her to the critique of her husband’s patriarchal attempt to construct her ideal identity of a wife. In her eyes, “marriage becomes a site of conflict the moment the woman attempts to forge an identity beyond motherhood and domestic servicing”\(^\text{24}\), implying her artistic career and thorough pregnancy avoidance, but also it is a place for restricting the woman’s freedom of sexual expression due to the widely-accepted pressure of sexual monogamy: “How hypocritical to go upstairs with a man you don’t want to fuck, leave the one you do sitting there alone, and then, in a state of great excitement, fuck the one you don’t want to fuck while pretending he’s the one you do. That’s called fidelity. That’s called monogamy. That’s called civilization and its discontents”\(^\text{25}\). Mocking her husband and herself for this hypocrisy, she recognizes that she earns her marriage of security through lies and falsity and is not getting less lonely inside the marriage. Being afraid of telling her husband all she accumulates in her observing mind, she does not do it because she does not want to hurt his feelings, but rather because she herself learns new desires, creates new fantasies and struggles herself between

\(^{24}\) Imelda Whelehan, "The Feminist Bestseller", Basingstoke, 2005, p. 89.

\(^{25}\) E. J., "FF", p. 83.
her own contradictory inconsistencies between wanting both a husband and a lover. The pressure of the system of sexual regulation in marriages makes her keep silent, but Bennett’s locking himself from her more and more gives her nothing but opportunities to look outside their home for potential outlets for her activity as a human being and personality. Thus, she finds them in writing, in sexual fantasies and in adventurous affair with Adrian.

Still what is it that keeps Isadora clinging to marriage despite its demystification? Jong does not give the direct answer to the reader in the same way as D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* stays open to different interpretations. But Jong does more than Lawerence, she introduces Isadora’s dreams of possibilities as pointers to some of the answers. One of her last dreams before she decides to come back to Bennett is about her faculty awarding her the diploma that allows her to have three husbands simultaneously: Bennett, Adrian and the faceless lover from the fantasies of zipless fuck. From first look such an absurd dream could nothing to do with Isadora’s future, but since she makes up her mind to rationalize marriage and her sexual needs in hope to reconcile one with another, it could be that only through marriage that she was able to learn more of her sexuality, of the way how she and her husband could change the relationship in order to make it satisfying to both, to test her ability to be loyal to her best friend in the conditions that demand more openness, empathy, respect and understanding of each spouse’s needs and desires.

2. **Extra-Marital Affairs as Escape Into Adventure and Escape From Control. Living Your Life.**

The principle question that will be touched upon here is what extra-marital activities contribute to the question of marriage in *Fear of Flying*, how they influence marriage and if they have value of their own. The issue of monogamous exclusivity attached to marriage is at stake in light of Isadora’s sexual and romantic yearnings and adventures outside it. Thus, this section is preoccupied with how extra-marital relations add to the meaning of marriage and how they can change its content and goals.

What is this fiction’s fascination with the story of adultery and what does it demonstrate about society? Is the image of the lover a fantasy or reality? Is it just human fancy, human mistake or human trait to seek something what one needs to feel fulfilled? Is it useless or possible to reach that fulfilment one yearns for despite the forbidden and the banned? Is there any way to merge marital and extra-marital if their split creates a conflict?
Isadora’s first extra-marital activities are associated with her writing her thesis for the college where she studies during her first marriage with Brian and is caused by having little time with her husband absorbed with his work day and night. During both her stormy marriages writing proved to be the best escape from boredom and lack of fulfilment, inattentiveness and insensitivity of her husbands, escape from domestic drudgery and routines. Through writing and reading she gained more knowledge of life. Her writing activity was so deeply-engaged that she “would have imaginary love affairs with poets whose work [she] regularly read in quarterlies…[…]…[She] would read the biographical sketches of the writers and feel [she] knew them. It’s odd how intimate a relationship you can have with someone you’ve never met – and how erroneous your impressions can be”\(^{26}\). These imaginary affairs will develop into erotic fantasies about her professors and fellow students and further about everyone she could catch an eye of in trains, subways, airports, aeroplanes, lifts and various public places. Isadora’s detailed observation of the outside world is similar to Edna’s attachment to her friendships outside home. They both share the hunger for communicating with the others, the different.

In the beginning of the novel Isadora describes her most fulfilling extra-marital affair she can have any time during the day or night, the fantasy of the zipless fuck. The whole scene is constructed in the head of the protagonist and is not acted upon, but thought of. This could seem like Isadora found an alternative to the real adultery and it indicated to the fact that it was only Isadora who could control her own body, mind and soul: she found freedom in fantasies, because she could create a reality of her own for a while and control the characters the way she wanted to. In her opinion, to have that freedom there were certain conditions in the fantasy of zipless fuck, brevity and anonymity of contact. The idea was that “when you came together zippers fell away like rose petals, underwear blew off in one breath like dandelion fluff. Tongues intertwined and turned liquid. Your whole soul flowed out through your tongue and into the mouth of your lover”\(^{27}\). Physical sexual pleasure is combined with spiritual sensation through imagining people, happenings and atmosphere, projecting one’s own dreams on the screen of reality and making virtual contacts with certain real people as characters of this fantasy world. What Isadora understands by anonymity of this sexual-spiritual contact is that it avoids all information about the person in contact, it is “free of all remorse and guilt; because there is no talk of her late husband or of his fiancée; because there is no rationalizing; because there is no talk at all…[…]…It is free of ulterior motives. There is

\(^{26}\) E. J., “FF”, p. 126.
\(^{27}\) E. J., “FF”, p. 11-12.
no power game. The man is not “taking” and the woman is not “giving”. No one is attempting to cuckold a husband or humiliate a wife. No one is trying to prove anything to get anything out of anyone. The zipless fuck is the purest thing there is.”

In this description Isadora’s fantasy is very much alike the experiences of impersonal union in pleasure of Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, Connie’s loss of her self into the bliss of sexual pleasure, Freud’s oceanic feeling and Edna’s yearning to merge with the sea in *The Awakening*, desire to lose control and give your self into the larger and deeper level of unconsciousness. Like for Connie and Edna, Isadora’s reason for involving herself into the fantasy of zipless fuck is her desperation for feeling alive. All three protagonists, though living at different times, have the same drive and outlet for their fantasies situated beyond traditional marriage ethic.

But there are crucial differences between all three of them in the fact that Isadora creates the world of zipless fuck for herself, while Edna and Connie submit, we could say more or less passively, to what gives intensity of feeling to each of them. In that sense, Isadora is more creative, she is building up the scheme of her fantasy.

The interpretation of Isadora’s fantasy as half-sexual, half-spiritual could be perhaps supported by Jong herself writing about it in her memoir: “Yearning is an essential emotion for a poet. Is the yearning spiritual or sexual? Who’s to say the two are not the same? Rumi and Kabir and most of the Persian poets see them as aspects of the same force – but then, of course, the Persians invented love, Heloise and Abelard discovered how close the two were – to their infinite regret. Only Protestant Puritanism has built a wall between physical yearning and yearning for God”.

American protestant ethic of life, in which Isadora’s environment is historically and socially immersed, stresses the importance of hard work in order to get to the ultimate satisfaction, which does go astray with her instinctive feelings that life is given to her to enjoy every little moment, each of them building up the happiness of life. This outlook is reconfirmed for her in the end of the novel, when she reflects on her situation by being left alone in Paris: “Suddenly I was acutely aware of all the small pleasures of being alive. The superb taste of the coffee, the sunlight streaming down, the people posing on street corners for you to admire them”.

By being alone and having time and ability to look at herself and around herself, she notices that she is more susceptible and open to the world. She sees that by concentrating on her problems, troubles and being busy with relationships, husbands and lovers, she does not manage to see the world with all its colours and contours, she skips it

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hurrying all the time with her petty errands. Unlike Edna, who enjoys solitude and alternates it with communication with her friends and lovers, Isadora rarely lingers in the state of aloneness in the course of the novel. What Edna is instinctively drawn to from the very beginning, particularly reflecting on life in peace and sleep-like manner, Isadora in her more restless way of thinking realizes in the very end of the novel.

Jong introduces an important issue having a lot to say about the nature of infidelity and our stereotypes about it through showing Isadora’s experiences of her fantasy during sex with her husband Bennett. Isadora has sex with Bennett, but thinks in her head of Adrian, another psychiatrist at the Congress she meets in Vienna whom she finds energetically magnetizing, probably the thing she lacks in her marital life. Is she unfaithful or is it only a fantasy she uses to arouse herself? Doesn’t fantasy, thinking and imagining count as adultery? Is unfaithfulness counted only if it happens physically, not in the head? Then it seems people do not respect their minds and inner world as their physical world. Or they perhaps prefer to live in illusion of the visible world of physicality. What runs in the mind does not matter then so much as what you actually do. In that sense, people prefer hypocrisy to honesty. And Isadora, pressed to follow what the society thinks she should do as her duty, engages in the sexual act that can be described as the mixture of marital rape and spiritual unfaithfulness. The body is there for her husband to use, but it is aroused by Isadora’s thoughts of Adrian, thus, she has sex with a person she does not want to, she lies to that person by having sex with him, but she also lies to Adrian, the lover whom she wants, but denies. Isadora’s consciousness is filled with the feeling of guilt in front of both her husband and her wanted lover and with spite for her own weakness and cowardice to be true to others and to herself. Isadora discloses the myth of her faithfulness since “what did it matter that [she] hadn’t screwed another guy since [she] met him [Bennett]? [She] was unfaithful to him at least ten times a week in [her] thoughts – and at least five of those times [she] was unfaithful to him while he and [she] were screwing”31.

For many readers that could seem quite a disturbing statement, but for Isadora that is what she sees and what is truth. Is there questioning of her loving Bennett? Isn’t her love for him big enough to sacrifice all her fantasies and dreams in her head? Love for her husband, with whom she has lived for four years, and sexual attraction towards him is not in the question in the novel: obviously, Bennett is the best physical sexual partner that Isadora has technically, attentive to all her reactions, gentle, precise and able to lead her to her own orgasm. He is

sexually technically superior to Adrian and all her fantasy lovers, who cannot satisfy her in the way Bennett does when it comes to real sex: “He soared and glided when he screwed. He made marvellous dipping and corkscrewing motions. He stayed hard forever, and he was the only man I’d ever met who was never impotent – not even when he was depressed or angry”32. What does she need more in sex or in love? The relationship with Bennett as well as sex with him becomes the same and repetitive despite its superb function, but Isadora wishes to be surprised, taken for a roller-coaster trip, she needs adventure and exuberance of the unknown experiences, novelty. Metaphorically, she needs “an overripe Camembert, a rare goat cheese: luscious, creamy, cloven-hoofed”33, she needs what she does not have with Bennett, a feeling of a new taste, contrasting bittersweet edge and atmosphere of risk and danger. Probably, she has lost the feeling of being alive. She wants to recapture it. Turning to writing, her fantasies and Adrian she sees that thanks to them she can fill in the those empty gaps to feel herself a more fulfilled person. Will her turning to them necessarily involve the neglect of her husband? Does she always need to be prepared to be a superb wife enormously in love with her adoring husband? Is playing the role of a happy wife a basis of a good marriage? Allowing each spouse to have time for extra-marital relations and activities gives them the great opportunities to see the world from different perspectives, to develop themselves as autonomous personalities, to feel free and more interested to come back to the marital nest. Erica Jong notices in her memoir that “marriage can only be free and sexual when it is not in captivity. Marriage can only be sexual when the fantasy includes not being married. To be free in a marriage is perhaps the hardest challenge. We do not own each other’s fantasies. All our closeness – sexual and otherwise – depends upon our knowing that”34. Instead Isadora and Bennett become strangers and then enemies. Bennett does not accept Isadora’s fantasies and longings that do not include him. Supported by the state institution of marriage viewed conservatively as the only place where two people can share their intimacies, he interprets Isadora’s behaviour as the one that distorts the order, disturbs the rationality and sanity of the relationship they have built together.

Adrian as a lover in Isadora’s real extra-marital affair does not distinguish himself technically in sex. On the contrary, he fails to give her what she can get from ever-potent Bennett, numerous orgasms. Why does she need him then? What is so special in Adrian that Isadora decides to leave everything and go on a journey of self-discovery through Europe

32 E. J., “FF”, p. 36.
with him? Beside freshness and novelty, Adrian has a certain openness and directness that Bennett lacks, he is not afraid to fart in front of Isadora, to grab her ass, to look lasciviously into her eyes, to kiss her in public places, to tease her verbally. Adrian’s courage fascinates Isadora, who herself is a compulsive coward as she sees herself. The best way to overcome the fear is to face it, and that’s precisely what Adrian teaches her on their trip through Europe – to look into the bottom of herself. The physical relationship of Isadora and Adrian is a parody of patriarchal view of a woman in reverse: thus, woman’s view of a man. The relationship, at least in its sexual stage, seems to be unbalanced between them by a rather strong personality of Isadora who gains more knowledge and power. Or perhaps Isadora’s intensifying obsession with Adrian as the ideal, perfect and impossible man makes him look at her sceptically and less willingly in fear that she will swallow his own autonomous personality by dragging him down into the romantic drama. He probably sees the first signs of her infatuation with him, the fact that will make her facing the reality more difficult in the end. As a spiritual teacher he observes it and is unwilling to infatuate himself into the oblivion of the romantic love. Like Mellors in the beginning of the relationship with Connie, he wants to show and teach, but not to engage. To be connected without applying certain tags or names to their relationship, to be connected for the sake of connection itself. From another point, it becomes less interesting to tease and play sexually with Isadora since she becomes free of marital bonds, and, thus, easily reachable, with no barriers, danger or risks to be involved, the attributes of passionate affair. Logically, for Isadora it is easier to fall in love in this situation, since for her it is a big adventure to leave her husband and run away with the lover, the whole situation is sexually charged with possibilities of transgressing the forbidden and long-dreamed.

Challenging the romantic love and obsession by pointing to the realism of the situation quite early in their relationship Adrian confuses Isadora, but also makes her think. After their unsuccessful sex act when Adrian “thrashed around wildly inside me hoping I wouldn’t notice...I wound up with a tiny ripple of an orgasm and a very sore cunt. But somehow I was pleased. I’ll be able to get free of him now, I thought; he isn’t a good lay. I’ll be able to forget him”\(^{35}\). Isadora lies to her lover by expressing her happiness and satisfaction for the sake of not hurting his feelings and for the sake of preserving their adventurous spirit. Shrewd and observant, Adrian notices Isadora’s doubt of his manhood and prefers her to be less altruistic and more true to herself. Demonstratively he points to the variety of imperfect bodies

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\(^{35}\) E. J., "FF", p. 134.
swimming and sunbathing around the swimming-pool: “…not just fat, nor just rolling bellies, and flabby arms, and double chins, and shimmering thighs – but all of it bright pink. Crackling. Burnt. Redder than Chinese pork. They looked like suckling pigs.”36 There is no place for idealization when it comes to Adrian, and he tries to persuade her to see that the world is not perfect, that the freedom she can get lies in the realization of this fact, in the acceptance of reality, herself, her husband and her lovers as they are. Thus, he indirectly confronts Isadora’s fantasy world of zipless fucks and faceless lovers, though not condemning her for them at all, and demonstrates the dangers of being lost in the labyrinths of imagination, the fatality of looking for love and of making efforts to turn one’s dreams coming true, of haunting the ideal in an almost fanatical and impatient way. Instead he asks Isadora to stop for a moment with him, take a trip and look at life as it is. If Isadora is lucky to have the one who points to the direction where reality lies, Edna in *The Awakening* has to find it for herself, stumbling several times on her way. Though Mlle. Reisz is the person who comes closest to Adrian’s test game of surviving in reality, Edna is situated in connection to several other people who have different values and influence on her, especially Alcee Arobin, Robert Lebrun and Adele Ratignolle. Isadora seems to be totally engaged with Adrian’s existentialism, confusing love with sexual adventure and self-creation, like Edna in her stupor in romantic infatuation with Robert. In that sense, she is less challenged than Edna, but thanks to Adrian’s detachment in relation to Isadora she receives indication of her oblivion and pointers to the exit into reality of life.

Thus, Adrian serves as a vehicle for her to self-discovery and freedom, self-realization that she and her husband can create their own model of relationship, which is not based on the universal pattern, but which takes into consideration the changes and each spouse’s needs that can serve as outlets for adjusting and reshaping their relationship. Perhaps, this is what Isadora thinks when she decides to come back to her husband in the end of the novel. Notice that Adrian comes back to his wife, too, though we are not given the details of that story of the plot. Do they come back to their spouses to continue the misery of inflexibility and live like enemies? Isadora does not have a certain reason for her coming back, but she feels the difference, she also can assume different consequences of her action, which represents her as a feminist-thinker in her ability to pluralize possibilities and outcomes: “Perhaps I had only come to take a bath. Perhaps I would leave before Bennett returned. Or perhaps we’d go home together and work things out. Or perhaps we’d go home together and separate. It was not clear

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how it would end. In nineteenth-century novels, they get married. In twentieth-century novels, they get divorced. Can you have an ending in which they do neither? But whatever happened, I knew I would survive it. I knew, above all, I’d go on working. Surviving meant being born over and over.37 In this way of thinking, Isadora is inclined more to alternatives, she seems to be more determined and less afraid of taking risks. The relationship with Adrian is a sign that people need to be in contact with others, who are situated outside the fences of the acceptable and permissive, thus, outside marriage, family, one’s own circle of friends, one’s own national community, even outside one’s own way of thinking: first of all, this way of living connects us closer to variety of humans with their thinking, second of all, it gives us opportunity to learn more and from a wider spectre of available contacts and sources and to bring our knowledge to them, creating an exchange program between people of different backgrounds, cultures, opinions and ways of thinking. In the end, what matters is not that we are different, but that we can share our difference, enjoy it and learn from it, to be friends rather enemies in all kinds of relationships based on respect and toleration of each expression. Thus, in Lady Chatterley’s Lover Connie’s connection with her gamekeeper gives her the opportunity to see and to experience a different world full of new sensations and pleasures, but also it gives her the chance to get more acquainted with the troubles of the lower class, to look at her husband and her ladyship position in a different way. In The Awakening Edna’s natural passing from one acquaintance to another gives her opportunities to see the world from different peoples’ perspectives and to choose her own behaviour and way of thinking under various influences. Instead of following monolithic set of rules suggested by the society, she absorbs different values and outlooks and have them as her food for reflection on how to orientate her own life. In that sense, Chopin’s novel is as challenging as Fear of Flying despite its modesty in sexual expression that Jong’s novel has thanks to sexual liberation of the 1970’s.

At the same time Jong seems to criticize not only the rigidity of marriage, but also loss of oneself in loose way of life, where anything is allowed, no control exists, all pleasures of life are available. Isadora experiences side-effects of freedom when she finds out that her trip with Adrian is becoming a meaningless drag from place to place, another escape from her fears and responsibilities in alcohol and sex games. She realizes that “fantasies are fantasies and you can’t live in ecstasy every day of the year. Even if you slam the door and walk out, even if you fuck everyone in sight, you don’t necessarily get closer to freedom.”38 With her numerous

38 E. J., "FF", p. 283.
disappointments of the love affair with Adrian, in sex, in romance and intellectually, facing the reality of life, she discovers that one can be alone and miserable both inside and outside marriage. As soon as she can understand it, there is some hope for improving personally and in relation to her husband Bennett. Improvement does not necessarily imply coming back to basics and taking it for granted, but it means the ability to see both sides of the same coin and create balance between its opposites. It can be done through respecting each other’s personal and sexual autonomy without abuse of feelings of possessiveness and jealousy over feelings of love and empathy towards each other.

3. Other Possibilities and Alternatives to Marriage. Creating Your Life.

This short chapter’s preoccupation is with several scenes and episodes in the novel that cause our rethinking of marriage as the only institution that accepts people’s intimate life to be inscribed in its narrow frames. Directly and indirectly those episodes cause the curiosity of looking at marriage and its alternatives critically and through the prism of sexual politics and queer studies. Thus, the major points of discussion are sexual autonomy in the relationship, heteronormativity in the context of variations from the norm, the diversity of intimate relations worthy of respect and social/legal rights, the question of non-monogamy relations with its advantages and dangers and possibilities of creating newer and more satisfying intimate associations as alternatives to marriage.

Isadora’s invention of zipless fuck and having sex with someone’s spirit through another’s body can be thought of both as a transitional method and independent way of attaining physical and spiritual satisfaction. Zipless fuck can be interpreted as a new way of sexual autonomy regardless its nature, goals and results, which is produced thanks to repression of Isadora’s longings inside marriage and thanks to such popular media as television, cinema, boom in technology and appearance of first computers in early 1970’s, the products that could stimulate Isadora’s creative imagination. But in Fear of Flying we can clearly see that her fantasy takes its main origin in her obsession with reading and writing, and having imaginary affairs with writers and heroes from the books. Michael Warner writes about appearance of different fields of sexual autonomy through and thanks to its popularisation in books and media, like romantic love, female ejaculation and anal pleasure, all rather new fields in the
sphere of sex. This is an indicator to the fact that within history the matter of love and sex changes continuously, new fields of expression that are thought to be forbidden can in the future become acceptable or even part of the major ones. Referring to Canguilhem, Warner mentions that “variations from the norm, in other words, are not necessary signs of pathology. They can become new norms. They are even necessary for health in this higher sense…In matters of health, it depends partly on what conditions people live in, what their way of life is, and what they are willing to tolerate or aspire to”39. Thus, ability to create new functions in new conditions is seen as healthy, but not by everyone. Isadora understands it, that is part of the reason why she decides to pretend and not to say the truth to her husband. It is precisely her fear that does prevent her from advancing in her creativity. So, she engages in an unconscious world where she has certain freedom to change and even to control the situation to her liking. Despite Adrian’s charisma, sex does not get better than the one she can get with her husband Bennett, who, in his turn, is too insensitive and modest to create adventurous surprises for Isadora. Moreover, Isadora seems to see sex life with Bennett machine-like, technically perfect, but spiritually giving her nothing. She exclaims at certain place in the novel that she wants them both, she cannot have only one of them, because each of them satisfies different needs of hers.

All, Isadora, Bennett and Adrian internalised the state meaning of marriage as an union of two persons exclusively in love with each other, so trespassing beyond this prescribed role is seen to be as betrayal not only to one’s spouse, but to the state’s system. The one who commits adultery, thus, extra-marital relation in secret, does so because of fear to ruin the marital relation through honesty, since wanting sexually more than your husband or wife is enough reason to disengage the relationship and start the procedure of divorce. Isadora’s behaviour, though still secretive, still daring in her description of fantasies during marital sex and direct flirt with the man she finds interesting beside her husband, suggests that “it would be better if the right to intimate association were recognized and interdependencies valued in any form, not just the married couple”40. But the society, in which Isadora lives, does set the rule of heteronormativity, how heterosexual relationships are supposed to be formed: a woman and a man living in a monogamous relationship accepted by the state’s institution of marriage. Deviances from this standard are not accepted by any institution, not given certain

40 Michael Warner, ”The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life”, Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 120.
rewards in the shape of economical or legal support. Thus, other variations of relationships are discriminated on the ground of the lack of their state’s protection. Since it is legal to have only one spouse legally, emotionally and sexually he/she understands to have only one partner, too. If one of the spouses is involved in extra-marital romantic or sexual affair, that is not considered emotionally and sexually fair towards another spouse, consequently not legally fair, in his/her eyes. The institution of divorce makes it easier to maintain this system of heteronormativity: if one wants another person in one’s life beside one’s husband or wife, this becomes unacceptable by law and by one of the spouses, consequently, one of them has more rights to disengage from the relationship than the one, who does want to build a new kind of relationship. Thanks to this monolithic system of how relationships are regulated, people are mostly motivated by fears of losing their partners and of turning out guilty or “wrong” to make efforts to stay in legally and socially acceptable, though often unhappy and unfulfilling, marriages rather than to open dialogues with their spouses on discussing alternative relationships.

Though not socially and legally accepted, such relationships, built willingly by people in the atmosphere of women’s liberation and sexual revolution of the 1970’s, are depicted in Fear of Flying, indirectly by Isadora’s dreams, longings and attempts, but also directly through some of the secondary characters. Adrian’s sexual adventures with his mistress Martine and her two other lovers Pierre and Louise in Paris, where he learnt how to live existentialism, makes him the biggest example of alternative relationships in the novel, in which he proves to be quite satisfying and which he suggests to have with Isadora: “…I don’t see what’s so super about the sort of hypocrisy you live with. Pretending to all that crap about fidelity and monogamy, living in a million contradictions, being kept by your husband as a sort of spoilt talented baby and never standing on your own two feet. At least we’d be honest. We’d live together and fuck everyone openly. Nobody would exploit anyone and nobody would have to feel guilty for being dependent…”41. The philosophy of stretching the boundaries that he overtook from Martine proved to be helpful in his life, because it tested his ability to adjust, to adapt and to survive in the atmosphere of complete freedom and total lack of dependency. What he was rewarded with came to him in the form of a happy relationship (he, Martine, Pierre and Louise) that included “illuminating” experiences in sex and sharing of everything. However, he had to go through initiation of traumatic experiences, too, in the beginning, but as we can see his experiment turns out to be a happy life regardless what the

state and law thinks. The biggest lesson he suggests to teach Isadora is not to be afraid of what’s inside herself, ride the path of life without looking back, always changing and advancing to something new.

In their own existential trip through Europe Isadora and Adrian meet a married couple Marty and Judy, who practise open relationship. She notices several side-effects that can happen in such relationships if they are taken by people without their will. The effect can be precisely the same as in conservative marriages – following the roles and rules as if by business agreement. While they all four discuss the possibility of swapping each other’s partners or having a group sex, it seems all they care is their own benefits. When Judy gets Adrian, Isadora decides to refuse Marty, who seems to be disappointed and somehow envious of his wife’s getting her pleasure: but agreement is agreement, so he has to control his feelings of jealousy, envy and inequality of sexual distribution. Marty is also more nervous of having his wife having sex with another man despite his long experience of having such moments. Does it show the fact that self-sacrifice and repression can be reasons of unhappiness in open marriages and free love relationships? But we can also speculate that he feels left in the background, unnoticed and alone while his wife probably got a better chance to find herself a partner and enjoy; or he feels it unjust that his wife got her pleasure, but he did not: probably, his mind is as corrupt and selfish as of the possessive husband, because he can’t imagine enjoying free love without certain exchange or transaction of pleasures he and his wife get. In conclusion we can add that such open relationships can as well be based on lies and falsity, high expectations, feelings of jealousy and possessiveness.

Isadora, who is after adventurous affairs, strangers and faceless lovers, faced with the opportunity to get all this just in a second with Marty, does feel opposite: “I thought of all the times I’d yearned for strange men, strange places, strange enormous cocks. But all I felt was indifference. I knew that screwing Marty would not take me any nearer the truth I was seeking – whatever that was. I wanted some ultimate beautiful act in which each person became the other’s prayer wheel, toboggan, rocket”\textsuperscript{42}. At this point of her self-discovery trip Isadora understands that indulging herself into one or another type of relation is a pure addiction, which can be attributed with fanatic yearning for something different from what one had before in hope to change the whole life. This realization is one of her final lessons to learn before she decides to come back to the marital bed. She is also faced with her own feelings of jealousy, possessiveness and obsession when Adrian suddenly says he has to go to the north.

\textsuperscript{42} E. J., “FF”, p. 282.
of France to meet his wife and children, but that is part of Adrian’s lesson to see beyond oneself into the bottom of one’s soul and try to face it and survive.

The end of *Fear of Flying* is written in such a way so that to cause the reader’s speculation and thinking of what can be done to reach happiness in relationships: Isadora is left alone in Paris to reflect on her life, facing her horror dreams and fantasies, her coming back is full of satirical symbolism alluding to Victorian gothic style, mocking herself and her life is maintained until the last word. Uncertainty and ambivalence of what is going to happen next is part of Jong’s idea of the novel, to make us think of possibilities and alternatives to what we’ve got now. Marriage and question of free love are two opposites which Isadora tries to reconcile. On the one hand, it seems easy to do so, especially when she herself learnt the myths following conservative view of marriage. On the other hand, it remains a big question how to combine respectful loving and caring relationship with possibilities of having guiltless and shameless, jealousy-free relations with other people than one’s spouse or partner. Jong raises many questions in connection to this, one of them is what one can do if each person has fundamentally different aspirations and goals in life despite their love and deep feelings for each other. Even if both partners agree to live according to a certain scheme, let it be monogamous heterosexual marriage or non-monogamous open relationship, how one can know if it is not based on lies in order to sweep the uncomfortable under the rug of surface. Perhaps, the most important message we can get from Isadora’s adventures and reflections is the respect for one’s own autonomy and for change: often people entering relationships try to keep promises and do obligations which go against their own nature and way of thinking, or the given promises cannot be actual or so important to them after a couple of months or years of living together. People change, they flow from one state to another, and this is part of their being humans. Promises, rules, roles and obligations inscribed in the institution of marriage can often go against those changes and personal growth, which can demand each spouse to sacrifice in the name of that inflexible institution.

Living together with great respect for each other’s personal development is what one can do in order to go in the direction of ethical freedom in the relationship. Then it is the question of what “personal development” can include: it is a very subjective question, and that’s why there cannot be any fences for that, ethically respecting each other’s autonomy in all spheres of life both partners or lovers truly in love with each other will not cast mistrust or suspicion, because that will only show that they are in love only with themselves. Truly knowing each other’s aspirations and ability to change these partners can expect nothing. They are together, because they love each other, because they find each other interesting and attractive, unique,
but that has nothing to do with their personal growth, their other needs and longings that include other people and relationships. Sexual autonomy is as important for each person, because through sex they often can reach a better understanding of themselves and find a deeper truth. Calling it selfishness, as many conservatives would do, is sign of envy and their own inability to adapt to new conditions of life. Thanks to the feminist best-sellers these themes were popularised in media since 1960’s and are still part of contemporary debates. Erica Jong’s novel is as readable in that sense now as it was in early 1970’s, because the question of the degree of freedom in relationships remains open up until today.

The anxieties of impossibilities of freedom in or outside marriage and romantic love expressed by both Edna in *The Awakening* and Isadora in *Fear of Flying* are still treated differently by these similar protagonists. Edna, despite her Isadora-like ambiguity, is not ready to confront her husband and family, and the reality of her situation: she needs her personal freedom, she thrives in it and gets inspiration from it, but in light of the end of the nineteenth-century society she often interprets this freedom as obsessive and destructive. Internalised guilt in front of her children and husband brings her to the point of understanding that death is something that can stop uncertainties and tormenting indecisions she is constantly faced with. While for Isadora, though tiring and sometimes misleading, ambiguity serves a new lesson: she takes it and, despite her fears and doubts similar to Edna’s, finding out part of the answer is willing to learn more, this cycle is constitutive of her personality’s growth in the same way as to Connie is each sexual act she has with Mellors. This ability to look at oneself, one’s life, one’s partners, relatives and other people, to observe and think of them through rationalizing, though not always ended up with solution, is part of each three protagonists from different times, but it is most rational and most observant in Isadora’s head. Twentieth century’s social, scientific, welfare and human rights development escalates with occasional pauses and reaches from the historical point of view with its peak in the 1970’s: consumerism makes each subject popular for the discussion, including sexuality and marriage, which were popularised through the era’s social changing attitudes. The 1970’s feminist best-seller, unlike Chopin’s only outcry, was the medium that reached the masses, spoke of their needs and disturbances in the atmosphere of social upheaval that can be only compared to post-French Revolution literature aspiring to freedom.

Feminist literature of the 1970’s gave voice not only to women, but to all those other minority groups, channels and modes of expression that have been not respected or taken seriously. Jong’s novel in particular gave millions of readers opportunity to talk about sex honestly and even confess that the book changed their whole life. Though not entirely the
book of sex, sexuality and different ways one can express oneself in sex found positive understanding and recognizing the need to change the way love and sex is looked upon, the necessity to change the way marriage is constructed. In this sense, *Fear of Flying*, despite its strange ending, is the most positive of these three works on marriage and sexuality, pointing to the reader to find his or her own solution to Isadora’s inconsistency, making it most contemporary not only to the readers of the 1970’s, but to those of the following three decades. The solution to Isadora’s puzzle can be as pluralized as the number of opinions on what is awaiting her after the end of the novel. In creating this interactive feeling with her main protagonist, Jong welcomes every reader’s interpretation, her sole role remains to raise a question.
CONCLUSION

I have noted in my introduction that marriage and sexuality are rarely discussed together in literary studies. Marriage is usually discussed in terms of love and emotional attachment, while sexuality is often a transgressive and dangerous topic in its connection to marriage in literature. What stimulated me even more was the realization during my research that sexuality studies do often overlook marriage as important contribution to the creation of numerous sexualities. That was precisely why I chose the literary works that had more focus on sexuality in marriage and outside it. I analysed the way sex mattered in making marriage sustainable or not. Sex and love, sensuality and spirituality have been seriously reconsidered in light of these three literary works.

Is sex not spiritual? Is love not sensual? Certainly, these binary distinctions were the first things I encountered on my way to analyses. Starting from the depiction of marriage as arrangement in Chopin’s novel, in which each spouse had certain roles to fulfil and duties to perform, until the last pages of Erica Jong’s Fear of Flying, in which marriage is thought of as safety from the dangers of outside world, loneliness and as a way to have a best friend who is always there for you, all point to the destruction of the romantic ideal of marriage as an ever-passionate union of two souls.

In this thesis I demonstrate how sexuality is produced through the institution of marriage. Sexual fantasies, invention of new fields of sexual expression, extra-marital sexual affairs, creating alternative sexual relationships and possibilities to have them are all those matters that are important in considering how marriage is involved in producing them. Marriage represses certain desires and longings, which tend to find their expression in extra-marital relations. This way, Edna in The Awakening finds connection with several people fascinating, including Mlle. Reisz, Robert Lebrun and Alcee Arobin, each of them having sexual connotations in arousing Edna’s sensations and emotions. Connie in Lady Chatterley’s Lover finds it in the Wragby forest and the body of her gamekeeper, Mellors, while Isadora in Fear of Flying creates her own sexual world of the zipless fuck, where everything she lacks in marriage is present. Isadora’s courage to flirt and then to have an affair with Adrian right in front of her husband’s eyes is part of these protagonists’ protests against egocentricity and one-dimensionality in marriage, which represses a lot of personal needs and desires.

It is very interesting to note that often the essence of extra-marital sexuality is not always positive. It can also restrict and control, as in the case of Edna’s addiction to Alcee Arobin or
her desire to lose herself in the sea or Isadora’s realization that free love is another way to loneliness and meaninglessness in life. Connie’s life-changing experiences with Mellors are the tests of her own ability to learn lessons from them and advance in her sexual initiation, which is sometimes painful, ridiculous and humiliating to her self.

Extra-marital activities and relations are not the solution of marriage problems, they are often presented as indicators to other possibilities. In *The Awakening* Edna learns from person to person new realities and looks at her marriage from a perspective that changes all the time. Thus, her romantic infatuation with Robert Lebrun, which ends up tragically for her, makes her reconsider the nature of romantic love. It makes her turn to realism of life in the same way as she did by marrying her husband, Leonce. Since she is willing to experiment and see what life is, she gets attached to sensations and Alcee Arobin’s erotic stimulation, which are presented as a delirious escape from reality, too. Edna’s realization in the end of the novel that she feels fulfilled only when she can communicate with people in alternative ways brings her back to home, at least in her thoughts and desires to be next to her children again. However, she also knows that she needs to have freedom to be next to the other people. In that sense, Edna’s endeavour to create a new way of life and new kinds of relationships meets no support in her development. Her last swim is metaphorical and is a legacy for the next generation to consider what possibilities she represents.

Connie in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* finds the one who teaches and supports her, her gamekeeper Mellors. Though quite isolating their relationship is in their seeking escape in the solitude of the forest, their mutual self-development starts inside the privacy of their intimacy: Connie learns lessons of love and sex by completely submitting herself to the one person, but each meeting sustains a continuity of her study and initiation into life. Her way of learning is different from Edna’s, but in no way more limited: her idyllic relationship based on introversion with Mellors is a necessary temporary pause in her social development, a period of reflection and refreshment from burdens and necessities of social life in order to gain strength and new enthusiasm to come back into the world.

As for Isadora Wing in *Fear of Flying*, in her courage to imagine new possibilities through her fantasies and thoughts and to make attempts to act on them in real life through her experimental relationship with Adrian makes her reconsider both the meaning of marriage and of free love: Isadora is learning to balance ethically her own longings and her partners’ needs in the atmosphere of respect and mutual understanding. Her extra-marital relations bring her back to the marriage she abandoned. But she comes back changed and determined to stand for what she is. Unlike Edna, she is more prepared with the help of her initiator Adrian, who
opens her eyes on the existentialism of life, to develop herself independently. But it is also thanks to her larger life experience and intensive reading and studying that she is able to think for herself and defend her own personal autonomy.

Some of the most important themes shared by the three novels discussed in this thesis are the necessity to be true and honest to oneself and one’s spouse or lover. This is often questioned by the three writers in all possible situations, because mostly the protagonists choosing to get involved in the relationship outside marriage prefer to lie to their legal partners, motivated by numerous fears. First of all, they can risk being abandoned on account of their confessing of wanting more in their lives than they have, considering what is provided to them by their main partners in terms of exclusive intimacy and unique friendship.

Secondly, especially in case of Edna and Connie, their social status and economical welfare can be seriously damaged in the atmosphere of lesser chances for women of 1890’s and 1920’s to get along independently. Then come numerous reasons for their maintaining falsity: it is easier not to complicate their conjugal lives with new arrangements and probabilities of disagreements between the spouses, it is safer to follow the mainstream of values and ideas than to distinguish oneself and be at risk of getting disrespect, disgrace and social ostracism. In that sense, even for the 1970’s it is characteristic to lie about one’s private needs that can go against the ideal of marriage as exclusive, still the most common model of relationship even for the hippie times.

Provided with the fact that monogamous relationship is maintained by these protagonists’ parents and the older generation persuades the new generation, despite social changes, to follow the ancient rule, that the state regulates human love relationships and sexuality through marriage and its old ideals, it turns out to be easy to understand the lies of the adulterers and adulteresses, who simply do not want to risk having stigma attached to their lives. None of these novels present two spouses peacefully discussing the alternatives to their marriage arrangement, none of them dares to face one’s own reality with the reality of marriage in a really confrontational way, or perhaps Isadora in the end of the novel is ready to do this while waiting for her husband in his hotel room. It is quite clear to understand that marriage is a public life rather than the private one: it is a public demonstration in front of the state, society and the couple’s relatives and friends that they follow the model of the relationship prescribed by the state. From another point, if marriage is private and the rules can be changed inside it at any time, then it is important to remember that changing the rules turns out to be more difficult than it seems because of the couple’s internalisation of the ideal of marriage, which is propagated through songs, films, books, media, parents, old generation’s praise of it and
state’s support. Moreover, giving fixed promises and votes in front of the state about eternal love makes it even more difficult to break them and make a new promise instead. There is risk that one of the spouses can be discriminated and disrespected by another one, who can get huge support from the state, social circles and relatives. I think, Edna and Isadora are those spouses, who turn out to be directly or indirectly discriminated on the account of their wanting change for a new arrangement of their primary relationships. Marriage as a universal inflexible institution providing no legal space for change as long as the alternatives or more various models of relationships are not accepted by the state. Since sexuality turned out to be some of the most important constituents of each marriage within the twentieth century, it is worthwhile noticing how the old model of marriage insisting on sexual monogamy goes against the new discoveries in sexology, anthropology and sociology in highly-respected works of Freud, Ellis, Russell, Kinsey, and Foucault that show the evidence of numerous varieties in human sexual behaviour, which include statistical majority of people, despite their social attachment to what is accepted, who are engaged in non-monogamous types of relationships.

This thesis analysed the literary works that made endeavours of speaking about new challenges and possibilities humans could have in light of numerous social developments within the twentieth century. Consumerism, feminism, sexual liberation, broader freedom of sexual expression, birth control, women’s increased economical independence, acceptance of new forms of sexuality did not leave the institution of marriage untouched. At the same time the old ideals, like social class, women’s inferiority and economical dependence on men, lack of awareness of heteronormativity, romantic love that lasts forever, sexuality’s inferiority before spirituality did gradually die out within the last century and left vital changes for marriage and sexuality that had to be filled in with human understanding. Choosing hypocrisy instead of openness and sincerity in marriage still happens even in our times. Chopin, Lawrence and Jong’s literary masterpieces point out in the directions, which only we as readers can define and make up for ourselves.
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