

**T.C.**

**ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE**



**SELF-DISCOVERY THROUGH REBELLION IN A DOLL'S HOUSE, THE  
AWAKENING AND THE YELLOW WALLPAPER**

**THESIS**

**Burcu ERDAĞ**

**Department of English Language and Literature**

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**Thesis Advisor: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Gamze SABANCI UZUN**

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## **DECLARATION**

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

**Burcu ERDAĞ**

## **FOREWORD**

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**October, 2019**

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## A DOLL’S HOUSE, THE AWAKENING VE THE YELLOW WALLPAPER’DAKİ BAŞKALDIRI İLE KENDİNİ KEŞFETME

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma Henrik Ibsen’in *A Doll’s House*, Kate Chopin’in *The Awakening* ve Charlotte Perkins Gilman’ın *The Yellow Wallpaper*’ında geçen üç kahramanı inceliyor. Bu çalışmanın amacı, özellikleri bakımından 19. yy da aykırı olan üç kahramana odaklanmaktır. Bu makale, kahramanların topluma karşı çıkmalarını iletmenin bir yolu olarak terkediş, intihar ve deliliğin tasvirini inceleyecektir. Bu tez, kadın kahramanların ayrılıklarının, kadınların sessizliğinden kaynaklanan bir eylem dili yarattığını savunur. Karakterlerin yaşamları yaşadıkları toplumlarla büyük benzerlikler göstermektedir. Ayrıca, içinde yaşadıkları toplumdaki kadınların konumu eleştirel bir şekilde değerlendirilmektedir. Üç romanın kahramanları, kadın kimliklerini kazanmak için birçok çatışma ve zorluklarla başa çıkmayı başarırlar. Mücadelelerinin bir sonucu olarak, baskıcı kurallara, erkek egemen toplumun yapısına ve aşağı cinsiyet olarak kabul etmekten ziyade toplumda bağımsız ve özgür seçimler yapabilirler. Üç kahramanı karşılaştırmak için, Gilbert ve Gubar’ın *Madwoman in the Attic* ve Hélène Cixous’nun *The Laugh of the Medusa* eserleri kullanılacaktır. Üç kahramanları bu yaklaşımlarla incelemek, üç kahramanın kadın modelini yeniden yarattığı, toplum normlarına karşı isyan ettiği ve zaman içindeki kadınların boyun eğen rolünü reddettiği fikrini kanıtıyor. Aynı zamanda, bu yaklaşımlar edebi metinlerdeki kadın karakterlerin “melek” veya “canavar” dan isyankar kadın gibi diğer farklı türlere değişiminin incelenmesine yardımcı olacaktır. Bu çalışma kahramanların geleneklere başkaldırmak için kullandığı üç unsuru işler: terkediş, intihar ve delilik. Kahramanlar bu isyankar hareketlerle itaatsizlik ve muhalefet göstermekte başarılı olmuşlardır. Yazarlar, romanlarında yaşadıkları dönemlerde hiç kimsenin konuşamayacağı konularla uğraşarak kendi çağlarının ötesine geçmeyi başarır. Bu çalışma, toplumun kendileri üzerindeki etkisini ortaya çıkarmanın yanı sıra feminist bir yaklaşım kullanan yazarlar tarafından oluşturulan karakterlerin benzersiz gelişme ve aydınlanma sürecini ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu makale üç kahraman arasında ayrıntılı bir karşılaştırma sunmakta ve 19. yüzyılın klişeleşmiş kadın karakterlerine örnek olmadıklarını, topluma başkaldırdıklarını kanıtlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kate Chopin, Henrik Ibsen, *The Awakening*, *A Doll’s House*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Feminizm, Viktorya dönemi kadını, Yeni kadın, Ataerkil, Başkaldırı

## SELF-DISCOVERY THROUGH REBELLION IN A DOLL'S HOUSE, THE AWAKENING AND THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the protagonists of three literary texts: Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The aim of this study is to focus on three heroines in terms of their characteristics that are unusual in 19<sup>th</sup> century and analyse their break outs. This paper will examine the depiction of leaving, suicide and madness as ways to convey the protagonists' opposition to society. My argument shows that female protagonists' break outs have created a language of actions from women's silence. The characters' lives show big similarities with the societies they live in. In addition, the position of women in the societies they lived in is being critically evaluated. The protagonists of the three novels manage to cope with lots of conflicts and hardships in order to gain their female identity. As a result of their struggle, they are able to make independent and free choices in society rather than submitting to oppressive rules, the structure of a male dominant society and accepting to be the inferior gender. In order to compare three heroines, I will use Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* and Hélène Cixous' *The Laugh of the Medusa*. Examining three protagonists through these approaches proves the idea that three protagonists recreate the woman model, rebel against the norms of society and rejecting the submissive role of women in their time. Additionally, these approaches will help to examine the change of woman characters in literary texts from "angel" or "monster" to other different types such as rebellious woman. This study will focus on the three ways: leaving, suicide and madness as their break outs to rebel against the conventions. Through these rebellious acts, they have been successful to display disobedience and opposition. The authors succeed in going beyond their own age through dealing with the issues in their novels that nobody could even dare to talk about during the periods they lived in. This study reveals the unique development and enlightenment process of the characters that were created by authors employing a feminist approach as well as revealing the impact of society on them. In conclusion, this paper presents a detailed comparison between three heroines and proves that they are not examples of stereotypical women characters of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of the ways they show their opposition to society.

**Keywords:** Kate Chopin, Henrik Ibsen, *The Awakening*, *A Doll's House*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Feminism, Victorian woman, New woman, Patriarchy, Rebellion



## 1. INTRODUCTION

“A life of feminine submission, of 'contemplative purity,' is a life of silence, a life that has no pen and no story, while a life of female rebellion, of 'significant action,' is a life that must be silenced, a life whose monstrous pen tells a terrible story”

–Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar

Gender discrimination has always been a problem for women. Women started to struggle against this inequity even before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They tried to write their issues from a female point of view in order to cope with the discrimination in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The struggle has become clear with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century women questioning the gender roles under the title of first-wave feminism. Anthony Giddens defines gender as “the social concept which gives men and women different kinds of responsibilities and social roles” (2002:112). Whereas the gender roles are different in each society, it can be said that there isn't much variety in a women role, which is only limited with house borders and child-rearing responsibility. Women represent the weak and inferior positions (112). Women have started to ask for equality and their rights because of those discriminations and unfair roles.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar assert that women were trapped in a male-dominated society. As a result, the literary works of the nineteenth-century female writers reflect on their limitations and they are considered as ingenious. Male writers were thought to have the ability of verbal expression. Thus, this situation created a boundary for women of that time. The female writers were silenced because of their gender. The writing was considered to be related to only men. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar discuss Gerard Manley Hopkins' thoughts on writing as an activity solely for men:

Is the pen a metaphorical penis? Gerard Manley Hopkins seems to have thought so... The artist's “most essential quality,” he declared, “is masterly

execution, which is a kind of male gift, and especially marks off men from women... Male sexuality, in other words, is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet's pen is in some sense a penis.... (1979:3-4)

Gilbert and Gubar state that men prevented women from writing. In other words, the female expression in writing is hampered by men. They claimed that in order to write, one must have a phallic symbol. Therefore, women were precluded from producing literary work. On this basis, if the pen is a symbol of the penis, then the writers are the producers of the meaning of the literary work. At this point, Gilbert and Gubar discuss "if the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?" (1979:7).

Another topic that Gilbert and Gubar suggest is that 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century female writers such as Emily Dickinson, George Eliot and Jane Austen helped many women produce creative literary works. These women writers are very important in the history of female writing. They inspired and encouraged other women in terms of writing. The literary works of female writers have the effect of their limited lives in the patriarchal society. Thus, these female writers "turned towards themselves and used imagery of enclosure exploring images of frustration, prisons, and cages forging a literature, more or less, of escape – a literature that prompts escape from the social boundaries" (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979:86). Additionally, they claim that the female madness in the literary works is actually a representation of the situation of female writers. Because these female writers are under the pressure of patriarchal society and write against it, they experience a kind of mental illness. Thus, this break out becomes a way to show their rebellion; and they have a new language which is madness.

Simone de Beauvoir published *The Second Sex* in 1949. In her book, she focuses on the restrictions men have on women's lives. She states that men make these restrictions by defining women as the "Other". The women are victimized and considered as objects by male dominance. According to Beauvoir, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1949:14). Women are not born with their responsibilities in society. The role of the woman is assigned by men and society later on in life. That is, the responsibilities and the role of a woman is framed after birth. Women are not born under the oppressions

of men, or as the “Other”. The genders are born with the same values; however, it is the women who are later subjected to discrimination and injustice.

Simone de Beauvoir radically changed the concept of discussion about “woman’s problem”. Beauvoir claims that what is considered to be women’s problem is actually men’s problem. Thus, “the other” has been found appropriate for women. Because women are forced to use a male point of view, the woman is always considered as the “other”. Additionally, their concept has been discussed by Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir’s definition of a “real woman” differs from society’s definition. The society’s expectation from a “real woman” is to obey the rules of patriarchal society, accept the definition of “Other”.

Simone De Beauvoir criticizes the plight of women in society. She wants to make people aware of gender inequality and show women that they have other sense of self than being a mother and a wife. According to De Beauvoir, the eyes and perspectives of men shaped the women's existence; thus, women are restricted in terms of their feelings, responsibilities and lives. She tries to find an answer to the question about “real woman” that is forced into stereotypical gender roles.

But first, what is a woman?... — “She is a womb”, some say. Yet speaking of certain women, the experts proclaim, — “They are not women,” even though they have a uterus like the others. Everyone agrees there are females in the human species; today, as in the past, they make up about half of humanity; and yet we are told that — “femininity is in jeopardy”; we are urged, — “Be women, stay women, become women.” So not every female human being is necessarily a woman; she must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity (De Beauvoir, 1974:23).

De Beauvoir claims that men are not obliged to ask this question, but only women. Men make a decision whenever it comes to women. Therefore, the limitation of women's lives is determined by the male dominant society. Simone De Beauvoir suggests that it is normal for people to define other people from their point of view. However, she claims that it is a mistake when it is implemented to the other gender. “Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of

view, which they confuse with absolute truth” (Beauvoir, 1949:154). When men define women from their perspective, they consider them as “Other”. As a result, women are isolated from society.

De Beauvoir determines that women are considered to be the second sex throughout history. Male dominant society has assigned their responsibilities, limitations and restrictions. Women are always obliged to question what a “real woman” is. Moreover, men are the determiners of the decision of their life. Beauvoir also focuses on the point of view on “the woman problem”. She says “the whole of feminine history has been man-made. Just as in America there is no Negro problem, but rather a white problem; just as anti-Semitism is not a Jewish problem, it is our problem; so the woman problem has always been a man problem” (1974:181). Since women do not have any rights, how is it possible that they create a problem? Women are “the other”, “the second” as the oppressed people in her statement. However, there is a difference between those groups of people and women; “women are not a minority like American blacks or like Jews: there are as many women as men on earth (1974:27). De Beauvoir expresses that women are not less than men in terms of either quantity or quality. She asserts that women and men are equal.

Women try to find their own identity apart from being a mother or a wife. Gilbert and Gubar assert that “marriage is crucial because it is the only accessible form of self-definition for girls in her society” (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979:127). They criticize society which forces girls to marry if they want to define themselves. As a result, “woman takes revenge through infidelity: adultery becomes a natural part of marriage. This is the only defence woman has against the domestic slavery she is bound to” (Beauvoir, 1949:88). On this basis, adultery becomes a way for women to liberate themselves. Therefore, women protest their restrictive and loveless marriage through adultery. The main discussion of these feminist writers is the emancipation of women from the conventional roles of society.

Betty Friedan is another important writer of second-wave feminism who helped this movement gain importance in the 1960s. She analysed her classmates and realized that most of her female friends were not happy in their marriage, because their lives revolve

around household chores and taking care of children. After this realization, she wrote her book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. She discussed ideal family life and what it means to be a mother. Friedan mainly focused on life at home because according to her, domestic life limits women and their imagination. In her book, she interviews women, asking if they are happy at home; taking care of their children and doing housework. Friedan criticizes the ideals of the 1950s in which women are considered to be happy at home and men at work. Friedan essentially discusses the ideal gender roles of the 1950s and if this is for the good of women (Ryan, 1992:42).

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

Friedan criticizes the isolation of women from the society which is under male domination. She explains that women do not need to be like men to have their own rights. Women need independence and freedom so that they can have their own voice and see their unlimited capacity. Friedan also argues that male dominant societies do not let women have self-expression. According to Friedan, another important problem for women is this lack of sexual satisfaction. She writes “The mistake, says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfilment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love” (1963:92). The definition of “real woman” in society includes being sexually passive in a male-dominated society. Moreover, Friedan claims that being sexually passive is a result of the limitations of the male-dominated society. As a result of sexual dissatisfaction, women tend to lose their femininity and their sexual desires are not considered as important.

Friedan supports the concept of “New Woman” because this “New Woman” is decisive, rebellious and challenges the patriarchal norms about ideal womanhood in the nineteenth century.

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

Friedan claims that the New Woman is challenging society, although she is already a housewife. Even if the New Woman will not be successful in realizing her dreams because of her surrounding conventions, she will make her daughter realize this dream.

Second-wave feminism mainly deals with gender equality and discrimination. This movement aimed to make women discover that they have their own voice. The women are given the right to vote, having their own property during first-wave feminism. However, women were still treated as if they were not a part of society. The women were considered as secondary citizens with all social inequalities. Their husbands were legally responsible for them. Since women do not have most of the rights, they were not expected to pursue a career other than being a wife and a mother. The second wave feminist movement gained power and started to expand in the 1970s. Theresa Lee claims that gender roles are all related to politics. She claims that if a woman wants to have an abortion and continue in the workplace, then this decision is criticized by a male-dominated society. Therefore, a woman's personal decision was criticized and politicized by the society where it was supposed to be a private issue (Lee, 2007:163).

Second-wave feminism is undoubtedly a social transition in Europe and the United States; starting from the 1960s and later on. The role of women in society was questioned, and awareness on this issue was created thanks to this movement. The writer of this period also helped criticize the traditional gender roles through their literary works. Thanks to these movements of women, today a woman who refuses to be a mother staying home is not often criticized by society. However, it took a lot of time to reach this level in society's perception. Second wave feminist movement enabled women to discuss their gender, class, identity and other topics that require equality.

In the 1960s and 1970s, second-wave feminism was divided into two movements; Equal rights feminism and radical feminism. Equal rights feminism supported equality of genders in the workplace (LeGates, 2001:347). On the other hand, the feminism movement wanted a radically fundamental change in society, in terms of how they perceive women and their place in society (357). People who supported these movements also differed in age and race. “The equal-rights feminists were largely white, older in age, and most came from affluent backgrounds. Radical feminists were made up of younger white, affluent women, and minority women of all ages who were active in the Civil Rights movement as well” (352).

The patriarchal society, and men's attitude towards women prompted women's emancipation acts. Throughout history, it has been women who have needed some other's protection and guidance since they have been considered as powerless. The role of a woman is determined by society and men. Since men and society requested woman to be a mother or a wife, women could not get an education. Men required women to fulfil household chores and child care, while they improved themselves in science (Botting, 2016).

In a patriarchal society, men were dominant in social and intellectual life whereas women mostly were at home, away from working life. Therefore, the women were not permitted to work outside of the house. It was in the 17<sup>th</sup> century where women were permitted to leave the house to work as servants. This situation changed with the Civil War in England (1644-1651); women took their husband's job during the time their husbands were at war. When the industrialization period is considered in terms of women's working areas, it can be seen that jobs in nursing or supervision were deemed appropriate for women. In the late nineteenth century, the women improved themselves in their working lives. Women owned their own businesses such as clothing, laundry and food. Women were more active in both working life and home (Nordenmark, 2002)

Women have to work more than men do in order to compete with men. Since women have responsibilities at home as a mother and a wife, they will have to carry out both house jobs and the working life at the same time. Additionally, women will enter into a rivalry with men whose women serve them at home. As a result, women are unable to

plan their future as an individual. Women have revolted against the role given by society. However, patriarchal society does not accept these kinds of uprisings. Since patriarchal society is based on a woman's obedience to male figures in their life (Woldegiorgis, 2015).

Adriana Craciun claims that women cannot defend themselves against the oppression of men (2005). According to Craciun, women could start to make their voices heard and fight for their rights in the late eighteenth century. Female writers criticized the marriage conditions of women which was imposed on women by their parents. Thanks to the French Revolution which brought liberty of thought, women were more interested in fighting for their rights. For the French Revolution made people fight for their rights such as voting, liberty, equality and independence, women were also influenced by that movement. The idea that women should be accepted as an individual occurred, and that they should have equal rights as men. Their responsibilities may enable them to express themselves in society.

Simone De Beauvoir profoundly supports women in their reaction against the image of them as housewives, and mothers. In addition to working life, women's participation in politics would give them the right to make decisions about their life independently, and give them a chance to be considered as individuals by the same means as men do. According to Beauvoir, after being active in politics, women will succeed in this field. Additionally, they will have self-confidence; thus, they will want to be successful in other areas apart from politics. In other words, participating in politics will encourage women to search for other areas in which to make themselves individuals (1946). Catherine Hakim suggests that women and men have many inborn differences (2006). She claims that some of these differences may be eliminated if both genders are given equal economic, social, political and educational opportunities.

Henrik Ibsen, Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman describe the female characters who suffer from the limitations of the male dominant society. Their female protagonists have different stories. However, the three of them come together at one point: their rejection of this male dominant society. The protagonists try to make their voice heard through their disobediences to socially constructed roles. The ways they break out occur



as leaving, suicide and madness. This thesis will study the ways these female protagonists break out against the conventions of the nineteenth-century period.

## **2. CHAPTER I**

### **2.1 A Doll's House**

This chapter will analyse the rebellious act of Nora; in leaving everything behind her. She abandons her family for the sake of self-expression. We will unveil how Henrik Ibsen makes the reader focus on 19<sup>th</sup>-century topics such as marriage and the redefinition of motherhood through the prism of society. Specifically, the topics discussed over *A Doll's House* will be Nora's marriage and Nora as a mother, which are also the ones that have been studied the most by many critics as elements to prepare for Nora's break out: leaving her family behind.

Ibsen's play has created different kinds of criticism due to its rebellious heroine and the different points of view in the past. The social and political issues of each period have given a way to criticize the play and its characters. However, it is true, this play has created a disagreement about its topics and characters' analysis. On the one hand, Ibsen is appreciated by some critics because he shows his ability to describe women from a female point of view. On the other hand, some critics have the idea that Ibsen did not write about the real world. Richard Gilman says, "Ibsen upset audiences because he had broken the expected illusion that plays reflected real life's supposed to closures of situation. Ibsen had attacked false optimism and expectations" (qtd. in Coombes 61).

We start to see the topic of marriage at the beginning of the play. Both Nora and Torvald seem to be happy with their marriage. Torvald expresses his affection for Nora by calling her pet names, but the audience considers this behaviour to be humiliating. Nora is enjoying her life, which involves going shopping and buying presents. The beginning of the play shows a clear picture of marriage and the roles of people as husband and wife. Nora and Torvald have a happy marriage with three children. Their happiness, however, is imperilled when Torvald gets sick. At this moment, Nora, as a wife, wants to protect her marriage and save her husband's life. Following the doctor's suggestion, Nora takes her husband and children on a trip to Italy. However, since they cannot afford

a holiday abroad, she forges her father's signature and borrows money from Krogstad, who is her husband's colleague. This is the moment when Nora ceases to be a typical woman and, instead, starts to create her own way of solving this problem.

Women are generally not able to control and make choices regarding their own life, the male dominance is so strong over women. Women are hampered by either their fathers or husbands. Society has this belief that men are superior to women since they deal with more important issues; such as earning money. Domestic duties such as taking care of children, doing household chores and most importantly, obeying her husband was a woman's assumed role. Therefore, a woman can have a respected place in society only if she accomplishes her domestic responsibilities. When Nora forges her father's signature, she challenges the limitations of women at her time.

Torvald talks about the rules that Nora has to obey at the end of their conversation in Act I. "Hasn't Miss Sweet Tooth been breaking rules in town today?... Hasn't she paid a visit to confectioners?" (Ibsen, 1879:9). The rule mentioned here is that Nora should not go to a confectioner to buy any kind of sweet. This is forbidden for her because Torvald thinks that spending money there is an extra expense. Torvald thinks that he works under difficult conditions and Nora is spending his money extravagantly. In addition to this, Nora also should be careful with her weight. If she wants to fit in the dress she wants to wear for Christmas, she should be careful with what she eats. This is actually a reference to the rules set by society. Nora is the one who has to obey the rules in the marriage. Torvald, as a husband, sets the rules and wants his wife to obey him. Apart from taking care of the children, running the household chores as the responsibilities for wives, the reader is introduced to this female role, which is to obey the rules established by their husbands, namely by the society they live in. Nora does not object to her husband's remark, rather willingly obeys him. "I should not think of going against your wishes" (Ibsen, 1879:9) replies Nora in order to show her loyalty to her husband when Torvald asks her if she has bought macaroons.

At one point in the play, Nora and Torvald are having a conversation and Nora is depicted as someone who just spends money extravagantly. However, Torvald is the one who earns the money; he is the decent one, strictly warning Nora about how to spend

money. He calls Nora a “little spendthrift”, “extravagant little person”, apart from those pet names (Ibsen, 1879:6-8). Nora as a wife is the one who must be controlled in the marriage. Torvald represents the controller and authority. He decides what is normal or what is excessive. “You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in the blood.” says Torvald in order to criticize the amount of money Nora spends for her family (Ibsen, 1879:9). According to Torvald, Nora spends money in vain, does not know how to spend money decently and spending money extravagantly is in her nature. Therefore, Torvald controls money spending, because he thinks that it is his money. As a result, Nora depends on Torvald economically as well as in other aspects. This restriction limits Nora’s freedom.

Both Nora and Torvald play the roles given by society. Nora talks happily about her husband and Torvald also seems to be in love with Nora, calling her by pet names such as “little squirrel”, “skylark” or “little featherhead” (Ibsen, 1879:6-7). Their marriage thus seems to be based on love. However, although the marriage seems to be based on love, the relationship between Nora and Torvald as husband and wife is strictly ruled by society. Nora's role is inevitably to obey her husband, ask him to decide for herself, take care of their children and do household chores. At the same time, Torvald’s role is to have an obedient wife, maintain a successful marriage and earn money for his family.

John Northam has stated that the difference between Nora and her husband is not only a matter of personality but also a matter of values. He claims that Nora's values such as freedom and being an individual is in opposition with those of her husband's. Northam suggests that the husband’s values in a way, represent the values of society (1973:18). Additionally, Torvald mindset contrasts directly with Nora’s opinion. At that point, as Northam suggests, Torvald is the representation of society which does not let Nora leave her family. Torvald is completely under the effect of society. The thoughts of people are of capital importance for him. At the end of the play, Nora realizes that Torvald is not concerned about his wife but he is afraid of what may happen to him, instead.

Even though Nora, the protagonist, acts very typical of her time at the beginning of the play, Ibsen changes her heroine's role towards the end of the play by making her act in a

way that is untypical of her time. Nora, the mother of three children, is a classic 19<sup>th</sup>-century woman; taking care of children, cooking, running the household chores until she realizes that her life is an illusion. At the end of the story, she makes a radical decision and ceases to be a typical virtuous Victorian woman. Ibsen shows the reader that there are several reasons to make his heroine act differently from her time. We can see Nora's change through different actions.

Nora: But you neither think nor talk like the man I could bind myself to. As soon as your fear was over- and it was not fear for what threatened me but for what might happen to you (Ibsen, 1879:86).

Jan Setterquish is among the critics who consider Nora's leaving as an inevitable act. Therefore, slamming the door and leaving her family behind is completely acceptable for Setterquish. He claims that Nora would be considered as a woman who would "accept the humiliating conditions imposed on her by her husband" if she did not leave and live her life without any change, as if nothing has happened (1913:18). By slamming the door, Nora shows that she is a deep character and she is more than what she seems.

Penelope Farfan states that "Nora leaves her home and family to educate herself about the workings of the world" after she is disappointed with Torvald's behaviour (1988:18). Importantly, Ibsen may add a touch of education to the play. This critic also includes in her writing that Ibsen never planned to write about feminism but about human rights, one of which is the right education for everyone.

Nora struggles with the society she lives in. It is clearly seen in different examples throughout the play. It has not been easy for Nora to rid herself of the role given to her by society. She knows her duties as a wife and a mother. Additionally, she is aware of the fact that she will be a "monster" if she denies them. Being a "monster", which is denying all responsibilities as a wife and a mother, in other words rejecting the Victorian type of woman, also means freedom for Nora. It takes Nora a long time to realize this rejection. However, even though she knows that she will be a "monster", she does not stop but keeps on searching for her freedom. Nora knows that the reader will no longer consider her as an "angel" after leaving her children and husband behind.

Torvald works at a bank and is responsible for financial issues. However, he had a health problem which made him stop working. As a result, he ceased to carry out his duty, which is to earn money. When Torvald's duty to earn money diminishes, Nora's duty to be obedient and a typical Victorian woman diminished. Therefore, they both are out of society's norms. Nora decides to forge her father's signature and borrow money from Krogstad just after she learns about the illness of her husband, Torvald. The reader can easily find out that what has pushed Nora to get out of society's norms is the fact that her husband has stopped carrying out his duties, one of which is to earn money. Therefore, Nora gives up being an obedient wife and breaks the rule of society just in order to make her husband recover and get back to the role he has been given by society. Nora sacrifices herself for her husband and quits being one of the typical women of her time. She risks her loyalty in order to save her husband's reputation. Additionally, her self-sacrifice causes a tragic end for herself.

Nora insists on convincing Torvald to let Krogstad keep his position at the bank. Nora is just trying to hide her secret, which is threatening her marriage, family and herself. When Nora does not give up and asks Torvald about Krogstad's situation, Torvald strictly rejects Nora's wish and says "Is it to get about now that the new manager has changed his mind at his wife's bidding?" (Ibsen, 1879:45). What Torvald says here is detailing society's point of view. Torvald is concerned about the thoughts of people who work at the bank if he changes his idea of firing Krogstad. He does not want the people of society, to think that he receives orders from his wife. As a husband, he is the one to decide and not to let his wife change or have any effect on his decision. Torvald reveals his concern on this issue saying "Do you suppose I am going to make myself ridiculous before my whole staff, to let people think I am a man to be swayed by all sorts of outside influence?" (Ibsen, 1879:45). The reader may even think that Torvald is not concerned whether Nora's request was right or not. What interests Torvald is that the decision must not be under the influence of his wife. He does not want people to think that he is affected by his wife's thoughts. Torvald's behaviour shows that society criticizes men who are influenced by their wives' opinions. This fact makes Nora's request impossible for Torvald. Therefore, it can be concluded that husbands are the authorities in the marriage. Wives come in for criticism if they want to have a word in their husbands'

decision. Therefore, Torvald undoubtedly refuses his wife's request. What is more, Torvald sends the letter in which he fires Krogstad right after their conversation.

Nora clearly talks about the social effect on Torvald. After Torvald learns that Nora has forged her father's signature, he is possessed by an incredible fear. This fear makes him think about the reaction of society. Additionally, that makes him aggressive and angry. Torvald even thinks that Nora will poison their children and tries to keep them away from their mother, Nora. Ross Ian Coombes also agrees with the idea that Torvald is affected by the norms of society. He says "Some critics have found Helmer's behaviour motivated by social pressures. That he is driven by unconscious psychological pressure should attract more empathy for him" (1996:185). Coombes claims that Torvald is represented as "more unattractive so that he would not gain too much sympathy and detract from an identification with Nora" (1996:64).

Robert Brustein also suggests that Ibsen has exaggerated Nora's situation and has chosen Torvald as a victim instead of the society which he actually considers to blame. He claims that Ibsen has presented "women's revolt against the tyrannizing male" while it is just "a metaphor for individual freedom" (1962:105). According to Brustein, it is not Torvald but the society that does not allow Nora to leave her family and start her journey of self-realization. "To desert your home, your husband and your children! And you don't consider what people will say!" says Torvald when Nora decides to leave (Ibsen, 1879:102). It can be concluded that Torvald is more concerned about society because he is the portrayal of the society he lives in.

Nora always tries to show how sacrificial she is. In Henrik Ibsen's play, the readers see that this sacrifice by women may also be a punishment. Nora does not hesitate to forge her father's signature. She is brave and can do whatever it takes to protect her family, even if she breaks the rules of society. When Nora meets Mrs. Linde and talks about her secret, she says "I too have something to be proud and glad of" (Ibsen, 1879:16). She shows that she does not regret what she has done and she is even proud of her act. When she tells Mrs. Linde about the money she borrowed in secret, she is neither ashamed nor regretful. She tells this proudly and claims that it is her who has saved her husband's life. "Do you still think I am of no use?" says Nora as an indication of pride (Ibsen,

1879:19). Even though she does not want Torvald or anybody to hear about it and keeps this truth in secret, she doesn't feel the slightest regret. Nora definitely knows what she has done is wrong according to her husband and society. Additionally, Mrs. Linde proves that Nora has broken the rule by saying "a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent" (Ibsen, 1879:17). Not only does Mrs. Linde talk about Nora but she also gives details about the rules of society.

Until Krogstad appears in the play, Nora seems to enjoy her life with her husband and children. However, and from Nora's point of view, Krogstad serves as a threat to her. He shows her how she will be perceived by society after her crime. Nora is more concerned with the reputation of her husband. She has suffered because of blackmail by Krogstad. However, Krogstad's behaviour has also contributed to Nora's process of self-assertion. He may be seen as the antagonist of the play. However, Ibsen successfully makes the reader question the purpose of Krogstad. Does his aim serve bad purposes or just someone who only wants his job back?

Nora is compelled to face what she has done by following the Krogstad's blackmail. If it was not for Krogstad's threat, Nora might never be able to slam the door and leave her husband and children behind. He has pushed Nora to face her action and its consequences. Therefore, Krogstad's blackmail is the first step in Nora's change process. Additionally, Krogstad plays a crucial role in Nora's self-definition process because he is the one who lends money and is also the one who blackmails Nora over revealing the truth.

Penelope Farfan has studied Ibsen's female characters focusing on the duties of women and Ibsen's female characters' behaviour including Mrs. Linde. According to Farfan,

Consequently, compelled to seem to abide by patriarchal standards of womanhood while actually necessarily subverting and redefining them, Ibsen's female characters feel the nineteenth-century woman writer's unconscious sympathy for the monster-woman and frequently adopt some form of her guise in those moments when, instead of being dutiful, self-effacing, self-sacrificing angels, they are selfishly concentrating their energy and attention on themselves and on their personal struggles for autonomy



and “self-articulation.” Because their lives are their literature, however, these metaphorical women writers lack the necessary saving distance from the monster that is provided by the physical texts of the work of actual women writers (1988:48).

As Farfan states, female characters in the play draw a different image of the nineteenth-century woman. Both Nora and Mrs. Linde actually act opposite to typical women features of their time. They quit being angels in the house taking care of their husbands and children. Additionally, they behave in an unusual way by leaving all the duties of the nineteenth-century women in the end. Mrs. Linde has had to marry someone whom she does not really love. Her marriage is only for the sake of her mother and brothers. After her mother and husband die, she goes to Nora to ask for a job. She is miserable and desperate when she first appears in the play. However, she does not quit and tries to find a job to move on. Additionally, Mrs. Linde makes Krogstad change his mind and he sends his blackmailing letter. Mrs. Linde thinks that Nora cannot hide this secret from Torvald and everything should be revealed between Nora and Torvald. One more time she acts differently than the women in the Victorian period. While a Victorian woman would prefer not to reveal Nora's secret because it will destroy Nora's life, Mrs. Linde chooses to make everyone know about this secret and make Nora face the consequences.

Nora and Mrs. Linde are school friends. Nora chooses Mrs. Linde to confess her crime even though they have not seen each other for a long time. Ibsen creates completely different female characters. These two characters are not rivals but sisters. Nora helps Mrs. Linde to find a job. Mrs. Linde plays an important role in revealing the truth. She gives Nora the chance to find herself as well as Krogstad does. Thanks to Mrs. Linde, Nora is able to face the fact that she is not happy in her marriage. The relationship between Mrs. Linde and Nora is crucial in the play. What we see between Nora and Mrs. Linde is a powerful sisterhood. Both characters have their own fight over either men or other lives.

Self-definition of the protagonist is an important challenge to mention. Nora slams the door and leaves her family in order to start the journey of discovering herself. This fact compels her to find her own identity and be rescued from the prison she is trapped in.

She comes to one point and then she starts to realize herself. Nora can even decide who is to teach her.

Helmer: There is some truth in what you say- exaggerated and strained as your view of it is. But for the future it shall be different. Playtime shall be over and lesson time shall begin.

Nora: Whose lessons? Mine or the children's?

Helmer: Both yours and the children's, my darling Nora.

Nora: Alas, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being a proper wife for you.

Helmer: And you can say that! (Ibsen, 1879:99).

After realizing, discovering herself, the protagonist does whatever she has to do in order to be independent and free. This time we see the determination of the protagonist in search of her freedom. The heroine is now ready to act and do whatever it takes to get her freedom. The radical decision she has made is very unusual in her time and even today. At the end of the story, the protagonist chooses to free herself through different actions. After completing her self-identification, Nora does not hesitate to slam the door and leave her husband and children behind. She is an independent individual from the moment she breaks through the role appointed to her by society.

Nora seems to be happy with her marriage at the beginning of the play. However, towards the end of the play, she realizes that she has never been happy about her marriage. She thinks that she is not a member of the family anymore. She considers herself as a tool to make her husband happy. According to Nora, from the time they met they "have never exchanged one serious word about serious things" (Ibsen, 1879:81). Therefore, this last talk is the first serious conversation between her and her husband. Previous to this, they have been just living in a fantasy in which Nora is just an amusement for Torvald. She feels she is ineffective in this marriage. As a result, Nora describes her marriage as:

Our house has been nothing but a playroom. Here I have been your doll wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll child. And the children in their turn have been my dolls. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as

the children did when I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald (Ibsen, 1879:82).

Marriage is supposed to be a mutual joy. However, what the reader sees here is not the joy of Nora. She feels that she is the toy for Torvald for his joy. She realizes that she has never been happy with her marriage. The role she has been playing is for the sake of her husband and children. Additionally, at some point in the play, Nora and Torvald talk about the duties of a woman in marriage.

Nora: What do you consider my most sacred duties?

Helmer: Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

Nora: I have other duties just as sacred.

Helmer: That you have not. What duties could those be?

Nora: Duties myself.

Helmer: Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

Nora: I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a responsible human being just as you are-or, at all events, that I must try and become one. I know quite well. Torvald, that most people would think you right and that views of that kind are to be found in books; but I can no longer contest myself with what most people say or with what is found in books. I must think over things for myself and get to understand them. (Ibsen, 1879:83).

The reader may have the idea that Nora and Torvald are happy with the roles they have been given by society. However, Nora later confesses that she has broken the rules of her role by borrowing money from Krogstad in order to save her husband's life. Nora challenges both herself and society by borrowing money from Krogstad in secret. In that moment, she exceeds the limits of her role as a wife. Nora is aware of her act, which is inconvenient and inappropriate for a dutiful woman. However, she does not hesitate and performs her action and borrows money. She keeps this truth in secret and tries to play her role as a wife as given by society. However, she knows that she is not one of the stereotypical women of her time. Not only does Nora redefine the wife role given by society, but she also changes the social values from her point of view. Forging her

father's signature is a crime according to society but Nora never cares about the values of society. She does what she thinks is right for her and her marriage.

According to Sarah Ellis, a well-known preceptress of female morals and manners, the questions such as "What shall I do to gratify myself or to be admired or to vary the tenor of my existence?" are not the right questions to be asked by a lady. However, these questions may help the reader realize the powerful message contained in the play. Women want freedom, recognition from society, and a feeling of self-determination and self-definition. However, according to Sarah Ellis, a lady should not ask those kinds of questions, because what is important for a woman is for the good of others in her life. Therefore, she should devote herself to the good of her husband and children of the household. Here lies the fight of women to free themselves from society.

Two of the most renowned theorists on feminism, Gilbert and Gubar, examine nineteenth-century women writers who created female characters either as an "angel" or a "monster" (1979:812). Examining these rebellious heroines through Gilbert and Gubar's theory provides us with a profound understanding of Ibsen's pioneering Victorian feminism. Additionally, Gilbert and Gubar explain the modes of mannerliness that contribute to this angelic self: modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability, politeness... A woman is expected to have those attitudes if she is the woman of right feeling. Therefore, Victorians considered women as maternal, passive, caretaker of her children, domestic, familial, dependent, submissive, timid, illogical, and emotional in an angelic manner. However, Henrik Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House* challenges such 19<sup>th</sup>-century patterns, as Nora, the protagonist creates her own story by rebelling against the norms of society and rejecting the role of women in her time.

The second main topic, motherhood, is reflected with examples such as the following. Torvald thinks that morally corrupt mothers poison the air in the house and, as a result, the children are infected. After Krogstad's first visit to Nora, Torvald clearly states that "Almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother" (Ibsen, 1879:37). Because mothers are responsible for taking care of their children, if the children are considered to be bad, the natural consequence is inevitable, blaming the

mother for this. Torvald is actually society's voice. The responsibility for children belongs to mothers, according to society. "Each breath the children take in such a house is full of the germs of evil," says Torvald in order to underline the effect of mothers on children (Ibsen, 1879:40).

Nora starts to spend little time with her children after Torvald talks about Krogstad and tells Nora how corrupted he is, and as a result, his children will be affected by him. Even the nurse warns Nora that her children need their mother. Nonetheless, Nora has decided to keep herself away from her children because she assumes this is what Torvald would want when he learns about Nora's secret. Nora is thus behaving as Torvald wants. Even though she has no regret for what she has done, she still cannot get away from Torvald's opinion. She thinks there is nothing wrong with her morals after she has forged her father's signature. Additionally, she will continue to be a good mother. However, Torvald, as her husband, completely changes her actions. Nora does not want her children to see her because Torvald makes her feel guilty. She thinks that she will harm them despite being their mother.

Being a mother is described as being a protector of children by the patriarchal society. Caring for children all the time and taking them under their wings clearly draws a picture of an angelic mother. Gilbert and Gubar explore how to get rid of this stereotype in woman characters; either "angel" or "monster" (1979:812). They underline the importance of "self-definition" through which writers will understand the nature and origin of the woman (1979:812). Rejecting the "angel" role as a mother or a woman, the heroine achieves to create herself as a new woman. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that "self-definition precedes self-assertion: the creative I AM cannot be uttered if the I knows not what it is" (1979:812). In the play, the protagonist leaves home to understand and explore herself. At this point, the reader clearly sees that Ibsen kills the "angel" and makes his heroine independent from her time. In order to get his protagonist free from stereotypical woman characters, the writer has firstly made his heroine know herself. Self-discovery of the heroine is followed by her radical action. Ibsen in a way proves the idea that women do not only exist in the role of an "angel" or a "monster". Women like Nora challenge society and the role she has been given.

The creation of a self-woman personality was difficult in the time, and Farfan captures this idea:

“However, whereas, like Ibsen, the men of his self-portraits all have professions of some sort and very strong senses of identity and purpose, the central female characters have no professions and not one of them can say, like John Gabriel Borkman, “...I had to do that because I was myself -- because I was John Gabriel Borkman -- and no one else.” As Myra Jehlen phrases this basic gender difference in a discussion of nineteenth-century novelists, a male author might write “without the support of publishers, critics, and audiences” because “despite their active discouragement,” he had himself, “he took himself seriously... he assumed himself. “A woman who was his contemporary and who also lacked encouragement and support could not similarly begin by assuming herself because, as a woman, she had not yet created herself” (1988:37).

Nora didn't have a close connection to her mother and this may be reflected when she detaches herself from her children, other than Torvald's wish. The opposite can be said about Nora's father. We only know that his signature was forged. Does it show a patriarchal way of life that Nora has learnt in her childhood? If we follow Penelope Farfan, it could be seen as a metaphorical sign of a woman trying to become a writer in a world owned by men (1988:71). In line with Nora's parents' presence, we believe Farfan is right when she asserts that “The maternal or, more precisely, the non-maternal status of each of these female characters is significant.” (1988:19). Thus, Nora can't be maternal if she is absent from her children's lives.

Throughout this study of the play, we have seen how society ties women and affects men's behaviour, leading to decisions which break traditions. The culture in Victorian times instilled the value of the external pressure on families. This culture also forced a lack of independence, as seen in Nora's actions at the beginning of the play and more on Torvald's actions, who seems to be highly affected by what society may think of him, giving a “prison lifetime” to Nora. It additionally shows Nora's self-esteem and pride in her actions and her sacrifice to go beyond the limits set by society. We can conclude that Nora is a rebellious heroine in Victorian times who fights for her happiness.

To conclude, Nora's lifestyle has been depicted in opposition to Victorian values. The women's role is strictly corseted by society. The play has also highlighted moral corruption along with the roles of motherhood and marriage. Nora chooses to leave her illusion marriage and start a new journey into reality. In order to escape from social restrictions and find a new sense of self, Nora escapes through leaving her husband and children behind.

### **3. CHAPTER II**

#### **3.1 The Awakening**

This chapter will analyse Edna Pontellier's suicide as an escape from conventional demeanour. The way Kate Chopin describes the disobedience of her protagonist, Edna Pontellier, is closely related to her criticism of the situation of women in American society at the time. Edna Pontellier challenges patriarchal society and refuses to obey social expectations and patriarchy through her suicide. In this chapter, I will discuss that Edna's awakening shows her disobedience to conventions and her determination to break out. This chapter will also analyse Edna Pontellier's suicide as proof of her resistance against the oppressions on women. I will focus on the protagonist, Edna Pontellier, and how she is limited by patriarchal society. As a result of the oppressions, Edna's attempts to liberate herself will be discussed and the elements such as painting, swimming and sexuality that have helped Edna with her emancipation will be analysed. The protagonist's disobedience is closely related to her individual preferences.

Edna believed that she will have a happy married life with her husband, Leonce. She thought they would get on well in their marriage. Their expectations from marriage are completely different from each other. Undoubtedly, Edna realizes that their marriage does not make her happy. She is not satisfied with her life because her husband does not treat her as if she is his wife. Leonce makes Edna feel like she is a possession of his. When they have been on holiday, Edna gets sunburned and the way Leonce looks at her is "as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage" (Chopin, 1899:3). That look of Leonce's explains why Edna is unhappy in her marriage. She and her husband lack communication.

For society, Edna is "married to a wealthy and attentive husband, the mother of two healthy children - from all appearances Edna Pontellier has everything to make a woman happy" (Rosowski, 1988:27) and that she does not need more from life. However, Edna Pontellier is severely suffering from this situation. Apart from the conventional roles she



has been given, she is going through the disappointment of her husband whom she had thought she shared similar thoughts and feelings with. This situation with her husband is one of the motives that takes Edna to her journey of finding her identity.

Leonce is not happy with Edna's search for self-identity and freedom. Leonce thinks that this search for freedom makes Edna fail in her maternal and spousal obligations. For Leonce, it is "folly" that a woman stops fulfilling her duties at home and starts to find out her own interests which will give her a chance to know herself better (Chopin, 1899:90).

Undoubtedly, Leonce is the reason why Edna has those suppressed feelings since he does not pay attention to Edna. Their marriage does not have a sexual purpose for it serves for the sake of society. Thus, his job and his status in society are the most important things in Leonce's life. Additionally, Leonce is not sorry with Edna's friendship with Robert. He is not jealous or concerned at all.

Kate Chopin's novella *The Awakening* introduces the reader to a woman who feels trapped with her role in her family as a mother. In the novella, Edna is portrayed as a twenty-eight-year-old woman married to a businessman from New Orleans with two children. Her husband, Leonce Pontellier, is an upper-classman from Creole society. Edna has a wealthy life thanks to her husband. She can get everything she wants with her husband's financial potential; except any satisfaction with her life. For Edna, her marriage is something she has to do, it is a kind of duty for her and not something she willingly does. Therefore, she "considers herself in a marriage that lacks love, but something expected of her" by society (Taş, 2011:416). Edna suffers from the pressure of society and its strict norms. She is also uneasy with her role as a mother.

In short, Mrs Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-women seemed to prevail that summer at Grand Isle. It was easy to know them, fluttering about with extended, protecting wings when any harm, real or imaginary, threatened their precious brood. They were women who idolized their children, worshipped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels (Chopin, 1899:12).

Edna does not consider her role as a mother as a sacred duty. Taking care of children is not sacred for her. Her children are not the meaning of life herself. Edna discusses what it means to be a mother with Adele who is also another mother in the novella. Edna says: “I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children, but I wouldn’t give myself. I can’t make it more clear; it’s only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me.” (Chopin, 1899:74-75).

Edna does not answer the description of a “mother”. In the novella, mothers are portrayed as women who take care of their children and put them, and their husband before everything. However, Edna is not like those “mother-women” (Chopin, 1899:12). Edna is following a different way which means she is on the wrong path and she will face troubles in that way.

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 (Chopin, 1899:9).

Leonce is the representation of the patriarchal society. According to society and her husband, it is mothers’, Edna’s in this case, responsibility to look after her children and do the household chores. However, Edna has been different from “mother-women” of her time (Chopin, 1899:12), for neither has she idealized her children nor has the protector angel wings to assure no harm to them. Edna is not an example of a perfect woman because she does not do everything the society, which is in the shape of her husband, asks from her. She fails in her responsibilities as a mother. Therefore, it is not surprising that her husband starts to complain about her failure. Edna is not accepted by society because she seeks her own pleasure, identity and even sexual pleasure instead of obeying the norms of the patriarchal society.

Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself. It seemed to free her of a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her (Chopin, 1899:30).

Edna clearly explains that her self-identity is more important than her assumed identity as a mother. She says she can do without money and even her life, but not her identity which is completely different from her “mother identity”. Edna stands up and fearlessly tells that she does not want to live a life that is destined for her by the society where these kinds of rebellious behaviours are condemned. Edna inhales “a first breath of freedom” when her children are with their grandmothers in the summer (Chopin, 1899:30). Additionally, Edna is relieved with the feeling of freedom when her children and husband are not around her. Because she feels that she does not have to play her mother or wife roles which have been given to her by society.

Edna rejects the traditional mother-wife woman role and chooses her own way of self-discovery no matter what society, her husband or people around her say. Kathleen M. Streater claims that the male view of women, which gives all responsibility in marriage to women, is considered as the way the women have to follow in their lives (2007:416). As a result of this perception, women feel inferior to men and have no idea about what their self-identity is. Edna is undoubtedly one of the most important women who pioneer this challenge towards the norms of the society they live in. She starts to realize that she is not happy with her life when she sees that there is no passion between her husband and her. She is not even happy with her children.

As society has its expectations from a woman as a mother and a wife, so does Leonce, as Edna's husband. According to her husband, Edna can satisfy neither society nor himself. Leonce thinks that the most important thing for a woman is being an obedient wife. Being a good mother is also a part of this importance. However, the children act as barriers for Edna. She feels that her children do not let her act freely; moreover, they trap her soul. As a result, she does not accept the mother role which is assigned to her by the patriarchal society. What she truly feels for her children is: “The children appeared before her like little antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days.” (Chopin, 1899:182).

Edna also feels oppressed by the other women who carry out the expectations of the Victorian period from a mother. Representing the angel in the house model, Adele Ratignolle is another oppression source for Edna. Adele Ratignolle is a devoted mother

and wife. She cares for her children, fulfilling domestic responsibilities and making her husband happy. By saying “She is not one of us; she is not like us”, Adele criticizes Edna's different behaviour and condemns her for not having the ideal woman features of the nineteenth century as Adele herself and other Creole women have (Chopin, 1899:113). As will be discussed in Chapter III, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's “The Yellow Wallpaper” also has the example of women’s oppression of women. The unnamed narrator is exposed to the oppression of her husband's sister, Jennie. Jennie represents the ideal Victorian woman role as Adele Ratignolle in *The Awakening*.

Therefore, the children are affected by Edna’s way of motherhood. They are also different from the kids of their age. Because Edna has not been a caring mother, giving her children love and passion, the children have been trying to solve their problem. The reader can clearly see from the quote that whenever they face a problem, they are not likely to go to their mother to ask for help. Instead, they act maturely and do whatever is needed. They are aware of the fact that their mother is not like the mothers of their friends.

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 the eyes and the sand out of his mouth, and go on playing (Chopin; 1899:12).

Edna crucially supported her children in order to make them free. Her children are not dependent on someone, even on their mother, thanks to Edna’s motherhood.

It would have been a difficult matter for Mr Pontellier to define to his own satisfaction or anyone else's wherein his wife failed in her duty toward their children. It was something which he felt rather than perceived, and he never voiced the feeling without subsequent regret and ample atonement (Chopin, 1899:12).

Edna changes the mother role of the Victorian period. However, Leonce and society do not accept this change. What Leonce and society expect from Edna is to fulfil her role as a mother. According to Leonce, a woman is obliged to behave however her husband

wants. Naturally, the husband is under the effects of society. Therefore, Edna is not an ideal woman since she does not perform a mother role similar to women of her time.

Catherine Mainland has stated that Edna Pontellier was a cold mother to her children. The reason for this fact lies under the relationship that Edna has with her mother. Edna was very young when her mother passed away. Therefore, she did not feel love from her mother (2011:76). Edna has an older sister; however, her sister has the same destiny as Edna. They have been raised by their father. Therefore, instead of sacrificing mother, both sisters have been parented by their father whose role in society is actually earning money and making decisions. And in return, Edna was the same with her father and cannot make her children feel maternal love. As a result, Edna has raised her children as self-supporting individuals like herself.

Adele Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz are two female characters who clearly represent two different women of the time: a typical Victorian woman and a “new woman” in the Victorian period. As Martin Wendy states:

Whereas Adele is ‘a faultless Madonna’ who speaks for the values and laws of the Creole community, Mademoiselle Reisz is a renegade, self-assertive and outspoken. She has no patience with petty social rules and violates the most basic expectations of femininity (46).

As Edna refuses to be a typical woman of the Victorian period, Mademoiselle Reisz, a talented piano artist from Grand Isle, becomes an inspiration for her. Mademoiselle Reisz represents “the new woman” of the Victorian period whereas Adele Ratignolle is the picture of a typical Victorian woman who devotes herself to her children and husband.

Adele Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz play a great role in Edna’s journey of finding her own identity, apart from being a mother and wife. Since Adele is the ideal Victorian woman, Edna sees what her husband and the society expects from her. Adele and Edna are both mothers; however, Edna is different from Adele in her sense of freedom and independent soul. Adele makes Edna remember the mother role she has been given by society and her husband. Edna cannot escape from the mother role because of Adele's reminders such as “think of the children” (Chopin, 1899:175). Moreover, Mademoiselle

is the inner voice, desires of Edna. Mademoiselle is the symbol of self-confidence and a powerful individual who cares about neither the society nor their norms.

Mademoiselle Reisz is not only an independent woman but also a powerful woman in society. Therefore, she tells Edna about her affair with Robert, a friend from Grand Isle, warning her to stay strong and decisive. According to Mademoiselle, if someone wants to go beyond the traditions, they have to be courageous and determined: “The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings” (Chopin, 1899:131). In that sense, Mademoiselle challenges the Victorian pattern for whom a woman can get a better status if she marries and has children. Edna has a respected and prestigious place in society since she is a married woman with two children. After she has married Leonce, she is ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of her husband and all her family. However, Edna does not accept those norms and she chooses her own way. She searches for her own identity through art, music and forbidden feeling such as her relationship with Robert. Neither norms of society nor her husband prevent her from searching for her independence and freedom. She is ready to sacrifice not for the sake of her family but the sake of her own identity and freedom. Edna does not feel like she belongs to the society that has forced her to obey her husband and live dependent on him. She is even against the marriage concept when she does not attend her sister's marriage. Her motivation for marrying Leonce is nothing but a rebellious act for her father.

Being an individual, an independent woman is what Edna dreams about. Edna has a different understanding of motherhood than that of Adele's. The motherhood concept for Adele, which is closely related to the angelic woman in the house, is what Edna wants to get rid of. Through her freedom of sexual demeanour and “the absence of prudery”, Edna is able to experience self-expression. This new sense of freedom in self-expression is completely different from Adele's because Adele's freedom is limited within the patriarchal concept of woman. Thus, Edna does not accept Adele's description of motherhood which includes only taking care of children and running the household. Additionally, Edna can send her children to stay with their grandmother without any maternal concern, and while her children are away, she uses the time to know herself better. For Edna, it is not only the mother's responsibility to take care of the children.

After Edna marries Leonce Pontellier, she moves to New Orleans. There she meets Adele Ratignolle who is described as a “patriarchal” woman (Chopin, 1899:25). Adele is full of affection and appeal and Edna is highly affected by that feature of Adele. Adele is obedient and fulfilling her responsibilities at home such as looking after her children. Per Seyersted (1969:103) suggests that “female's capital is her body and her innocence, and she should be attractive and playful enough for the man to want her” and in addition to this, “she should eagerly welcome the sanctity of motherhood”. These definitions completely fit in Adele Ratignolle as she accepts and internalizes that children are her responsibility and does not neglect her feminine duties for her husband. Therefore, it can be suggested that Adele Ratignolle presents the patriarchal woman. On the other side, the reader can see the opposite of this patriarchal woman, the new woman in their society. This new woman “insists on being a subject and men's equal, but who cooperates with the male rather than fighting him” (Seyersted, 1969:105).

Although her husband thinks that Madame Ratignolle is an ideal woman, Edna has Mademoiselle as her role model. Mademoiselle lives alone and is economically independent of a male. She does not have those responsibilities of a Victorian woman since she has neither a husband nor children. Day by day Edna gains her economic freedom through her paintings. Additionally, she does not want to live with her husband who is responsible for earning money in society. Now that she can earn money and does not need her husband's financial support, Edna no longer wants to share the same house with Leonce. She has got a pigeon house she inherited from her parents. She knows she “shall like it, like the feeling of freedom and independence” (Chopin, 1899:125).

In short, Mrs Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight-perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman (Chopin, 1899:21).

Edna has started to discover her inner self which is completely different from Edna the mother or Edna the wife. On the island, she stays with her children and her friends, Adele Ratignolle and Robert Lebrun, away from her husband, Leonce. Through her

conversations with her friends, Edna finds a chance to talk and think about her existence and herself as an individual.

Edna's problems do not only stem from society but also from herself. Because oppression is not only social but it also psychological, she would have to resist not only the system but also herself. Kate Millett argues:

But the oppression of women is not only economic; that's just a part of it. The oppression of women is total and therefore it exists in the mind, it is psychological oppression. Let's have a look at how it works, for it works like a charm. From earliest childhood, every female child is carefully taught that she is to be a life-long incompetent at every sphere of significant human activity, therefore, she must convert herself into a sex object – a Thing. She must be pretty and assessed by the world: weighed, judged and measured by her looks alone. If she's pretty, she can marry; then she can concentrate her energies on pregnancy and diapers. That's life – that's female life. That's what it is to reduce and limit the expectations and potentialities of one half of the human race to the level animal behaviour (1969:52).

Edna has developed a different type of woman who needs to act as an individual apart from her role as a mother or wife. She proves that this new woman needs independence and freedom as well as emotions and conflicts. The new woman of the Victorian era does not accept the norms of society which tell women to stay at home to look after children and to be an obedient wife to her husband as Edna starts to change her maternal role in society. Edna does not blame herself for not being an angelic mother.

Male-dominated society has not let women search for their own interests or desires apart from their real duties. By rejecting social and maternal expectations of society, Edna has found different ways to express her inner soul and her feminine side. Now that she realizes her strength and desire to be an individual, Edna wants to continue on this journey of finding her self-identity.

Edna also proves that she is a different woman through art. One day she goes and tells Mademoiselle that she wants to be an artist. Then she starts painting works of art that are highly opposed by her husband, for she is neglecting her real duties. Art, as it is with



music, is the symbol of freedom and self-expression. Being an artist means being an individual. Thanks to art, Edna is able to express her feelings and inner world and escape from the oppression of society through her paintings. Kathleen Wheeler also claims that Edna owes a lot to art and music through which she has found a chance to feel free from pressure.

Art is the activity of giving shape and order to oceanic formlessness. Art is a creative process, pre-eminently of the creation (through great labour) of a self that is genuinely original and individual. Art is structured through intelligent work, organized and articulated as a result of powerful imaginative gestures working on initially unformed material (1994:133).

Art plays an important role in Edna's discovery of female sexuality. Edna chooses to improve her painting skills and refuses her role as a housewife. Edna finds a way to express her hidden female side as a means of her art.

"I feel like painting," answered Edna. "Perhaps I shan't always feel like it."

"Then in God's name paint! but don't let the family go to the devil. There's Madame Ratignolle; because she keeps up her music, she doesn't let everything else go to chaos. And she's more of a musician than you are a painter."

"She isn't a musician, and I'm not a painter. It isn't on account of painting that I let things go."

"On account of what, then?"

"Oh! I don't know. Let me alone; you bother me." (Chopin, 1899:90).

Martha Cutter states that Edna "seeks voice in her painting" (1999:95) as Lady of Shalott weaves the images of the things she sees outside her window on her loom. The way Edna draws her paintings will completely depend on Edna's inner world. Thus, she can express her rebellion against the roles given by society through her art. It is not the interest in painting; Edna is more likely to be interested in the feeling of independence. Edna chooses Adele to portray in her paintings. Ironically, Edna wants to get rid of maternal and wifely norms of society and at the same time she has a female figure to portray, Adele. However, Chopin crucially shows that Edna has used her paintings as an

expression of her feminine side and through which she finds a chance to discover her sexual side.

In addition to discovering painting as a way of self-expression, she, later on, discovers sexuality having the same effect, giving her the same sense of freedom. Edna is sexually awakened by Robert Lebrun, a friend from Grand Isle in the first place. She truly enjoys talking and spending time with Robert. Edna's sexual awakening starts to become obvious with Robert's intimacy. Robert's close friendship makes Edna realize her oppressed sexual feelings. They start to flirt from their first meeting. As they talk about pirates and buried treasure, the reader has an idea about their future relationship.

“And in a day we should be rich!” she laughed. “I'd give it all to you, the pirate gold and every bit of treasure we could dig up. I think you would know how to spend it. Pirate gold isn't a thing to be hoarded or utilized. It is something to squander and throw to the four winds, for the fun of seeing the golden specks fly.” (Chopin, 1899:55).

According to Jane P. Tompkins, Edna and Robert do not realize that they are flirting. However, the reader can clearly see the passion between them. Their conversation expresses their hidden interest in each other. After this meeting, Edna starts to discover her female sexuality (1976:23). By saying “I'd give it all to you, Edna seems to be ready to give everything to a man (again); however, this time, not because she has to, but because she wants to. Edna's passion for Robert is different from her feelings for Leonce. Robert has given her a chance to see what it is really like to feel passion for someone. Moreover, Edna proves that she cannot quit her independence when Robert wants to marry her.

Robert: Did you say I should stay till Mr Pontellier came back?

Edna: I said you might if you wished to.

He seated himself again and rolled a cigarette, which he smoked in silence. Neither did Mrs Pontellier speak. No multitude of words could have been more significant than those moments of silence, or more pregnant with the first-felt throbbing of desire (Chopin, 1899:47).

Edna and Robert have a different kind of friendship. They do not use words to communicate. What they expect from this relationship is a topic that they have never talked about. One day on Grand Isle that summer, Robert is in Edna's cottage as usual. He wants to leave after some time but Edna insists him to stay until her husband arrives. Both Edna and Robert are aware of the things going on between them. Their relationship consists of pure love and passion for which they will need no words. Nor do they have the need to confess that they are in love with each other. As they spend time together, Edna feels closer to Robert. She gradually sees the changes and the awakening in both her soul and body. Robert makes Edna feel more like a woman. She feels like a real woman with desire. He sees Edna as a beautiful and attractive woman and that makes Edna realize her sexual power and physical appearance.

As Seyersted suggests, Edna "thinks nothing of disregarding her traditional duties toward her husband and of challenging the sacred concepts of matrimony" (1969:151). Edna has married and had two sons. Leonce is a caring and thoughtful husband who satisfies Edna economically. However, Edna has a love affair with Robert Lebrun. Additionally, she also has a sexual affair with Alcee Arobin.

George Arms's claim that "Mrs. Chopin regards freedom from children as a necessary basis for complete freedom" (1981:150). Therefore, Edna thinks that liberating herself will only be possible if she is completely free of her roles as a mother and wife. Martin Walker stresses that Edna "resembles a sleepwalker much of the time, not aware on an intellectual level of what she is doing" (1979:68). According to Walker, "Edna's awakening is instinctively sexual, a process that leads to a lack of command over her own feelings and actions" (1979:69).

A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before (Chopin, 1899:43).

The sea is another tool that makes Edna aware of her power and what she can achieve. As she improves in her swimming, she feels more fearless and courageous against the society that never wants a woman to feel those emotions. Swimming saves her from the

limits of society and she does not feel imprisoned any longer. She is familiar with this feeling of freedom. Edna has felt the pleasure of self-expression and individualism. Edna discovers her body with the experience of swimming. She feels control over her body and that feeling encourages her to follow her own thoughts of life. Therefore, the sea is one of the symbols of Edna's sexual discovery. This time, Edna has the taste of freedom by means of the sea. Now, Edna wants to push the limits and go beyond the limitations of the society as a woman.

The moment Edna learns how to swim is the moment she forgets about the oppression of society and her husband. Swimming is something Edna improves later in her life. She feels her individual success when she feels that she can swim. This success belongs to the individual Edna who does not play the role of a mother or a wife. Achieving something makes Edna feel so free that she regrets that she had not tried it before: “why did I not discover before that it was nothing. Think of the time I have lost splashing about like a baby” (Chopin, 1899:44). With painting and swimming, she finally achieves a whole power over herself.

Edna is trapped between the society that demands her to carry out its norms and her inner self that tells her to break free and be an independent woman. She is trying her best to follow her own path and refuse society's expectations. Edna wants to be accepted by society but not in the way society wants but the way Edna herself is. She wants to be accepted by society as an individual and independent woman, not as a mother who is responsible for her children's care or as a wife who has to obey her husband and accept his thoughts. However, no matter how hard she tries, she finds the solution by ending her life at the end of the novella. She enters the sea and just in order to free her soul from repressions, she leaves her body to the sea which will take her to eternal freedom.

Edna's inner quest for self-expression leads her to suicide at the end of the story. Her desire to become an individual prevails over the ideal Victorian woman concept. Through Edna's rebellious demeanour, Kate Chopin criticizes the gender inequality in society. Through Edna's suicide as a way to break out, Chopin wants to show that there is something wrong with the position and the role of woman in the patriarchal society.

Edna fights for a new sense of self, “new woman”, and her suicide is a symbol of her rejection of conventions and patriarchal society.

Although some readers may have the idea that suicide includes defeat, guilt and giving up, Edna’s suicide is usually interpreted as her rebellious and disobedient voice against the society and conventions. Judith Fryer is one of the critics who supports that Edna’s suicide was a symbol of opposition:

Edna Pontellier, on the other hand, chooses to die; her suicide is part of her awakening, the ultimate act of her free will. And it is told in terms of Edna: how she perceives the sea, the sun, the sky, the naked body are all there for the reader to see, touch, feel, and smell; her thoughts and impressions are there for the reader to share. The suicide scene of *The Awakening* is the fulfilment of Edna's awakening; to understand it, then, is to understand Edna herself (1976:244).

As Fryer states, Edna's suicide is not related to defeat but to repudiation. The desire to be an individual and self-expression overrides the conventions and society. Dale M. Bauer is another critic who agrees that Edna's suicide does not represent a sign of the devaluation of woman. Bauer claims that:

Therefore, to end these novels (one of which is *The Awakening*) with suicide or sacrifice is not to put an end to the dialogue about sexual difference as the plot traces out that trajectory if Bakhtin has it right, however, the dialogue never ends. Literary suicide and sacrifice are metaphor for a refusal to be conscripted; suicide forces the internal dialogue into the open, raising questions about sexual difference rather than closing them. Voice can be reconceived as a means of power and activity because it engages dialogue, opening up discourse as fluid (1990:4).

According to Bauer, literary suicides do not symbolize a defeat but an internal dialogue. Therefore, inequality and social contradictions will be revealed by means of this internal dialogue. Through this internal dialogue, society may question the situation of women. Thus, the opposition of Edna is not only rejection but also a search for the new sense of self.

Chopin's new woman description comes into existence with her rebellious protagonist Edna Pontellier. Edna is the symbol of women who seek their independence and self-expression. Her journey to find a new sense of self shows the reader the woman's change. Chopin uses music, sea, sexuality, swimming, isolation and suicide as tools to express the feeling of the new woman who seeks her self-expression. Edna's swimming in the sea naked symbolizes her rebirth. Through swimming, she discovers her feminine self-expression. Her suicide shows that Edna chooses to fight against the society instead of accepting the role they have assigned for women.

Finally, Edna's suicide as a break out leaves the reader thinking about the oppressions of society and gender inequalities. Chopin creates a protagonist whose aim is to find a new sense of self and independence. Edna Pontellier is awakened through her own inner quest for self-expression.

## 4. CHAPTER III

### 4.1 The Yellow Wallpaper

“I was born, so to speak, in the skin of writing, and I have writing in the skin.”

“When I do not write, I feel as if I were dead.”-

-Helene Cixous

“To say ‘I am mad’ is already, logically, a contradiction in terms: either the speaker is ‘mad’ and what he says (the theme) is non-sense, or else he is saying something meaningful, and is therefore sane (at least at the moment he says it). The act of enunciation contradicts and problematizes the statement it issues”

– Shoshana Felman

In this chapter, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” will be analysed in terms of how the protagonist uses “madness” as a way to break out. I will argue that the narrator unwittingly uses madness as a way to free herself from her husband and his expectations. While studying this short story, the way the protagonist breaks out, her discovery of liberation will be the focus. “The Yellow Wallpaper” is another story in which women in the nineteenth century are victimized by the oppressiveness of society over women. Gilman's short story was published in 1892, in the late nineteenth century, concerning the mental situation of Victorian women. Conrad Shumaker says that the story is about “The tale of a young wife and mother driven to madness by medically and socially imposed conditions was too bleak and strong for the popular magazines of the time” (1985:598). Additionally, “The Yellow Wallpaper” is concerned with male treatment of female mental illnesses.

According to Paula Treischler, “The Yellow Wallpaper” is a direct challenge to patriarchal society and also the way physicians want to treat women (1987:70). Throughout the story, the protagonist is uneasy with the rest cure treatment, however;

she does not reject her husband's wish saying "What is one to do?" (Gilman, 1892:4). She reveals her helplessness and inner depression by asking this question. Therefore, the narrator feels unable to cope with the inner conflicting emotions and becomes one of the victims of patriarchal society, like Nora and Edna. After she feels trapped in this rented summer house, the narrator seeks help by writing her journal, hoping that this "dead paper" will be her recovery (Gilman, 1892:1).

The beginning of the story gives clues about the plight of the protagonist through her language which will be discussed in detail. The story is written as a series of diary entries. The protagonist is married to a physician and has just given birth. The narrator is uneasy with depression after birth, as occurred with Gilman in her real life. Her husband makes sure that her illness is not something important and there is nothing wrong with her. Her brother who is also a physician assures her that there is nothing serious. As a result of the attitude of her husband who does not give much importance to the narrator's illness, she isolates herself from them.

As in *A Doll's House*, we see the husband calling his wife several terms such as "blessed little goose" (6) and "little girl" (11) as if he is not the husband but a father. Even though these terms seem nice and loving, there is a hidden meaning of someone who needs help and is dependent on the caller. Considering the place of women in society, the story shows that a woman wants to be nothing but "a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper" (Gilman, 1892:9). According to Barbara Harris, the woman's place in society shows the 19<sup>th</sup>-century belief of true womanhood. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg defines the features of ideal Victorian wife and mother as sensitive, self-sacrificing, gentle and passive (1984:317). However; at the same time, women should be self-supporting, protective, efficient and strong. As a result of two different expectations, women were confused about their role in society. In the nineteenth century, a mental disease occurred among women (Smith-Rosenberg, 1984:318). This incident affected the books written between 1840 and 1900. The majority of books written in this period were about middle-class American women who suffered from a nervous disorder caused by the dilemma of the role of women in society (Ann Douglas Wood, 1973:26). According to Wood, the male doctors were of the belief that the female inferiority was the reason of this hysteria or nervous disorder in women instead of thinking of the possibility of stress created by the



society (1973:35). Charlotte Perkins Gilman used a real character from her time who is Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, known as the doctor creating the rest cure, to narrate her own plight as well as that of the Victorian women.

Wood claims that the physicians believed that moral corruption was innate in female nervous disorder because women's sanity was directly related to the aliveness of their pelvic region which was the representative female moral situation (1973:34). Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, who is at the same time a character of Gilman, says "I look upon most cases of confirmed hysteria as finally dependent on physical states or defects which may first have been directly or indirectly due to moral causes" (Diseases, 267).

These women who suffered from nervous disorder or hysteria were seen as morally sick in the eyes of society. Additionally, there was a misunderstanding among Victorian doctors in that they thought female patients were trying to avoid their maternal and marital responsibilities (Wood, 1973:34). The incomprehensible nature of the illness was one of the important reasons for doctors' misunderstanding. According to physicians, patients who suffered from hysteria were "suggestible, narcissistic, impressionistic and egocentric in the extreme" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1984:321). Even Dr. S. Weir Mitchell defined them as "the pests of many households, who constitute the despair of physicians" (1885:266). Therefore, the women who were psychologically ill in the nineteenth century did not receive any kind of treatment but only a version of seclusion from society which is the "rest cure".

Rest cure was Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's treatment for the women who were suffering from a mental disease or nervousness. As we see in "The Yellow Wallpaper", this treatment is a period of inactivity including seclusion and physical rest. As in the story, the protagonist is taken to a summer house in order to recover from her nervous depression. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell explains that the reason for seclusion is to make the woman separate from her friends and relatives and taking her under the doctor's control (1885:271). "Absence of all possible use of brain and body" is what Mitchell means by "rest" (275). The reason why the narrator was prohibited to write anything can be understood with this definition. Both her husband and the doctor thought if she was to continue writing, she would never recover from the nervous depression. For Mitchell,

any possible usage of the brain is hazardous for the sanity of the woman because women may leave their maternal or marital responsibilities (Mitchell, 1887:36). Mitchell says “the absolute rest provided the physician the opportunity to correct this moral dereliction by teaching the patient emotional restraint and proper submission” (1885:276). Thus, this treatment imprisoned women and did not let them write or use their mind.

After diagnosing the illness of his wife, John takes his wife to a summer house away from her home. Thus, the heroine is forced to be isolated from her own environment because of her nervous situation. What John hopes by isolating his wife from her environment is to make her recover from this nervous disorder by the “rest cure” treatment. Gilman's focus on the setting shows that the narrator is unable to adjust herself to this new atmosphere. The narrator is clearly concerned with this new environment. “A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate” and “a haunted house” are the first impressions of the narrator for the house (Gilman, 1892:1). According to the narrator's description, the house is very big and spacious. However, she feels trapped within the yellow wallpaper in spite of the light, air and windows. When the unnamed protagonist describes the room, she says:

“It is big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the wall” (Gilman, 1892:4).

The description makes the reader feel the isolation and restriction. She can no longer carry out her role as a mother or a wife because of her nervous disorder. According to her, she is taken to this house because she “cannot be with him (her baby), it makes” her “so nervous” (Gilman, 1892:3). This illness also does not let her fulfill her responsibilities as a wife. The “rest cure” is supposed to help her by making her rest to get rid of her nervous condition. Moreover, this summer house is the opposite of what is expected from the treatment. The house which isolates the narrator from the normal environment is described as a prison where she is kept because of her nervous disorder.

The fact that the narrator wants to use “dead paper” as a confidant shows that she feels isolated and cannot ask for support from her husband (Gilman, 1892:1). Going to a

summer house which she finds somehow “queer”, the protagonist is also physically isolated from her friends and relatives, as Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure treatment suggests. The way she describes the house as “quite alone” and surrounded by walls, completely matches her own isolation. The narrator is also uneasy with the location of her room which is upstairs. The room of the protagonist is big and almost empty. Thus, she feels like she is in prison spending her day looking at the yellow wallpaper. Having nothing to do all day, she gets obsessed with the pattern and the colour of the wallpaper.

The narrator realizes that she has discovered a new sense of self within the treatment time in that nursery room. Finally, she is able to “come out” (Gilman, 1892:15). Thus, she does not like “to look out the window” anymore as her view consists of the women who are creeping, presenting the idea of escaping. The way she identifies herself as the woman behind the pattern shows that she wants to free herself. She disconnects herself from the reality that is distressing for her. According to the narrator, in order to hide the rebellious acts from her husband, she should be careful, as she says “I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night” (Gilman, 1892:15). The night is where her husband is present at home. That's why she wants to be careful during the time John is there.

The more the narrator empathize with her situation and her new identity, the more comfortable and free she feels in that room. She is both driven to “madness” by the diagnosis of the physicians of that time, and “free” which enables her to discover her new sense of self. The nursery room has created a “space” for her to develop her identity. She has transformed her prison into a space where she changes her situation from a depression diagnosed woman by the male-dominant medicine to a free woman who is strong enough to take her own freedom.

As John has done several times, his wife locks the door of her room to have control of her transformation. Thus, no one can disturb her when she creeps and lets these women get out of the wallpaper. The reaction of John when he sees her creeping can be described as a change of gender roles.

“I can't,” said I. “The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!”  
...he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

“What is the matter?” he cried. “For God’s sake, what are you doing?”

I keep on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

“I’ve got out at last,” said I, “in spite of you and Jane. And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back!”

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time! (Gilman, 1892:15).

What John hears from his wife shocks him. Throughout the story, his wife was an obedient woman who accepted her fate, and stayed in the house where her husband wanted her and behave as a patient who is going through the treatment of her husband and male physician. John does not expect this situation as he says “For God's sake, what are you doing?” The control is with the protagonist, the opposite of what it was before. John's reaction is closely related to his despair that he cannot control anymore. According to John, if she looks better physically, she will feel better mentally as well, because the body of women represents their wellness and femininity. She finds her safe space in the thing she has dissected which is the wallpaper.

After being neglected by both her husband and brother, madness becomes her reaction to this situation. Gilman used her life experiences in this story, her husband, Charles Stetson, was also ignorant of her situation. In the story, John who is the narrator's husband and physician, thinks that she is recovering from her illness depending on her physical improvement. John does not realize that the fact that his wife improves physically does not necessarily mean she is getting better mentally as well. Physical appearances are not always the reflections of our inner world. After spending some time in this house, she asks her husband to take her out and leave because she can feel that she gets worse. Her husband’s reply goes:

“Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and colour, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you” (Gilman, 1892:8-9).

Susan Bordo suggests that here the “interpreter” of a woman's body is a man.

“The bodies of disordered women in this way offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text for the interpreter [which, in the nineteenth century, meant men]—a text that insists, actually demands, that it be read as a cultural statement, a statement about gender” (2003:169).

John becomes the “interpreter” and he interprets that his wife gets better by looking at her appearance. She apparently has nothing to say about her disease. The treatment and the right to say anything about the illness belongs to the physicians. However; there is something John did not realize. This madness gives her a voice so that she finds her own voice and no one can say a word there except the narrator herself. Ironically, the treatment of her husband and the doctor, which makes her experience a forced loneliness, encourages the narrator to rebel against the norms of that time.

In the story, John is a caring husband who wants to help his wife recover from the illness. However, his love is not pure; his concern is to cure her of the illness. The protagonist says “John is so pleased to see me improved! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wallpaper” (Gilman, 1892:13). This statement of the narrator proves that her husband is more like a physician to her. What is more, they do not even sleep in the same bed. She improves on acting: how to make husband think that she is recovering. The narrator acts in the way her husband and society demands from her as Victorian women have acted in the roles that have been given by society. She hides what her real situation is. She accepts her husband’s treatment even though she does not find it beneficial. The rebellious women protagonist of Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman are the ones who stop acting as Victorian women, and these heroines have found a way to perform on their own. As a result of the fact that the narrator stops acting, John fails to understand the real situation of his wife. He thinks that he is the authority to decide on the treatment. He says:

“Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and colour, your appetite is better, and I feel really much easier about you. (11)

John is unable to understand his wife's situation as a husband. Therefore, the relationship between John and the narrator is not a husband-wife relationship. The relationship switches into a physician-patient relationship. Another relationship between the narrator and her husband is a father-daughter relationship. John treats the narrator as if she is his little child. He does not believe that his wife is sick and forbids her to write. The narrator says "He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction" (Gilman, 1892:3). John likes to control his wife as if he is taking care of her.

The unnamed heroine tries to share her worries about the wallpaper with her husband. Because her husband is a physician, the narrator does not have anything to say about her treatment. She says that "John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures" (Gilman, 1892:1). The protagonist feels uneasy with the tangled pattern of the wallpaper as an indication of her worry and fear. She sees a figure of a woman's shape in the wallpaper. Whenever she tries to tell her husband about her fear, she is turned down by her husband who is in the role of a physician. John disappoints her, saying "there is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy" (Gilman, 1892:11) Gilman shows that John and the narrator have a totally different logic. Therefore, in the story, the narrator is forced to live in her husband's sense. She does not have the chance of living in her own way. She admits "John is a physician and perhaps- (I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind-) that is one reason I do not get well faster" (Gilman, 1892:1).

The madness of the narrator combines Gilman's criticism of the role the women have been given in marriage and the unequal society. The husband represents the patriarch; he ceaselessly rejects his wife's feelings and does not trust her capacity to evaluate her own illness. Whenever he diagnoses her as depressed, what the narrator says is nonsense, irrational and unusual. However, at the end of the story, she makes her voice heard by her husband through her madness.

There is not an angelic woman character that represents the ideal Victorian woman. John's sister, Jennie, represents the patriarchal society and she checks the improvement

of the protagonist. She helps her brother and supports him with the rest cure treatment. According to the narrator, Jennie is also like her husband because she wants to hide her writings from Jennie. Jennie is like a prison guard who carries out the rules of her brother. The narrator says “I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give” (Gilman, 1892:16). Therefore, she is away from the angelic characters like Madame Ratignolle in *The Awakening*. According to Jennie, what the narrator tries to realize is scary. Once she is caught by the narrator while touching the wallpaper.

“I caught Jennie with her hand on it once. She didn’t know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper—she turned round as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so! Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John’s, and she wished we would be more careful!” (Gilman, 1892:13).

After Jennie touches the wallpaper, she is scared and says that everywhere is stained. This incident shows the fact that Jennie is afraid to be rebellious as the narrator is. Because Jennie is the representation of Victorian woman, feminism is monstrous for her. Asking for their rights and rejecting the norms of society is unacceptable for Jennie. That’s why she feels everywhere “stained” when she gets closer to the wallpaper and touches it.

Whenever John is not home, she takes her time to ponder this wallpaper. She is imprisoned in the nursery, however; “creeping” gives her the freedom she needs. These movements stand for a kind of an escape from that room:

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!  
And I’ll tell you why—privately—I’ve seen her!  
I can see her out of every one of my windows!  
It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women  
do not creep by daylight...

...It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight! I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once (Gilman, 1892:12).

Whenever her husband is not there, the woman the protagonist sees behind the wallpaper starts to do all the activities. These women creep all around the garden presenting her desire to escape. Creeping is the movement of a baby before walking or an animalistic movement where the person or animal crawls on the floor. Her husband takes her to this old summer house and imprisons her as if she is an animal and the husband is her owner. Creeping symbolizes the weak side of her. However, it also helps her to escape from the bars of the pattern. This movement becomes the symbol of her new identity which is stronger. Thus, the narrator is turning into the woman her husband tries to save her from. Creeping stands for more than a symbol. The narrator is able to accept the new identity that enables her to get rid of societal demands. The more she knows herself, the better she gets mentally and physically. She says "Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better and am more quiet than I was" (Gilman, 1892:10). She is pretending to be an ideal Victorian woman who obeys her husband. Moreover, she keeps on writing her diary in secret about the wallpaper.

One of the last things the narrator writes, "I want to astonish him" by creeping, proves that she wants to show her husband the results of his treatment. Through the wallpaper, she discovers her "self". Therefore, this new self is strong enough to rebel against her husband and brave enough to make her voice heard. She does not accept the "acceptable" things that her husband wanted her to do. With the help of the woman in the wallpaper, she wants to "astonish" her husband instead of accepting the things he wants for her. She has the room key. In other words, now she has control of something related to her life. By having the key of her room, she starts to have her own space so that she can feel safe to realize herself. Her attitude about the room changes from negative to a room that it is "pleasant to be out in this great room" where she can even creep around as she pleases.



In "The Laugh of the Medusa", Helene Cixous, French feminist writer, has claimed that women can free themselves through writing. She suggests that "the individual woman must write herself, her body must be heard" (Cixous, 1975:880). According to Cixous, women have the right to write literary works which may enable them to express the gender discrimination of society. Cixous encourages women to write themselves. Although the language is the language of men, Cixous says "Even language conceals an invincible adversary because it is the language of men and their grammar. We mustn't leave them a single place that's any more theirs alone than we are" (1975:887). Thus, language equally belongs to women as much as it does to men. Therefore, Cixous encourages women to use the language and "write through their bodies" instead of accepting that writing is for men (Cixous, 1975:886). Cixous claims that "there is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink" (1975:881). Cixous evaluates the writing process as: if the writing is considered to be related with men, the pen as a symbol of the penis, then, women are related to the ink from that pen which comes from the mother's ink. Therefore, if a woman writes something, it is valuable. According to Cixous, a woman who writes has a "body without end, without appendage, without principal parts" (1975:889).

In the short story, the protagonist does not stop writing in spite of her husband. Whenever she has a chance to write, she uses it as if "dead paper" is her friend (Gilman, 1892:1). "Dead paper" is the narrator's confidant. Whenever she writes, she does not act. Whenever she can use the dead paper, she does not need to deceive anyone. She just writes as if she is talking to her best friend. "Dead paper" gives the protagonist the chance of expressing herself sincerely. By not obeying her husband's decision as she keeps writing on the "dead paper", she rejects remaining silent. Conrad Shumaker says,

She reveals to the "dead paper" that she must pretend to sleep and have an appetite because that is what John assumes will happen as a result of his treatment, and if she tells him that she is not sleeping or eating he will simply contradict her (1985:593).

She does not agree with her husband about the treatment. However, she pretends to do everything he says. The narrator shows her disobedience in her journal writing what she truly wants to say to her husband. Therefore, she feels comfortable writing on the "dead

paper” (Gilman, 1892:1). It does not address her husband, doctor or Jennie. Writing shows that the narrator does not accept the restriction of her husband who is actually the representation of the patriarchal society. As I stated before, these restrictions will prepare the consequences of the patriarchal society’s limitation on women.

Jeannette King describes the wallpaper as “the opposite of any imposition of a controlling order”; she adds that the wallpaper is an “expression of her imaginative energies, which, if not checked, might lead to all manner of excited fancies over which her husband would have no control” (1995:29). Paula Treischler claims that the yellow wallpaper “stands for a new vision of woman- one which is constructed differently from the representation of women in patriarchal language” (1987:64). According to Treischler, this wallpaper is a challenge to the patriarchal society.

As she describes the wallpaper: “When you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide - plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions” (Gilman, 1892:5). The narrator is so hopeless because she has to do what her husband and society wants her to do. She is not allowed to do what she wants, which is to write. When she writes secretly, “there is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at your upside down” says the narrator as if these eyes are the representation of the society (Gilman, 1892:7). While her mental sanity gets worse, the protagonist is still aware of social obligations.

The protagonist does not only stare at the wallpaper during the day. She keeps staring at night as well. Day by day, she realizes that the front pattern changes and there is a woman kept behind the wallpaper.

“There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit.” (Gilman, 1892:15).

The woman behind the tangled pattern crawls around the room and tries to get out of this tangled pattern as if she is trying to get out of the bars of a prison. This imprisoned woman is the reflection of herself in the narrator's mind. She actually sees herself behind

the bars and imprisoned in this room. She is also trapped by her husband and society. As this woman behind the pattern of wallpaper wants to get out, the protagonist wants to escape from this house as well as this treatment that her husband obliged her to undergo. Additionally, the effort of this woman to get out of pattern presents her inner desire for independence and escape. Tearing down the wallpaper is the only way to get this woman as well as herself out. In order to get rid of social and marital obligations which are presented as a tangled pattern of wallpaper, she needs to destroy the wallpaper. "I've got out at last in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!" (Gilman, 1892:19).

The wallpaper becomes the curiosity of the narrator. She is more interested in the pattern of it day by day. She calls it "artistic sin", she even says "I never saw a worse paper in my life" (Gilman, 1892:3). The more she stares at the wallpaper, the more she gets irritated by the pattern. The pattern which is "unclear yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight" is even "torturing" for the protagonist (Gilman, 1892:9). When she describes the room, she says "It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others" (Gilman, 1892:3). The way she describes the room with the word "sickly" shows that the environment of the room does not help her recovery. The imagination of sulphur hint is also creating a hell image. The second time she looks at the wallpaper carefully, she personalizes the wallpaper: "two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down" (Gilman, 1892:5). From then on, the wallpaper is personified and it is looking at her whenever she is in the room. Then, "those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere" says the protagonist (Gilman, 1892:6).

The wallpaper is the narrator's space where she can use her creativity. When she interacts with the wallpaper, the readers see the way she connects to this imaginary figure inside the wallpaper. The narrator tries to talk to the figure she realizes in the pattern of the wallpaper. However, she feels there is a "vicious influence" in the wallpaper (Gilman, 1892:5).

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn't match, and the

eyes go all up and down the fines, one a little higher than the other (Gilman, 1892:6).

The unblinking eyes clearly symbolize the plight of the narrator. She sees a figure of a woman trapped in the wallpaper. Therefore, the unblinking eyes reflect the protagonist's predicament. Because her husband does not give importance to what she says, she creates her own world in this room with the wallpaper. According to Lisa Kasmer, the yellow wallpaper “contains a liberating and disruptive force which at once mirrors and contains her unconscious. This force allows the narrator to begin to surpass her husband’s language and desires and to establish her own (1990:4). Kasmer claims that the wallpaper has a positive effect on the narrator in her process of self-realization.

The figure of the woman that the narrator sees in the wallpaper is described through the details in the pattern. She says “there is something else about the paper—the smell. Such a peculiar odor too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like. The only thing I can think of is that it is like is the colour of the paper! A yellow smell” (Gilman, 1892:14). Kasmer relates this strong sensibility to the feminist discourse which uses human's senses and feelings. The narrator feels that the “yellow smell” makes her tired and “it creeps all over the house” (39). The wallpaper has a repressive effect on the narrator. The imprisoned woman behind the wallpaper represents the narrator's imprisonment in the room and in her marriage, too.

Paula A. Treischler suggests that “In these feminist readings, the yellow wallpaper represents the narrator’s own mind, the narrator’s unconscious, the pattern of social and economic dependence which reduces women to domestic slavery. The woman in the wallpaper represents the narrator herself, gone mad, the narrator’s unconscious, all women” (Treischler, 1984:64). Therefore, it can be concluded that the wallpaper is one of the most important elements in the story. The protagonist finds the wallpaper annoying at the beginning of the story. However, she starts to identify herself with the wallpaper after she sees the image of a woman who is “stooping down and creeping about” to get out of the prison cells (Gilman, 1892:12). After identifying herself with the wallpaper, her repellent feeling about the wallpaper disappears. According to Greg Johnson, the wallpaper has helped the narrator to emerge into “selfhood” (1989:523).

The woman figure in the wallpaper is obviously a reflection of the unnamed heroine: “She is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through the pattern-it strangles so” (Gilman, 1892:15). Moreover, the protagonist, as a reflection of the women in her time, finds a way to get out. By creeping around the room, the narrator has turned into the woman figure behind the bars trying to get out.

Christiane Makward, a French feminist critic, suggests that female language is considered as “open, nonlinear, unfinished, fluid, exploded, fragmented, polysemic, attempting to speak the body, i.e., the unconscious, involving silence, incorporating the simultaneity of life as opposed to or clearly different from pre-conceived, oriented, masterly or 'didactic' languages” (qtd. in Baym, 1978:03). Therefore, the wallpaper characterizes this female language definition. The protagonist uses this new language without any limitation. This new language is the language of a madwoman. It interacts with the woman figure behind the bars. This language enables her to get over the limitations and restrictions. The wallpaper is a channel to her self-expression and individualism. The protagonist is free with her interaction with the wallpaper. Her description of the pattern and her thoughts are not judged or rejected by her husband because this interaction happens when her husband is not present.

Paula A. Treischler examines that “the form of the story we are reading” relates to “unheard of contradictions” which the narrator writes in her hidden journal (1984:73). According to Treischler, women’s discourse such as the protagonist’s journal of which the yellow wallpaper is taken as a metaphor seeks to escape the sentence that the structure of patriarchal language imposes, to move beyond the boundaries of formal syntax” (1984:70). However, “there is as yet no escaping the sentence of male-determining discourse (Treischler, 1984:71). As Treischler concludes “to escape the sentence involves both linguistic innovation and change in material conditions of women’s socio political realities” (74:1984).

“The Yellow Wallpaper” tells us about a rebellious woman who is imprisoned in a room by a dominant male treatment. Therefore, she chooses the wallpaper as a tool to get her out of this prison. The narrator finds her real sense of self which enables her to get rid of this room, in other words, get rid of the restrictive feminine role. The woman says “In

spite of you (John) and Jane”, she has her new sense of self which has cost her sanity. Now her concern is “to creep over him every time!” This is another reference to male dominance and interference in women's lives. In this story, Gilman did not aim to show that madness is the solution for Victorian women whose roles are mother and wife to get free. However, the reader is left with the idea of what would happen if the plight of women was ignored by others. It is possible that Gilman chose madness as an escape to make society aware of the situation of women. As long as the patriarchal view of woman will continue, the possibility of madness will exist in women's lives. Gilman shows that the male treatment of women is the reason for madness. Madness is an outcome of patriarchal society.

The story creates questions such as “Is the narrator free at the end of the story?”, “Does madness mean to escape?” or “Does the madness make her more trapped than she was before?” in reader’s mind. In “The Yellow Wallpaper”, Gilman gives “voice to the dark nightmare” which is the Victorian women’s plight through the protagonist in her short story (Eric Savoy, 2002:159).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this study, the physical and spiritual awakenings and emancipations of Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*, Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* and the unnamed protagonist in "The Yellow Wallpaper" are examined. Henrik Ibsen, Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman tried to reflect the problems of the women in their time. These three writers created such characters who had difficulties in being accepted by society because of their unusual acts. Their protagonists are determined to get rid of the pressure of dominant patriarchal structure and live their life in accordance with their own decisions. Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman's main characters neither give up on their fight nor accept to live under the limitations of patriarchal society. The works of Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman were severely criticized because they did not portray the typical women of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Their literary works were even wanted to be changed in accordance with society's norms. However, these literary works gained the right values years after they were published. Therefore, Henrik Ibsen, Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman managed to go beyond their time and revealed the problems of women at a time in which their aim was not accepted by society.

Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman use female characters' rebellious acts in order to criticize the position of women in society. The aggressive behaviours of the female characters' highlight gender inequality in society. This study has analysed the way female protagonists' internal quest enables them to step out of the restrictions of society. These rebellious women challenge the social conventions and act against its rules by not carrying out the role they have been assigned. Thus, the experiences of these women affect social equilibrium and show how society reacts to their rebellious acts in an attempt to maintain conventionality.

Nora in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, abandons her home, leaving her husband and children behind and starts a new life without them which can be considered as less devastating than the following two characters. She puts behind her family in order to

start her inner journey. Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* learns how to swim and then leaves herself to the open sea as a symbol of emancipating her body and soul to nature. In the end, she owns her independence by committing suicide. The third female protagonist, in "The Yellow Wallpaper", the unnamed protagonist welcomes the voice of the madwoman as a tool to use in self-expression. At the end of the story, the female protagonist gets mad as a result of patriarchal restrictions and imprisonment.

Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman expressed their ideas and unconventional thoughts by means of their characters: Nora Helmer, Edna Pontellier and the unnamed heroine. Therefore, the protagonists have a strong resemblance in terms of rebellious thoughts and their different points of view, trying to make society accept them as they are. Nora, Edna and the unnamed protagonist are in search of identity and they do whatever it takes to find it. There are many similarities between Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman's characters, including the end of their literary works. Three protagonists, Nora, Edna and the unnamed heroine are birds in a cage with no freedom. While Edna and the unnamed heroine live in reality, Nora's life is in a fantasy world. All three protagonists seem to be happy about their marriage at the beginning, which is controlled by their husbands. Despite all the similarities, the three protagonists differ in several ways: the unnamed protagonist and Edna do what they want, while Nora dreams about what she wants; the unnamed protagonist and Edna have a mind of their own while Nora seems to be a scatter-brained wife; and the unnamed heroine and Edna stop taking care of their children all together while Nora cares for the children on and off.

The self-definition of the protagonists is an important similarity to mention. They discover themselves throughout their stories because they are dissatisfied with their roles in society. This fact compels them to find their own identity and save themselves from the trap in which they have been captured. Three women characters come to one point and then they start to realize themselves. After realizing, discovering themselves, three women characters do whatever they have to do in order to be independent and free. This time we see the determination of the protagonists in searching for their freedom. Three heroines are now ready to act and do whatever it takes to get their freedom. The radical decisions they have made are very unusual in their time and even today. At the end of each story, three protagonists choose to free themselves through different actions. After



completing her self-identification, Nora does not hesitate to slam the door and leave her husband and children behind. Edna is also making another radical decision and chooses to end her life instead of living a life that is a prison for her. After the moment her husband trapped her in this nursery room, the unnamed protagonist starts to search for a way out from this room. They are individuals from the moment they break with the role appointed to them by society.

Through all three stories, the reader can hear the voices of rebellion which are formed through the female heroine's rejection to be obedient, submissive and traditional. These women protagonists', Nora, Edna and the unnamed character of "The Yellow Wallpaper", rejection of conventional has been the main focus of this study. Whether they have been successful in their expressions is another important topic to study on. This study has examined the three ways: leaving, suicide and madness, to rebel against the conventional. Through these rebellious acts, they have been successful in displaying disobedience and opposition. However, the endings do not show an improvement in women's situation. Their endings; leaving, suicide and madness demonstrate the devaluation of women. The position of women is not exalted in the ends of the stories even though the three women protagonists have rebelled against society and its norms. What we read in these three stories of rebellious women shows that women's lives were restricted during their time.

The reader can clearly see the anger and opposition which are respectively revealed through madness, suicide and leaving in these three stories. The discourse of anger and disobediences points the voices of the women, their subjectivity. This discourse is related to the protagonists' identity search, their experiences so on. The things the protagonist cannot utter are revealed through their aggressive behaviour. Therefore, through their rebellious acts, these three women protagonists go beyond their limits in society.

This study has examined the different discourses of disobedience respectively; desertion, suicide and madness. The first chapter has dealt with a rebellious woman, Nora, as a performance of Victorian ideals. Nora slams the door and leaves her family behind. Her marriage is only based on illusion. She eventually wakes up from this illusion and leaves

her fake world in order to start facing reality. The second chapter has analyzed the changes in sexual desires. Edna's affairs demonstrate the inner quest for new feelings of women who do not accept conventions. The discussion of the third chapter has shown that the male treatment of the nineteenth century clearly fails in women's recovery from madness. Gilman uses S. Weir Mitchell to reveal the failure of her own experience of treatment. Gilman chooses madness as an escape as if she wants to show what could happen if the society kept ignoring women's plight.

The female protagonists of Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman have aggressive behaviors in order to challenge patriarchal norms. What they have in common is the purpose of their disobedience and rebellious manner to conventions. This study has revealed a concentration on the rebellious act through leaving, suicide and madness. Therefore, the disobedient acts of women protagonists mean a lot, functioning as a tool to utter what women cannot do in words.

In *A Doll's House*, *The Awakening* and "The Yellow Wallpaper", the reader is introduced to three female characters that push the limits of the society they live in. Nora, Edna and the unnamed protagonist try to get out of the angel in the house model which is just to make women obey the norms of society. Nora slams the door of her house and leaves her husband and children behind, whereas Edna commits suicide to rebel against the society. The unnamed female protagonist escapes through madness. With their acts of emancipation, the reader can clearly see that one does not exist if she does not live the way she wants to live despite society and oppressions.

In their stories, Nora, Edna and the unnamed protagonist prove that they are not examples of nineteen-century women. In each story, they challenge their time and society no matter what it takes. The acts of three protagonists are almost the same and serve for the main aim which is to set themselves free from the oppression of society. Their refusal of the roles they have been given by society bears a strong resemblance. The similarities of the three heroines have differentiated them from nineteen-century women and make them pioneers of the feminist movement.

For the sake of emancipation and self-expression, Nora, Edna and the unnamed protagonist reject staying with their families, as well as rejecting to be a slave of the

male-dominated world. Nora's slam of the door was heard all around the world. Edna's suicide was talked about by all the people living in society. The madness of the unnamed protagonist scared society, revealing the question of what would be the results of male treatment. The reader read about Nora, Edna and the unnamed protagonist and the people who heard about their rebellious acts from others considered them as real characters, more than fictional personalities. "Nora was discussed as a real person, a tribute to Ibsen's stagecraft. He had given a social problem flesh and blood in a female part that actresses have stood in line to play ever since" (Haugen 10). Ibsen, Chopin and Gilman brought a social injustice into question by means of their protagonists from *A Doll's House*, *The Awakening* and "The Yellow Wallpaper".

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