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Marriage, transgression and death:

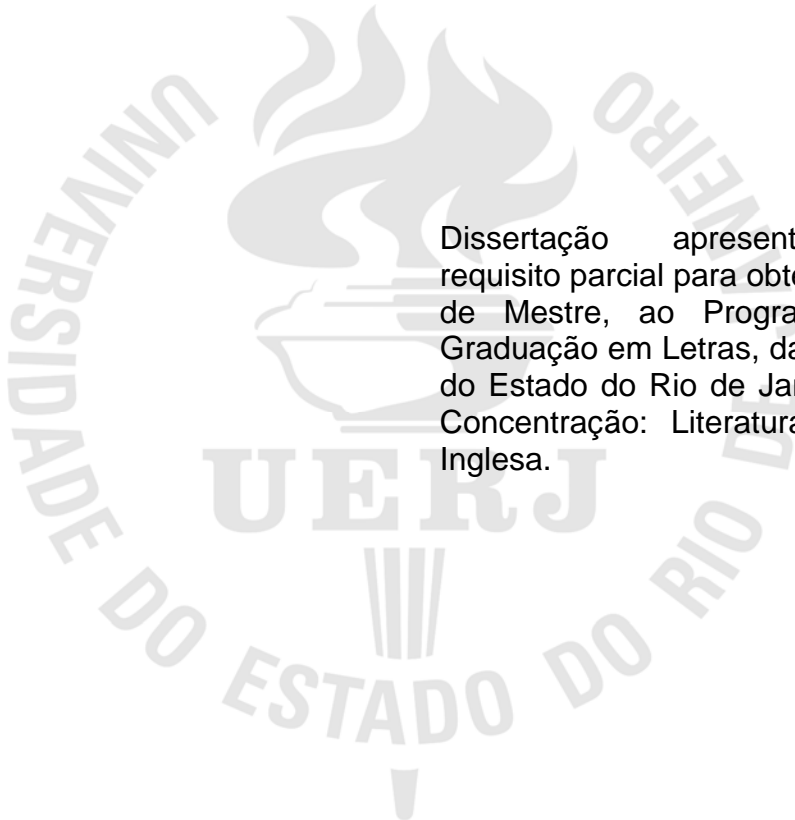
Wuthering Heights and The Awakening

Rio de Janeiro

2012

Mariana de Melo Miranda

**Marriage, transgression and death:
*Wuthering Heights and The Awakening***



Dissertação apresentada, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de Concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Orientadora: Prof^a. Dra. Maria Conceição Monteiro

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DEDICATION

For my dear mother

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My special thanks to my dear professor and advisor, Maria Conceição Monteiro, for sharing her materials, knowledge, patience and friendly guidance which helped to the development and realization of this project.

I am fully persuaded that we should hear of none of these infantine airs, if girls were allowed to take sufficient exercises, and not confined in close rooms till their muscles are relaxed, and their powers of digestion destroyed. To carry remark still further, if fears in girls, instead of being cherished, perhaps, created, were treated in the same manner as cowardice in boys, we should quickly see women with more dignified aspects. It is true, they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society, and discharge the important duties of life by the light of their own reason. "Educate women like men", says Rousseau, "and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us". This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.

Mary Wollstonecraft

RESUMO

MIRANDA, Mariana de Melo. *Marriage, transgression and death: Wuthering heights and The Awakening*. 2012. 74 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2012.

Esta dissertação tem como objetivo analisar a situação da vida da mulher durante o século XIX, na Inglaterra e nos Estados Unidos da América, através de duas obras do século XIX: *Wuthering Heights* (1847) de Emile Bronte e *The Awakening* (1889) de Kate Chopin. Objetivamos, na presente dissertação, apontar a crítica dos discursos patriarcal e das práticas de poder social que tornaram o contexto social das mulheres representadas nos romances citados, propício para a anulação da expressão erótica e repressão. O objeto da análise restringiu-se às duas personagens principais dos romances, Catherine Earnshaw e Edna Pontellier; personagens cujas subjetividades foram reprimidas através da imposição e desempenho de papéis sociais que não as satisfaziam como mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Literatura Inglesa. Literatura Norte-Americana.

Casamento. Erotismo. Transgressão. Morte.

ABSTRACT

The present work aims at analyzing the situation of women's lives during the nineteenth-century in England and the United States of America, in two nineteenth-century novels: *Wuthering Heights* (1847), by Emile Brontë and *The Awakening* (1889), by Kate Chopin. Our objective in this study is to point out the patriarchal discourses and practices of social power that made the social context of the women represented in the mentioned novels, suitable for the annulment of erotic expression. The object of the analysis was restricted to the two main characters of the novels Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier, whose subjectivities have been suppressed through the imposition and performance of social roles that do not fulfil them as women.

Keywords: English Literature. North-American Literature. Marriage. Eroticism. Transgression. Death.

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FIRST WORDS

The torment that so many young women know, bound hand and foot by love and motherhood, without having forgotten their former dreams.

Simone de Beauvoir

EMILY BRONTË

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote that “marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.” (BEAUVOIR, 1949, p. 445). It is true that many women want to be married, and also that many others suffer from not being, but there are those who do not wish for it. Marriage has been the very aim of many women’s lives, as Simone de Beauvoir states: “[...] for girls marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage. This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for them.” (BEAUVOIR, 1949, p. 447). As Beauvoir reminds us marriage for a long time has been the only way for some women to integrate society.

As we look back at the long path trodden by the women’s movements, it can be said that many conquests have been accomplished. Positions have been guaranteed and much awareness has been conquered; yet many issues involving women are left unresolved.

The main aim of the present study is to analyze how marriage is portrayed in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Awakening* within the nineteenth-century context and show transgression and death as paths that represent the situation of the nineteenth-century protagonists of the novels chosen. Both novels address issues faced by the majority of women in the nineteenth-century: male dominance, subjection to social roles of mothers and wives, marriage as a way of living, and erotic restriction.

Emily Brontë was born in 1818, in Thornton, Yorkshire to Maria Branwell and Patrick Brontë. She was the younger sister of Charlotte Brontë. In 1842, Emily and

her sister Charlotte went to Brussels in Belgium to attend a girl's school. They had planned to open their own school, but with the death of their aunt, they had to return home. Later they opened a school at home, but were not able to attract enough students. In 1847, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* was published containing various poems by the Brontë sisters. They had adopted pseudonyms for publication.

For Georges Bataille, Emily Brontë “of all women, seems to have been the object of a privileged curse. [...] she had a profound experience of the abyss of Evil. Though few people could have been more severe, more courageous or more proper, she fathomed the very depths of Evil.” (BATAILLE, 2001, p.15).

In 1847, *Wuthering Heights* was published under the pseudonym of Ellis Bell. According to the “Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell” by Emily's sister, Charlotte Brontë, the sisters had chosen these pseudonyms because they feared to face prejudice if they let the publishers know they were women: “[...] while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because – without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not called “feminine” we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice [...]” (BRONTË, 1994, p.06).

After Emily's novel publication, according to Charlotte Brontë, the novel was not well accepted, as she explains: “Critics failed to do them justice. The immature but very real powers revealed in *Wuthering Heights* were scarcely recognised; its import and nature were misunderstood; the identity of its author was misrepresented; it was said that this was an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced *Jane Eyre*.” (BRONTË,1994,p.8), misunderstandings which Charlotte considered “unjust” and “grievous”.

Despite her young age by the time of her death and little or no experience of love, Emily Brontë was able to write one of the most violent and profound love stories of the world's literature. Bataille notices: “[...] she had an anguished knowledge of passion[...].” (BATAILLE, 2011,p.16). Described by her sister Charlotte Brontë as “stronger than a man” and “simpler than a child”, Emily Brontë died on the 19th of December in 1848. Today Emily Brontë's voice is known around the world through her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, which remains one of the most intense works in English literature.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

The core of the story in *Wuthering Heights* is the love between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff. They have developed a strong bond in their childhood and later decide to rebel against Catherine's tyrannical brother, Hindley and his regime in Wuthering Heights. Although Catherine loves Heathcliff and states to her governess: "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind [...]" (BRONTË, 1994, p.81), she decides to get married to Edgar Linton, a man from a respectable and sophisticated family. Catherine is fond of her husband, but she is never able to forget Heathcliff, who she betrays by marrying another man. Catherine naively believes that she can keep both men, but soon she discovers that being divided between the two men will bring her much despair.

After Catherine's marriage to Linton, Heathcliff goes away from Wuthering Heights and then returns as a prosperous man. Confused by Heathcliff's reappearance, Catherine in vain tries to make both men interact with each other friendly and from this moment on, Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship becomes bitter and destructive. Betrayed and seeking revenge, Heathcliff, starts on his revengeful acts against his enemies. He marries Edgar's sister, and takes advantage of Catherine's drunken brother in order to get money and power. While she is dying, Catherine does not find any comfort in Heathcliff; instead, he gives her a cruel analysis of what she has done to herself, by betraying their love, she finds her own destruction. Catherine dies for going against her own erotic desire. Catherine's death becomes a representation of a tragic violation of the erotic desire of the Self.

KATE CHOPIN

In her *Unveiling Kate Chopin*, Emily Toth describes Kate Chopin's attempt of becoming a professional writer:

She had always known how to be a widow, and she learned about marriage and motherhood from her mother, and from experience. Too, the rules for wives, mothers, and widows are always widely available – in magazines, newspapers, etiquette books, synagogues, and sermons. There are always people willing to tell a woman where to go and how to do it, if she wants to settle into a conventional destiny. It is far more difficult for a woman to fit into a professional run by men. (TOTH, 1999, p. 121).

Kate Chopin, born Catherine O' Flaherty was born on February 8th, 1850 into a wealthy family from St. Louis, in Louisiana. When Kate O' Flaherty was five years old, her parents sent her off to a boarding school. Thomas O' Flaherty was a Catholic Irish immigrant from a poor background but had been able to get himself an education. Settled in St. Louis, Thomas and his brother Roger O' Flaherty made fortune equipping westward trekkers. According to Kate Chopin's biographer Emily Toth, Eliza Faris and Thomas O'Flaherty were married six months after the death of his first wife, in July 1844. Eliza was barely sixteen and Thomas was thirty-nine.

As a young girl at school, Kate O' Flaherty, received the typical education girls from wealthy families were supposed to acquire at that time. At school, she learned French, history, literature, and music. As a teenager Kate had read a vast variety of English, American and French novels. She especially admired Maupassant, who later she said was the one who provided her philosophical perspective when writing at her late thirties.

In June 9th, 1870, Kate O' Flaherty married Oscar Chopin at the Holy Angels Church in St. Louis and with him she had six children. After her husband's sudden death, Chopin returned to St Louis in 1884. By the age of thirty-five she had to raise the children by herself and also try to conciliate her writing career with the life of a single mother. Most of her stories were written in a single day. Her stories dealt with themes about life in the countryside and also the life of the Creole of Louisiana, but she focused mainly on the tension between individual erotic inclination and the constraints placed on desire by traditional social norms. She focused mainly on women's sexual and social desires and was perhaps one of the main American writers of her time who had begun to challenge the patriarchal rules that not only controlled women's social ambitions but their lives as individuals as well.

THE AWAKENING

The Awakening, Chopin's major work, was published in 1899. The novel, which portrays the sexual and sensual coming to consciousness of the main protagonist, Edna Pontellier, produced critical hostility among the main critics of the time of its publication, which caused the book and the author to be unknown for centuries. After the publication of the book, Chopin fell ill and died shortly after. In

more recent times many critics and scholars began to investigate and write about race, gender, sexuality, which are subjects deeply present in the novel and in the construction of its main character. Today, *The Awakening* has a secure place in the American feminine literary canon.

Different facets of female appropriations, such as artistic, social and sexual, are explored by Kate Chopin in her novel. Chopin calls these issues to question through Edna's attempt for expressing herself as a painter and her dissatisfaction with her social roles as wife and mother.

To most of the nineteenth-century women, marriage was their only option for a fulfilling life, was their destiny, and it casted them as objects of their husbands, limiting their existence to serving and pleasing others rather than themselves, as Simone de Beauvoir puts: "[...] marriage is her only means of support and the sole justification of her existence." (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p. 446).

As we can see, it was expected from the nineteenth-century wife to respect and submit to her husband and serve her family. These women were expected to be the "angel" of their homes; always docile and obedient, as wives they were expected to be the "guardians" of society.

Today many critics see Edna Pontellier as a "courageous soul", who violates the codes of the nineteenth-century American society assigned for women. Although Edna Pontellier seems to possess a "courageous soul", she is not able to reach the end of her journey to self-fulfilment and personal emancipation that she strove for: the story ends with her suicide.

THE STUDY

In order to study the subjugations and limitations faced by women within the nineteenth-century context, this study will focus on the relationships of the two main characters of two novels of the same period: Catherine Earnshaw, in *Wuthering Heights*, and Edna Pontellier, the main protagonist in *The Awakening*.

The characterization of these protagonists highlights the positions to which women have been engaged, eliminated from any important roles in society by their gender. Their submissive roles, however, have contributed greatly for the maintenance of the pillars of bourgeois society; they play the roles of devoted wives and mother, designated for them by the domination of the white-male supremacy.

Chapter one of the present study emphasizes the nineteenth-century historical context and the discourses within the social and cultural backgrounds in which women were trapped. A characterization of marriage within the nineteenth-century and its implications regarding women's lives are addressed in chapter two.

Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier try to conform to their roles as women of their time, by getting married and putting aside their own erotic desires. Despite their conformation to society, Catherine and Edna cannot find satisfaction by playing the roles they were assigned. Through transgression they attempt to fulfil their erotic needs and achieve some satisfaction in their lives. The issue of transgression is dealt in chapter three, which also deals with the innovative writings of Emily Brontë and Kate Chopin.

By the time they realise their unbearable unhappiness, it is too late and they have both reached destruction, relieved only by death. Chapter four deals with eroticism and death. Death as a paradoxical relieve for both Catherine and Edna, but at the same time as a reminder of their unfulfilled journey to self-realization.

1 CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As far as women were concerned, in fact, they were bound by their juridical and social status as wives.

Michel Foucault

In the nineteenth century, Britain was enjoying great prosperity brought by the Industrial Revolution which had started in the eighteenth-century. Being able to produce many goods, Britain had become the “shop” of the world, producing more than any other country in the world at the time. Britain’s power did not only concentrate on industrialization, but also extended to the political level. By the end of the nineteenth-century, Britain was a powerful empire which controlled and ruled over many parts of the world.

According to David McDowall, during the nineteenth century, political and economic power was concentrated in the hands of the middle class and not in the hands of the Crown or the aristocracy, as during this period they had little power. This was due to the growth of the middle class, as McDowall reminds us: “This growth and the movement of people to towns from the countryside forced a change in the political balance, and by the end of the century most men had the right to vote.” (MCDOWALL, 1989, p. 131).

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain saw her prosper times turn into a nightmare. With the peace, Britain had no one to buy their factory-made products and as a result many people lost their jobs, not to mention the soldiers who were back home looking for employment. In order to chase for better life conditions, many people from the countryside fled into the towns. Before, most people lived in the countryside, but by the third decade of the nineteenth- century most people were living in cities.

These cities were overcrowded and most people lived in unhealthy conditions. Most of the factory workers lived in tiny houses in slums without any proper drains or water supplies and, according to Mcdowall: “One baby in four died within the first year of its birth.” (MCDOWALL, 1989, p.140). By the end of the nineteenth-century, a

lot of women and children still worked under very bad conditions in factories in order to help their families.

The railway system was a great achievement for Britain in the nineteenth-century. It made it possible for the industrialists to transport their products throughout the country. Later, it was not just goods that were being transported but people began to use the railway. Rich and poor benefited from the railway system. They used it to go back and forth from work, and from the suburbs into town. Another important aspect of the nineteenth-century was the growth of the middle classes, which included people of different levels and positions in society such as law, medicine, the civil service, the army, the navy and the merchant banking. If most people from the countryside had fled to the cities seeking for employment, most of the people from the middle classes had fled into the suburbs in order to find better conditions of living since the cities were overcrowded and unhealthy.

Amongst many social and political changes, Queen Victoria managed to successfully reign in a newly industrialized nation. Queen Victoria became queen as a young woman and reigned until her death. According to Mcdowall, Queen Victoria managed to improve monarchy's popularity among people in a time when many people believed that with democracy, monarchy would soon reach its end, as writes Mcdowall:

One important step back to popularity was the publication in 1868 of the queen's book *Our life in the Highlands*.[...] It delighted the public, in particular the growing middle class. They had never before known anything of the private life of the monarch, and they enjoyed being able to share it. [...] But she also touched people's hearts. She succeed in showing a newly industrialized nation that the monarchy was a connection with a glorious history. (MCDOWALL, 1989, p.144).

Concerning family values in the nineteenth century, it is important to notice that strict ideas influenced family relations at the time. In a typical family of the Victorian period, the husband remained as the 'head' of the household. Wives were not seen as equals to their husbands, as Mcdowall reminds us: "As someone wrote in 1800, "the husband and wife are one, and the husband is that one." (MCDOWALL, 1989,p.137). It was almost impossible for women to find happiness outside marriage and family life. Victorian women were destined to find a suitable man and get married. As many critics have said, the Victorian period was the age when sexuality was carefully controlled. Russel M. Goldfarb has argued that the Victorians were

obsessed with sex: “ The truth is, of course, the Victorian age was obsessed with hiding sex [...] If sexual expression could be hidden deeply enough, if it could be successfully repressed, completely repressed, then one could speak easily and apparently without guilt of being respectable.” (GOLDFARD, 1970,p. 21).

Still according to Goldfarb, this obsession with sex and respectability was very much emphasized by the Church. Religion played an important role in regulating people’s sexuality in the nineteenth century. Religious literature tried to promote holiness and was for free. Evangelical reading was strongly promoted among people, while Victorian authors and poets were not studied at schools. Sex was not to be seen, spoken or stimulated by any measure, it was a secret that should be kept away in the parent’s bedroom and not to be practiced to achieve pleasure but to reproduce descents. As Goldfarb writes: “Many adult Victorians were completely ignorant about whole areas of human sexual behaviour.” (GOLDFARD, 1970,p.35). Victorian women were not expected to be capable of sexual feeling. They were supposed to only please their husbands; sexual pleasure and enjoyment of intercourse was out of question for these women. As Goldfarb puts it: “the Victorians wanted desperately to believe that their wives and mothers were sexually pure and so they placed women on a towering pedestal the better to idolize them; on the pedestal, women served as constant reminders that society wanted them isolated.” (GOLDFARD, 1970,p. 41).

The Victorian woman thus became the embodiment of purity and at the same time the that they became the embodiment of sexual repression. She was supposed to keep the family in order. She played the role of the guardian, the guardian of the family and society.

In the United States, during the nineteenth century, things were not much different from Britain as regards family and women. Religion played an important role in influencing people’s sexual behaviour in the United States like it did in Britain. The country’s first founders, the Puritans, chased holiness in their matrimonies. The Puritans, made an effort to lead a pious life in which God was the supreme authority. Aware of their religious obligations, the Puritans maintained a strictly disciplined way of living.

In the beginning of the nineteenth-century the United States was an agricultural country in expansion. As regards literature, Romanticism found great sympathy by the American mind that was daily in contact with nature and expanding its territory. At this period personal freedom was of very much importance and

attractive to Americans. Americans considered individual liberty the essence of their society. Romanticism also emphasized individualism and each person's integrity was respected. These ideas and attitudes also impressed Americans. Before they had struggled for their individual liberties; now they had guaranteed their rights and liberty in the democracy they had created.

As concerning important aspects of the American past in the nineteenth century, it is clear that with the independence and expansion of the American territory, the United States was not only a growing nation, but it is fundamental to highlight that a new American mentality was also emerging. This new emerging set of mind was individualism. The previous tradition in American culture had been Puritanism, which besides seeking for a holy life and future salvation, it had also concentrated upon each person's rational and intellectual capacities to fully develop his or her abilities as individuals. It can be argued that this new mindset in the American society of the nineteenth century contributed to the development of the nation's economy. The growing nation offered many opportunities for investment and many individuals ventured to establish new businesses. Individualism undoubtedly contributed greatly to the development of the American economy and society.

As regards the structure of the American family of the nineteenth century, a new ideology was emerging. According to Tamara K. Hareven one of the major changes was "[...]the recognition of childhood as a distinct stage of life among urban middle-class families.[...] Children were no longer expected to join work force until their late teens [...] Parents began to view them as dependent objects of tender nurture and protection." (HAREVEN, 1987,p. 247).

Like in Britain, motherhood was the full-time occupation for American women, as Hareven reminds us: "[...] women were expected to concentrate on making the home a perfect place and on child rearing [...]" (HAREVEN, 1987,p. 248). The roles of husbands and wives were also clearly delimited:

The roles of husbands and wives became gradually more separate; a clear division of labour replaced the old economic cooperation, and the wife's efforts concentrated on home-making and child rearing. With men leaving the home to work elsewhere, time invested in fatherhood occurred primarily during leisure hours. [...] This pattern, which emerged in the early nineteenth-century, formed the base of relations characteristic of the contemporary American family. (HAREVEN, 1987, p. 248).

According to Haveren, in the nineteenth-century American society, the cult of domesticity predominated. According to the theorist, it helped to keep women from

being able to work outside their homes and limited their activities to the management of their households: “Consequently, married women entered the labour force only when driven by necessity.” (HAREVEN, 1987,p.248). In this aspect, among traditional families “[...] sentiment was secondary to family needs and survival strategies.” (HAREVEN, 1987,p. 249), in this sense, marriage was regulated and decided not by the desires of the individual but in accordance to the family’s decision.

During this period, the timing between marriage and the first child was very narrow. Marriage was the main goal of young women’s existence and procreation was the major goal in marriage, as Tamara Haveren argues: “In the nineteenth-century, when conception was likely to take place very shortly after marriage, the major transition in a woman’s life was represented by marriage itself.” (HAREVEN, 1987,p. 252).

2 CHAPTER TWO: MARRIAGE AND WOMEN

It is easier to be a lover than a husband for the simple reason that it is more difficult to be witty every day than to say pretty things from time to time.

Honoré de Balzac

In this section, marriage and its issues regarding women will be discussed through different perspectives of authors such as Michel Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir, Martha Vicinus and Patricia Branca. These authors will help us achieve a clear understanding of marriage and its background.

For many decades women have been prepared to get married, have children and serve the family. Women have been kept under the submission of the male-dominant figures of fathers and husbands. In order to start this discussion, we must consider the perspectives of Michel Foucault regarding marriage. In his *History of Sexuality 2*, Foucault, gives us a rich historical insight about the sexual relations between husband and wife within the Greek society centuries ago. According to Foucault, the Greeks had a clear set of rules to what was allowed and forbidden concerning married couples. The Greek society legally allowed men to obtain sexual pleasure outside marriage as for in this society, for some time, marriage's main function was reproduction. As for women, all their sexual activity had to be within their marriages and their husbands had to be their only sexual partners, as Foucault describes: "they were under his power; it was to him that they had to give their children, who would be citizens and heirs." (FOUCAULT, 1992. p.145).

In the ancient Greek society, when a couple was married, it was the woman who suffered most restrictions because of her marital status as wife. On the other hand, marriage did not impose sexual restrictions on the man. The married man was forbidden only from contracting another marriage, but he was allowed to have intimate affairs with other women, he could even contract the services of a prostitute. As men were allowed to fulfil their sexual desires outside his household, adultery only

happened if the married woman had sexual encounters with another man other than her husband. It was the status of the woman that characterized adultery and not the status of the man, since his married status did not restrict him, as Foucault points out: “The principle of a double monopoly, making exclusive partners of the two spouses, was not required in the marital relation. For while the wife belonged to the husband, the husband belonged only to himself.” (FOUCAULT, 1992,p.146). However, according to Foucault, the man had some obligations once he was married. His reputation as a citizen was directly connected to accomplishing his household obligations. Once married, the man became the head of the family and his reputation was linked to how well he exercised his authority at home.

While the woman was restricted to rearing children and exercising her sexual activities only with her husband, if the man had to restrict his sexual activities it was because he was expected to display self-control in the use of his authority, but for the wife, “having sexual relations only with her husband was a consequence of the fact that she was under his control. For the husband, having sexual relations only with his wife was the most elegant way of exercising his control.” (FOUCAULT, 1992,p.151).

Continuing to reflect upon marriage within the context of the Ancient Greece through the light of Michel Foucault’s analysis, we may acquire a better understanding of marriage and the relationships between husbands and wives.

In Foucault’s *History of Sexuality 3*, in the section entitled *Wife*, within the first chapter, “The Marriage Tie”, Foucault presents us with a study on marriage. In this chapter, Foucault investigates the major shift in Ancient Greece regarding marriage. According to Foucault, this major shift was encountered in the Stoic texts of the two first centuries which pictured a different form of relationship between husband and wife from the one proposed in the classical texts. In these texts, marriage was a “matrimonial form” of setting roles for man and woman and managing the household, but in the Stoic texts, it is no longer just a “matrimonial form” but a “marriage tie”; in other words, a “tie” between the husband and wife which established a personal relationship between them.

If the purpose of marriage was to mainly contribute to the community and to procreation, the Stoics changed this view in an important way. If procreation is an important aspect in society, on the other hand, it alone should not justify marriage. According to Foucault, to one important Stoic philosopher, Musonius, marriage is based on the human, rather primitive tendency which aims at constituting progeny

and sharing of existence. Foucault also cites other thinkers, such as Plato: “he recommended to humans the example of those animals that are chaste so long as they are living in a band but pair off and become “conjugal” when the mating season arrives.” (FOUCAULT, 1992,p.152).

In Ancient Greece, Stoic thinkers perceived marriage as a duty, for them marriage was a direct ordain by Nature to which humans were naturally drawn. It also meant for them a set of tasks and duties that every human being should follow as a member of humanity. But marriage was not only conceived as a “duty”, it was also to be aspired as a common existence by the spouses in which they participate in one another’s life and remain together as much as possible. The Stoics granted the husband and wife equal capability of virtues. Harmony is a fundamental aspect for the success in the matrimonial life according to the Stoics. In this sense, the relationship between the woman as “wife” and the man as “husband” as individuals who are conjugal by nature, a nature that is fulfilled by a life in common, is essential to existence.

It is relevant to mention that in Ancient Greece the concepts of infidelity and adultery took, according to Foucault, a new problematization given the association of sexual relations and the requirement of doubled sexual fidelity. What defined infidelity and adultery had different meanings regarding husband and wife. What established adultery was solely the fact that the woman was married. The marital status of the man did not matter. If a man was unfaithful he was not considered to have transgressed the matrimonial “tie” or his bond to the wife as her husband, but he was considered to have transgressed the core of relations between men. It is true that we can find in the history of Greek society changes in the conduct of matrimonial life which required reciprocal fidelity between husband and wife, but it is important to point out that marriage required a particular style of conduct to both man and the woman and in the case of infidelity what mattered was the married woman’s status and not of the man’s to define adultery.

As we will see, very little was changed from the medieval condition of a married woman. In the nineteenth century the womanhood ideal was constructed for an emerging bourgeois supremacy. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, points out how “marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society.” (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p. 445). Although, due to the economic evolution in woman’s situation and due to the fact that this evolution has set a process of changes

regarding the institution of marriage in relation to women, marriage tends to perpetuate its old ways.

Beauvoir argues that marriage has always been a different thing for man and for woman. According to her, a man is socially an independent and complete being whose existence has the productive function of a worker whereas the woman while granted the domestic and reproductive roles, is not guaranteed equality. In order to reinforce her argument Beauvoir investigates in history the situation of women in ancient societies regarding marriage. According to her, in some societies, the woman has never been able to choose her future husband. The woman mostly like a slave is controlled by her family which is dominated by fathers and brothers and has been given in marriage to a male by other males. In some more primitive societies, the woman like an object would be part of deals agreed by two distinctive families. We see that the woman's freedom to choose her destiny has been much restricted as Beauvoir says: "marriage is her only means of support and the sole justification of her existence." (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.446).

Marriage has been the woman's justification of existence mainly for two reasons. In some cases, the first reason is that she must procreate and contribute to society with children and the second reason, in some cases, is that she must satisfy the man's sexual needs and mind his household and children. Once married the woman was expected to fulfil some duties placed on her and in return her husband had to support her. There is no equality between the sexes. The girl is *given* into marriage by her father while the man *gets* married.

Marriage permits the married man the synthesis of maintenance and progression which are implied in the living activity because the man through his occupation in business and in the political life can find progress and change and once he is tired of such life he can find comfort and peace in his home which the woman has carefully guarded. On the other hand, the married woman's main occupation in her life is to take care of the house and of the children. As we can see, outside the household the married woman has very little influence; she participates in the social community only through her husband.

Still according to Simone de Beauvoir, if marriage enslaves the woman to her man, at the same time it makes of her the mistress of the home. Even those more emancipated women tend to choose marriage considering the economic advantages it can bring into their lives. According to Beauvoir, on the whole, the situation of the

married woman is unfair in relation to the married man. The wife's life is fated to repetition as she tried to establish continuity at the household while the married man as the one responsible for the family's earnings, is able to lead a more exciting life outside his home. As Beauvoir argues: "Man marries today to obtain an anchorage in immanence, but not to be himself confined therein; he wants to have hearth and home while being free to escape there from; he settles down but often remains a vagabond at heart; he is not contemptuous of domestic felicity; he seeks novelty, opposition to overcome, companions and friends who take him away from solitude *à deux*." (BEAUVOIR, 1997,p. 475).

While some men marry to find an anchorage in immanence, for the married woman immanence is a constant factor in her life. Because marriage restricts the married woman's life is devoted to the maintenance of the house and the care of children, she often feels annoyed and unsatisfied. The tragedy of marriage, says Beauvoir, is that it mutilates the woman; it dooms her to repetition and routine. (BEAUVOIR, 1997,p.496).

In *Suffer and Be Still*, Martha Vicinus presents us with different essays on feminine stereotypes and attitudes concerning women in the Victorian age. In her introduction, Vicinus, argues that in beginning of the nineteenth century the "perfect lady" was very much idealized during the Victorian period. Young girls from the upper middle classes were raised by their families to become the "perfect lady". These girls brought up to be innocent and sexually ignorant. Motherhood and family caring were innate to these girls, who after marriage did not work and had little to do with their children. Most of their occupation concerned the managing of the servants and the household. Their social status depended on their father's or husband's. Needless to say their lives revolved solely around the well keeping of their families.

During the Victorian era, marriage was of prime importance. Young women did their best to suit into the "perfect lady" ideal. Their sole goal was marriage and once married it concerned procreation. These young women were trained to be "perfect" ladies. They had to know how to speak languages, especially French, and how to play an instrument. They were also trained to keep their opinion to themselves. They were trained to be affective and that was enough. Besides serving the family, the Victorian married woman, would serve in the Church as an "alternative" servitude.

Those who did not find a suitable man to marry and perpetuate the Victorian "destiny", were much seen as parasites in society who usually had to remain at their

father or brother's house at their cost. The woman without a husband was considered to be a social failure, even more- an outcast. The "outcast" woman then, impoverished and surviving at her brother's expense had to seek for work. With society offering little or nothing, many respectable ladies, unable to find work were drawn into prostitution in order to survive.

Those who went into prostitution, divorced women and those who committed adultery, were a threat to society. Expected to be docile, loving and submissive, the "perfect lady", looked after her family and committed her heart and soul to her husband. Adultery was the worse sin that the perfect lady could ever commit. Those who transgressed the marriage "tie", were expelled from social circles.

Patricia Branca, in *Silent Sisterhood*, offers an important study about women's social situation and their role in the family during the nineteenth century. In this study, Branca, also argues that marriage provided the main role for the middle- class women during the Victorian period. Although, many critics have argued that the Victorian middle-class women were mere submissive and unimportant figures who did not have a major role in society, Branca, on the other hand, argues that the Victorian middle class wife played a very important and active role in the family. For Branca, the middle-class wife was a true help for her husband, not only did he care for their children and house, but she also helped the husband in his business. This "perfect lady", was the desire of many parents for their daughters. Parents would send their daughters to boarding schools where they would learn all the good manners required to be a perfect lady and a suitable wife.

According to Branca, within the Victorian context, the middle class girls kept themselves busy in trying to acquire the perfect lady's accomplishments and no longer concerned themselves with the affairs of the household. The Perfect Lady's main role was to provide the household with an offspring. After having children, the Perfect Lady concerned herself very little with her children. They had nannies and governess to mind and educate their children. As her husband's "helper", the Perfect Lady was expected to comfort her husband in his moments of grief and to provide her family a peaceful environment. Branca points out the fact that before Law the married woman had no existence apart from her husband. Divorce was extremely difficult to obtain and in case of adultery, the woman, had to prove additional charge by her husband. Regarding the couple's children, the husband had all the legal rights. The married woman was in an inferior position to her husband, since she did

not work, and when she did, all her money belonged to her husband. The husband of the Victorian middle-class wife had all legal right to her earnings and inheritance she might obtain.

3 CHAPTER THREE: TRANSGRESSION AND TRANSGRESSIVE NARRATIVES

We seek the heights.
Each one of us can ignore this
search if he has a mind to, but
mankind as a whole aspires to
this heights; they are the only
definition of his nature, his only
justification and significance.

Georges Bataille

In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw is torn between two men. Marriage has taken her physically away from Heathcliff but not emotionally. As a married woman Catherine is not supposed to even think of another man, but she declares that “[...] they may bury me twelve feet deep, and throw the church down over me, but I won’t rest till you are with me. I never will!” (BRONTË, 1994, p.117). It is clear that Catherine desires Heathcliff and wishes to be with him. For Terry Eagleton, Catherine lives two lives as she tries to conform to the social role of a married woman she had assigned and at the same time trying to keep her link with Heathcliff: “Like Lucy Snowe, Catherine tries to lead two lives: she hopes to square authenticity with social convention, running in harness an ontological commitment to Heathcliff with a phenomenal relationship to Linton.” (EAGLETON, 1997, p. 224).

As regards desire and pleasure, marriage did not provide the fulfilment of these two; the sole purpose of marriage was linked to reproduction; any sort of sexual pleasure was excluded from the marital tie. As women were subjugated to their husbands, all their sexual desire had to be towards their men and their husbands had to be their exclusive partners: “Aphrodite and Eros must be present in marriage and nowhere else.”, Foucault points out (FOUCAULT, 1990, p.177).

In this sense, if Aphrodite and Eros must be experienced in marriage only, we certainly know that Catherine cannot live a happy marriage with Linton because she is never able to forget Heathcliff. As Maria Conceição Monteiro highlights in her “ Evil in Brazilian/ Canadian Literatures: A Cultural Legacy”: “ when Catherine marries Edgar Linton and moves to Thrushcross Grange, her transformation is not complete, as she cannot leave her shadow, Heathcliff, behind and, thus, she remains torn

between the two men” (MONTEIRO, 2009, p.99). In this aspect, we can see that marriage has imposed a barrier between the relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff, bringing only dissatisfaction and deception as neither Catherine nor Heathcliff can achieve a sense of completeness being apart from each other.

In *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier is up to the moment of her vacation on Grand Island, living in an unsatisfactory marriage as a half-asleep woman. Returning now to the marriage of Edna and Léonce Pontellier, in the very beginning of the story we have a peculiar description which reveals Mr. Pontellier’s views of his wife: “You are burned beyond recognition, he added, looking at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage.”, says Mr. Pontellier to his wife (CHOPIN, 1993, p.2). This clear description reveals Mr. Pontellier’s feelings towards Edna and her position in relation to her husband; a valuable piece of personal property.

As the novels unfolds, we begin to discover Edna’ feelings as regards her marriage and as we meet with Edna in her moments of solitude, we see her: “turning, she thrust her face, steaming and wet, into the bend of her arm, and she went on crying there [...] She could not have told why she was crying. Such experiences as the foregoing were not uncommon in her married life.” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.06), as we go on, we discover that often:

An indescribable oppression, which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness, filled her whole being with a vague anguish. It was like a shadow, like a mist passing across her soul’s summer day. It was strange and unfamiliar; it was a mood. She did not sit there inwardly upbraiding her husband, lamenting at Fate, which had directed her footsteps to the path which they had taken. She was just having a good cry all to herself. (CHOPIN, 1994, p.6)

In both novels, the protagonists are imprisoned by their traditional marriages. By trying to fulfil the social roles assigned for them as women, both Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier see themselves trapped in a situation that cannot bring them any kind of self-realization or happiness as women, thus, exposing the conflicts within the conjugal life so much valued by the patriarchal society at the time.

In his essay “A Preface to Transgression”, Michel Foucault draws our attention to the fact transgression involves the limit – transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses. Foucault’s formulation suggests that the limit and transgression are connected for transgression would not exist if there was no limit to be transpassed. For the French theorist, transgression:

Does not seek to oppose one thing to another, nor does it achieve its purpose through mockery or by upsetting the solidity of foundations; it does not transform the other side of the mirror, beyond an invisible and uncrossable line, into a glittering expanse. Transgression is neither violence in a divided world (in an ethical world) nor a victory over reason, (in a dialectical or revolutionary world); and, exactly for this reason, its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise. (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.74).

Foucault's perspective provides us a new understanding about transgression. Usually, most of us tend to think of transgression as something bad – an act that destroys or eliminates something. However, what transgression does is not “to seek to oppose one thing to another” (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.74), but “transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being – affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time.” (FOUCAULT: 2000, p. 74).

Still in the same line of thought, we see that transgression does not eliminate the limit; rather it reveals its existence. In this sense, we can see that transgression and the limit depend on each other for their existence; once transgression denies the limit, at the same time, transgression also reveals it, thus transgression reaffirms the existence of the limit. Foucault calls our attention to this dependency which make of the limit and transgression closely related. This dependency is kept because “transgression carries the limit right to the limit of its being: transgression forces the limit to face the fact of its imminent disappearance, to find itself in what it excludes (perhaps, to be more exact, to recognize itself for the first time), to experience its positive truth in its downward fall.” (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.73).

In this line of thought, when we think of the relationship between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, we see how through transgression they try to reconstruct the bound that was damaged by Catherine's marriage with Edgar Linton. As Maria Conceição argues: “When they are dislocated from this world of imaginary unity, therefore, they struggle desperately to recover it. When Catherine is compelled to choose between the two men in her life, she loses the other self that gives her the sense of wholeness.” (MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 99). In this way, Catherine's sense of self is only achieved by being with Heathcliff; thus their separation represents the limit that should not have not been crossed.

In *The Awakening*, we see Edna Pontellier trying to achieve some sort of emancipation when she decides to leave her home and her family and chooses to

live by herself; step which “she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual.” (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 94).

In this sense, Edna's marriage and her family represent the limit which she tries to cross. In this same line of thought, we see that when Edna takes the action and leaves her family; by transgressing this limit, she is revealing us what keeps her imprisoned.

Leaving her home and family, is not the only act of transgression that Edna Pontellier takes. We already know that many times she forgets her children and feels glad not to have to deal with them. Edna gets involved romantically with two different men during the vacation on Grand Isle. Like Catherine Earnshaw, Edna does not have a physical sexual encounter with her beloved Robert Lebrun, but we know that she strongly desires him. After Robert Lebrun goes to Mexico, Edna meets Alcée Arobin for whom she feels no real strong feeling, but is drawn to him sexually: “Alcée Arobin was absolutely nothing to her. Yet his presence, his manners, the warmth of his glances, and above all the touch of his lips upon her hand had acted like a narcotic upon her.” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.77). Although, Edna does not experience a physical sexual encounter with Robert, she does so with Arobin as described in the following scene:

She only looked at him and smiled. His eyes were very near. He leaned upon the lounge with an arm extended across her, while the other hand still rested upon her hair. They continued silently to look into each other's eyes. When he leaned forward and kissed her, she clasped his head, holding his lips to hers. It was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming torch that kindled desire. (CHOPIN, 1993, p.83).

As we can notice from the scene above, Edna does not experience her attraction for Arobin only through desire; she experiences it physically too and obtains a feeling of satisfaction from it: “it was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded.” (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 83), making of Edna Pontellier an adulterous woman for having failed to respect the matrimonial law imposed on her by her bourgeois society.

Both Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier have become adulterous women for having transgressed the patterns of conduct formulated by their societies for married women. As we know Edna has got romantically and sexually involved with two different men and with both of them she commits adultery. Even though

Robert and Edna have never had a physical sexual relationship, Edna desires him and makes plans to be with him in the future. On the other hand, Edna has a physical sexual encounter with Arobin; her desire for him is merely sexual. Therefore, Edna Pontellier, is an adulterous woman twice - for having physical sexual encounter with one man and for desiring another.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff love each other; however, they do not have a sexual physical encounter. Although, Catherine does not have a physical sexual encounter with Heathcliff, her sexual desire for him is very evident as she asks Heathcliff to come and take her: "But Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I'll keep you." (BRONTË, 1994, p.115). In "Cenas de um Casamento: Paixão e Transgressão", Maria Conceição Monteiro argues that adultery does not necessarily involves a physical sexual encounter, but it can happen simply on the level of desire, as she points out about the relationship between Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff: "apesar de não haver um encontro sexual físico entre Catherine e Heathcliff, considero de adultério a cena que se segue, simplesmente, por ocorrer no plano da paixão, em que o desejo transcende o ato em si em busca do absoluto." (MONTEIRO, 2009, p.136).

We cannot forget Heathcliff, in his acts for revenge, he like Catherine becomes a transgressor. Georges Bataille reminds us how the love between Heathcliff and Catherine originated; they abandoned themselves in their innocence and remained untouched by any conventions of society. However, according to Bataille their wild and childish love could not have survived because "social constraint would have required the young savages to give up their innocent sovereignty; it would have required them to comply with those reasonable adult conventions which are advantageous to the community." (BATAILLE, 2001, p.18).

Having to conform to the world of assigned conventions, Catherine marries Linton, while Heathcliff flees from *Wuthering Heights* only to return as a rich man. Heathcliff is then armed with the necessary weapons to fight his "enemies" and revenge those who had caused him misery. For Heathcliff, the limit that is unveiled is the fact that, like Catherine, he cannot bear to live separated from his beloved; thus when their bond is broken by her marriage, and she leaves him to live her married life in Thruscross Grange, Heathcliff seeks revenge. By seeking revenge and committing the most cruel acts against his enemies, Heathcliff becomes a transgressor whose fury cannot be stopped.

Seeking revenge, Heathcliff goes away for a while and returns a wealthy man, but Emily Brontë does not provide us information about how Heathcliff obtained his money. Taking advantage of Hindley's drinking problem, Heathcliff sets himself to ruin Hindley and eventually takes over all his property. Knowing that Isabella Linton is in love with him, he decides to marry her, but treats her badly and takes her to live in Wuthering Heights. One day, Isabella pregnant manages to escape Wuthering Heights and gives birth to a sickly son named Linton Heathcliff in the South of England. In the meanwhile, Hindley dies of drinking and Heathcliff is able to take over Wuthering Heights, where he lives with Hindley's son, Hareton, whom Heathcliff, out of revenge, mistreats and keeps from obtaining any kind of education. As if his actions of revenge were not enough, Heathcliff goes even further transgressing the "limits" of humanity in order to accomplish his revenge. Some time passes, and Catherine Linton discovers that she has two cousins. On Isabella's death, Heathcliff claims Linton Heathcliff and takes him to Wuthering Heights. One day Catherine discovers about her cousin Linton and they start to correspond with each other secretly until their correspondence is discovered and stopped. One day, Catherine meets Heathcliff who tells her that Linton is very ill. She many times visits him secretly. One day, Heathcliff kidnaps her and forces her to marry Linton. Linton makes a will leaving all his property to his father Heathcliff before dying; this way Heathcliff takes possession of both properties – Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.

Heathcliff acts of hatred may cause us to think that he is pure evil; however, we can see he is on the side of humanity because we can understand the sufferings he went through and which led him to commit his acts of hatred. According to Arnold Kettle, Heathcliff is a conscious rebel:

[...] Heathcliff becomes a monster: what he does to Isabella, to Hareton, to Cathy, to his son, even to the wretched Hindley, is cruel and inhuman beyond normal thought. He seems concerned to achieve new refinements of horror, new depths of degradation. And we tend to feel, perhaps, unless we read with full care and responsiveness, that Emily Brontë has gone too far, that the revenge (especially the marriage of Cathy and Linton Heathcliff) has o'erflown the measure. And yet it is only one side of our minds, the conscious, limited side that refers what we are reading to our everyday measures of experience that makes this objection. Another side, which is more completely responding to Emily Brontë's art, is carried on. And the astonishing achievement of this part of the book is that, despite our protests about probability (protests which, incidentally, a good deal of the twentieth-century history makes us a little complacent), despite everything he does and is, we continue to sympathize with Heathcliff –not, obviously, to admire him or defend him, but to give him our inmost sympathy, to continue in an obscure way to identify ourselves with him *against* the other characters. (KETTLE, 1997, p. 168-169).

Still, borrowing Kettle's argument about Heathcliff acts of revenge, we can understand why Heathcliff goes so far in his revenge because we can see the morality behind his actions: "Heathcliff retains our sympathy throughout this dreadful section of the book because instinctively we recognize a rough moral justice in what he has done to his oppressors and because, though he is inhuman, we understand *why* he is inhuman.

If transgression:

then, is not related to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of building to its enclosed spaces. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral that no simple infraction can exhaust. Perhaps, it is like a flash of lighting in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies; which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity. (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.74).

Then following Foucault's line of thought, we can conclude that transgression "illuminates" the boundaries – limits imposed on ourselves in different ways. The relationship between transgression and the limit is a continued one; the continued movement between the inappropriate and appropriated.

All characters mentioned in this section: Catherine Earnshaw, Edna Pontellier and Heathcliff have gone beyond the boundaries imposed on them; thus by doing so, they have not eliminated these boundaries but by going beyond them, they have questioned and identified these limits, in this sense, then, transgression becomes of very much importance as Monteiro points out:

The age of reason developed philosophical, scientific and psychological systems to define and classify the nature of the external world, the parameters of human organization and their relation to the workings of the mind. It is not surprising that in this context, transgression becomes important not only as an interrogation or received rules and values, but also to identify, reconstitute or transform limits. (MONTEIRO, 2009, p.101).

Catherine Earnshaw, Heathcliff and Edna were not, perhaps, able to fully obtain success in overcoming the limits imposed on them and which have kept them from accomplishing inner self fulfilment. However, they have been able to identify and question these rules and values. Both novels touch on the issue of unachieved desires. Considering the condition of women within the novels' historical context, and more specifically in the case of Catherine, and Heathcliff, their desires and erotic

fulfilment are treated as something that is evil; therefore the accomplishment of these desires for these characters can only be experienced as an experience that is located beyond the limit, thus; transgressing all laws.

Interesting to notice is that even though both Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier strive to achieve self-fulfilment by transgressing the limits that are part of their lives as women of the bourgeois society – Edna leaves her home to live in a cottage on her own, and Catherine tries to keep Heathcliff as a “friend” by her side even though she is married – both find it difficult to live the new life scribed for them. They cannot conform with the demands of domestic life. What we notice then is the ultimate failure they both face. For them to accept the requirements of conjugal life is to fall into depression and despair. Both Catherine and Edna face similar dilemmas. Catherine cannot live without her “soul” and Edna cannot envision herself in a role other than wife, mother or lover. Outside domestic life there is nothing for them.

In this sense, both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Awakening*, among other issues, signalises there is no place beyond the house for the heroines, no transcending the domestic life. In this line of thought, we see how in both novels, Catherine and Edna, are women who are caught in the fabric of social living, a fabric which often restricts the self. In this sense, the restrictions they encounter do not allow them to find a satisfactory way to experience and satisfy themselves outside domesticity. Domestic life does not allow them to find a sense of self. Hence transgression for them is “the act that carries them all to their limits and, from there, to the limit where an ontological decision achieves its end; to contest is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limits defines being.” (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.75).

TRANSGRESSIVE NARRATIVES

In both *The Awakening* and *Wuthering Heights*, the main female protagonists Edna Pontellier and Catherine Earnshaw can be considered to be transgressive women as they cross the norms and expectations set for them. Due to the fact that in *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin writes about the local people and society of Louisiana, some critics have tried to identify in *The Awakening* characteristics of American realism, romanticism and regionalism. For Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, many aspects encouraged this type of writing:

[...] the domination in book-length publication of European authors (not until 1891 did American writers acquire the protection of an international copyright law), the emergence of mass periodicals as market for short fiction, post-war curiosity about disparate sections of the country and a growing nostalgia for simpler times and tales of an ever-more-strange past. The concern of this writing was to capture the peculiar flavour of regions and districts. Dialects and customs, dress and landscape. It reached from the New England of Harriet Beecher Stowe, author not only of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [...] and Kate Chopin, with her outspoken novel of female repression, *The Awakening* (1899). (RULAND; BRANDURY, 1991, p.191-192).

Inspired by the place where she lived, Chopin is able to provide the reader with customs and culture of her environment, but a more comprehensive reading of the novel can allow us to notice elements that are universal human experiences. Indeed, the setting chosen by Chopin for her novel is full of local characteristics: an exotic island, a colourful parrot, the Gulf of Mexico, a group of French-Creole friends may reinforce the localism; however, when the reader meets Edna, they meet a woman who is facing a dilemma that many women could identify with.

At the time of its publication *The Awakening* received several negative criticisms. For the majority of 1899 critics, Chopin's protagonist, Edna Pontellier, appeared to be a foolish and selfish mother and wife who is not able to appreciate her husband and family. Indeed, the novel was being negatively criticized by reviewer after reviewer. According to Emily Toth, *The Awakening* was an "honest and fearless book that could be understood only by smart and sophisticated people [...]" (TOTH, 1999, p.221). Toth goes further suggesting that at the time of the novel's publication most editing and publishing companies which were controlled by males contributed for the negative acceptance:

The male critics and gatekeepers who controlled editing and publishing would never accept her vision of women's ambitions and passions, nor did they even notice her celebration of women's friendships. None of them noticed Edna's learning about herself, gaining trust in her own voice, in a world of women. Scarcely anyone praised Kate Chopin for writing with intelligence and maturity about a fascinating subject had been studying all her life: how women think. (TOTH, 1999, p.226).

The Awakening remained out of print for half a century after 1906. Nevertheless, by the 1990s, according to Emily Toth, a Norwegian named Per Seyersted began to resurrect Kate Chopin's work. Seyersted spent several years collecting archives for manuscripts and unpublished papers. In 1969, his *Complete Works of Kate Chopin* and *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography* were published, they

both coincided with the rebirth of the feminist movement in the United States. By the 1990s, *The Awakening* was finally being taught in Literature and Women's studies courses in the United States and around the world. In 1991, *A Vacation and a Voice* – Chopin's last story collection was published and the manuscripts, along with her letters and diaries were published in *Kate Chopin's Private Papers*, edited by Emily Toth, Per Seyersted, and Cheyenne Bonnell, in 1998.

When we compare *The Awakening* to the bildungsroman, we notice that Chopin moved her protagonist backward and inward. Although Edna is set in a public world, Chopin moves her away from it and leads her to a private world. Readers notice that in the story Edna does not begin as a child who will go through a process of discovering the ways of the world; rather she is first presented as an adult set successfully in this world. Chopin inverts the process of self-discovering in Edna's case. For Susan Rosowski, Edna Pontellier: "[...] learns that her youthful experience did not equip her for life, her suicide serving as a powerful reminder that she has not acquired the "art of living." (ROSOWSKI, 1988, p.27). In this sense, we can clearly notice how Chopin's narrative differs from the bildungsroman - despite the fact that it has some patterns that is typical of it, however, Chopin alters the process of self discovery and growth of her character.

Another interesting point present in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* is her narrative technique. The narrator in the novel, often presents the reader with the characters' thoughts while at the same time it can be observed what the narrator thinks about the characters. In a passage about Edna's marriage Chopin's narrator states: "she fancied there was a sympathy of thought and taste between them, in which fancy she was mistaken." (CHOPIN, 1993, p.18). As we can see, the first part of the phrase reveals Edna's belief of her relationship with her husband and the second part reveals the narrator's belief that Edna's conception is wrong. Chopin uses this technique many times in her novel.

In this line of thought, we can see that by showing two ways of thinking: Edna's and the narrator's, Chopin then enables the reader to follow Edna's awakenings and growth and perceive the conflict between the realization of the self as a woman and the conventions she is assigned to live socially.

Considering Mikhail Bakhtin's theory about the dialogic aspect of texts, we can argue that Kate Chopin calls into question the assumptions and ideologies about women presented by thinkers of her time. Bakhtin argues that the novel is a kind of

dialogue with other texts. In this sense, we can say that *The Awakening*, invites the reader into a conversation with the assumptions and ideologies created for women. Thus, “without overtly stating her position, Chopin makes counterclaims about women throughout *The Awakening* and has produced a novel that was scandalous in what it suggests about its heroine’s sexuality.” (BAUER; LAKRITZ, 1988, p.47).

In fact, Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, was creative in breaking the thematic and the stylistic ground as it marked an epoch. For exposing a woman’s personal and sexual longings, Chopin went beyond the work of her female precursors. Historically, *The Awakening* belongs to a period in American women’s writing. After the American Civil War, women began to demand their entrance to the educational and working world as motherhood and family were not anymore the goals of many women’s lives, fiction also had began to focus on other issues other than maternity and family as the conflicts experienced by Edna Pontellier.

According to Elaine Showalter, Chopin’s literary innovation took her through different phases of the nineteenth-century American women’s culture and writing, as she argues:

Born in 1850, she grew up with the great best-sellers of the American and English sentimentalists. As a girl, she had wept over the works of Warner and Stowe and had copied pious passages from the English novelist Dinah Mulock Craik’s *The Woman’s Kingdom* into her diary. Throughout her adolescence, Chopin had also shared an intimate friendship with Kitty Garasché, a classmate at the Academy of the Sacred Heart. Together, Chopin, recalled, the girls had read fiction and poetry, gone on excursions, and ‘exchanged our heart secrets.’ Their friendship ended in 1870 when Kate Chopin married and Kitty Garasché entered a convent. Yet when Oscar Chopin died in 1883, his young widow went to visit her old friend and was shocked by her blind isolation from the world. When Chopin began to write, she took as her models such local colorists as Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman, who had not only mastered technique and construction but had devoted themselves to telling the stories of female loneliness, isolation, and frustration. (SHOWALTER, 1991, p. 69-70).

Showalter suggests that much of the shock caused by *The Awakening* to the public was due to “Chopin’s rejection of the conventions of women’s writing.” (SHOWALTER, 1991, p.71). Edna Pontellier is also a peculiar woman; she is dissatisfied with her marriage to a successful business man and a comfortable home, she is not a woman happy with motherhood and physically she is rather strong and enjoys drinking and eating. As Showalter reminds us, for women who were used to reading about Meg in *Little Women*, *The Awakening* surely appeared to be shocking.

Another aspect which is interesting in Chopin’s novel is the organization of the structure of each section of her novel. They are structured in an uneven length. The

repetition of images and motifs such as the sea, the lovers, eating, sleeping, swimming and music alternate with realistic, dreamy and satirical scenes from different episodes of Edna's life. Most important about Chopin's narrative in *The Awakening*, suggests Showalter, lies in the fact that "where previous works by American women largely ignored sexuality or spiritualized it through maternity, *The Awakening* is insistently sexual, explicitly involved with the body and with self-awareness through physical awareness." (SHOWALTER, 1991, p.72).

Still according to Showalter, Chopin presented a new ending for her story by refusing to give Edna a traditional literary end: getting old and losing her husband and family but not her pride and art. However, articulating a new ending with a new ideology and aesthetic position was something impossible as Edna "remains very much entangled in her own emotions and moods, rather than moving beyond them to real self-understanding and to an awareness of her relationship to her society." (SHOWALTER, 1991,p.77).

It seems that in *The Awakening* both Edna and her creator break away from convention - Edna Pontellier rejects the roles of wife and mother and Kate Chopin, breaks away from the literary conventions by exposing a woman's dissatisfaction with the conventional roles set for her. In this sense, it seems that the stories of the author and the protagonist synthesize in an attempt for going beyond the definitions of artistic creation and femininity.

At this point we will consider *Wuthering Heights* and its narrative structure. As we have discussed in chapter one, marriage was an unquestioned destiny for a woman. For the Victorians of the nineteenth century in England marriage was portrayed in fiction as the happy destiny for any girl's life.

Wuthering Heights treated marriage differently. But to affirm that the novel is only about marriage is to reduce it and overlook its complexity and richness. For Virginia Woolf, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* touches what is beyond the personal experience to go the universal extension that we can all identify, she writes:

When Charlotte wrote she said with eloquence and splendour and passion "I love", "I hate", "I suffer." Her experience, though more intense, is on a level with our own. But there is no "I" in *Wuthering Heights*. There are no governesses. There are no employers. There is love, but it is not the love of men and women. Emily was inspired by some more general conception. The impulse which urged her to create was not her own suffering on her own injuries. She looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her power to unite it in a book. That gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle, half thwarted but superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely "I love" or "I

hate”, but “ we, the whole human race” and “ you, the eternal powers...” the sentence remains unfinished. (WOOLF, 1997, p. 130).

Like *The Awakening*, *Wuthering Heights* was not appreciated and well received by the critics of its time and Emily Brontë was not recognized as she deserved. In the biographical note present in the novel, Charlotte Brontë tells us that her sister's story was said to be “an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced *Jane Eyre*.” (BRONTË, 1994, p.8). Despite, past unfair criticisms, Brontë's novel is today considered to be one of the greatest books in English literature and Emily an unequal genius.

For critic David Cecil, *Wuthering Heights* is unlike any other work produced in its time. Cecil suggests that Brontë is able to go beyond her culture and surroundings in her writing as she does not touch only upon what is local; unlike her contemporaries:

Like Blake, Emily Brontë is concerned solely with those primary aspects of life which are unaffected by time and place. Looking at the world, she asks herself not, how does it work? What are the variations? –but what does it mean? None of the other Victorian novelists are concerned with such a question. And the fact that she is so occupied makes Emily Brontë's view of life essentially different from theirs. For it means that she sees human beings, not as they do in relation to other human beings, or to human civilization and societies and codes of conduct, but only in relation to the cosmic scheme of which they form a part. Mrs. Brown appears not as to Jane Austen in relation to Mr. Brown, or as to Scott in relation to her ancestors, or as to Trollope in relation to her place and social structure, or as Proust in relation to herself; but in relation to time and eternity, to death and fate and the nature of things. (CECIL, 1997, p.145-146).

Another unique element in Brontë's narrative is the antithesis between good and evil. Emily embraces both in her narrative. In fact, her characters can feel as much love as they can feel destructive passion for each other. What is also interesting to notice is that the typical battle between good and evil very much present in Victorian fiction seems not to be the case in *Wuthering Heights*. There is no battle between good and bad because good and bad are both components of the human nature.

According to Cecil, another different point in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, is her treatment of human feelings, for him her characters are the most intense in English fiction:

They are implacable and irresistible as the elemental forces they resemble; unchanging as the hills, fierce as the lightning; beside them, even Mr. Rochester's passions seem tame and tea-party affairs. But they are not awoken by the same

causes as the emotions in other Victorian novels. They may be superficially attracted for such reasons, as Catherine Earnshaw is attracted to Edgar Linton. But their deeper feelings are only aroused for someone for whom they feel a sense of affinity that comes from the fact that they are both expressions of the same spiritual principle. Catherine does not “like” Heathcliff, but she loves him with all the strength of her being. (CECIL, 1997, p.148).

David Cecil highlights another interesting characteristic of Brontë’s –her view of death; he points out: “here she is different from other Victorian novelist: and, as far as I know, from any novelist of any time. Emily Brontë does not see human conflict as ending with death.” (CECIL, 1997, p.149). As we know, Catherine does not go to heaven after she dies; her soul wanders and attempts to enter her chamber in the night Lockwood is in it and after her death Heathcliff urges to be haunted by her spirit.

In *Wuthering Heights*, death is not seen as bad for it does not represent the end of everything; rather it seems to be for Emily’s characters a sort of escape from the world where they could not achieve their goals “for themselves they welcome it as a gateway to a condition in which their natures will be able to flow out unhampered and at peace; a peace not of annihilation, but of fulfilment.” (CECIL, 1997, p. 150).

Nancy Armstrong’s study about the domestic fiction and its political power, highlights some important aspects of *Wuthering Heights* and its innovative technique. Armstrong argues that Emily Brontë was not challenging male institutions; “yet it does to require any great stretch of imagination to think that these women knew well the power of language to constitute subjectivity and knew as well that such power was easily available to women.” (ARMSTRONG, 1987, p.189).

Considering that Foucault’s conception about power becoming knowledge which works through discourse in order to sustain a certain institution, Armstrong suggests that the novels by the Brontë sisters have played a very important role in British history as she points out:

We can assume their fiction produced –figures of modern desire. These techniques have suppressed the political identity along with knowledge of oneself as such. The production of the political unconscious has accompanied the production of sexual subject, I believe, and in this way continued the repressive power actually exercised by a polite tradition of writing. (ARMSTRONG, 1987, p 191).

In this sense, when their narratives have produced “figures of modern desire”, the Brontës opened a new possibility to represent and talk about the issues of

women that were unspoken. In her study, Nancy traces a parallel between the Brontës' and Jane Austen's works. Armstrong believes that the Brontës' were able to go beyond and talk about the unseen desires of women while Austen had failed to do so:

Austen's heroines marry as soon as their desire has been correctly aimed and accurately communicated. But the Brontës broke up this congruity of personal and social experience by endowing their heroines with desire for the one object they could not possess, namely, Heathcliff and Rochester as first encountered in the novels. These males are historically obsolete. This frustration of conventional novelistic closure does not, however, repress some desire that exists prior to its figuration as writing, but provides a strategy by which to expand the semiotic space for representing personal desire. [...] When one discovers what one wants in an Austen novel, then, the story is almost over. But when one discovers what one wants in the Brontës's novels, the story has just gotten underway. Their heroines typically desire the one man whom society forbids them to marry, giving rise to the notion that social conventions are, in an essential way, opposed to individual desire. (ARMSTRONG, 1987, p.192-193).

As regards *Wuthering Heights*, Armstrong points out how Emily Brontë locates desire elsewhere outside social conventions. She argues how one of the narrators – Lockwood encounters an illegible social surface in *Wuthering Heights*. Lockwood fails to see the bond between Catherine Linton and Hareton because of his inferior social position. The critic also points out the fact that both Catherines in the novel have acquire all the families names which according to her this disjunction of their social identities reinforces the shifting of female desire.

Still according to Armstrong when the Brontës infuse their protagonists with desire for a male they cannot possess, “everyone within the field of social possibilities becomes a mere substitute for the original, and socially mediated forms of desire never again provide anything approximating *complete* gratification –to wit, Rochester’s missing parts.” (ARMSTRONG, 1987, p.198). For Armstrong when the Brontës represent desire:

[...] desire acquires a reality in its own right, a reality equivalent to, though often in conflict with, the reality principle. Of anything, desire wins out over the reality principle, as these novels progressively reorganize disparate elements of the socioeconomic. Not only social signs, but anatomical elements, biological functions, behaviours, sensations, and pleasures all become signs of male and female desire. And as they do so, the principle reorganizing the object world into this gender formation takes on the proportions of a casual principle and a universal meaning to be discovered. [...] With the Brontës, however, the history of the novel took a contrary turn. In their hands, domestic fiction began playing out a fierce struggle to socialize desires whose origins and vicissitudes comprised one's true identity as well as his or her possibilities of growth. (ARMSTRONG, 1987,p. 198).

In this sense we can conclude that *Wuthering Heights* proposes a new perspective in what is true about passion and society. The truth – that many times passion and social conventions are not reconcilable. While Catherine and Heathcliff attempt to keep their “romantic” reign alive, the ways of their society will only intensify their experience as Eagleton reminds us: “romantic intensity is locked in combat with society, but cannot whole transcend it; your freedom is bred and deformed in the shadow of your oppression, just as, in the adult Heathcliff, oppression is logical consequence of the exploiter’s ‘freedom’.” (EAGLETON, 1997, p.226).

We can see then, how both *The Awakening* and *Wuthering Heights* have shocked and troubled their contemporaries, but only because they have given voice and exposed the deepest “unseen” desires of their characters.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: DEATH AND EROTICISM

Yes, death. Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft brown earth, with the grasses waving above one's head, and listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and no to-morrow. To forget time, to forget life, to be at peace. You can help me. You can open for me the portals of death's house, for love is always with you, and love is stronger than death is.

Oscar Wilde

The imagery of death is present in both *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *The Awakening* (1899), in both novels the main protagonists perish. According to Gail Cunningham, the Victorian fallen woman was like a stain on society who should be punished either in her conscience or by death. (CUNNINGHAM, 1978, p.21). In this chapter, we shall consider the deaths of Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier. In both cases, death paradoxically seems to indicate that something has gone badly wrong, but at the same time it brings resolution.

Catherine's sufferings begin when she decides to marry Edgar Linton because "he will be rich, and I shall like to be greatest woman in the neighbourhood" and because "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now." (BRONTË, 1994,p.80). But Catherine is only superficially attracted to Linton (he is handsome and rich), on the other hand, her deepest feelings are aroused by Heathcliff; the one for whom she feels a real sense of affinity. Catherine is not only "fond" of Heathcliff, but she loves him with all her strength, to the point that she reveals to Nelly that she loves Heathcliff:

[...] not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. [...] My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning: my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger: I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods: time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My Love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff! He's always,

always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being. (BRONTË, 1994, p.80-81).

For all its intensity, Catherine's love for Heathcliff is her completeness for he is the being who brings her a sense of joy and fulfilment. In this sense, we can understand how Catherine's marriage to Linton brought misery upon her as it keeps her separated from Heathcliff. Melvin Watson suggests that the great irony of the novel lies in Catherine's failure to realize that her marriage initially intended to help Heathcliff, alienates herself from him, as Watson says: "she failed to think her decisions through. When she makes her fatal confession to Ellen, not once does she consider the effect of her choice on Heathcliff. She assumes that she can continue to rule both Edgar and Heathcliff as she has done in the past, but she reckons without his pride." (WATSON, 1997, p. 151). For Catherine being apart from Heathcliff is the greatest misery that could happen to her. In fact, she is not afraid of death, nor she cares whether it will make Heathcliff unhappy. She only fears death may break their bond:

[...] You killed me- and thriven on it, I think. How strong you are! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone? [...] I wish I could hold you till we were both dead! I shouldn't care what you suffered. I care nothing for you sufferings. Why shouldn't *you* suffer? I do! Will you forget me? Will you be happy when I am in the earth? Will you say twenty years hence, "That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw? I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her; but it is past. I've loved many others since: my children are dearer to me than she was; and, at death, I shall not rejoice that I am going to her: I shall be sorry that I must leave them!" (BRONTË, 1994: p.141-142).

For Heathcliff, Catherine's death represents his own death. Their relationship's bond is based on such a deep affinity that for Heathcliff, Catherine is his "life" and "soul" as he cries after he discovers that Catherine has died: "Oh, God! It is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" (BRONTË, 1994, p.148). After Catherine's death Heathcliff continues his revenge but from now on his mechanisms of revenge will become more cruel. He cries: "I have no pity! I have no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails!" (BRONTË, 1994, p.137). Arnold Kettle suggests that Heathcliff's strong desire for revenge becomes a pathological neurosis: "Heathcliff becomes a monster: what he does to Isabella, to Hareton, to Cathy, to his son, even to the wretched Hindley, is cruel and inhuman beyond normal thought." (KETTLE, 1997, p. 172). In this sense,

we can relate Heathcliff's hatred feelings towards those he wishes to revenge with death itself.

Catherine initially feels attracted to the world of Thrushcross Grange, after spending some time with the Lintons she returns visibly changed to Wuthering Heights –with her manners improved and wearing fine clothes. According to Queenie Leavis, Catherine's staying at Thrushcross Grange is the turning-point in her life, as she notes: "[...] as her inward succumbing to the temptations of social superiority and riches parts her from Heathcliff." (LEAVIS, 1997, p. 208).

As Arnold Kettle also points out, the marriage between Catherine and Edgar Linton which was intended to help Heathcliff escape Hindley's tyranny, turns out to be the cause of Catherine's suffering as it keeps her apart from Heathcliff and confined in a life that does not satisfy her and she cries: "oh, if I were in my own bed in the old house! [...] I wish I were out of doors! I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy and free; and laughing at injuries not maddening under them!" (BRONTË, 1994, p.115-116). In this sense, by leaving Heathcliff to marry Linton, Catherine has caused her own destruction as Kettle points out: "yet Catherine betrays Heathcliff and marries Linton, kidding herself that she can keep both, and then discovering that in denying Heathcliff she has chosen death." (KETTLE:1997, p. 165).

For David Cecil, like William Blake, Emily Brontë was concerned mainly with the aspects of life which are unaffected by time and place. She saw the lives of people, not in relation to other people or in relation the codes of societies, but in relation to "the comic scheme of which they are a part" (CECIL, 1997, p.145-146). According to Cecil, Emily was a mystic who believed in the immortality of the soul as he points out:

Finally, Emily Brontë does away with the most universally accepted of all antitheses—the antithesis between life and death. [...] if the individual life be the expression of a spiritual principle, it is clear that the mere dissolution of its fleshly integument will not destroy it. But she does more than believe in the immortality of the soul in the orthodox Christian sense. She believes in the immortality of the soul *in this world*. The spiritual principle of which the soul is a manifestation is active in this life: therefore, the disembodied soul continues to be active in this life. (CECIL, 1997:p. 149).

When Lockwood arrives at Wuthering Heights and falls asleep in Catherine Earnshaw's old chamber, he has a dream which he describes it as "the intense

horror of nightmare” in which Catherine appears as a child knocking on the window begging him to let her inside:

[...] I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of a nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it and a most melancholy voice sobbed, “Let me in-let me in!”, “who are you?” I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to discharge myself. “Catherine Linton”, it replied, shiveringly [...] “I’m come home: I’d lost my way on the moor!” As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. [...] yet, the instant I listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on! “Begone!” I shouted, “I’ll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years.” “It is twenty years,” mourned the voice: “twenty years. I’ve been a waif for twenty years!” (BRONTË, 1994, p. 36-37).

Although Lockwood speaks of the scene above as a nightmarish dream, Heathcliff will soon make it clear that Lockwood was not dreaming. In the same scene Heathcliff hears Lockwood’s scream and after discovering that Lockwood had had a dream with Catherine, Lockwood describes that “he got on to the bed, and wrenched open the lattice, bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears. “Come in! come in!” he sobbed. “Cathy, do come. Oh, do –*once* more! Oh! my heart’s darling! hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last!” (BRONTË, 1994,p. 39).

After her death, Catherine Earnshaw is very much present in the story as a force that is felt especially by Heathcliff like Cecil suggests when Catherine dies: “[...] her spirit does take up its abode at Wuthering Heights. And not just as an ineffective ghost: as much as in life she exerts an active influence over Heathcliff, besieges her passion.” (CECIL, 1997, p. 149-150). It is clear then that both Heathcliff and Catherine are tormented by their separation which started with Catherine’s marriage to Edgar Linton. Catherine cannot rest even after her death “[...] twenty years. I’ve been a waif for twenty years!” and Heathcliff is obsessed with striking down those he wishes to revenge.

If dead Catherine is physically separated from Heathcliff and has been wondering the moors in torment, paradoxically it is death which will bring for both Catherine and Heathcliff a sense of peace and fulfilment. The dying Catherine cries:

“And”, added she, musingly, “the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all. I’m tired of being enclosed here. I’m wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there: not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it, and in it. Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I; in full health and strength: you are sorry for me –very soon

that will be altered. I shall be sorry for you. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all. (BRONTË, 1994, p.143).

At her chamber, Heathcliff appears and finds dying Catherine. In their last encounter before she perishes Heathcliff does not offer Catherine comfort. Instead of comfort Heathcliff gives Catherine a direct analysis of what she has done:

You teach me now how cruel you've been –cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You killed yourself. [...] You loved me –then what *right* had you to leave me? What right –answer me –for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart –*you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you –oh, God! Would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave? (BRONTË, 1994, p. 144).

In the memorable passage above, Heathcliff knows that death awaits for Catherine and nothing can save her. He knows that this one analysis of what she has done can bring her peace and a “full and utterly honest understanding and acceptance of their relationship and what it implies.” (KETTLE, 1994, p. 168).

Heathcliff conquers both properties: Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, however, he comes to an understanding of the emptiness of his victory. By the end of the novel his hatred has disappeared in him, as Kettle suggests: “he has come to see the pointlessness of his fight to revenge himself on the world of power and property through its own values” (KETTLE, 1997, p. 171). At death, Heathcliff realizes the horror of his acts and by realising it he can die with dignity and “in his death he will achieve again human dignity, “to be carried to the churchyard in the evening.” (KETTLE, 1997, p. 171).

In this sense, the deaths of Catherine and Heathcliff are a kind of triumph because both face death honestly and come to a full understanding of their acts and their relationship. Catherine and Heathcliff know that their union is not possible and since the possibility of their physical union is totally erased by their deaths –their union must be spiritual, only in death, as Terry Eagleton points out, the love and relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff by-pass any social mediation; thus:

Their love remains an unhistorical essence which fails to enter the concrete existence and can do so, ironically, only in death. Death indeed, as the ultimate outer limit of consciousness and society, is the locus of Catherine and Heathcliff's love, the horizon on which it moves. The absolutism of death is prefigured, echoed back, in the

remorseless intensity with which their relationship is actually lived; yet their union can be achieved only in the act of abandoning the actual world. (EAGLETON, 1997, p. 230).

The Awakening is a novel which contains various imageries. Colours, smells and sounds are very much present in Kate Chopin's novel. Chopin's imagery is not merely a decorative artistic device as Joyce Dyer points out: "it is an essential artistic component. The book depends on symbolism to define Edna's psychological dilemma and romantic sensibility; to explain the limitations and dangers of her new vision; and finally, to help readers understand why Edna walks into the sea." (DYER, 1988, p.126).

If the imageries present in the novel are there to help the readers to understand why Edna chooses death at the end of the story, then we can argue that all these imageries help us to access Edna's mind and feelings. The imageries point out what Edna is going through in her life. There are very interesting imageries in the novel: the birds, the woman in black; the young lovers on the beach, Mariequita, music, the man in Edna's mind who stands naked on the beach and the sea; are some of the imageries.

Although, there are different imageries in the novel, in this section we will focus on the imagery of the sea as related to death. The imagery of the sea is present from the beginning to the end of the story and plays a fundamental role in the novel. The sea is connected to Edna's death. It is in the sea where she chooses to die. But the sea also plays a very important role in Edna's process of awakening. It is the sea that Edna first discovers the powers of her body: "but that night she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, boldly and with over-confidence." (CHOPIN, 1993, p.23). It is swimming in the waters of the gulf that Edna begins her search for emancipation and self-discovery.

Edna's creative and erotic powers are revived in the water when she is attempting to learn how to swim. The water's odour and touch revives Edna's sexuality: "the voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace." (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 13). Joyce Dyer suggests that in *The Awakening*, the sea represents the possibility of achieving spiritual and physical freedom, as she points out:

The gulf –like the woods in Hawthorne, the Mississippi Rover in Twain, the ocean in Melville –is a place that promises spiritual as well as physical freedom. The sea urges Edna toward limitlessness, toward transcendence, toward the romantic. As Donald Ringe recognized years ago, above all else *The Awakening* “is a powerful romantic novel” (“Romantic imagery” 587). Its sea invites the soul “to wonder for a spell in the abysses of solitude.” (DYER, 1988, p. 127).

In this sense, the water imagery in *The Awakening*, presents revival, healing and freedom to Edna’s sleeping erotic powers. It can be argued that the feelings of self-awakening, freedom and satisfaction experienced by Edna by being in contact with the water are symbols for the emancipation Edna desires to achieve in her life. But different reasons will prevent Edna from achieving the fulfilment that she strives for. Léonce represents the social conventions Edna must face –her role as wife and her children who “appeared before her like 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, 1993, p. 115), and yet she knows that she must do as Adèle asks her: “think of the children, Edna” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.111), just like John Rowe reminds us:

In a novel celebrated for its authenticity regarding a woman’s “natural” sensations and affections, *The Awakening* represents a woman’s nature in extraordinary ambitions ways. In fact, as Edna only dimly recognizes at the very end of the narrative but Chopin knows all too well, there can be *no* nature for a woman that is not always already shaped and determined, inscribed and charted, by the laws of the social order. (ROWE, 1992, p. 135).

In this aspect, we can consider how as Edna awakens to her erotic *self*, she acquires an understanding of the limitations of her new awaken powers, she realizes that “the bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.83), and as Edna walks on the beach she sees a bird with a broken wing “beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.115), just before her final swim. Again the imagery of the sea (water) is present, this time the sea receives the bird with the broken wing that cannot fly, just like it will receive Edna.

In *A Água e os Sonhos: Ensaio sobre a imaginação da matéria*, Gaston Bachelard offers us an interesting insight about the water imagery. For Bachelard the water is –among various symbolisms- a natural symbol for purity and purification: “a água se oferece pois como um símbolo natural para a pureza; ela dá sentidos

precisos a uma psicologia prolixa da purificação.” (BACHELARD, 1989,p.139), but it is also an invitation to death because:

A água já não é uma substância que se bebe; é uma substância que bebe, que *engole* a sombra como um xarope negro. [...] Suas águas preencheram uma função psicológica essencial: absorver as sombras, oferecer um tumulto cotidiano a tudo o que, diariamente, morre em nós. A água é assim um convite á morte; é um convite a uma morte especial que nos permite penetrar num dos refúgios materiais elementares. (BACHELARD, 1989, p.57-58).

Bearing in mind Bachelard’s thought, we can take into consideration Edna’s suicide in the water. For Bachelard the water represents both purification and an invitation to death, in this sense the water imagery in *The Awakening* has a paradoxical meaning once we consider that Edna begins her search and erotic awakening in the water, but it is also in the water that she ends it. The same sea that has invited Edna in the beginning to “[...] wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation” (CHOPIN: 1993, p.13) , is also where “ a quick vision of death smote her soul, and for a second of time appalled and enfeebled her senses.” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.28).

As we can see, the imagery of the sea (water) symbolizes both Edna’s awakening to her sensuality, to her own body and *self*, but at the same time the sea is infused with death. But this death is a redeeming death. In the end, Edna realizes that for her there is no place beyond the domestic house, there is no transcending domesticity; thus Edna understands that the only way to hold on onto her aspirations and escape domesticity is to die. Death is the price she has to pay for her dreams, but paradoxically it is only in death that she can find freedom. Bachelard suggests that the great hero of the sea is the hero of death:

Nenhuma utilidade pode legitimar o risco imenso de partir sobre as ondas. Para enfrentar a navegação, é preciso que haja interesses poderosos. Ora, os verdadeiros interesses poderosos são os quiméricos. São os interesses que sonhamos, e não os que calculamos [...] O herói do mar é um herói da morte. O primeiro marujo é o primeiro homem vivo que foi tão corajoso como um morto. (BACHELARD, 1989, p.76).

In her final swim Edna’s last thoughts are about her time as a child: “she did not look back now, but she went on and on, thinking of the blue-grass meadow that

she traversed when a little child [...] Edna heard her father's voice and her sister Margaret's" (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 116), in this sense, Edna's last thoughts about her childhood resembles Freud's idea about the living entity's desire to return to where it has departed: "the aim of all life is death." (FREUD, 1989, p. 32).

According to Freud while Eros is concerned with preserving life, the death instinct aims at destruction. In other words, the death instinct is in opposition to Eros. The death instinct drives beings into their "inanimate state". Freud points out that the instinct of the living individual aims not at a state of things that it has never been attained, instead, it aims at an "old" state of things: "[...] an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or another departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads" (FREUD, 1989, p.32), in this sense life is aiming at death; to return to its inanimate state of origin.

Borrowing Freud's ideas about the death instinct, Edna's death can represent the possibility to a return to the "state" in which she can free herself from the limitations she has to face in life. The waters of gulf in which she chooses to die welcome her to return back to the 'inanimate state' in which she can finally "be" herself. Bachelard reminds us that: "a morte numa água calma tem afeições maternais. [...] a água mistura aqui seus símbolos ambivalentes de nascimento e morte." (BACHELARD, 1989, p.93). This way, Edna's death in the water symbolizes both her failure in fulfilling her independence outside the world of social conventions succumbing with her physical death but it also symbolizes her rebirth and ultimate freedom.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Earnshaw dies for breaking the bond she and Heathcliff developed during their childhood. They both know that their union cannot become concrete in life; they must die for their union is only made possible in death, as the crying little boy tells us at the end: "there's Heathcliff and a woman" (BRONTË, 1997, p. 278). Both Catherine and Edna cannot escape the world of traditions; only death can save them. Gail Cunningham, reminds us that in many cases the Victorian fallen woman had to be punished by death, but in the cases of Catherine and Edna, death reveals that something has gone wrong in the lives of these women; however death is not a punishment for in their deaths they triumph.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine lives a turbulent life after her marriage to Edgar Linton, separated from Heathcliff she cannot live a peaceful life with her husband Edgar, her unhappiness is clear in her own words:

What were the use of my creation if, I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries. [...] If all else perished and *he* reminded, *I* should continue to be [...] My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods [...] my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath: a source of little visible delight, but necessary. (BRONTË, 1994, p.81).

It is clear Catherine's unhappiness with her marriage. Catherine's erotic feelings and sense of realization is accomplished only when she is with Heathcliff and her marriage keeps them apart. According to Audre Lorde once the erotic force within us is experienced, it fills us with a sense of satisfaction and completeness and once we have experienced this feeling, we will do everything to feel this sensation again, as Lorde highlights:

It is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognizing its power, in honor and self-respect we can require less of ourselves. [...] For the erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how we acutely and fully we can feel in the doing. (LORDE, 1984, p.278).

In this sense, Catherine's erotic force which gives her a sense of happiness is Heathcliff himself as it is expressed by her: "Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, as I am no longer a pleasure to myself, but as my own being." (BRONTË, 1994, p.81).

Let's consider what happens to Edna at this point. On the island where she spends her vacation, she meets Robert Lebrun who teaches her how to swim. When Edna finally is able to swim without the help of anyone, an amazing feeling of achievement overtakes her:

But that night she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its power, and walks for the first time alone [...] she could have shouted with joy. She did shout for joy, as with a sweeping stroke or two she lifted her body to the surface of the water. A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given to control the working of her body and her soul. (CHOPIN, 1993, p.27).

After her conquest in the water, Edna begins to swim alone instead of preferring the company of other people. The sensation of being able to swim in the water gives Edna a sense of achievement, thus the sea then becomes seductive for her: "the voice of sea is seductive, never ceases, whispering, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a moment into the abyss of loneliness, lost in the mazes of inner contemplation." (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 13). We can see, how the image of water is

significant in Edna's erotic experience, as John Rowe points out: "from start to finish, this essential self, is associated not only with the physical body of Edna, but also with the submission of the body ocean, the mediator in which the completeness of the body can be felt." (ROWE, 1992, p. 118).

Edna likes her life of comfort and has a husband who loves her, but she does not feel fully satisfied with her life: "her marriage to Léonce Pontellier was an accident [...]" (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 18), then we find out that Edna does not feel happy and satisfied with motherhood either:

She was fond of her children in an uneven, impulsive way. She would sometimes gather them passionately to her heart; she would sometimes forget them. [...] Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself. It seemed to free her from a responsibility which she had blindly assumed and for which Fate had not fitted her. (CHOPIN, 1993, p.18).

According to Simone de Beauvoir, traditionally, if a woman does not find self-realization in marriage, then it should be through motherhood that the woman should feel complete and fulfilled, both socially and sexually. In this sense, the purpose of marriage is meant to be found in motherhood:

It is in maternity that woman fulfils her physiological destiny; it is her natural "calling", since her whole organic structure is adapted for the perpetuation of the species. But we have seen already that human society is never abandoned wholly to nature. (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p. 501).

Having this in mind, we can see that Edna's realization as a woman does not happen through marriage or through motherhood. During her vacation on Grand Island, she experiences several erotic moments that awaken her and lead her to conclude that her life is empty and meaningless: "Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul." (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 32). Even when Edna listens to Mademoiselle Reisz play the piano, the music searches Edna's soul and makes her experience a strong emotion:

She was what she herself called very fond of music. Musical strains, well rendered, had a way of evoking pictures in her mind [...]The very first chords which Mademoiselle Reisz struck upon the piano sent a tremor to Mrs. Pontellier's spinal column [...] She waited for the material pictures which she thought would gather and blaze before her imagination. She waited in vain. She saw no pictures of solitude, of hope, of longing, or of despair. But the very passions themselves were aroused

within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her. (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 26).

Besides the confusing and deep emotion felt through the music of Mademoiselle Reisz, throughout the narrative we can see other moments when Edna gets in touch with the erotic force that dwells within her but that seemed to be asleep and unknown to herself for a long time.

In her process of awakening and self-discovery, Edna takes actions. She decides to devote herself to painting, but she does not succeed as a painter, however, the effort and work are enough to make her happy in her attempt, but she still feels a gulf in her soul. She finally decides to leave her comfortable home to live in a small and simple house by herself. By leaving her home, Edna again feels a sensation of fulfilment and achievement: "Every step which she took toward relieving herself from the obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual." (CHOPIN, 1993, p.94).

Rejecting her home gives her a feeling of social decline, but at the same time, we notice that for the first time Edna feels empowered and in control of her life; by doing with her life what she wishes. Robert goes away to Mexico, and when he returns, Edna is determined to leave her family and start a new life with him, but Robert does not believe it is possible that they could live together, because after all, Edna is a married woman and mother of a family: "I love you. Good-by – because I love you." (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 112); reading the farewell words of Robert makes Edna realise that she is completely alone.

According to Georges Bataille, the erotic experience is a solitary one; the erotic emotion is felt so intensely to the point that it cannot be expressed through speech; therefore erotic experience leaves us in solitude: "o erotismo é, pelo menos, aquilo de que é difícil falar [...] No conjunto de nossa experiência, ela permanece essencialmente separada da comunicação normal das emoções." (BATAILLE, 2004, p. 398- 399).

It is worth mentioning the dinner scene when Edna appears most likely as a vision wearing nice jewels and a white satin dress. But despite her luxurious belongings, that inexpressible feeling of incompleteness overtook her: "but as she sat amid her guests, she felt the old ennui overtaking her; the hopelessness which so

often assailed her, which came upon her like an obsession [...]” (CHOPIN, 1993, p.89).

In *Wuthering Heights*, we see a similar experience lived by Catherine. Catherine is tormented because she cannot live away from Heathcliff. In this sense, by keeping her away from Heathcliff, her marriage prevents Catherine from fully experiencing the fulfilment of her erotic feeling for Heathcliff. It is important to mention that their strong bond is developed during their childhood, when they lived freely wandering around Wuthering Heights. By marrying Edgar, Catherine and Heathcliff's bond is disturbed, and she tries to recover it, because she knows it is only with Heathcliff she can feel a sense of completeness. Despite the efforts of Catherine to keep her bond with Heathcliff, it is too late. Their physical union is not possible, but the intense desire they feel for each other sustains their connection:

“I wish I could hold you”, she continued bitterly, “till we were both dead!” I shouldn't care what you suffered [...] “Are you possessed with the devil”, he pursued savagely, “to talk in that manner to me when you are dying?” [...] You know you lie to say I have killed you: and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?” [...] “I'm not wishing you greater torment than I have, Heathcliff. I only wish us never to be parted: and should a word of mine distress you hereafter, think I feel the same distress underground, and for my own sake, forgive me!” (BRONTË, 1994, p.142).

The scene above reveals how strong is the desire Catherine and Heathcliff share for each other. The realization of their desire transgresses the sexual act, since desire itself leads to the experimentation of the erotic force that Lorde talks about and that Octavio Paz argues: “O erotismo é sexualidade transfigurada: metáfora. O agente que move tanto o acto erótico como o poético é a imaginação. [...] O acto erótico desprende-se do acto sexual: é sexo e é outra coisa.” (PAZ, 1995, p.9-11).

In *Wuthering Heights* and *The Awakening*, Catherine and Edna succumb to death but they both have experienced the erotic in different moments and ways. Edna experiences the erotic through the discovery of her sleeping capacities and emotions: learning the power of her body by learning how to swim, her ability to paint, being sensitive to music, and making the decision to leave her home. All these acts give Edna a sense of realization as an individual that she cannot experience in her traditional marriage. On the other hand, Catherine's desire for Heathcliff and the impossibility of their union drives her to sickness and death. In this sense, her

torment is an erotic one, because it is generated by the separation from the one individual who represents the completeness and gives her a sense of fulfilment.

While Edna swims away from the beach:

She did not look back now, but swam, thinking of that green bush she crossed as a child, believing it had no beginning and no end. Her arms and legs were getting tired. She thought of Léonce and the children. They were part of her life. But they could not think they could possess her body and soul. (CHOPIN, 1993, p. 116).

Edna's last swim is an erotic one. She thinks of her responsibilities as a mother and wife, but "they could not think they could possess her body and soul" (CHOPIN, 1993, p.116); she chooses to swim away from them. In this sense, we can see that Edna's decision to kill herself is erotic; in her act she finishes with her own life, but she reaches a sense of satisfaction in doing it, through her suicide her erotic experience is completed because through it she can be released from the life she could not conform with.

Catherine Earnshaw, like Edna, also dies with the memories of her childhood in her mind: "she had a sweet smile on her face, and her latest ideas back to her early days of pleasant living." (BRONTË, 1994, p.148), just as Edna also thinks back on her childhood.

Catherine and Edna think about the early time in their lives when they were free from social conventions and happy. Death puts an end to oppression and represents the possibility to return to what they really "are" – not the married and mother Edna Pontellier or Catherine Linton, the wife of Edgar Linton. The deaths of Catherine and Edna are erotic ones, because death is the return to the inanimate state –the end of biological life, but at the same time their deaths are desired, because only in death they can finally find liberty.

5 LAST WORDS

That best portion of a man's
life, his little, nameless,
unremembered acts of
kindness and love.

William Wordsworth

In the present study four words have most echoed throughout its line: “marriage”, “women”, “transgression” and “death”. Within the context of the XIX century these words seem to be intertwined when it is about the women discussed in this study: Edna Pontellier and Catherine Earnshaw. Despite the fact that *Wuthering Heights* was published in 1847 and *The Awakening* published in 1899 – over half a century later, both novels deal, to a certain extent, expose some of the issues experienced by women for centuries. We have attempted to investigate the mechanisms which have kept women away from social life and from achieving emancipation.

In chapter one, a historical and social contextualization was necessary in order to make it possible to understand some of the elements of society which helped to keep women inside the home and banned from important social positions. McDowall, Russell Goldfarb and Tamara Hareven have helped us to have an insight into society in England and in the United States and what were the expectations in relation to a woman's life.

Marriage, as the only destiny offered to women was discussed in chapter two with the theoretical help from Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, Martha Vicinus and Patricia Branca which have helped us to understand the implications of marriage in women's lives.

Society prepared girls to become perfect wives and mothers. We have seen there was no other way of living offered to women as they were not educated to be professionals rather they received an education to be able to manage a house and a family. This only perspective of life frustrated many women, who could not do anything to change what Fate had offered them.

Foucault in his research on marriage have shown us the shift in Ancient Greece regarding the marital relationship between wife and husband when procreation was not the solely purpose of marriage but sharing an existence too. But Foucault also reminds us how the ancient Greeks did not see marriage only as a duty they had to accomplish but rather as a way of sharing a life together, still the different rights regarding wife and husband were huge especially when it was about fidelity. Michel Foucault pointed out that what defined an adulterous woman was her marital status as wife. On other hand, the fact that a man was married did not matter. As Simone de Beauvoir has argued socially a man was freer than a woman: “the two sexes are necessary to each other, but this necessity has never brought about a condition of reciprocity between them; women, as we have seen, have never constituted a caste making exchanges and contracts with the male caste upon a footing of equality.” (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p. 446).

Martha Vicinus, presented us with the expectations Victorian women were supposed to fulfil first as daughters and later as wives. Vicinus talks about the “perfect lady” the married Victorian wife was supposed to play. The perfect lady was the embodiment of the perfect docile wife and mother. This role, however, caged women and limited her life to being the guardian of the family.

In the same chapter, we saw through Patricia Branca’s perspective how the Victorian wife, despite her submissive position in relation to her husband, played an important role in the family. Playing an active role in the family, the Victorian wife was of great help to her husband as she cared for the children, managed the servants of the house and sometimes even helped the husband in his business.

As marriage had been the only way women were supposed to follow, it is not difficult to imagine that even though many women had followed this way and fulfilled the social role of wives and mother; many could not be satisfied. In chapter three, this dissatisfaction was explored through the light of the works of Maria Conceição Monteiro and Michel Foucault. These authors have helped us to see how the roles Catherine and Edna play socially go against their erotic desires as women.

First Monteiro reminded us how Catherine cannot forget her shadow – Heathcliff, when she gets married and goes to Thrushcross Grange to live with her husband. At this point, we know that Edna Pontellier is also unhappy with her married life and strives for emancipation. Foucault’s thoughts on transgression were very important in this study to help us understand what transgression is and how it occurs

in the novels cited here. Being transgression the exposure of what is repressed by the limit and going beyond the limit brings transgression to the surface not eliminating it but bring it to light. The limit in both Catherine and Edna's lives were imposed by their marriages. Catherine could not live apart from her true love Heathcliff and Edna was not fit for the life of a married woman and mother.

In chapter three, we have seen how dissatisfaction and the attempt to try to follow their desires have led both Catherine and Edna Pontellier to transgress the limitations which kept them from experiencing their inner desires. In her process of self-discovery and awakening, Edna follows her erotic impulses and takes on actions: she leaves her home and starts working on her art. She also gets romantically involved with two men despite the fact she is married while Catherine cannot leave Heathcliff behind. In fact, she is tormented exactly because she cannot live apart from him and in her attempt to try to keep her marriage and befriend Heathcliff at the same time she becomes mad and sick. She becomes a transgressor because she desires Heathcliff. In her case, adultery does not happen physically but in her heart.

Their transgression, in this sense, serves to signalize that something is wrong – these women are not satisfied in their marriage, in their lives, they are limited by their female positions as wives and in the case of Edna as wife and mother.

Despite their acts of transgression, there is not really emancipation for Catherine and Edna. They have both attempted to find self-emancipation and fulfil their lives as women, but there is no resolution. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the process which they go through. Perhaps, it is not the end of their stories that are most important but the path – what happened along the path until the end. In the same chapter, the narratives of Emily Brontë and Kate Chopin were analysed and we were able to see how their ways of writing and exposing women's issues were innovative and not well accepted by most critics of their time.

In chapter four, we saw that death is the only way out for Catherine and Edna. Death then paradoxically ends their lives, but it is in death that Catherine and Heathcliff's love find realization. In Edna's case, some critics have argued her death to be a kind of a victory while others have argued her death to be the result of the actions a solitary woman who was coward and selfish. In this study, we have seen her death as none of the two points. Rather, her death is a sensual one which occurs in the same place (the sea) where she first happens to discover her ability to swim and control her own body. Her death, paradoxically serves to signalises that

something was wrong –her unhappiness about her life, however, at the same time, death sets her free from the life that could not make her satisfied.

Under the light of Bachelard's study on imageries of water, we could see how water can be an invitation for purification, a new beginning but also an invitation to death. In this sense, in this study we could not deal with death as if it had just one meaning rather we could understand its ambivalences: the end, the impossibility to life what the soul desires, but finding in death the exit from a life of limitations and as Freud highlights, death, as the return –the return to where there is no woman, wife, man or husband, where beings are not defined.

Marriage, transgression and death have perhaps echoed the lives of many women throughout the centuries. Perhaps not the physical death of their bodies, but the death of the *self* in the name of the roles they had to play in society.

Emily Brontë and Kate Chopin through their pens have been able to expose women's issues that have been kept unspoken: their aspirations, love, desire, marriage, motherhood and mostly they have contributed, consciously or unconsciously, to make readers to mediate upon these issues.

In "Marriage, Transgression and Death: *Wuthering Heights* and *The Awakening*", we tried to highlight in Emily Brontë and Kate Chopin's works the exposition of the limitations experienced by the protagonists of their novels; roles imposed on them by a patriarchal society in the form of subscribed roles they were expected to perform.

Catherine Earnshaw and Edna Pontellier, have been confined to the roles they tried to play: wife and mother. By trying to conform to society's expectations, they have had their subjectivities put aside and driven to death as the only way to find a sort of assertiveness for themselves and their desires.

Shocking and rejected at the time of their publication *Wuthering Heights* and *The Awakening* have become canons of English and American literatures. Nowadays both Emily Brontë and Kate Chopin have achieved recognition and respect through the brilliant works they have left. Both may forever live through their characters and the experiences felt in the minds of the readers that have met Catherine Earnshaw, Heathcliff and Edna Pontellier.

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ANNEX A – Illustration number 1.

Emily Brontë.

Disponível em: <<http://www.notablebiographies.com/Br-Ca/Bront-Emily.html>>.

Acesso em: 26 de outubro de 2012.

ANNEX B- Illustration number 2.



The Brontë's home in Yorkshire, England.

Disponível em: < <http://blog.ctnews.com/bookends/2009/12/>> Acessado em: 26 de outubro de 2012.

ANNEX C- Illustration number 3.



Kate Chopin.

Disponível em: <<http://faculty.atu.edu/cbrucker/Engl2013/week10notes.htm>>.
Acesso em: 26 de outubro de 2012.

ANNEX D – Illustration number 4.

Kate Chopin's home in Louisiana.

Disponível em: <<http://www.city-data.com/picfilesv/picv8720.php>>. Acesso em: 26 de outubro de 2012.

ANNEX E – Illustration number 5.



A Victorian woman and her child.

Disponível em: <<http://historysheroes.e2bn.org/hero/world/3521>>. Acesso em: 26 de outubro de 2012.