Janina Corda

Images of Women in 20th-Century American Literature and Culture

Female emancipation and changing gender roles in *The Age of Innocence, Breakfast at Tiffany's & Sex and the City*

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1 Introduction

The 20th century has seen much progression concerning women and their status within American society. Tired of being reduced to the sphere of the home where they were primarily valued as mothers and wives, women have, since the beginning of the new century, more and more entered the public sphere and have fought for their right to be full citizens who should inherit all the rights men have ever since had. From today's perspective, women have come a long way, but have they yet arrived? What has actually changed? Are today's women really that different from women who lived about a hundred years ago, or are they still akin? What is truly new in the lives of women and what has remained the same? Besides, have things changed for the better or for the worse?

In order to answer these questions, I will analyze the depiction of women in Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (AI), Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (BAT) and the TV series *Sex and the City* (SATC). The analysis also includes the film version of BAT since movies in mid-20th-century America were extremely popular; they reached a broad audience and therefore had much influence on people. The movie version is, besides, of further interest because it alters not only the characteristics of the novella's female protagonist, but also parts of the storyline, thus presenting a considerably different image of women only three years after the publication of the novella. Moreover, I chose a TV series as the third object of analysis due to today's popularity and influence of the medium and of the series itself.

The analysis will show that the roles of women and their depiction in literature and the media over the course of the 20th century – especially in the second half – have drastically changed. At the same time, however, it will become clear that despite all the progression and newly gained liberties, all of the discussed women have to face similar problems and are torn between – or at least have to struggle with – conventional and modern gender roles. Furthermore, it will emerge that even though men's roles have changed as well and both men and women have adopted characteristics that are traditionally assumed typical

of the respective opposite sex, men and women are still not equal. Instead, today's women have to deal with new problems that are exclusively female and that often make women's lives more complicated than men's.

Edith Wharton's novel, though written in 1920, is set in the 1870s and 1880s. Likewise, SAT was produced and aired from 1998 until 2010, the date when the second movie was released. Thus, both the novel and the TV series cross the borders of the 20th century which, however, does not pose a problem for the following analysis; that is to say, since cultural changes are fluid and ambiguous issues, the early 20th century and its gender roles are, of course, influenced by the late 19th century, just like the late 20th century has its influence on the early 21st.

Central to the development and lives of the novels' and the series' protagonists is their common geographical and social background which I will illuminate in the next chapter. I will, then, start my analysis following a chronological order. Since all of the discussed women face similar problems, all of the chapters are structured in a similar way which makes the comparability of the different images of women easier. Each chapter begins with a historical overview for a better understanding of the respective time and its circumstances concerning gender roles and women's development in the US. Since AI, BAT and SATC mainly focus on the depiction and support of a modern female lifestyle, I will first illustrate the women's progressive traits (and society's reaction to that). After that, I will show that despite their modern characters, all of the women also have a conventional side or still have to deal with conventional gender roles. The subsequent chapter then exemplifies men's changing roles and attitudes towards gender issues.

2 Common Background: Geography and Social Status

2.1 A City of Hopes and Dreams: New York City

AI, BAT, and SATC all deal with progressive women and are all set in New York City (NYC). This combination is no coincidence though, but results from the city itself and its particular, outstanding character. Due to its unique historical background and status as world metropolis, namely, NYC offers its inhabitants liberties and possibilities that are rarely found anywhere else in the country.

The United States is generally seen as the land of opportunity, and NYC is often especially cherished as an embodiment of this reputation. Hence, many foreigners assume NYC to be a typical American city; for many Americans, however, it represents everything that is foreign (Burns et al. XIII). The reason for this diverging perception is that huge parts of the country are not as open-minded and progressive as many foreigners might think. Especially people of the rural South, the Midwest, the regions of the Bible Belt, small cities and suburbs are still relatively conservative in their ways of thinking and living. On the contrary, large cities – and NYC in particular – unite much diversity and are ever-changing due to their history of immigration, their constant growth and industrial development. This is why they signify everything that is modern and progressive and "living in a place like New York that symbolizes social modernization creates the preconditions for a modern mind to develop a modern consciousness" (Köhler 208). Thus, New Yorkers are not like other Americans as Djuna Barnes observed almost a hundred years ago: "On every corner you can see a new type; but strange to say, no Americans are to be discovered anywhere. New York is the meeting place of the peoples, the only city where you can hardly find a typical American" ("Greenwich" 226). Accordingly, NYC is not a typical American city but stands out due to its forward character and ongoing foreign influence.

NYC has always been a port of call for many immigrants, a haven for desperate and unhappy people who hoped to make a better living and to fulfill their hopes and dreams in this city (cf. Burns et al. XV). The early Puritan set-

tlers in New England, who – ironically – fled to the new continent in order to escape religious persecution at home, rejected and punished any deviation from their own religious belief. The Dutch settlers, however, who arrived in the early 17th century where today's Manhattan is located, welcomed everybody to their colony without regard to religion or heritage. Due to their openness and acceptance of diversity, they largely influenced America's cherished belief in equality and everybody's right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Boyer et al. 745) as written in the Declaration of Independence (Gruening qtd. in Burns et al. 10) which, however, has often not been acted on to the disfavor of several minority groups, such as African Americans, Jews and, as we will later see, women. Thus, New Amsterdam – or Manhattan and NYC in general – have grown over the years into a conglomerate of most diverse people (cf. Burns et al. XIII, 25, 72, 86, 545). Especially in the second half of the 19th century when, for instance, the Civil War had ended slavery, the industrial revolution began, and famines as well as economic problems made life in Europe more difficult NYC faced an enormous wave of immigration from all over the world. Greeted since 1886 by the statue of liberty to the land of the free (cf. Burns et al. 187), they hoped for a better life in this liberal and dynamic city. Thus, in this melting pot, or salad bowl, myriads of nationalities, religions, races, age groups, classes and, of course, sexes mingled. Often packed in small and dirty housings, these different people had to somehow get along together. Indeed, this cultural clash often spurred open hostility and gang warfare, and people of the same nationality, religion or class often settled in the same neighborhoods – such as Little Italy, Chinatown and Five Points – in order to keep traditions and to feel not too far from home. Nevertheless, in everyday life, at work etc., they inevitably encountered diversity, and over time the various New Yorkers became, more or less, used to each other and learned to accept otherness (cf. Burns et al. 72, 86 ff., 239 ff.).

Since early Dutch settlement, NYC has, furthermore, been constantly expanded and has thus become a synonym for progression and growth, i.e. in terms of population as well as economy. In 1699, for instance, the royal governor declared NYC the fastest-growing city in America (Burns et al. 24). While in 1624, 110 men, women and children settled in New Amsterdam, in the 1640s, the colony already totaled 1500 inhabitants (Burns et al. 7 f., 13). In 2007, more than eight million people lived in NCY (U.S. Census Bureau). In addition to its number of inhabitants, the city's economy and wealth have also steadily grown. Unlike most early settlers in the 17th century, the Dutch did not search for religious freedom on the new continent, but for new possibilities of trade (Burns et al. XIII). This focus on economy and finances has shaped the image of the city and its character until today. Ever since, people have come to NYC in order to fulfill their dreams and to make money. Thanks to both their personal ambition and the city's possibilities, or more precisely open-mindedness

as regards new ideas, many small people have achieved great things here (cf. Sanderson 36). Especially during the industrial revolution, NYC offered its venturesome and forward-looking inhabitants the chance to not only work and earn money, but to also make little or even big fortunes. As a result, a nouveau riche elite emerged, displacing the old and rigid aristocracy and strengthening the city's aspiring and flexible character (cf. Burns et al. 153). Furthermore, innumerable companies do business from here; the Wall Street and Fifth Avenue do not only stand for money, but are also two of the city's most famous emblems, and the overwhelming townscape impressively mirrors the city's wealth. Thus, it is no surprise that poverty is almost perceived a crime in NYC (Burns et al. 164) even though it largely exists, as well. Furthermore, although this concentration on as well as of money and power, of course, has its downside and is often harshly criticized and despised – 9/11 being the most dramatic and terrible prove for these sentiments –, it nevertheless renders the city an innovative and forward-heading place where people encounter possibilities that almost nowhere else can be found. The city that never sleeps can thus be seen as ever-searching for new potential and developments. With the help of its "unprecedented technology, and enormous appetite . . . " (Sanderson 32), NYC and its inhabitants never stand still but move constantly on.

Another indication for these qualities is the city's appearance which has steadily been renewed. Over the course of only a few centuries, more and more territory has been made accessible and built on. At the end of the 19th century, architects then started what was to become the revolutionary and unique Manhattan skyline which until today becomes continuously expanded. Additionally, during the 20th century, visionary people like major Fiorello La Guardia and Robert Moses sedulously expanded and improved the cityscape and the city's quality of living (Burns et al. 71, 230 ff, 420 ff.). Hence, the city not only keeps up with the times, but is often even ahead of it.

Due to its progressive and open-minded character, NYC became a Mecca and home for free-thinkers from all over the world. The notorious Greenwich Village especially became the place to be for Bohemians – liberal people, mostly young intellectuals, who wanted to escape the restrictions of their conservative bourgeois homes and society in general. Here, they could live a more liberated lifestyle with like-minded people, enjoy sex without having to feel guilty or bad, be creative and rebellious and indulge in art and literature which allowed them to freely express their emotions and feelings. NYC gave them the possibility to live the way they wanted to – not the way society dictated them (cf. Barnet 11; Dallmann 362). In this city, they and their creativity were not rejected for being different, but were instead appreciated for being innovative and inspiring since New Yorkers, as we have found to understand,

are used to constant change; therefore, they are mostly not afraid of diversity or new things, but rather embrace, or at least, accept them.

As a result, its exceptional history and liberal inhabitants make NYC a perfect background for stories about independent and progressive women who struggle with gender roles and restrictions to which society wants to bind them. In almost no other American city, it might have been possible for Wharton – even if for her to a much lesser extent – and Capote to observe at their respective times the emergence of these new kinds of women and their unconventional lives which they depict in their novels; and, presumably, in no other American city the creators of SATC might be able to encounter such a variety of modern women and display their manifold ways of life in the TV series. Hence, this city, "wo Menschen aus aller Herren Länder ihre Traditionen abstreifen, Ehrgeiz entwickeln, ihre Identität wechseln und sich neu definieren" (Burns et al. XV) plays a huge part in contributing to the fact that the discussed women can more or less leave their past behind them, outlive their unconventional personalities, or at the least develop more open minds.

However, not everything has always been possible for everybody even in NYC. That is why the discussed women all face some sort of resistance which, of course, also depends on the times they are living in. Especially Ellen and Holly: although they display and hold on to their modern personalities, they are eventually not (yet) allowed to succeed. Indeed, they can be seen as pioneers who induce new times which are made possible, as just pointed out, by NYC's progressiveness. However, it is more difficult for them to actually push through their particular characters and lifestyles because of the social class they belong to. Hence, not only is the geographical location crucial to the development of women in 20th-century-America, but also their class affiliation which will be further explained in the next chapter.

2.2 Class-Differences in the US and Their Impact on Women

As we have seen, NYC can be considered a city of progression and modernity where people are more open-minded than elsewhere. However, this cannot be generalized, for such status also depends on the different social classes which exist in this city.

All of the discussed women are part of the more sophisticated stratum of NYC's society. Wharton's Ellen Olenska, for instance, belongs to Old New York's (ONY) elite which can also be defined as the leisure class. For them, reputation is most important, and the open display of property is "the conventional basis of esteem . . . [and] necessary in order to have any reputable standing in the community" (Veblen 23). None of them has to work, for they survive on inherited or marriage-gained family wealth since "wealth acquired passively by transmission from ancestors or other antecedents . . . [is] even

more honorific than wealth acquired by the possessor's own effort . . . " (Veblen 23). Nevertheless, for reasons of prestige and social status, all of the circle's men are educated and some, actually, pursue white-collar jobs, however only in a "leisurely manner" as was the custom for this class at the end of the 19th century (Wharton, *Age* 54, 79 f; Boyer et al. 430). However, in contrast to men of different classes – of their respective time as well as later generations – "the gentlemen . . . of Old New York do not define themselves according to their professions;" instead they value leisure with "the seriousness of a business proposition, a business that has always been driven by the investment in the propagation of heirs and the proper consolidation of property" (Waid, Business 311). Thus, their degree of leisure largely determines their social status; they rather enjoy their free time and try to keep their circle exclusive instead of striving for fast and infinite wealth, as did many newly-rich during the industrial revolution since "a life of leisure is the readiest and most conclusive evidence of pecuniary strength, and therefore of superior force . . . " (Veblen 30). Wharton who grew up in this circle describes the leisure class sentiment as follows:

> It will probably seem unbelievable to present-day readers that only one of my own near relations, and not one of my husband's, was "in business". [sic] The group to which we belonged was composed of families to whom a middling prosperity had come, usually by the rapid rise in value of inherited real estate, and none of whom, apparently, aspired to be more than moderately well-off. I never in my early life came in contact with the gold-fever in any form, and when I hear that nowadays business life in New York is so strenuous that men and women never meet socially before the dinner hour, I remember the delightful week-day luncheons of my early married years, where the men were as numerous as the women. ("From" 257)

Since conspicuous consumption and prestige in general are very important to the leisure class, ONY's members live in a highly esteemed and rich neighborhood around Fifth Avenue and display their social status, among others, by means of fashion, extravagant dinner parties and, above all, strict obedience to their established social rules (cf. Crowninshield 330 ff.; Boyer et al. 435).

Capote's Holly Golighty, too, lives in a prestigious area, namely "Manhattans fashionable East Side . . . " (Wasson, *Fifth* 66). Unlike Ellen, she comes from a poor Southern background and associates without problems with people of lower social strata. However, just like Capote himself who "came to the big city from Monroeville, Alabama . . . and seduced the rich and the famous . . . " (Haskell, "Unmourned" 138), Holly tries to become a member of New York's rich and glamorous upper class and, thus, mostly mixes with people of this social status. Some of them achieved their status and wealth by means of heritage (e. g. Rusty Trawler), others instead by means of their profession which also serves as a prestige marker (e. g. O.J. Berman). Since most of her

friends do not pursue typical nine-to-five jobs, but rather work as Hollywood producer, model, writer or, as already mentioned, not at all, they all enjoy much free time. Therefore, Holly, too, is not interested in a regular and ordinary occupation, but earns her money in rather unconventional ways which permit her to live the same leisure class life as her upper class friends. She also practices conspicuous consumption, that is she wears a certain fashion style in order to gain the desired social status. Like Wharton's ONY, Capote's class of rich and famous people lives according to certain rules which distance them from lower classes.

Unlike Ellen and Holly, SATC's Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte rather belong to the middle and upper-middle class. They mostly do not survive on family money, but instead have regular jobs in order to earn a living. Today's members of this class can be roughly defined as college-educated and well-to-do white-collar workers who are fond of "high culture and cosmopolitanism" (Lamont 168) and who deem prestige important. In contrast to Wharton's elite circle, their class affiliation does not depend on heritage or clever marriage. Instead, their degree of education, income, and job's prestige determine their social status as middle or upper-middle class (Beeghley 24 ff.; Lamont 200; Bledstein 37). Accordingly, Miranda and Samantha who work as a corporate lawyer and a public relations executive, pursue typical prestigious upper-middle class professions (cf. Brooks 15). Their jobs "entail supervisory responsibility and . . . [more or less] involve the risks of entrepreneurial (or business) activity" (Beeghley 26). Furthermore, their income is high enough to allow them to buy their own apartments or to pay extremely high rents on the Upper West Side and the Meatpacking District and to regularly dine out. The same accounts for Charlotte. In her function as art dealer, she as well has a college-degree, supervises others and has an income that permits her an expensive apartment and a carefree lifestyle. However, Charlotte can be assigned to the upper class as well due to her Episcopalian WASP heritage and her short marriage to Trey McDougall – who stems from an aristocratic Scottish clan – after which she does not need to work anymore in order to survive. Carrie, on the other hand, differs a bit from her friends. She is a writer, an occupation which once was despised as a minor bohemian working class profession as can be noticed, for instance, in Wharton's AI. Nowadays, however, writers are also part of the upper-middle class (Brooks 39). Just like her friends, Carrie's income permits her to almost always dine out, rent an Upper East Side-apartment and buy much of expensive fashion. Nevertheless, Carrie is the only of the four friends whose job, for instance, does not include supervisory responsibility and leaves her frequently short of money instead of easily covering her lifestyle. Moreover, her apartment – even though located in a much esteemed neighborhood – is rent-controlled and relatively small and simple. When it goes co-op, she has not the means to buy it, unlike her friends, but in-

stead has to borrow the money from one of them. This is why Carrie is no clear cut middle or upper-middle class member but rather lies somewhere in-between. Just as is the case with Ellen and Holly, the girls' social status and personalities are displayed by their respective fashion style and neighborhood they live in.

Usually, the upper class and to a certain degree the middle and upper-middle class are assumed to be rather conservative (cf. Boyer et al. 435 f.; Brooks 66). According to Boyer et al., for instance, "the very rich [of the late 19th century] lived in a world apart . . . " (431) which becomes particularly clear in AI. The small elite circle described by Wharton consciously distances itself from the social and cultural changes that transformed NYC and its inhabitants at the turn of the century (cf. Waid, Modern 401). Julius Beaufort, for example, who works as a banker and mirrors the new emerging robber barons who accumulated much wealth at the turn of the century and displaced the old aristocracy, spurs a scandal and gets excluded from ONY's society when he greedily tries to make much money in an illegal way. And of course Ellen who represents the emergence of the New Woman does not manage to push through new ways of thinking but gets excluded as well. Moreover in BAT and SATC, New York's elite is mostly displayed as a rather piqued group of people who value above all old tradition, good manners and a decent behavior, especially on the part of women. Therefore, despite all the years that have passed between the respective times of our protagonists, Holly as well as Carrie & Co. are, like Ellen, still more or less rejected by elite but also some (sub)urban middle class friends and socialites on terms of their unconventional behavior (cf. 4.2 and 5.2). Contrary to the elite, however, the middle and upper-middle class have, likewise, gradually opened to variation which becomes, above all, evident in SATC. Because of that and because of their lower social status, its members normally enjoy more liberties:

> A middle-class family may sit on the front stoop all evening and watch the society people go to the weddings in their closed carriages. Father doesn't have to wear a tight dress coat all evening and have collar chocking him. He may take off coat or vest, or both, and smoke either pipe or cigar without scandalizing any one. If he and mother wish to get some ice-cream they go around the corner to get it, or else they may send one of the children with a pitcher. If they were above the middle class, of course, it would never do for them to be seen in a common ice-cream place, and the idea of sending a pitcher would be shocking. (Ade qtd. in Bledstein 41)

It is important to keep this difference in mind in order to better understand the different possibilities the discussed women have or have not even though they live in the same open-minded city. Certainly, the different times they live in are the major reasons for their different lifestyles (as will become clear in the following chapters). Their respective class affiliation, however, plays a crucial

role, too, because "people's choices vary in light of their class" (Beeghley 23). Ellen and Holly, for instance, might not have been rejected for their unconventional characters and been forced to leave NYC if they had been part of the lower or working class, and it certainly is no coincidence that SATC's Charlotte is both the most conservative of the four friends and the only one connected to the upper class.

However, not only due to class differences, but also due to race-differences, for example, the development of women and gender roles over time has, of course, not been uniform. While women of the white middle and upper class have fought against their restriction to the sphere of home, working class women of both Anglo-Saxon and other heritage have often yearned for just that kind of life. Due to economical necessity, however, many have been forced to work instead of solely caring for and spending time with their families (Chafe, *Paradox* xi f., 99, 176; McLaughlin et al. 17 ff.). However, since the protagonists of AI, BAT and SATC are all white and, as just pointed out, part of New York's middle, upper-middle and upper class, I will not expand on these differences even though I am fully aware that they have existed and still do. Thus, when writing about women and men and their changing gender roles without further specification, I am exclusively referring to the members and the development of America's white middle, upper-middle or, depending on the subject of analysis, upper class.

3 Early Signs of Change: *The Age of Innocence*

When Wharton began writing AI in 1919, she was searching for security in times of chaos. During WWI, she had lived in France where she experienced the horrors of war very intensely by actively participating in relief efforts (Wagner-Martin 3). Shaken by this experience, Wharton returned in her Pulitzer Price-winning novel to the place of her childhood: ONY, a small circle of New York's elite and place of order which she now so desperately needed (cf. Lewis Thompson 90).

Apart from this sense of security, however, ONY did not offer Wharton much pleasure. She had a very conventional upbringing and suffered heavily from society's superficiality and the then prevailing double standard on gender roles. Nonetheless, Wharton gradually developed into an independent and self-confident woman. Against the convention of her class and much to the chagrin of her parents, for instance, she became a writer, divorced her much older and unfaithful husband, and spent the rest of her life as a single woman in Paris (cf. Lewis 260 ff., Baym, "Edith" 829). Nevertheless, despite this progressive lifestyle, Wharton, like many women at the turn of the century, had never been able to free herself completely from 19th-century Victorian morality and was thus torn between her conventional upbringing and her own varying feelings and longings as a woman (cf. Köhler 298; Singley 38; Salmi 16; Lewis Thompson 80).

This conflict is mirrored in her famous novel which, indeed, depicts "a fictional realm . . . [but] has been mapped onto memories of an actual world" (Waid, Autobiography 221). Its three major protagonists – Newland Archer, Ellen Olenska and May Welland – all bear traces of Wharton herself, thereby illustrating her life-long inner struggle and experience (cf. Bloom 1; Goodman 85; Wagner-Martin 63) and "establishing . . . how she had become the woman she was" when she wrote AI (Wagner-Martin 100). That is, even though the novel's story is predominantly set in the 1870s and 1880s, the characters clearly reflect the changing gender roles which influenced America in general and Wharton in particular at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centu-

ry. Thereby, the novel, which can be seen as "an amalgam of 1870s and 1920s culture . . . " (Bauer 78), on the one hand makes clear that the prevailing image of women at that time was that of a conservative and domestic one. On the other hand, it also illustrates and promotes the birth of a new kind of self-confident, independent woman who, like Wharton herself, challenges the patriarchal order of New York's aristocratic circle; and even though society vehemently and mercilessly opposes this development and initially appears to succeed in this effort, Wharton shows that the new female behavior could not be stopped, but could gain more and more ground at the turn of the century.

Since, as a result, the development of women and their status during this period of time is crucial to understand Wharton and the rendering of her novel's protagonists, I will first give a rough summery of women's role in American society from mid-19th-century up to 1920 in order to then analyze the images of women depicted in the novel.

3.1 Historical Background: Women from Mid-19th-Century to 1920

When in 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, American women had not only finally gained the right to vote, but also achieved a major success in a struggle that had been started many years before and included more than mere political interests: women's status and equality within American society.

In 19th-century America, the Victorian ideal of the True Woman strictly reduced the female sex to their roles as mother and wife. While men were expected to earn a living for their families and to establish themselves through a profession, women, on the other hand, were restricted to the home and supposed to find identification by caring for the well-being of the whole family. Their profession and center of life, they were told, was to raise children and support their husbands (cf. Köhler 39 ff., 58 f.; McLaughlin et al. 17; Boyer et al. 402) which is why women up until the 20th century married and had their first child relatively early, the average age being 22 and 23 respectively (McLaughlin et al. 56, 135). Thus, in this "'masculine century'" (Weiss qtd. in Köhler 59), "American social life . . . was organized on the basis of a gender role pattern that naturalized the separation of men and women into a female domestic and male public sphere" (Köhler 38). Due to society's claim that the different treatment of women and men was natural and God-given, many women were not aware of their inferior position or did not dare to oppose it. During abolitionism, however, they realized that not only African-American slaves were severely oppressed by white men, but women as well. And if women considered equality a basic human right, then it was high time to fight for their own rights, too. Accordingly, in 1848 Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton brought the first women's rights convention – set in Seneca Falls, New York – into being. They claimed equality between men and women

and strived, among others, for women's right to vote (cf. Boyer et al. 225). Even though it took more than 70 years for the latter to be achieved, women's role slowly began to change.

Tired of being treated like slaves[1] who were bound to servitude in the prison of home (Chafe, *Paradox* 8; Eby 63; Updike 138), women more and more began to perceive themselves as individuals and tried to become more independent. Hence, they started to escape domesticity and enter the public sphere. Especially young single women strived for higher education and tried to engage in occupational activities (Köhler 1, 5, 43; McLaughlin et al. 21). Society gradually accepted this development, but women were nevertheless not perceived as "equal participants in the labor force" and were paid less than men. This treatment was not only discriminating but also confined women's financial autonomy and maintained marriage as the primary way of survival (Chafe, *Paradox* 75 f.). Besides, many occupations were not deemed appropriate for the female sex and, thus, only a small range of jobs was made accessible to them. As a result, women mostly worked or were educated, for instance, as teachers and nurses since these kinds of professional work were compatible with their established angel-like image as nurturing, caring and innocent beings who uphold moral and religious values in a sinful male world (Köhler 1, 38, 41; McLaughlin et al. 17, 22; Boyer et al. 435). Indeed, upper class women also entered fields like medicine or law and the industrial revolution and World War I offered women further occupational possibilities in the early 20th century, but their impact was not lasting (Chafe, *Paradox* 63 ff.). According to Chafe, "[t]he major statistical shifts in the female labor force occurred before 1920" (*Paradox* 72); after World War I, however, many women lost their jobs to the returning men and "functioned as they always had–as second-class citizens, powerless to alter their inferior position" (*Paradox* 65 f.). Their lower status also becomes obvious by the fact that women were supposed to quit their jobs as soon as they got married: "In the 1890s, the average woman worker was single and under twenty-five; she worked for a few years, then married and left her job" (Chafe, *Paradox* 68). Additionally, even though working single women had more or less become accepted by society, they were not only denied promotion and even largely despised when trying to pursue a typical male profession (Chafe, *Paradox* 100, 109), but they were also often perceived as unattractive and un-womanly and not uncommonly remained single when they aimed for a lasting career. As a result, many women refrained from a pro-

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[1] John Lennon, for instance, still saw this connection in 1972 when he sang, inspired by an interview his wife Yoko Ono once gave, that "Woman is the Nigger of the World;" of course, his song was widely censored in the US which, maybe, was not only due to its harsh title but also due to society's fear of feminism and its consequences on the established but tottering patriarchal order; but this is only a speculation (cf. Rogan 61 ff.; Du Noyer 59 f.).

fessional career with the fear of ending up a spinster (Köhler 98; Chafe, *Paradox* 110 f.; McLaughlin et al. 22). This shows that men and society still cherished women above all as mothers and wives and even many women continued to identify themselves primarily through this role (cf. Boyer et al. 403, 446). However, despite all these limitations, women had finally managed to enter a sphere that was before reserved for men. While at the end of the 19th century only few women attended school or college or held a job, the percentage of women who pursued an occupation largely increased at the beginning of the 20th century (McLaughlin et al. 21). Even married women who had children were not strictly bound to the home anymore, but instead engaged in public activities, entered the public sphere as consumers of goods, and sometimes were employed, too (cf. Boyer et al. 225, 444; Köhler 50 f.; Chafe, *Paradox* 68 f.). Thus, even though change concerning occupational distribution proceeded rather slowly at the turn of the century, a new kind of female lifestyle had, eventually, come into being.

In terms of sexuality, women had also gained new liberties. In 19th-century America – and to a certain degree beyond (cf. chapter 4 and 5) – the Victorian double standard which granted men more sexual liberties than women ruled society (cf. McLaughlin et al. 86). On the one hand, women largely functioned as sex objects for male fantasies, and their lives were often dependent on their sexual capacity. While men, for instance, had ever since been able to earn their own living, "a woman's survival rested on her ability to seduce and hold a husband. In effect, sex became a woman's economic way of life . . .," determining her living conditions and social status (Chafe, *Paradox* 7). Furthermore, women were expected to fulfill their conjugal duties by unconditionally responding to and satisfying their husbands' sexual desires (Köhler 40 f.). On the other hand, however, society deprived women of their own sexual pleasure by making it a taboo. Men could more or less freely outlive their sexual desires (cf. McLaughlin et al. 84, 86), but women were denied premarital sex and became undesirable as women and mothers if sex for them not only meant natural procreation but was practiced for enjoyment:

> *Purity* not only referred to a woman's premarital virginity but to her adult life free of passion and sexual desire as well. Female sexuality was 'equivocal, discreet and reproductive.' A True Woman had to be innocent in feelings and knowledge which meant that she was supposed neither to know much about her body and its functioning nor to be interested in gaining information about it. (Köhler 40)

Thus, female sexuality was largely perceived and treated in different ways than men's; it functioned for women rather as a means to an end instead of a means to fulfillment and satisfaction. Even women's new-gained occupational possibilities, which were perceived by society "as a casual dalliance before marriage" (Chafe, *Paradox* 77), were for a long time of little help in order to

change these conditions since they did not yet secure women life-long (financial) independence from marriage or men and their sexual expectations and oppression. Still, some changes did occur at the turn of the century. The newly desired equality and independence altered women's self-perception which of course also included their sexual identity. Thus, some wives not only perceived sex as a marital duty and act of procreation, but also took the liberty to enjoy it (Stearns and Stearns qtd. in Köhler 40); and although the percentage of women who practiced premarital sex was relatively low, it gradually increased (McLaughlin et al. 80). Furthermore, sex slowly subsided to be a taboo subject, women as well engaged in extra-marital sexual activity, and petting became a common dating ritual (Chafe, *Paradox* 104 f.). Little by little, marriage and family ceased to be women's major or even only center of life. More and more women remained single, divorce rates increased, and birth rates dropped which was, among others, due to contraception and abortion (Boyer et al. 434, 445, 477; Köhler 44; McLaughlin et al. 55, 59, 123). The latter also made pre- and extramarital sex easier for women since they did not have to worry anymore about unwanted and exposed pregnancy (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 105).

This "revolution in morals and manners . . . prior to 1920" (Chafe, *Paradox* 105) was also accompanied and reflected by the emergence of a new fashion style. While 19th-century fashion consisted largely of tight bodices and floor-length dresses that were supposed to entirely smother the female body (Boyer et al. 445), women were literally liberated wearing less constricting and shorter dresses in early 20th century (cf. Baym, Introduction 1179). Moreover, women began to wear dark instead of light clothing (Köhler 1) and cut their hair, giving them an often considered unfeminine look. The embodiment of this sexually and in terms of fashion liberated New Woman was the flapper which emerged around 1910 and largely shaped the image and perception of women up until 1920 and beyond (Chafe 104; Boyer et al. 535; cf. 4.1).

As already mentioned, these shifts in thinking and behavior were not easily achieved or pushed through. Men in particular largely opposed the alteration of traditional gender roles. Since women had begun to enter spheres that were once supposed to be exclusively male, men not only felt emasculated, but feared that this growing female intervention could, for example, diminish their own professional possibilities and destroy patriarchal control and superiority (Köhler 25, 60, 63; Chafe, *Paradox* 77). However, many women as well held on to the conservative gender roles they were used to and identified with (Köhler 4; Boyer et al. 444, 446; Chafe, *Paradox* 77). Even suffragists and feminists of older generations did not agree with all of the innovations, especially women's more carefree sexual lifestyle (Chafe, *Paradox* 105 f.). Furthermore, industrialization and urbanization indeed made life for many Americans easier and played an important role in the development of new gender roles. However, it

also contributed to a large bewilderment on the part of men and women who felt threatened and replaced by the new emerging technology and machines. Thus, in these times of uncertain change and upheaval, both sexes often longed for the stability of traditional family values (Köhler 38) and rejected the "New Woman . . . [for being] 'a condensed symbol of disorder and rebellion'" (Smith-Rosenberg qtd. in Köhler 53).

Women often suffered from these transitional insecurities concerning their social and cultural status, feeling "[t]wo [n]atures [s]truggling [w]ithin . . . " them (Köhler 298). On the one hand, society offered them new educational, professional and sexual possibilities; on the other hand, they were despised for actually accepting and practicing them. Or, seen from the opposite point of view, society preached the value of separate spheres, but at the same time the boundaries started to blur, conservative ideals were attacked as old-fashioned, and women who cherished these old ways felt taken by surprise and overwhelmed by the emerging new lifestyle (cf. Köhler 24, 63).

Because of these several obstacles, insecurities and oppositions, it took women many years to alter their inferior status within American society and to achieve a little more equality. Despite the emerging changes, the major goals in the lives of most women continued to be marriage and the family (cf. Köhler 4). Yet, at the turn of the century, women had started to create their own "images of female identity, and about 1915, the image of the New Woman dominated American cultural discourses" (Köhler 6). As a result, women, as well as men, became eventually more open-minded and accepted more diversity in general, as well as on behalf of the shifting gender roles (cf. 3.2, 3.4).

The emergence of the New Woman was mostly a white middle class concept (Köhler 28). As mentioned in 2.2, the lower classes could not afford to forgo additional money earned by wives[2] and children and the upper class tried to ignore any changes for a long time. However, even the members of New York's elite were sooner or later affected by the varying gender roles as will become clear in the next chapter.

3.2 The Emergence of the New Woman in Old New York

According to Waid, "*The Age of Innocence* is set in a time of great change and the entire novel is written with a consciousness of what this world is destined to become . . . " (Introduction xvi). This applies above all to its depiction of the New Woman. By projecting her own experiences onto the novel's characters,

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[2] The ideal of separate spheres was also valid among the working and lower classes. Thus, mothers and wives of this social status held jobs that could be pursued at home (Boyer 402).

Wharton illustrates and advocates – against the background of ONY and its rigid Victorian morality – the new sentiments concerning gender roles which had – inspired by the cultural influence of NYC's numerous immigrants and the atmosphere of departure spurred by industrialization and urbanization – redefined women's status in the early 20th century. Ellen Olenska is the embodiment of this more liberated woman and more than any other of the novel's characters, she mirrors the author's modern and progressive side (cf. Greeson 418; Ammons 443 f.). Because of her unconventional behavior, she largely differs from the rest of ONY's society and therefore becomes rejected by her leisure class family. However, some of AI's other female characters also already display modern traits and thus foreshadow the changing gender roles that were about to find their way into American society.

The first glimpse of difference and modernity we perceive of Ellen is her unusual look when she appears for the very first time in the novel. Carefully watched by the ruling men of ONY, Ellen enters the opera balcony wearing her hair and dress according to the so-called "'Josephine look'" (7) which "contrasted sharply with the plunging, lace-covered necklines and accentuated bodices that characterized the dresses worn by fashionable American women in the 1870s" (Waid in Wharton, *Age* 7). While the latter not only confined women's mobility and made it more difficult for them to breathe, it also accentuated especially their bust and waist – two major objects of female sexuality and male lust (cf. 4.2) – and can therefore be seen as a means of the sexual double standard to reduce women to their body and, hence, their sexual availability for men. Ellen's dress, however, is "belted under the bosom and worn over a sheer slip . . . " (Waid in Wharton, *Age* 7). That means that she can not only easily breathe and move, but her body is not as exposed to the voluptuous male gaze as are those of New York's women (even though she is definitely watched by men, as well). Instead of being reduced to an artificial sexual ideal, Ellen's body is displayed in its natural form. It is unleashed, so to speak, and not, as was the custom, kept under (male) control by a restricting bodice or the aforementioned male gaze which, as well, functions as a means of power and control according to Freud (qtd. in Spengler 72). And if a woman cannot be controlled and does not obey to patriarchal rules, she must be bad and, eventually, be eliminated. Thus, Ellen's outward appearance contributes to the bewilderment and rejection on the part of the novel's men and women: "[T]he way her dress (which had no tucker) sloped away from her thin shoulders shocked and troubled him [Newland]. He hated to think of May Welland's [his innocent fiancée] being exposed to the influence of a young woman so careless of the dictates of Taste" (11). Ellen, however, seems to be "quite unconscious of the attention . . . [she is] attracting . . . " (7) which hints, among others, at her cultural difference and consequent progressiveness. For her this kind of clothing is normal. She does not wear this dress in order to actively

protest against female oppression since at that time she is barely aware of New York's restrictive character concerning women. According to Newland,

> The exciting fact was her having lived in an atmosphere so thick with drama that her own tendency to provoke it had apparently passed unperceived. It was precisely the odd absence of surprise in her that gave him the sense of her having been plucked out of a very maelstrom: the things she took for granted gave the measure of those she had rebelled against. (73)

Hence, Ellen is a true independent soul who is used to living a freer (European) life than it will, eventually, be possible for her in New York. Indeed, she had to suffer from oppression in Europe, as well, especially in her marriage. Nonetheless, it was normal for her to leave her abusing husband when his behavior towards her had become too much to endure. This, of course, would not have been possible, or would even have come to her mind, had she been raised and married in New York. Thereby, the author makes clear that Europe, especially Paris, is a much more modern place than America: "For Wharton, contemporary French society offered an example to America in how it should conduct itself" (Edwards 488). That is, according to Wharton, French women at the turn of the century were much more self-confident, mature and independent than American women who were rather kept innocent, infantile and dependent on men (Wharton, "New" 288 ff.; cf. 3.3). Thus, by introducing Ellen in this nonchalant and foreign way of behavior, or fashion style, Wharton immediately makes clear that Ellen does not fit New York's then prevailing cultural and societal norms; that she differs in her progressiveness from the other female characters and men's expectations of her.

Moreover, Wharton continues throughout the novel to use fashion as a signifier for Ellen's otherness. Her clothes often seem to be inappropriate for the respective occasions, making her appear "heedless of tradition" (67), and the latter being deemed indispensable to the members of Old New York (cf. Singley 165). One evening, for instance, Ellen wears a "long robe of red velvet bordered about the chin and down the front with glossy black fur" (67). According to Newland, this dress is rather bold and "[t]here was something perverse and provocative in the notion of fur worn in the evening in a heated drawing room, and in the combination of a muffled throat and bare arms . . . " (67). Her exposed skin and the color of this dress further underline her passionate and wild, thus, different and for the time and class inappropriate sexual nature (cf. Ammons 442). In addition, red is an eye-catching signal color. Several of Ellen's clothes are red and stress her dynamic personality, her conspicuousness and self-confidence. This becomes, above all, clear when she wears a red cloak while standing in the middle of a snow-covered landscape (82). This flamboyant apparel makes her literally and symbolically shine out as a strong, vivacious and experienced woman in contrast to all the passive white

innocence that surrounds her in the form of her female relatives (cf. Edwards 503). Hence, Ellen's clothing not only represents freedom in the actual bodily sense – e. g. the "Josephine look" – but also in a metaphorical one. She does not confine to sexual ideals and gender roles, but instead is natural and casual, not obeying to male rules which, among others, are grown out of one-sided sexual desire and oppression and deprive women of their own well-being. She just wants to be and act the way *she* feels and which seems to be right according to *her* mind and feelings and not according to an artificial societal order.

By having such an unusual outward appearance, Ellen, furthermore, violates the behavioral norm that women should not attract too much attention. Newland, for instance, mentions, that Ellen "reveal[s], as she leaned forward, a little more shoulder and bosom than New York was accustomed to seeing, at least in ladies who had reasons for wishing to pass unnoticed" (10) Also his mother claims that being conspicuous "can hardly be what she wishes'" (26). But Ellen has ever since had "conspicuous eyes" (39) and "'was always a wayward child'" (91) and according to May, "'[s]he's so different . . . [because] she seems to [even] like to make herself conspicuous'" (189). In a time in which stereotypical women "can be defined only in relation to men" (Knights 96) and in which society and family counted more than the (female) individual (71), she does not intend to carve out a shadowy existence. Hence, in contrast to the typical invisible status of women at the turn of the century (cf. Eby 57), "Ellen Olenska is so very visible" (Wagner-Martin 75).

However, not only do her looks render her different and attract (negative) attention, but also her home and behavior are unusual and thus frowned upon by society's members. Ellen's house is located in a respectable but unfashionable neighborhood and looks as if her husband "must have robbed her of her fortune as well as of her illusions" (43). However, since appearances and fashion are crucial for ONY's members to maintain their social standing and order, her "relations despise it" (47) and try to force Ellen to move. She instead "'doesn't care a hang about where she lives – or about any of . . . [ONY's] little social sign-posts'" (77). This underlines that her freedom is most important to her. To her mind, it does not matter if something is fashionable, but she wants to feel well and free without having to obey artificial rules made up by society which make life unnecessarily uncomfortable. Besides, she is not interested in simply floating with the current and asks Archer, "'Why not make one's own fashions?'" (47). Unlike her family who cherish uniformity and try to refrain from any of the novelties that had started to alter NYC, Ellen is manifold and innovative and even creates change herself. This is why she has returned to NYC in the first place; for her, like for many other people at that time, "New York simply meant peace and freedom" (106) from an unhappy and repressive past, a progressive place where one would rather not expect a stuffy bourgeoisie (cf. "Innocence" 397) but where people can be themselves and try a fresh

start (cf. Edwards 502). Therefore, the van der Luyden's "Patroon's house" which was built by the early liberty-seeking settlers is, for example, the only American house "'that she . . . [can] imagine being perfectly happy in'" (116; cf. Knights 100). Her modern way of thinking is further underlined by her own (un-American] house's furnishing which is foreign and exotic like Ellen herself (47, 49). Hence, her unconventional house is liberating and like heaven for her – a direct contrast to the usual stifling haven of domesticity which can be found in almost any of the other conventional houses of NYC's upper class, especially May's (47, 178; cf. Hadley 41).

This domestic freedom is enhanced by the fact that Ellen lives alone with her Italian maid and considers this circumstance a "blessedness" (47). Wharton here not only accentuates Ellen's otherness – according to Victorian morality women were not supposed to live alone, but should live either with their husbands or their parents (McLaughlin et al. 17) and of course her family does not approve of Ellen not obeying to this (49) –, but also her appreciation of the new-gained and long desired personal latitude as well as female solidarity. Ellen does not treat her maid Nastasia like a servant, but like a friend; for instance, when she calls her "'my dear one'" and when she lends Nastasia her opera cloak which, too, is a rather unusual behavior as Archer observes (102). Thus, like Carrie & Co. more than a hundred years later (cf. 5.2), both women – and later also Ellen and her aunt Medora – function as a surrogate family for each other. They do not need a man to be happy but get along very well without (cf. Goodman 9, 155).

Hence, it is no wonder that Ellen, just like Wharton herself, eventually spends much of her adult life living alone, not remarrying and not having any children. Both women are "capable of living alone and being independent. The thought of loneliness does not frighten" them (Wagner-Martin 64 f.). Hence, contrary to society's claim that motherhood and marriage are women's major purpose in life and the only way to real fulfillment, Wharton shows that these domestic duties have become less important to the New Woman and that they are not the only means to feel happy and complete. Instead of resigning herself to such constrictive gender roles, Ellen – freed from domestic obligations – indulges in NYC's and later, supposedly, in Paris' public sphere, enjoying arts and sophisticated conversations, for instance (55, 215). In ONY, this behavior arouses consternation which is one reason why Ellen's life here is rather unhappy, and why she develops from an initially optimistic (12) into an indifferent person (133) who "grow[s] tired of what people call[. . .] 'society'" (146). In Paris, however, she finally has the possibility to lead a freer and more self-determined life. Indeed, Wharton leaves the reader in the dark about Ellen's post-NYC life; however, in view of the parallels that exist between Ellen and Wharton, as well as the author's preference of Parisian lifestyle over the American, "the reader might be convinced that Ellen Olenska has been happy, has

been satisfied with what was, truly, an interesting life." Hence, instead of passing the rest of her life lonely and loveless, Ellen can be supposed to finally have "'a real life'" (Wagner-Martin: 96) in contrast to the hypocritical lives of many American, or more precisely ONY's women who accepted their domestic role but often suffered from its monotony (cf. 176). Accordingly, Wharton debunks the naturalization of the separate spheres and shows that women can be fulfilled and even happier by not blindly conforming to old-fashioned conventions, but by enhancing their interests and activities and adopting a more *male* lifestyle.

Ellen's wish to divorce her unfaithful husband whose behavior made her "'want to wipe out all the past'" (69) further underlines women's progressing estrangement from family life and their increasing self-perception as independent individuals who more and more refused to put up with everything their husbands did. According to Newland, ONY's "'ideas about marriage and divorce are particularly old-fashioned. Its . . . legislation favors divorce–[its] . . . social customs don't'" (70). Instead, a wife's place is at the side of her husband, come what may (163); above all, "[o]ne should not strive for one's own pleasure and happiness at any cost whatever" (Salmi 58). Nevertheless, at the turn of the century, divorce rates skyrocketed, and most American divorces were filed by women (Bentley 161). This hints at the fact that mostly women had to suffer from unequal gender roles which were subject to marriages. It also shows that more and more women developed their own voice – their own self-consciousness – and tried to fulfill their dreams and live according to their own happiness instead of blindly conforming to the rules of society. Hence, Ellen's divorce plans and her consequent reluctance to return to her husband not only antagonize her family, but also render her a woman who is ahead of her time.

These issues are also accompanied by Wharton's frequent depiction of marriage as a burden, duty or even death – mostly for women but sometimes even for men (cf. 3.4) – often only contracted out of tradition or financial reasons (29). In this way, she denounces marriage in general as an old-fashioned and fatal institution and thus makes singleness appear a modern and more satisfying lifestyle (cf. Wagner-Martin 66). Furthermore, Ellen is the only woman in AI who is not willing to become "versed in the arts of the enslaved" (183), but instead has the courage to break free from her marital hell, not caring about the consequences concerning her finances and social status. Thereby, she not only resembles Wharton, but also foreshadows a more self-confident and autonomous female lifestyle. Just like Holly and SATC's women in the years to come, Ellen already feels more fulfilled as an independent woman than as a dependent wife. Neither of them rejects men in general, but neither of them is willing to give up their personal freedoms and individual characters. They welcome and even desire relationships; however, only if they do not

have to change or have to pretend to be someone they are not just to confine to social rules and restrictions (cf. Wagner-Martin 68). This might also be a reason why Ellen seems to be more alive to Newland than anybody else of his circle (cf. 55). Not only has she not resigned herself to restricting and paralyzing traditions, such as Newland himself (cf. 159), but she also introduces the future while ONY's breed is dying out (cf. Goodman 103; Singley 165; Knights 87).

However, single women are perceived as enemies by ONY (cf. Knights 105), and Ellen especially poses a modern threat to society's sexual double standard due to her exotic appearance, her openness and experience which is, among others, underscored by Archer sending her yellow roses (Salmi 82). Her dark appearance and her curly hair further illustrate her seductive nature and temperament, and give her a certain sexual charisma which at once disgusts ONY's members – it makes her morally questionable since it violates men's sexual dominance –, and attracts the circle's men (76 f.; MacMaster 465). Thereby, she clearly reflects Wharton's late discovered sensuality and women's new sexual interests and activities. Just like many women at the beginning of the 20th century no longer blush when in a conversation that is having the slightest hint of sexuality (207), Ellen also engages in that topic without problems or blushing, hinting of a sexual knowledge and desire nice women were actually not supposed to have (cf. Wolff 125). Accordingly, she has no inhibitions to passionately kiss Archer (173) or to utter *forbidden* words. When she asks him, "'Is it your idea, then, that I should live with you as your mistress . . .,'" Archer is shocked since "the word was one that women of his class fought shy of, even when their talk flitted closest about the topic" (174; cf. Wolff 117 f.).

Ellen is a modern and self-confident woman, though, who always tells the truth and says what she thinks instead of being submissive in order to keep up appearances (cf. Singley 172) – much against what ONY and conventional gender rules value as proper female behavior (cf. Köhler 39). Apart from her, for instance, nobody has ever dared to call the house of the powerful van der Luyden's "gloomy," even though everybody thinks of it that way (47). Ellen suffers a lot from the hypocrisy of her family who "'only ask one to pretend . . . '" (50) and do not approve of women's frankly uttering their thoughts and feelings (cf. 3.3). Women were "supposed to exert a positive influence on their husbands, children, and other family members . . . " (Lewis Thompson 20) and bothering them with personal problems or unpleasant truths was, thus, not appreciated (cf. 176). However, it is not Ellen's nature to be silent or silenced; hence, she not only violates ONY's strict conversational customs, but also questions society's rules and oppressive gender roles (cf. Eby 59). She prefers "new and crazy social schemes . . . [over] the blind conformity to tradition–somebody else's tradition–that . . . [she] see[s] among . . . '" ONY's members

(146). At this point, Ellen can be connected to Eve of the Bible's Genesis who did not tacitly obey inexplicable (male) rules, as well. Indeed, both women are punished for their disobedience by being excluded from paradise and "heaven" respectively – as Ellen often (ironically) calls the allegedly flawless New York society (12, 83). This might be one reason why female insubordination is often considered bad and men feel the need to control women. (cf. Eby 59; Mulvey 8 f.) However, considering the fact that it was just Eve's activity – in contrast to Adam's passivity – which induced the development of humankind – just like Ellen introduces a new era and female image – it seems to be sheer mockery that society usually considered (and today largely still does) women the passive and men the active sex (Boyer et al. 445; Maasik and Solomon 438). Thereby, women's liberation from male oppression becomes not only a positive, but also a necessary issue; necessary not only for the survival and development of women since conservative gender roles "dulled . . . [their] minds and limited their horizons . . . " (Chafe, *Paradox* 7), but also for children, husbands and the country itself since, in the end, they all suffer from society's naturalization of separate spheres:

> The pernicious consequences of sexual dependence afflicted everyone. Woman's human impulses to grow and to create were stifled. Men were denied true companions because their wives shared nothing in common with them. And children were psychologically deprived as a result of being dominated by mothers who had never been allowed to develop mental maturity. A nation which expected to maximize the potential of all its citizens depended upon each individual pursuing his or her unique talents. Yet social convention dictated that half the race perform nothing but menial household tasks. (Chafe, *Paradox* 7)

In this context, Ellen Olenska's unconventional behavior appears to exemplify that it is just not natural or healthy to force a subservient, passive and domestic role on women.

Connected to this comparison is also "women's (transgressive) desire to know . . . " which Mulvey, however, traces back to the myth of Pandora and her curiosity that brought harm to men (3). Likewise, Ellen's intelligence and interest in stimulating conversation pose a threat to ONY who tries to keep its women innocent (cf. 3.3). Her world knowledge, namely, enables her to raise doubts about society's maxims and her habit to discuss her thoughts also prompts others, particularly Newland, to reflect on the circle's principles (cf. Wolff 114 f.; Singley 174). This becomes above all clear when Ellen's remarks about ONY's family and power system open Newland's eyes and make him "look at his native city objectively" (49) for the first time (which again evokes the analogy to Adam and Eve, the woman enlightening the man). Thus, Ellen's intellect not only causes ONY's patriarchal order to totter, but further underlines her deviation from the cultural norm according to which education was primarily reserved for men (cf. Köhler 65). By displaying Ellen as Newland's

teacher (cf. Singley 176 f., 203), Wharton, furthermore, proves society's naturalization of men's (intellectual) superiority above women wrong.

Together with her love of art, her sophisticated personality also identifies her as a part of New York's Bohemia which emphasizes her own as well as Wharton's more liberal worldviews. Like Wharton, who can be seen as a bohemian herself since she was one of the "'people who wrote'" (158; cf. Singley 45), Ellen searches the company of artists (68) and likes to "mix[. . .] with other bohemians" (Bauer 73) – much to the disgust of her family (65) since being "an artist is to rebel against all that comprises the traditional and domestic" (Lewis Thompson 83). She lives, for instance, in a Bohemian quarter and cannot understand why her family has "'such a feeling against living in *des quartiers excentriques*'" (47). Furthermore, the fact that Ellen is the only woman who defies the manliness of smoking associates her "with urban and Bohemian tastes and more libertine views" (Waid in Wharton, *Age* 48; cf. Lee 168). Indeed, Ellen does not enjoy shocking the elite like many bohemians did (Brooks 76) – as well as Capote's Holly and SATC's Samantha –, but she is a free spirit who appreciates diversity and simply enjoys the "'world of independent ideas and artistic expression'" (Joslin qtd. in Bauer 77). According to Brooks, "'[t]he great goal of the bohemian was the expansion of the self" (69) and, accordingly, Ellen is by no means willing to give herself up in order to conform to ONY's rigid rules; instead, she returns to Paris – the birth-nation of bohemian culture (Brooks 65 ff.) – into exile. This behavior clearly renders her a pioneer who paves the way for more independent and individual women to come. Like Wharton, Ellen is clearly ahead of her time and obviously influenced by the development of women in the early 20th century.

However, some of the novel's other women also already display slight traces of change. Ellen's aunt Medora, for instance, can be, too, "admire[d] . . . under a New Woman label . . . " (Knights 93) due to her unusual lifestyle as well as Mrs. Struthers who holds bohemian parties at her house. The fact that both women are tolerated, i.e. are to become gradually accepted by NY's society, is indicative of the change that, eventually, even affected the upper class.

The same accounts for Mrs. Manson-Mingott, ONY's "Matriarch" (9) who is also a powerful and progressive woman (cf. Wagner-Martin 52). Since she "had never had beauty . . . she had won her way to success by strength of will and hardness of heart" (10), hence by actively taking charge of her own life. She was the first to build a house in a yet undiscovered and hence "unfashionable region" (129), using "pale cream-colored stone" instead of the common "brown sandstone" (9) which shows that she, like Ellen, not only cares little about fashion and appearances, but also appreciates change, even driving it forth herself. As a result, she complains about her family's resistance to diversity and the fact that "'there's not one of . . . [her] own children that takes after . . . [her] but . . . [her] little Ellen'" (95). According to her, ONY "need[s] new

blood and new money" (20), her furnishings are as exotic and frivolous as Ellen's (19), and the several yellow items in her house (130, 179) hint, like Ellen's yellow roses and Fanny Ring's yellow carriage, at her unconventionality. Mrs. Manson-Mingott can also be seen as a new, self-confident and independent woman because she mostly does not bother herself with what her family and social conventions in general expect of her. Hence, she also arranges, much against her family's wish, for Ellen to be financially autonomous so that she does not have to return to her husband. "'You sweet bird, you! Shut you up in that cage again? Never!'" she exclaims (180), thereby clearly supporting women's independence (cf. Wagner-Martin 84). This also underlines her advanced way of thinking since she has realized what makes women dependent on men and helps Ellen to supersede these chains. The fact that she is already rather old but nevertheless a free spirit makes her a true pioneer of the New Woman (cf. Wolff 126).

Even May who actually functions as Ellen's very counterpart is not as innocent as she seems to be at first sight. Instead, she is fully aware of Newland's romantic feelings for Ellen and successfully intrigues in order to keep her husband (cf. Goodman 99 f.; Wolff 120; MacMaster 464). She is not willing to tacitly endure Newland's supposedly amorous debauchery but fights back, even if only covertly. Against the habit of ONY's women to politely overlook their husbands extramarital sexual activities, May has even the courage to corner Newland when she realizes that he is lying to her about his motives why he no longer has to leave the city on business as soon as he learns that Ellen will come to NYC: "'Then it's [a patent case] *not* postponed?' she continued, with an insistence so unlike her that he [Newland] felt the blood rising to his face, as if he were blushing for her unwonted lapse from all the traditional delicacies" (170).

Furthermore, her offer to cancel the engagement in case Newland is in love with another woman shows a slight sign of progressiveness in the character of May (cf. Eby 61). According to ONY's rules of female behavior, she could have simply ignored her impression that Newland might still be thinking of another woman. However, she directly addresses this topic and therewith a problem, the latter, as we have seen, being rather ignored and silently eliminated by this elite society instead of causing a big stir. Newland himself is surprised that May speaks so openly – and above all with such a self-confident "womanly eminence" (94) and "dignity" (92) – about an inconvenience and even feels attracted by it, realizing for a short moment, but apparently misinterpreting or forgetting it afterwards, that May is not as ignorant as he supposes her to be.

Furthermore, May is very athletic. According to Victorian customs, "proper young ladies must never sweat . . . and physical exertion should take place in private" (Boyer et al. 445). Hence, sports was a male privilege, but in the

course of the altering gender roles unconstrained athletic activity was made accessible for women, as well (Harrison 338). May is very good in archery which not only makes her hands look large and unfeminine (20; cf. Wagner-Martin 73), hence different, but also hints at her not so submissive fighting spirit; the same accounts for her frequent comparison to Diana, the goddess of the hunt, especially when she appears at the van der Luyden's dinner party just when Ellen and Newland are engaged in a private talk during which their mutual affection becomes obvious: "The tall girl [May] looked like a Diana just alight from the chase" (42; cf. Killoran 152). Her being good in archery might also imply that she is good with Archer, i.e. that she knows how to handle and manipulate him so that she eventually gets what she wants (cf. Singley 172). Her "handling the reins and Archer sitting at her side" (129) is likewise indicative of her hidden control which – unnoticed by Newland – leads their way, i.e. their lives.

Moreover, May is described as "boyish" (116) and a bad needlewoman (177) – even though the latter was considered a typical female task (cf. 3.4) – and as "incapable of tying a ribbon in her hair to charm" Newland (121; cf. Bandi 72 f.). At the end, she even engages in new public activities and attends the artistic parties of Mrs. Struthers which she and her family had despised before as bohemian, thus inappropriate for their social status (cf. Waid, Changing 340).

Hence, all of the novel's progressive women show that American culture was about to transform, i.e. that it had started to transform in 1919 when Wharton wrote AI. Especially "[w]ith . . . [Ellen] comes the breath of the greater world, the world on the threshold" (Watson 400) which is most evidently made obvious by the fact that she, even though exiled, is not really punished for her unconventional behavior (cf. Hadley 41 f.). Instead, she is allowed to stay true to herself and lead a (supposedly) happy life (cf. Bandi 76 f.). Even initially conventional characters open up to some extent, and ONY's next generation once and for all makes clear that change had arrived and conventional gender roles altered (209 ff., cf. Killoran 151).

Nevertheless, Victorian morality largely continued to define the images of American women as will become clear in the next chapter.

3.3 An Age of Innocence and its Cult of True Womanhood

Despite all the changes that had begun to alter the lifestyles of women, conventional gender roles were still prevailing in the early 20th century. This becomes also obvious in AI: "Far from encouraging individuality and freedom, 'America' in this novel enforces conformity to convention . . . " (MacMaster 472). Like many women at that time, even Edith Wharton could not completely shake off her conservative upbringing, but held on to some old virtues. This

side of her and of American women in general, is primarily embodied by May Welland, but also the novel's other women and even Ellen sometimes appreciate tradition and live according to society's conventional rules. However, Wharton's sentiments towards Victorian morality were ambivalent. Therefore, she indeed looks back at ONY "with nostalgia" (Kress 168) and honors some of society's conventional values (cf. Wagner-Martin 22); nonetheless, most of the time she denounces them for the destructive effect they (still) had on women (cf. Wagner-Martin 8).

Just like Ellen's otherness, also May's conformity is first of all depicted by means of her outward appearance, i.e. her fashion style when she is introduced for the very first time. May wears a demure dress with a restricting bodice and "a modest tulle tucker" (5) that covers her chest in order to not expose too much skin and uphold her decency (cf. Waid in Wharton, *Age* 5). Newland confirms this look with a "breath of satisfied vanity . . . [and] a tender reference for her abysmal purity" (5 f.). Since fashion defined true womanhood and moral respectability at the turn of the century (cf. Scorsese and Cocks 61 ff.), May is always anxious to wear the right dress in order to not attract attention or violate the common "'Taste,' that far-off divinity of whom 'Form' was the mere visible representative and viceregent" in ONY (10 f.). During their honeymoon in England, for example, May desperately worries about her clothes since she does not "want to be ridiculous" by wearing an unusual dress which would render her conspicuous and different from the norm (118). Hence, all of the novel's women are defined and define themselves through their clothing, the latter functioning not only as a status symbol (cf. Boyer et al. 431), but also as "their armor" as Newland observes (121). Whereas Ellen's fashion displays her difference and progressiveness, ONY's conservative women use their conspicuous fashion-consumption in order to distance themselves from any diversity or change that was proceeding around them and threatening their exclusiveness (Salmi 53). It's "their defense against the unknown, and their defiance of it" (121); tradition considers it "'vulgar to dress in the newest fashion . . . " which is why the clothes they purchase in France have to "mellow" in the closet for at least one season before it becomes appropriate to wear them (156). This practice, however, bears some irony in itself. Indeed, in the very moment in which they are finally worn, these dresses are more or less obsolete. Nevertheless, they once *had* been a novelty. So, by acting this way, ONY's women do not actually resist change, but rather delay it. As Newland observes:

> It was thus . . . that New York managed its transitions: conspiring to ignore them till they were well over, and then, in all good faith, imagining that they had taken place in a preceding age. There was always a traitor in the citadel; and after he (or generally she) had surrendered the keys, what was the use of pretending that it was impregnable? (157)

Therefore, the women's attitude towards fashion could also be interpreted as a parallelism to the circle's initial rejection and yet eventual adoption of Ellen's European shaped behavior – as described by Newland above – and hence as an indication and critique of society's hypocrisy on the part of Wharton.

Furthermore, May, in contrast to dark Ellen, is a light figure, "the fair American girl . . . [who] represents the safe, secure world of New York gentility . . . " (Singley 172). She has white skin, blue eyes and blonde hair. Her dresses and accessories, such as her gloves (5), are white – or at least have a bright color – and Archer sends her lilies-of-the-valley every day (51). By enwrapping her all white, Wharton emphasizes May's innocence, her child-like and untouched – hence ideal – nature according to traditional gender roles. May's grandmother, for instance, who mostly is a rather liberal woman, notices with disdain May's large modern hands, but is pleased that at least they are white (20; cf. Wagner-Martin 73) which confirms society's obvious preference of the True over the New Woman. According to Salmi, however, white is "also [the color] of cold" (81) and thus, May's aura is not only a pure, but also a frosty one. This becomes further underlined by the frequent connection of May to cold items, like "the moon, frost, ice [and] marble" (Salmi 83). Hence, Wharton tinges the American ideal of female purity with a negative connotation. Due to the glorification of women's supposedly domestic and angel-like nature, which prevented them from any experience outside the home, "the average American woman . . . [at the turn of the century was] still in the kindergarten" according to the author (Wharton, "New" 289). Throughout the novel, May is, thus, described as "childish[. . .]" (114), "girlish" (192) or descending "from . . . womanly eminence to helpless and timorous girlhood" (94), and Newland even calls her "child" (93). Therefore, May can be seen to be literally "frozen in endless childhood" (Ammons 436) and trapped in a white shell.

May's childlike innocence is above all displayed in terms of sexuality. First of all, conventional gender roles do not allow her to engage in premarital sex or to have any sexual knowledge at all before marrying. According to ONY's moral rules, it is Archer's "duty, as a 'decent' fellow, to conceal his past from her [May], and hers, as a marriageable girl, to have no past to conceal" (28). Moreover, May even blushes when the conversation just remotely revolves around a sexual topic, even after years of marriage and when talking to her husband (206). This implies that May does not see sexuality as something to be enjoyed but is rather ashamed of it. Her "rare caresses" (188) are a direct contrast to Ellen's kisses and identify May as an asexual and non-tender person. The same accounts for the "slight hardness of her virginal features" (118) and her androgynous appearance (cf. Knights 94). Here, Wharton underlines that women's forced virginity and ignorance concerning sex is anything but feminine. Due to "wilfully obtuse parental treatment" (Lewis 272), the author herself was for many years deprived of her sexual identity and discovered on-

ly late in life, through adultery, her own passion and ability for sexual enjoyment and therewith her womanliness (Wagner-Martin 27). Hence, she shows that being a true woman includes sensuality and clearly judges Victorian prudishness for misdirecting women in terms of sex (cf. Lewis Thompson 93). The fact that May's "hardness" seems to be "softened" during their honeymoon in Europe (118) further underlines the rigidness of American society as opposed to the openness of European society.

Besides, the Victorian double standard not only grants ONY's men more premarital, but also more extramarital sexual liberty. While it is "undoubtedly foolish of the man . . . " to commit adultery, whether being married himself of having an affair with a married woman, it is "always criminal of the woman" (61). Accordingly, Ellen, for instance, gets expelled and despised for her supposedly extramarital affair(s) whereas Newland emerges unscathed (Eby 63). And even though Wharton frees female sexuality from taboos by making it one of the novel's major topics, she mostly uses a "metaphorical language . . . that would be acceptable to her reading public . . . " (Lewis Thompson 96). This shows that in 1920, the majority of Americans still thought it inappropriate to openly address female sexuality.

ONY's women are not only sexually inexperienced, but also mentally. While all of the circle's men are educated and engage in sophisticated conversations, especially after dinner, none of its women has attended school or university or is even interested in further knowledge. May states for example, that she is "not clever enough to argue with . . . " Newland (53). During their honeymoon, she is only attracted by shallow amusement like "the theaters and the shops" (119), and when Newland reads a history book, she is not interested in him reading it out loud to her (177). This shows that May is not a profound person, but completely identifies with the superficiality of her class and acts like it appertains for women according to conventional gender roles: "Because their natural, childlike state and simple piety would be compromised if taxed by mental labors, women were taught to refrain from critical speculation or analysis . . . and barred from the institutions of learning . . . "(Singley 42).

Rather than their mind, then, it is women's beauty that renders them attractive and desirable wives (10). May for instance is often thought to be "the handsomest girl in the room" (43) while "[i]t was generally agreed in New York that the Countess Olenska had 'lost her looks'" (38), again exemplifying society's preference of the True over the New Woman. Hence, it is not the women's identity or character that counts, but only their shell. As Coates states, women, in order to be good mothers and wives, must be "focusing on how they *are*, while . . . [men must] be focusing on what they *do*" to prove their worth (Coates 73, my italics).

Thereby, ONY's women are reduced to a passive position. According to the circle's rules, women should be "immovable as an idol" (41) and, accord-

ingly, May rather reacts instead of acting by herself although she surely would like to given her interests in sports (Goodmann 97 f.). Instead, she reacts, for instance, to Newland's wish to advance the announcement of their engagement and their marriage; even her one big, but covert, activity (her scheme against Newland's and Ellen's affair) is ultimately only a reaction to Newland's disloyal behavior.

Affiliated to that is also the fact that May, in contrast to Ellen's frank speech, keeps all her thoughts and opinions to herself and, thus, obeys society's rule to "only pretend" and be a cheerful wife: "If May had spoken out her grievances . . . he [Newland] might have laughed them away; but she was trained to conceal imaginary wounds under a Spartan smile" (176). Hence, May is silenced and reduced to an inferior position since her emotions – and thereby also she as an individual – are not taken seriously (cf. Eby 60 f). Wharton sharply criticizes this "means of social control . . . " which is used by ONY's members in order to maintain "a constricting definition of 'the feminine'" (Eby 56). The "dazzle" of May's blue eyes and her "tremble[ing] in his [Newland's] arms" hint at the sorrow she has to swallow in order to keep appearances up (176, 171, 189). Moreover, by making her secretly and successfully plot against Newland's happiness, Wharton also underlines the harm that this kind of female oppression can do to men.

Furthermore, ONY's women are all defined through their husbands which again emphasizes society's disrespect of the female and, more precisely, a wife's individuality (cf. Goodmann 98). After her marriage, May Welland is nothing more than a part of "The Newland Archers" (169) just as Regina Dallas has become "'Mrs. Julius Beaufort'" (164). This underlines "the position of the women as members of a family, a tribe" (Wagner-Martin 80) and, accordingly, the importance of women to marry. Not only is their social status defined by their marriage (6), but their worth is also dependent on this factor since "a married woman" counts a lot more than "an old maid" (74). Hence, ONY above all values "the haven of blameless domesticity" (24; cf. Goodman 103), and May's "bright housekeeping air" (162) renders her once again a True Woman. The same accounts for the frequent comparison to Diana, who "is also the goddess of fertility and childbirth" (Bandi 73). May's conformity to domestic values becomes also clear by the fact that May is "not a clever needlewoman . . . but since other wives embroider[. . .] cushions for their husbands she . . . [does] not wish to omit this last link in her devotion" (177). Hence, she fully embraces her role as a dutiful wife – and later mother – and treasures it more than anything else. She even becomes manipulative in order to honor and maintain the institution of marriage (cf. Wagner-Martin 43); and even though her capacity to push her will through renders her a more progressive woman than generally thought, it also proves her "superior to Ellen" (Wagner-

Martin 39). This underlines the dominance of tradition over modernity at the turn of the century.

However, in AI, the almost holy status of the family and people's expected commitment to this institution is in many ways restricting and fatal. For one thing, it binds women to the domestic sphere, depriving them – and at times men (cf. 3.3) – of their liberty and often also their happiness. The aforementioned scene, for example, not only illustrates women's domestic commitment, but also the pressure that weighed on them and forced them to do things they actually did not want to do. Additionally, Mrs. Welland acts as a servant to her husband who has not the slightest notion of or interest in domestic matters (75; cf. Auchincloss qtd. in Wagner-Martin 20); family and marriage duty binds the first Mrs. Beaufort to her disgracing and unfaithful husbands (165) and May not only has to spend her life with someone who does not really love her (Bandi 74), but she literally sacrifices herself for her family when she dies from her son's illness "through which she had nursed him" before (208).

Nevertheless, marriage is also one of the few topics which shine a light on Wharton's own conservative side. According to Goodman, the author "exposes and analyzes the cultural forces that result when women are defined by their mate's status, but she offers no replacement" (103). This becomes above all obvious by the fact that Ellen indeed manages to maintain her independence, but only for a high price. The clear winner of the novel is May who successfully upholds traditional gender roles and family duties, and even her and Newland's rather modern children are immediately linked to marriage (206, 209). Wharton's unwillingness to free ONY's women from male financial independence is also indicative of her conservatism and her belief that women "must marry" (Goodman 7; cf. Wharton, "French" 294). None of the novel's women enjoys an educational training or works (cf. Wagner-Martin 71 f.). Even when Ellen refuses to take back her own money from her husband (141) and her grandmother cuts her allowance (160), working is no option. Even though also upper class women had slowly started since the end of the 19th century to attend "high schools in order to get access to college training and after graduation to the professional world . . . " (Köhler 41), AI largely ignores this novelty and only covertly hints at this development when Julius Beaufort is rumored to have an affair with a "typewriter" (203). This issue also mirrors Wharton's own conflict concerning her status and capacity as a writer and working woman since she deemed women not capable of producing the same kind of critical and serious literature as men could (Wegener 6 ff.). Hence, the novel's women, though partially liberated and modern, remain dependent on men, at least in financial terms (Salmi 38). Indeed, Ellen eventually survives on her grandmother's money; however the latter gained her wealth through heritage and, thus, in a broader sense, her money is male money, as well (9 f.).

Wharton's – and American society's – appreciation of some traditions is also underlined by the fact that even her progressive alter ego Ellen has a conventional side. Initially, for instance, she "want[s] to do what . . . all do" and "feel cared for and safe" (47) (however, like Holly later, only on her own terms). Moreover, she refuses to have sex with Newland as soon as she comes to know about May's pregnancy thereby accepting "the code of decency . . . rather than backing her own personal claims" (Bloom 8). The holy institution of family is even for her very important, even if marriage, as it seems, is not for she had agreed to the sexual meeting when Newland was supposedly only a husband and she, of course, still a wife (187). Hence, also Ellen obeys the "moral force" (Bloom 8) that defined gender roles and even becomes more conservative because of Archer. She claims to not feel lonely or afraid anymore now that Archer has taught her the value and solidarity of family, something she has not known before (107). This is one of the rare moments in which Wharton seems to praise American moral order over European laissez-faire; she makes clear, that not everything that is conservative is bad and that even an open-minded and progressive woman like Ellen might learn from ONY's conventionalism: "After all, there was good in the old ways" (208; cf. Holbrook 13).

In addition to that, the divorce issue bears much conventional potential, not only on the part of ONY but also on the part of Ellen and Wharton herself. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ellen's wish for divorce renders her a modern and self-confident woman. However, although "[b]etween 1867 and 1929 . . . the divorce rate [in the United States] rose 2,000 percent . . . " (Bentley 161), the small New York elite in Wharton's novel does not accept divorced women. Instead, Ellen's family deems "an unhappy wife [better] than . . . a separated one" (153) since a divorce would not only ruin Ellen's reputation (68) but also cast a shadow over NYC's flawless upper class (19). Ellen remains true to herself, though, and does not return to her husband. Nevertheless, she eventually does not pull through her divorce plans but gives in to family pressure, thereby sealing her and Newland's fate and obstructing the possibility of ever living happily together. On the one hand, this decision reflects the still prevailing high status of marriage at the turn of the century and the fact that many women still identified themselves primarily as wives. On the other hand, Wharton, who already was divorced herself when she wrote the novel, thereby shows how backward some parts of society still had been in otherwise progressive times, and how harmful restrictive conventions and the blind conformity to them can be. In addition to that, it also mirrors Wharton's struggle concerning conventional and modern behavior. Although the author suffered from her unfaithful husband and even abandoned herself to an extramarital affair, she maintained her unhappy marriage for more than 20 years due to her "'moral conservatism and her devotion to family ties and the sanctities of tra-

dition'" (Baym, Edith 829). Indeed, she eventually divorced her husband, influenced by female emancipation as well as by her first glimpse of sexual satisfaction and enjoyment. But according to Salmi, "[h]er feelings about it were contradictory . . . " (57) and, hence, all of her novel's women who are divorced or want to "are ostracized" (58).

Besides, the fact that Newland and Ellen are not permitted to share a happy future – neither in the final version of the novel nor in its first drafts (cf. Greeson 413 ff.) – further underlines Wharton's commitment to marriage and the fact that the majority of Americans in 1920 still perceived marriage a sacrosanct institution that should not be violated. To Wharton's contemporary readers, Ellen's "excursion with a newly-married man" already displays an "extraordinary freedom" on the part of a woman (Holbrook 25). They rather sympathize with the moral May and would not have approved if Wharton had made the immorally and sexually more eccentric couple win (cf. Wagner-Martin 10, 46). Hence, Newland and Ellen can admit and express their feelings only outside the city, i.e. outside the restrictive realm of ONY, such as Ellen's unconventional house (104 ff.), the settler's cottage in the countryside (82 ff.) and during the aforementioned excursion to the bay of Point Arley (142 ff.). There is just no place (yet) for this kind of liberty among upper class New York (cf. Knights 100 ff.; Kress 172 f.).

Finally, May's birth name Welland is also an indication of the positive aspects and Wharton's appreciation of traditional behavior (cf. Wagner-Martin 80); and the fact that even May's and Newland's daughter is "so like her mother" (206) indicates, that the conventional image of women still prevailed in the early 20th century. However, the new female lifestyle, as we have seen, had started to put down its roots, and Wharton makes clear that Victorian morality had harmful effects on women and even weighed down on men as will become clear in the next chapter.

3.4 New-land in Old New York: Men and Their Perception of Women

The shifting female lifestyle at the turn of the century of course not only affected women, but men, too. While most men felt threatened by the new developments, some also supported women in their fight for more freedom and equality (cf. Kimmel 143 ff.). In AI, Newland Archer illustrates both sides. Suffering himself from Victorian morality, he is Ellen's most ardent proponent; however at the same time, he is unable to cut off his conservative roots. Thereby, he most clearly mirrors Wharton's and America's moral conflict concerning gender roles and shows that even among men, modernism was on its way, but conservatism still prevailed.

Since ONY feared its downfall due to "sexual as well as financial seductions" (Waid, Time 298), most of the novel's men are displayed as strictly con-

servative and upholding Victorian morality in order to avoid change and to maintain their exclusive and superior status, especially towards women. Prizing themselves as "authorit[ies] on 'family' [and] 'form'" (7) and "exalt[ing] the sanctity of the home" (202), their lives and behavior are ruled by conservative gender roles and the sexual double standard which is why they vigorously condemn Ellen's otherness and try to confine her to her proper role as a submissive woman and wife (cf. Knights 95). Their perception of women as unequal and inferior to men becomes for instance obvious by the several liberties they grant husbands but not wives. Indeed, "in Archer's little world no one laughed at a wife deceived, and a certain measure of contempt was attached to men who continued their philandering after marriage" (183). Nevertheless, ONY did not pillory unfaithful men like Lefferts or Beaufort even though they did not approve of their actions. They were talked about quietly and still tolerated within their exclusive circle. The men's mistresses or supposedly unfaithful women like Ellen, on the contrary, were harshly despised and punished for their immoral and unconventional behavior. As Eby points out, "According to the sexual double standard . . . only a woman can break the law." Hence, the fact that Ellen gets expelled while Newland emerges unscathed even though both are assumed to have committed adultery, "illustrates the double standard at the heart of patriarchy" (63).

The novel's undertone reflects this male conservatism, thereby illustrating that the latter still ruled American society in 1919 when Wharton wrote AI. Even though the oppression of women is one or even the major motive of AI and May and Ellen, eventually, turn out to be its actual main characters, the novel is entirely written from a male perspective and leaves the women's true stories out (cf. Hadley 33; Goodman 101; Wagner-Martin 62). So, by giving Newland "center stage," Wharton both exposes her own conservative side and "reinforce[s] her readers' expectations . . . " since people were more interested in reading about male than female experiences (Wagner-Martin 28, 30). Accordingly, giving a (mostly) female problem a male voice heightened the odds for Wharton and her criticism to be taken seriously and listened to. At the same time, however, Wharton's choice of perspective also reveals male arrogance against and ignorance of women. Newland – and with him the reader – thinks to know it all, but becomes disabused at the end (cf. Wolff 112; Wagner-Martin 19). A further motive might be that Wharton largely identifies with Newland since she herself often felt and acted rather like a man than a woman because the latter's lifestyle and behavior was dull and lowbrow (cf. Salmi 108; Singley 46 f.). And in addition to that, the novel's perspective gives the reader an insight on the changing roles and sentiments of men, as well.

In contrast to the majority of ONY's men, Newland displays a more modern and progressive way of thinking, above all when it comes to women's rights. This is already made obvious by means of his name. It reveals his de-

sire for change, he wants to conquer new land in which "'words . . . and categories like" mistress or adultery "'won't exist. Where . . . [he and Ellen] shall be simply two human beings who love each other . . . " (174) and not two constantly observed troublemakers who violate society's rigid behavioral norms which deem the well-being of the family more important than the well-being of the individual (cf. Bandi 77; Hadley 35; Wolff 111). Hence, Newland defends Ellen against the circle's hostility and consternation as regards her wish for divorce although she is suspected to have dared to commit adultery just like her husband did: "'Who had the right to make her life over if she hadn't? I'm sick of the hypocrisy that would bury alive a woman of her age if her husband prefers to live with harlots . . . . Women ought to be free–as free as we are . . . '" (27).

Newland's more open-minded character and his appreciation of novelties is further underlined by his tendency to interfere with and enjoy the company of people of lower status, such as journalist Ned Winsett, a bohemian who shares Newlands "intellectual interests and curiosities" (78). The same accounts for Count Olenski's secretary M. Rivière "to whom good conversation appear[s] to be the only necessity" in life. In contrast to May, who finds him common, Newland is delighted with his inspiring intellect which "put[s] new air into his lungs," and he deems his free ideas and thinking an advantage and superior to ONY's shallowness (123).

Furthermore, Newland is not fond of society's infantilization of women in order to keep them obedient. Against ONY's preference of simple women (94; cf. Knights 95), he does "not in the least wish the future Mrs. Newland Archer to be a simpleton" (6) but envisions his marriage to be a "passionate and tender comradeship" (29). Hence, he is annoyed with May's blind assimilation to the inferior role society has assigned her. This becomes most obvious after their one and only frank and profound conversation before their marriage:

> [May] descended from her womanly eminence to helpless and timorous girlhood; and he understood that her courage and initiation were all for others, and that she had none for herself . . . . Archer had no heart to go on pleading with her; he was too much disappointed at the vanishing of the new being who had cast that one deep look at him from her transparent eyes. (94)

Instead of a (sexually) innocent and stereotyped woman who is blind to the facts of reality like a "Kentucky cave-fish" (53) and only "echoe[s] what was said for her" (52), Newland wants his wife to be an experienced and "worldly-wise" (6) individual who enriches his life instead of boring him to death (cf. Salmi 82 f.; "Innocence" 398). However, he realizes that this is not possible within this society and its rigid gender roles (29). So, like quite a few American men at that time, Newland is deprived of a true "companion" due to moral

conventions (Lewis Thompson 23). At this point, Wharton makes clear that society's restricting gender roles not only did harm to women, but also confined and diminished men's lives and well-being (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 7).

Consequently, even for Newland, marriage and family become a destructive force. After having met Ellen, who opened his eyes yet a little more (cf. Salmi 51), the prospect of getting married to May and, thus, to lead a "usual" life is "like cinders in his mouth," and he feels "as if he were being buried alive under his future" (87). His marriage, eventually, becomes as dreary and superficial as anybody else's and makes him feel trapped in a kind of living death (178; cf. Salmi 100 f.; Hadley 40 f.). Besides, just as May loses her individuality as soon as she is a wife (cf. Eby 61), parts of Newland's individuality also fall prey to "May's [domestic] pressure" (124); and just like some of SATC's women will deem marriage and children as the end of personal freedom and life in general (cf. 5.2), May's pregnancy is the final factor to end Newland's modern ambitions and his hopes for a free and happy life (cf. Kress 170). This reversal of traditional gender roles is of peculiar importance since "being trapped in domestic life . . . [is] a position usually assigned to a female character . . . " (Chandler qtd. in Kress 167). Wharton shows that not only women had to suffer from society's strict conventions, but so did men. Making marriage and family, according to the rules of Victorian morality, a cage for both sexes, further reinforces the severity of Wharton's critique of the restrictive domestic life men as well as women were forced to (cf. Bentley 458; Goodman 141).

The slow convergence of gender roles at the turn of the century is also mirrored by the fact that Newland displays characteristics that are generally deemed to be rather feminine – just as Ellen, and to some extent May, has adopted typical male attitudes. Although ONY's men were expected to be "self-controlled" and not "melodramatic" (192), Newland develops for instance an unbridled jealousy and anger towards other men who pay attention to Ellen (85) or talk pejoratively of her (159 f.). Furthermore, he is very emotional and less rational than Ellen when talking with her about a (im)possible shared future and cries (173 ff.); and even May can control her emotions better than Newland (194). In addition to that, he adopts a passive role when he realizes that he cannot escape his marriage (Hadley 41) – the fatal consequences of his inability to act can be seen as another criticism of Wharton concerning the harm of passivity that was usually forced on women – and according to Wagner-Martin, his language is more romantic than a woman's which shows that "[a]nticipated roles have been exchanged, social attitudes reversed" (58). Thereby, Newland also reflects or rather responds to Elizabeth Cady Stanton's claim that not only women should adopt a more male behavior, but also men a more female one (Lewis Thompson 30).

Not only Newland inherits progressive traits, but also some of the novel's other men are of a more modern mind; even ONY in general slowly opens up to (female) diversity. Professor Emerson Sillerton, for example, stems from a much respected family, but pursues an unconventional profession as archeologist and fills his "house with long-haired men and short-haired women" (134). Furthermore, Julius Beaufort can, of course, be seen as a "symbol of the unconventional 'new' man" (Wagner-Martin 34) since he not only (re)presents America's financial modernism and a "lack of gentlemanly discretion in his sexual affairs" (Ehrhardt 404), but also adheres to his spurned mistress and in fact marries her at the end. Additionally, even Lawrence Lefferts deems "vulgar women" to be "less harm [than] men of obscure origin and tainted wealth" (202), and the fact that Ellen's family initially backed her up even though they were fully aware of the scandal her "anomalous situation" (11) would spur illustrates that ONY from the beginning on had already started to admit some change (cf. Wolff 126).

Despite all that, Newland – just like Wharton – is not able to completely let go of his conventional heritage and is torn between the old and the modern (cf. Mansfield 399). Indeed, he is more liberal than any other of the circle's men and advocates women's equality, but only as long as this does not affect his own male liberties: "He could not . . . see any honest reason (any, that is unconnected with his own momentary pleasure, and the passion of masculine vanity) why his bride should not have been allowed the same freedom of experience as himself" (30). Hence, Newland still feels superior to women and actively reduces them to minor positions. For instance, he calls May as well as Ellen "child" (70, 93), has the upper floor of the house all to himself while his mother and sister "squeeze[. . .] themselves into narrower quarters below" (22), and "with a thrill of possessorship . . . " he envisions his "manly privilege" to read to his wife and to improve her "thanks to his enlightening companionship" (5 f.). Unlike Ellen, who really believes in women's right for freedom, Newland "revert[s] to all his old inherited ideas about marriage" (119) as soon as it becomes more comfortable to him and Ellen plays no longer an active part in his life. Furthermore, he despises men like Beaufort and Lefferts for their sexual double standard but is himself more than willing to cheat on his wife. His own double standard becomes also clear by the fact that he does not want his wife to be too innocent, but at the same time only translates as much of the words of the "'cocottes's'" songs for May as he deems "suitable for bridal ears" (119; cf. Knights 94). He is attracted by Ellen's sensuality, but has little respect for other sexually active women like Mrs. Rushworth (61; cf. Holbrook 20) and only wants to marry a "nice" girl (123). Thus, his perfect woman is a hybrid of Ellen and May, "'a miracle of fire and ice' that will satisfy both his sexual and his intellectual urges, as well as his need to control her . . . " (Wagner-Martin 19). Hence, he indeed has become aware of the (sexual)

inequality that rules ONY and harshly despises it; nevertheless, he as well cannot absolve himself of female oppression and thus remains a part of the circle's "masculine solidarity" (6; cf. Knights 94; Wagner-Martin 39).

His feeling of superiority and conformity to conventional rules is, moreover, what finally derails his plans of a happy future since it leads him to misinterpret Ellen and underestimate May. Like all of the other men, he victimizes the women by not paying attention to their thoughts and feelings. Instead of frankly asking Ellen if she had committed adultery, he prefers to not pronounce this unpleasant and sexually charged topic. "[H]e reads Ellen's innocent silence as an admission of guilt" and, accordingly, recommends to refrain from her liberating divorce plans, thereby betraying his earlier mentioned "ideal of the free woman" (Eby 62) and obstructing a shared future. Moreover, throughout the novel, Newland wallows in self-pity and suffers from his marriage, but only once he considers the possibility that May is also unhappy and that marriage is also a burden for her (176). He makes her responsible for his misery and thereby, unconsciously, becomes to May what Count Olenski had become to Ellen. He is so concerned with his own interests that he even fails to read the signs that May is not as unknowing as he thinks her to be. He continuously criticizes her shallow superficiality, but when May for instance begins to find her own voice by commenting on what he reads out aloud for her after "he had ceased to provide her with opinions" (177), he is merely annoyed by her interference. Wharton eventually punishes Newland for being so ignorant towards women and their lives and sentiments. Not only has his conformity to patriarchal rules destroyed the possibility to marry the one he really loves, but also his underestimation of May, whom he even after her death still believes to have been "lacking in imagination" and "incapable of growth" (208), "has enabled her [May] to destroy his hope of 'escape'" (Hadley 40). At this point, Wharton makes clear that the idea of male superiority and female inferiority is full of flaws and by no means a natural concept.

Hence, Newland is indeed of a progressive mind, but he eventually does not manage to live his ideas but instead confines to societal rules (cf. Wagner-Martin 86). Since he has "little practice . . . in dealing with unusual situations" (69), his new gained insights and ideas concerning gender equality trouble him, and he finally remains a "dilettante" to whom "thinking over a pleasure to come often . . . gives a subtler satisfaction than its realization" (4; cf. Bandi 77). His incapacity to practice his thoughts – in contrast to Ellen – is mirrored when he wants her to write a note for her secretary with his new "stylographic pen[. . .]." Newland is the one who provides the novelty, but Ellen is the only one who uses it (143). As a result, Newland eventually decides to remain "'old-fashioned'" by clinging to family duties and honoring them until the end, thereby sacrificing for the second time a possible future with Ellen (217). As Wagner-Martin points out, Newland is a "man torn be-

tween the strictures of social convention and the fury of passion. And with age, that fury has mellowed into an acceptance of the rightness of convention" (47). This decision makes Newland the "perfect . . . American . . . " "hero" (Knights 105), and by making Newland choose the True over the New Woman, Wharton illustrates that in 1920 most men and society in general – especially the older generation – were not yet ready to fully embrace the changing gender roles. Accordingly, it also shows that "'Wharton was only partly a feminist. Social class was even more important to her than sexual equality'" (qtd. in Salmi 31).

Nevertheless, Newland, among others, has triggered off a new way of (male) thinking which is finally put into practice by the next generation. Neither does his son Dallas care about his future wife's heritage as one of "Beaufort's bastards," nor does society – Newland included – "wonder[. . .] or reprove[. . .]" (211; cf. Goodman 103). And even though Newland's and May's daughter is "no less conventional, and no more intelligent . . . " than May, she at least leads "a larger life and . . . [holds] more tolerant views" (209). Thus, despite the fact that conservative gender roles still prevailed at the turn of the century, men as well as women gradually became more open-minded and women, hence, had finally the chance to become more liberated: "There was good in the new order too" (209).

3.5 Conclusion

According to Köhler, turn-of-the-century literature and magazines not only depicted, but also largely helped to create the image of the New Woman. At the same time however, the major concept of women and their gender roles remained to be domesticity and purity (275). As just pointed out, Wharton, too, introduces and clearly promotes this new European-shaped image of experienced women, but likewise she still clings to some conservative ideals concerning gender roles. Indeed, Ellen is allowed to maintain her personality and even receives male support, but she has to pay a high price for her independence: exile and the loss of love. May instead, is supported by her family and friends and successfully continues her innocent lifestyle. Thereby, Wharton shows that despite the shift of gender roles the repressive Victorian moral standards that had ruled her childhood were still intact in 1920 (McDowell qtd. in Bandi 67). However, Wharton also makes clear that May's success is only achieved because she, as well, bears traits of the New Woman under her conservative surface. Hence, in AI, open rebellion and diversity still do not succeed though the novel already gives a hint of what was to come in the years ahead. That is to say, even though, according to Beeghley, people of high social status usually have more power and influence than people of low social status (18 ff.), ONY eventually perished due to its rigidness, while "the mass

lower-class culture", which out of necessity was more flexible and, hence, progressive, "ultimately proved most influential in shaping modern America" (Boyer et al. 431). Thus, over time, New York's upper class also adapted to a certain degree to the new lifestyle and once strict conventions and gender roles loosened. However, this development was not a lasting one, and America faced a gender backlash in the middle of the century as will become clear in the next chapter.

4 The Changing Roles of Women in Post-War America: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

While Ellen and May for the most part represent either the new or the old, Holly Golightly, the female protagonist of Truman Capote's novella BAT, embodies both the new type of woman who longs to be free and independent and the traditional woman who aims for the stability and security of marriage and family. Just like the women in Wharton's novel, Holly, too, is situated in times of massive change and upheaval, and like Ellen she has to cope with many prejudices on the part of both men and women concerning her otherness. Living an unconventional life in New York in the late years of World War II, she is on an everlasting search for a place which she can call home, a place where she finds mutual love as well as individual fulfillment, respect instead of oppression, where men and women, husbands and wives are equals instead of superior or inferior. However, the omnipresence of traditional gender roles among New York's upper class does not give her the chance to succeed in the end.

Just like Wharton dealt with her own life and personal experience in AI, Truman Capote, as well, displays in BAT the world that surrounded him up until 1958 when he wrote the novel. Being part of New York's fashionable elite, he continuously observed how young and aspiring women tried to take hold of the public sphere, but marriage eventually bound them to domesticity and suffocated their aspiring plans for a modern future (Wasson, *Fifth* 63). According to Baym, "The passage from the 1950s to the 1960s marks the great watershed of the postwar half century. Conflicts between conformity and individuality, tradition and innovation, stability and disruption . . . " (Introduction 2085) evolved and are clearly reflected in Capote's novel. BAT shows that in a time of change and simultaneous fear of deviation from established values, American women were torn between their wish for an individual identity and the pressure to conform to cultural norms. And just like Wharton, Capote thereby clearly not only favors progressiveness over conservatism, but also values some traditions. Hence, in the following, I will first give a rough over-

view of the cultural and social transformation that governed, complicated and facilitated the life of women and men before and after World War II. Then I will illustrate how Holly's manifold personality reflects the shifting gender roles of the mid-twentieth century and how Hollywood three years later dealt with these issues.

BAT was written in 1958, its story takes place during the last years of World War II, and the movie version was released in 1961. Therefore, the following analysis is based on the prevailing gender roles and social novelties of all three periods.

4.1 Historical Background: Women between the 1920s and 1960s

During the two decades following 1920, the economic situation for women did not change much. They were still primarily perceived as mothers and wives and their participation in the labor force after World War I even declined (Boyer et al. 517). Indeed, more and more married women started to pursue a profession, especially during the depression era when many families were dependent on a second income and, accordingly, the average age of employed women rose to over thirty. Nevertheless, the overall percentage of women holding a job in the 1920s and 1930s only grew slowly and for the most part it was still single women who were allowed or wanted to work since society perceived working women and especially wives less feminine and lovable. Furthermore, they were still paid less than men and mostly held only jobs that were deemed appropriate for women. Although "[b]y 1940 . . . white-collar work had become a dominant category of employment . . . . [especially] for middle- and upper-class women who previously had been unable to find positions commensurate with their social status," only a few had managed to occupy male professions, such as "architects and lawyers." Hence, women were still far from economic equality (Chafe, *Paradox* 68 f., 71, 63 – 71, 110 f.).

Also in terms of family, sexuality and behavioral norms, the 1920s and 1930s largely resembled the new gained liberties of the preceding 20 years. The fashionable flapper which had emerged around 1910 still dominated the image of women in the 1920s. Indeed, the double standard still granted men more sexual activity then women, and premarital sex, though practiced, was commonly still frowned upon. Nonetheless, "female sexuality was acknowledged more openly," the new dances of the "Jazz Age" as well as shorter dresses underlined women's sensuality, and the new liberal "'dating'" gave them the possibility to test men before making a promise of marriage. Women adopted a more male behavior and rebelled against constricting conventions by smoking cigarettes, swearing, drinking and cutting their hair (Boyer et al. 535 f.; Chafe, *Paradox* 106). Many young women did not care anymore about social conventions, but claimed the freedom to do what they like. Instead of

living either with their families or husbands, they had started to have own apartments which further contributed to the newly gained sexual liberty (Chafe, *Paradox* 104, 64; cf. Dallmann 373). The percentage of women who engaged in premarital sex, stayed single or divorced remained relatively steady since the beginning of the century, as well as women's average age of 22 when they first married and 23 when they had their first child (McLaughlin et al. 54 ff., 80, 135). Unfortunately, also "the basic distribution of roles between men and women . . . " continued to be the same, and even sexually more liberated women were above all seen in domestic terms as long as they had no economic perspective (Chafe, *Paradox* 106 f.).

During World War II, however, the role of American women experienced a lasting change. While men moved off to defend their country, women were now given the opportunity to take over their husbands' jobs and to prove their abilities outside their domestic sphere. According to McLaughlin et al., "[t]he typical employed woman during the war was a middle-aged housewife–not a young single woman" and more than a few were even mothers (23). The quantity of women entering the working world rose by 50 percent, their salaries increased, and society and the media even encouraged women to pursue a (male) profession (Chafe, *Paradox* 121 ff., 131). This development was not only accompanied by a more diversified daily routine, but also by financial independence and a new self-confidence. As a result, the typical American "family structure began to change, previously sacrosanct gender roles began to alter, and struggles over the meaning of *female* and *male* became particularly evident in the cultural atmosphere. Change was imminent but not yet explicitly acknowledged" (Byars 8).

And indeed, the post-war years faced an enormous backlash. Men returned from war, longing for social and domestic tranquility and reclaiming their former workplaces. Furthermore, the absence of working mothers at home was made responsible for the breakdown of the family and juvenile delinquency (cf. Boyer et al. 600). Even women's new gained gender identity caused much displeasure within the patriarchal society of that time since men suffered from a "decline of masculinity, which they felt had been caused by the excessive influence of the feminine on society" (Slocum 132). As a result, many women became again unemployed and were forced back into the domestic sphere where they were supposed, more than ever, to uphold family virtues and find fulfillment through their natural role as mothers and wives (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 154 ff., 181; McLaughlin et al. 24). In order to restore patriarchal order and superiority, the media largely supported and glorified the image of the happy housewife and mother and degraded the single career woman: "'A woman isn't a woman until she's been married and had children'" (Boyer et al. 647 f.). Thus, with marriage and childrearing being again the primary goal and (supposedly) only true source of satisfaction in women's

lives, the country witnessed the so-called marriage- and baby-boom up until the 1960s: as McLaughlin et al. point out, the average age at first marriage dropped to "an all-time low of 20.1 years" (56) and "at first birth . . . [to] under 22" (135); less women remained single (54), birth rates drastically increased (123) while divorce rates declined (59), and society strongly disapproved of women who decided to never marry or have children (188). Besides, less women earned a college degree (32 ff.), and those who did mostly enrolled for "traditionally female fields" (37) since intelligent and competitive women – like single and career women – were perceived unfeminine and not desirable for men, i.e. as wives. In effect, most women, even though college educated, strived for marriage and financial security and stability through working husbands (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 184; Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 133).

Being again tied to the domestic sphere, however, many women suffered from a sense of emptiness and boredom (cf. Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 212), a phenomenon that Betty Friedan later called the "problem that has no name." Accordingly, more and more women did not accept anymore to live in the shadows of men and to be treated like infantile "second-class citizens" (Winkler 65; Chafe, *Paradox* 195 ff.). They were not willing to give up the social position and freedom they had gained during World War II, but strived instead for financial independence, personal progress, and the fulfillment of their own individual identity (cf. Chafe, *American* 178 f., 229; Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 233, 240). Hence, up until the 1960s, a considerable number of women of all age groups and marital status – wives partially even outnumbering single women – reentered the labor force although payment was still bad and the jobs usually of lower prestige or typically female (Boyer et al. 648; Chafe, *Paradox* 161; McLaughlin et al. 26). As a result, however, they often had to face prejudice and open hostility since "[m]any people still opposed the idea of women working outside the home" (Chafe, *Paradox* 163).

Women's sexual role, as well, was rather contradictory in the years following World War II. On the one hand, their sexual independence continued to grow since more and more women were having pre- or extramarital sex (McLaughlin et al. 80). Moreover, sexuality per se was not a taboo, "the postwar period" even "encouraged and acclaimed marital sex," and the media made female sexiness a topic in order to stimulate consumerism (Breines 55, 86). On the other hand, however, the double standard still persisted, virginity was promoted, and women who were sexually active outside marriage were frowned upon; even married women were told that the only way to find sexual fulfillment was to passively "welcome[. . .] the male phallus" (Chafe, *Paradox* 178; McLaughlin et al. 86). Indeed, during the 1950s, society's sexual restrictions further loosened to some extent, but still premarital sex was only accepted if love was included and marriage about to follow (McLaughlin et al. 86).

All in all, women largely suffered from the contradicting expectations, ambitions and possibilities that transformed women's role during the years after World War II (Chafe, *Paradox* 183 f.). As Chafe points out,

> A growing number of modern women . . . were confused and frustrated by the conflict between traditional ideas about woman's place and the increasing reality of female involvement in activities outside the home . . . . [They] still wanted to get married and have children, but . . . also wished to participate in the world beyond the home . . . . One of the by-products of the war, it seemed, was a deepening sense of bewilderment among many American women over how to define their identity in a society that failed to offer adequate alternatives." (*Paradox* 175)

Being trapped in this dilemma, most women, indeed, gave in to society's pressure and largely tried to conform to what was commonly perceived an adequate female lifestyle in order to not end as a social outcast. Of course, as we have seen, there were independent women who did not conform to society's rules; however they were rather despised. Hence, the years after World War II, especially the 1950s, can be seen as "the embodiment of traditional family life and the 'feminine mystique,'" and women's image largely resembled that of the True Woman from which women had, actually, partially freed themselves half a century ago (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 182, 197). Nevertheless, discontent continued to grow, "the seed of rebellion . . . was germinating" (Haskell, *Reverence* 235), and "the role [women] played in the 1940s served as a model for the women's movement in the decades ahead" (Winkler 67, 69) as will become clear in the next chapter.

4.2 Deviation from the Cultural Norm: The Modern Woman

According to Brandon French, "[t]he transitional woman is often torn between her desire for a conventional, secure lifestyle and her longing for an unconventional, adventurous, largely uncharted course of action." He further explains that she also "may exhibit two contradictory modes of behavior, stemming from confusion about her natural and her traditional female role" (xxii f.). Holly Golightly is such a transitional woman and, thus, has two faces. The visible one is that of a carefree and fun-loving modern woman who does not care about what other people think or say of her and her unconventional lifestyle.

The most salient indicator for Holly's deviation from prevailing cultural norms in mid-twentieth century America is her outward appearance. She is a skinny girl with a "flat little bottom (9) and her hair is as "sleek and short as a young man's" (6). However, the desirable ideal of especially the 1950s were female curves – "breasts, waist, hips" as Wini Breines points out (100). Females with short hair were instead often perceived as men-hating amazons or lesbians (Meyerowitz 233). Hence, Holly is no classic desirable beauty; her eyes are

also “too large and tilted” and her mouth is “wide, overdrawn, not unlike clown-lips” (6) and the media, indeed, disapprove of her tomboy-look (91). Nevertheless, many men are enchanted by Holly, whereby Capote shows that diversity is not as bad as society and the media in mid-20th-century America depicted it to be. The same accounts for Holly’s multicolored eyes and hair which not only emphasize the many facets of her personality, but also give “out a lively warm light” (18) and, thus, clearly have a positive connotation.

Moreover, Holly wears “a slim cool black dress, black sandals . . . ” (12) and almost always black sunglasses (14) which connect her to the Beat-Generation and bohemian culture whose consciously stressed difference was still seen as a threat to American moral and cultural norms. While proper girls and women in the 1950s were supposed and encouraged to wear pastel, dark clothes were identified with the Beat Movement and rebellion and therefore not appreciated. Thus, many girls used their style to revolt against society and its restrictions (cf. Breines 137, 142 ff.). Accordingly, Holly’s clothes also underline her “individual personality” and render her an “uptown beatnik . . . [rustling] with the fervor of the next generation” (Wasson, *Fifth* 130, 68 f.). Besides, in contrast to ONY’s women who used their fashion as armor against change (cf. 3.3), Holly uses her fashion just to spur change. She wants to leave her old and sad life behind and her clothing helps her gain a new social status and therewith secures her a new lifestyle. Indeed, also her style functions as armor; not, however, against the world’s novelties, but against its cruel traditions and restrictions. For instance, she puts on makeup and her sunglasses before reading José’s goodbye letter in order to not get hurt because he leaves her due to her unconventional nature (99; Garson 40). At this point, Capote also underlines the harmful consequences of societal bounds.

The fact that Holly plays the guitar (16) and is, thus, to some extent artistically active can be seen as a further indication of her insurgent bohemian character. The same accounts for her pleasure to shock people (“‘I’m always top banana in the shock department.’” (61)) (cf. 3.2) and her decision to move to New York. As we have already seen, NYC and especially Greenwich Village were places of progression and rebellion in the mid-twentieth century and, thus, highly attractive for “middle-class Beats, bohemians, or rebels” (Breines 128 ff.). Shortly before her planned departure to Brazil she tells the narrator that one day she will return with her children and show them the city she loves so much (84): a hint that she wants to raise her children to become open-minded and free individuals just like her, since, according to Breines, children who grow up in big cities like NYC are “exposed to a diversity unavailable to those who . . . [grow] up in the suburbs or smaller cities and towns” (164 f.).

The city’s open-mindedness made it furthermore a haven for minority groups, such as homosexuals and Afro-Americans. The latter still suffered from open discrimination in mid-20th-century America and were considered

an inferior race compared to the standard of the WASP, the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Inter-racial relations or even sexual intercourse were, hence, "inappropriate and forbidden" (Breines 19). Holly, however, does not care about racism and is unprejudiced towards people of dark skin color. She is not afraid of diversity and her "Leben ist Ausdruck von Freiheit und Toleranz" (Clarke 404). Thus, she looks forward to marrying José who "has a touch of *le nègre*" and to the "coony bab[ies]" (81) she wants to have with him. Additionally, she mentions that it is not important for her to marry a North-American man (47), she is assumed to have had a sexual relationship with an African woodcarver (13), and she wants her neighbor to "get a list of the fifty richest men in Brazil . . . regardless of race or color" (103 f.). Homosexuality, as well, is no problem for her. She associates with many homosexuals, such as the narrator and Rusty Trawler, thinks to "be a bit of a dyke . . . " (22) herself who would "settle for Garbo any day," and is, thus, of the opinion that "[a] person ought to be able to marry men or women . . . " (83).

With regard to her own sexuality, Holly is also rather permissive – in contrast to the stereotypical adequate behavior of women. As already mentioned, in accordance to Victorian morality, proper women in mid-20th-century America were still "considered . . . sexually passive" and "receptive" as well as "dependent . . . and submissive, waiting for men" (Oakley 73). Therefore, it is not surprising that many men did not "believe that sexual intercourse should occur only when both partners desired it" (Chafe, *American* 236). Women were instead made an "object" rather than being appreciated as a "subject" and were, thus, "not even expected to enjoy or participate in the act of sex" (Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 72). As Anna Koedt points out:

> One of the elements of male chauvinism is the refusal or inability to see women as total, separate human beings. Rather, men have chosen to define women only in terms of how they benefitted men's lives. Sexually, a woman was not seen as an individual wanting to share equally in the sexual act, any more than she was seen as a person with independent desires when she did anything else in society. (qtd. In Hamblin 88)

Holly, however, not only engages in premarital sexual activity, but also enjoys and openly talks about it. She tells her roommate Mag, for example, that she prefers men who laugh in bed instead of those who are "all pant and puff", which, according to Holly, unfortunately applies for most men (50). This clearly illustrates her preference of enjoyable intercourse and mutual sexual satisfaction and her disapproval of the then widespread stereotypical sexual male dominance. She does not want to be a mere sexual object for men's desires but also claims her own pleasure. According to Mag, this behavior is not normal. She only chases after men in order to find a husband. Holly instead truly relishes the company of men, floating "round in their arms light as a scarf" (15), flirting even though in a relationship, and having sex with not only one but

several men. She does not want to be what society calls normal but prefers to be "natural" (50), following her biological wishes and desires just as men do. Capote here makes clear that contrary to public belief, the passive asexual housewife is just not the natural role of women, but that they have a natural right to outlive their sexual side as well.

Moreover, Holly is not ashamed of her own nudity (63) and likewise likes to look at a naked male body. She also recommends the latter to Mag as a means to completely embrace and live out her own sexual identity (50). At this point, Holly turns the idea of the male gaze as a means to control and objectify women upside down and exploits it for her own pleasure and sexual power. She transforms from object to subject, from passive to active and like Ellen, she thereby challenges male superiority. She chooses men and not vice versa (cf. 13 f.). Both hetero- and homosexual men like the narrator, Mr. Yunioshi, Joe Bell, Doc Golightly or Sid Arbuck are smitten with her charms and let themselves be twisted around her little finger instead of dominating or controlling her. Hence, she is a seductive femme fatale, a Pandora whose "sexuality . . . [is] the source of all the evils of the world" and "harmful and dangerous to man" (Mulvey 8, 6) and thereby of course to American patriarchal society of that time. Accordingly, her carefree way of practicing and talking about sex often makes her the target of disapproval and disdain, especially on the part of her upper class friends and acquaintances. Mag, for instance, calls her a ". . . ro*vol*ting and . . . de*gen*erate girl . . . with no more morals than a hound-bitch in heat" (95), and her neighbor Madame Spanella deems her a whore (72, 93). The latter is above all scandalized at Holly's numerous male visitors since female sexuality was only given its place within marriage as a means of reproduction. As a result, the promiscuous single woman was perceived a threat to the American family ideal and therefore equated with lesbians and prostitutes as "symbols of moral decay" (Penn 361)[3]. Madame Spanella launches a petition which states that Holly is "'morally objectionable' and the 'perpetrator of all-night gatherings that endanger . . . the safety and sanity of her neighbors'" (64). This statement reflects the idea of mid-twentieth century America that all those people who deviate from the traditional norm are a threat to society as well as to cultural and national values (cf. Campell 100; Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 41;

[3] Even readers of the novella as well as spectators of the movie version sometimes assume Holly to be professionally active in that business (cf. Hasted; Heitmueller; Wasson, *Fifth* xix). Personally, however, I think she might be a call girl who gets herself paid by men for spending an evening with them, but not a professional prostitute since she herself chooses with whom she spends the night and does not even hesitate to reject willing men by slamming the door into their face (13). She rather uses these men to find a proper, that is, rich husband so that she can continue to live a comfortable and free life without worries instead of sacrificing her liberty and independence to a bourgeois occupation.

Breines 9 f.). Furthermore, it illustrates the double standard which still restricted the sexual freedom and needs of American females of that time. While Madame Spanella condemns Holly's carefree lifestyle and promiscuity, she accepts the same behavior in Quaintance Smith, the male tenant who moves into Holly's apartment after her departure to Brazil (110). The failing of the petition, however, emphasizes the change of mind that took place among the American population at the same time; and according to Garson, Holly's "enthusiasm," hence her active character, "is contagious, so that all men feel more alive in her company" (39) just as Ellen was more alive to Newland than anybody else who conformed to traditional rules (cf. 3.2). Hence, despite all resistance, Holly's (sexual) unconventionality is positively connoted, and Capote makes clear that also men would be much happier with a modern, active woman instead of a traditional passive one.

Besides, Holly might be defined as a woman of high dominance. Not only because women of high dominance enjoy sex more than women of low dominance which renders them "not 'feminine' in the conventional sense . . . " (Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 275 f.); but also because they are strong and self-confident individuals:

> High dominance feeling involves good self-confidence, self-assurance, high evaluation of the self, feelings of general capability or superiority, and lack of shyness, timidity, self-consciousness or embarrassment . . . Such women . . . prefer to be independent, stand on their own two feet, and generally do not care for concessions that imply they are inferior, weak or that they need special attention and cannot take care of themselves. This is not to imply that they cannot behave conventionally. They do when it is necessary or desirable for any reason, but they do not take the ordinary conventions seriously . . . . They are strong, purposeful and do live by rules, but these rules are autonomous and personally arrived at. (Maslow qtd. in Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 276)

That Holly is an autonomous and self-confident woman who values her own individuality more than anything else becomes obvious throughout the novella. For instance, she lives alone in her own apartment, "walks fast and straight . . . " (9) and is not intimidated by men but stands up to them. In contrast to May for instance, she openly says what she thinks and wants and prizes her own needs and well-being above men's. When Sid Arbuck sexually besieges her, she unscrupulously slams the door into his face (14) and even throws the narrator out of her apartment when he insults and almost hits her (63). Hence, she does not allow to be oppressed, neither by men nor by society's idea of male superiority but turns it upside down. For instance, it is the male narrator who is not successful in his career, and Holly is the one in the position to offer him help (20). She also self-assuredly challenges what was considered male behavior by smoking (16), drinking (21) and using swear words (108). Her upper class acquaintances of course do not approve of her self-confident behav-

ior and think her "brazen" (18), but Holly does not care about that. Like her tomcat, the tomboyish Holly is "an independent" (39) and has a mind of her own. She is not interested in keeping up appearances and conforming to restricting rules, i.e. to an artificial idea of femininity which would not make her happy. She wants her life to be adventurous and not dull. Hence, instead of caring for domesticity (30) and housework (22), she rather goes and steals something because "successful theft exhilarates" (55). She considers herself a "wild thing" (74) that does not want to be caged, but prefers to go on, to make new experiences, to "travel" as it is plainly indicated on her business card (11). She has a "restless spirit" (Reed 19) and does not stand still but heads out to see the world, thereby broadening her mind and developing an open-minded character. In addition, her full name – Holiday Golightly – indicates that life to her is like a holiday which is supposed to be enjoyed without unnecessary worries or artificial constrictions. The fact that Holly invented this name further underlines that she herself directs her life and applies the rules for it.

Truman Capote illustrates her wild and independent as well as liberty-seeking nature also on the symbolic level. For instance, Holly rides horseback (56) and like a crow, "she went wild and flew away" (70) from her former husband who had tried to domesticate her (69 ff.). She rejects going to the zoo where wild animals are kept in cages (54) and advices her neighbor to "never put a living thing" in the artful birdcage which she bought him as a Christmas present (59). Besides, she sings "*Don't wanna sleep, Don't wanna die, just wanna go a-travellin' through the pastures of the sky . . .*" (17). These lyrics show that Holly wants to experience life instead of being bound to housekeeping and childrearing as were many American women after World War II. Instead of broadening their mind and developing their own individual personalities, they stood still, remained childlike dolls and suffered from depression and unhappiness and were, thus, trapped in a sleep- or deathlike state of existence (cf. Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 13 f., 32 f., 39, 67, 205 ff.). How much Holly despises this kind of restricted live is likewise elucidated when she tells the narrator that she will "'never get used to anything. Anybody that does, they might as well be dead'" (19). Instead, she is always on the move, doing things only for the sake of change, such as going to New York because she has "'never been to New York'" (32) or marrying because she has "'never been married before'" (69). She has not bought any furniture and in her apartment "everything [is] packed and ready to go, like the belongings of a criminal who feels the law not far behind" (52), or rather of a free and unadjusted spirit who does not want to conform to the rules and norms of society.

Holly Golightly can be compared to "[t]he lasting American image of the 'emancipated woman' . . . the flapper of the twenties: burdensome hair shingled off, knees bared, flaunting her new freedom to live in a studio in Greenwich Village . . . and drink, and smoke, and enjoy sexual adventures – or talk

about them" (Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 92). She clearly deviates from the traditional female gender roles that were praised during the mid-twentieth century. She is aware of the negative effect that her unconventional behavior exerts on the most part of her fellow men but does not care about it (18). However, when she plans to leave the city she tells the narrator: "'I don't think anyone will miss me. I have no friends'" (86). Hence, her carefree lifestyle does not make her as happy as she hopes and mostly pretends to be. Indeed, she is an unbound wild thing who "lives in the open sky . . . " (Hassan, "Birth" 111), but as she tells the narrator: "'[I]t's better to look at the sky than live there. Such an empty place; so vague. Just a country where the thunder goes and things disappear'" (74). At this point, Capote again emphasizes the harmful and cruel effects society's illiberality had on people. The members of Holly's social class are not as progressive as she is, and in addition to that, they do not accept others to be. As a result, Holly, like Ellen, is eventually not yet allowed to succeed. Indeed, she, too, is not heavily punished but manages to maintain her individuality; however, it is not yet possible for her to live an independent and unconventional lifestyle when being part of New York's upper class.

This also shows that it was almost impossible to enter the elite in the 1950s (cf. Brooks 22 f.). Holly is only accepted at the beginning when people believe her to belong to the "Boston Golightlys" (37). At the end, however, when her involvement in a Mafia drug scandal becomes public, she is immediately dumped by her so-called friends of the upper class, such as Mag and Rusty. Indeed, O. J. Berman helps her, but even he asks to stay anonymous in order to be not connected with Holly. Only her real friends who belong to the middle class and are more part of the bohemia than of the bourgeoisie, such as the writing narrator and Joe Bell, a bar-owner, adhere to her.

Like Ellen, Holly stays true to herself, though, and does not give in to society's rules and oppression. She rather leaves the country instead of sacrificing her personality and become caged – this time symbolically and literally due to her unintended involvement in the aforementioned criminal act (101 f.). Therefore, also Holly can be seen as a pioneer who is ahead of her time concerning gender roles. Like Ellen, she (re)introduces a new era esp. displaying characteristics that are momentarily revolutionary but will prevail in the subsequent years. Thus, Truman Capote's AI and Holly Golightly can be seen as a part of a new modern cultural direction which found its beginning in the inevitable social change due to World War II and culminated in "[t]he women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and 1970s" (Breines 11 f.).

Nevertheless, Holly also embodies traditional cultural values which will be discussed in the following chapter.

4.3 The Conventional Ideal of Proper Womanhood

The second more covert face of Holly Golightly is that of a lonely girl who desperately desires what was seen and cherished as the "basic American institution" of the post-war era, the home and the family (Mead qtd. in Chafe, *American* 176). Thus, despite all her strivings for independence, she also displays conventional attitudes of the mid-twentieth century American woman, for the most part those that were said to attract men in order to find a proper husband. However, it becomes clear that Holly's idea of home and family is not consistent with society's.

Even though Holly's outward appearance seems to mainly underline her progressive character, it also contains traces of the female beauty ideal that was predominant especially in the 1950s. She has blond dyed hair (12, 16) since blonds were said to be preferred by men (cf. Breines 97) and is dieting (16) just as many women did in order to be as attractive as possible (cf. Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 15). Furthermore, she is always "well groomed", stylishly and glamorously dressed (14, 53) and has an upturned nose (12) which was perceived an important part of "white beauty standards" (Breines 97). Holly's former Hollywood agent O. J. Berman tells the narrator that he transformed her from being "okay" into an interesting and desirable woman, modeling "her along the Margaret Sullavan type" so that even "a respected guy" planned to marry her (32). On the one hand, male dominance over women becomes apparent at this point. Men, or rather patriarchal society, decided how females had to be in order to not only attract the stronger sex, but also to please society in general, in this case the potential audience of a future actress, which did not accept diversity. On the other hand, it becomes clear that even Holly – like ONY's women – is still primarily defined through her outward appearance (cf. 3.3). In mid-20th-century America, women still had to fit cultural beauty and behavioral standards – which were often embodied by idealized movie stars (cf. Breines 102 f.) – in order to find a husband or be appreciated by others. As already mentioned, "women tend to gain their status through how they *appear* (rather than through what they *do* – job or income) . . . " (Coates 81). Accordingly, Berman does not try to make her a famous actress because she is talented, but because she is good-looking and "comes across." Instead of giving her acting lessons, he just smartens her up in order to make people interested in her (32). Hence, it is not her skills that count but only her shell. Even Holly defines herself primarily through her looks. As already mentioned, she is always dressed up and uses her style in order to become accepted by NYC's upper class (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* xviii) and to attract men. Moreover, she tells the narrator that she used the time with Berman in Hollywood only to "make a few self-improvements . . . " (38) and even modulates her appearances according to what is deemed adequate for the respective occasions (58) which underlines her partial adjustment to then prevailing ex-

pectations concerning proper female appearance. However, beneath Holly's mask of beauty lies a "wreckage" (53) who suffers from society's superficiality and is exhausted by having to keep up appearances herself. Although her looks are "immaculate" (53), her soul, like that of many women of that time, is not. She suffers from the gender conflict that ruled America as well as herself and under her masque of beauty lies "'a tired young lady'" (77), "'[a]ll wild around the eye'" (52) and struggling with her role in society.

Nevertheless, in this context, it is no wonder that Holly has not had any school education, or at least it is not mentioned. Indeed, the reader does not come to know much about her childhood. However, after having married Doc Golightly at the age of fourteen, she apparently did not do anything "'[c]ept to comb her hair and send away for all the magazines'" (69). Furthermore, her "[b]ookcases, covering one wall, [merely] boast[. . .] a half-shelf of literature" (29), and even those books – about baseball and horses – only serve the purpose to become more attractive to men and find a husband: "'I loathe baseball . . . . but . . . it's part of my research. There're so few things men can talk about'" (37 f.). The same accounts for her visiting the library where she only studies literature about South America in order to be able to win the Brazilian José over. The novel's narrator even mentions that "Holly and libraries were not an easy association to make" (57 f.). Thus, according to men's preference of plain wives, Holly, too, rather seduces men by means of her physical attractiveness than by her wit or intellect. This, besides, reflects Capote's opinion that it is altogether irrelevant "whether or not . . . [a woman] is intelligent . . . " as long as she is beautiful (Capote, "New" 292).

Holly, in addition, pointedly uses her look in order to find a rich husband who will financially secure her. Pursuing an occupation herself is no option. Indeed, throughout the novel she finances her lifestyle more or less independently. However, due to her highly unconventional way of earning money, she is not as autonomous as it might seem or as she might wish to be. She has no regular income but is subjected to men's arbitrariness. While most men give Holly enough money for the "powder room" and the "cab fare" (26), some, however, do not (14). Hence, like many middle-class housewives of that time, she is financially dependent on men (Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 39) in contrast to other modern women who resisted traditional norms and occupied a regular job in order to earn themselves a living (Winkler 66).

Even though Holly can be perceived a rather experienced woman (cf. Hassan, "Birth" 110) who has got around a lot, she is often displayed as a naïve child. For instance, she seems to be downright dumb concerning Sally Tomato's criminal activities and the role she plays in it. In defiance of all the dubious indications, Holly thinks him to simply be "a darling old man" (25) who merely wants her to visit him in jail – for money – because "'he had long admired . . . [her] *à la distance*'" (26) before he was imprisoned. Her male

neighbor, though, is immediately skeptical and warns her, but Holly shrugs off his doubts telling him that she has "'taken care of . . . herself a long time'" (27). Eventually, however, she becomes arrested for drug smuggling (89 ff.) which implies that, like a child, she is just not capable of taking care of herself but rather in need of male protection since her male neighbor has known better from the beginning. Hence, although Holly was initially in the position to help her unsuccessful neighbor, eventually it is again the man who has to rescue the helpless woman from herself and her inability to cope with the world. The fact that Holly has a "freakishly awkward, kindergarten hand" (28) further underlines this notion. Moreover, according to Friedan, many women in mid-20th-century America were still perceived as dolls, never growing up but hiding behind their traditional female roles in order to not face reality and the intimidating challenge of freedom (cf. Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 179 f., 251, 292). Accordingly, Holly – although she is not afraid to defy society – also lives in a self-invented fantasy world and ignores her actual unhappiness and sadness which are, among others, caused by her disappointment in men and society's restrictive gender roles (cf. Garson 39). Just like many women who played a masquerade as a happy housewife, Holly, as already mentioned, puts on a mask of makeup and sunglasses in order to not get hurt when José leaves her (98 f.) and takes tranquilizers in order to not despair due to her loneliness caused by society's conventions and prejudices (31). Thereby, Capote obviously criticizes the harmfulness of society's oppression and narrow-mindedness. Not only does he show the destructive effects gender roles had on women, but he also uses "childhood itself . . . [as] a criticism of maturity . . . " (Hassan, "Birth" 112). While Holly's childlike world is shaped by tolerance and personal freedom (cf. 4.2), America's real adult world is characterized by prejudice and restriction which made life difficult for many people at that time.

As we have seen in 4.2, Holly is rather progressive concerning sexuality. Nevertheless, she displays an attitude which Angela Hamblin calls the "'good girl facade'" (91). That is, female sexuality is only authorized when it is accompanied by love and confined to one man. Indeed, Holly has had more than one lover but seems to justify her sexual activity and desires in terms of cultural norms by persuading herself to have been in love with all of them (82; cf. Breines 119). In addition, she tells the narrator that she wished to still be a virgin for José with whom she had really fallen in love (83) which shows that some cultural norms, in this case the virginal ideal of mid-twentieth-century American women, also affected the way of thinking of modern women like Holly.

Holly's targeted search for a rich husband also mirrors the marriage boom which followed World War II. Despite her independent and unconventional lifestyle, marriage is the primary goal in her life. Furthermore, she is only 19 years old when she searches for a husband and, eventually, becomes pregnant.

She tells the narrator that she is "delighted" because of her pregnancy and "want[s] to have at least nine" children (81), a reflection of the post-war baby boom. So, like most women of that time, Holly also strives above all for a family and security, and like more than a few "women who were content with their [domestic] lives . . . " (Chafe, *Paradox* 197), Holly even appears to be "more content, altogether happier" than ever due to her engagement to José and her pregnancy. She develops "[a] keen sudden un-Holly-like enthusiasm for homemaking . . . " and adopts classical housewife-tasks such as cooking and decorating the home (80 f.) or carrying José's "suit to the cleaner . . . " (83). She even buys furniture for her apartment, a step that she planned to take only when she has finally found a place where she really belongs to (40). Hence, on the one hand, Capote, too, seems to share society's opinion that only an adjusted and domestic life can really fulfill women. On the other hand, however, there is more than one hint that the widely praised ideal of the domestic woman cannot make Holly happy. Indeed, she has begun to cook, but she is still not able to prepare simple everyday-dishes. Instead, she almost exclusively concentrates on exotic meals, such as "*outré* soups . . . Nero-ish novelties . . . and other dubious innovations . . . " (81) which elucidates that she still prefers diversification to everyday routine. Moreover, the fact that she always loses her key to the apartment exemplifies that she is not the domestic type. She literally blocks herself out from the domestic sphere and it is only men who finally make her enter (11, 14). Hence, both examples show that Holly indeed embraces some domestic ideas and even tries to enter this sphere. However, she does not conform to its restricting characteristics. Holly does not want to be either traditional or modern, but she wants to combine both the old and the new. That is, she longs for a family and a home but is not willing to become a stereotypical and caged "happy housewife heroine" (Friedan, *Feminine*[1] 30) who has to swallow all her sorrows and becomes depressed only because she tries to fit into society's image of the ideal woman. Instead, she wants to maintain her individuality even though married which, however, was not accepted by society. This conflict-laden desire of hers is above all symbolized by her suffering from "the mean reds," a state of apparently reasonless panic which only subsides when she goes to Tiffany's, the New York jewelry store (39 f.). According to Friedan, unmarried women of mid-twentieth-century America suffered "from anxiety and, finally, depression" (*Feminine*[1] 23) since female fulfillment was said to be found only in marriage and motherhood. Thus, the "mean reds" mirror Holly's yearning for a home and Tiffany's is its ideal fulfillment: "[Tiffany's] calms me down right away," she tells the narrator, "the quietness and the proud look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there, not with those kind men in their nice suits, and that lovely smell of silver and alligator wallets" (40). The quietness of the jewelry store indicates that home should be a place of well-being instead of worries or problems which

encumbered many women within traditional and strictly gender-defined marriages. Its proud look is an indicator for both, the personal individuality that should be maintained within marriage and the respect that should be paid to and by both partners. She, furthermore, defines the store as free from anything bad and a place where one can feel safe. This protection and security should be given at home for one thing due to financial stability, as indicated by the silver wallets; for another thing, due to a husband's kindness to his wife and his appreciation of her independence which is suggested by the description of the store employees as well as the alligator wallet. This definition of a perfect home summarizes everything that is of central importance in Holly's life and reflects the traditional as well as the modern part of her personality. Holly seems to have found this ideal when being engaged to José; however, even he eventually leaves her because of her otherness, and it seems that Holly's upper class "'neighborhood holds no future'" (103) yet for a progressive woman like Holly.

Nevertheless, Capote clearly promotes Holly's ideal of marriage and home by contrasting it with the marriage of Rusty and Mag which stands for society's ideal. Rusty and Mag marry for reasons of prestige and to hold up appearances because it is just the right thing to do. Furthermore, both condemn Holly's unconventional lifestyle and, eventually, distance themselves from her. In the end, however, the "Trawlers . . . [are] countersuing for divorce . . . "(110) whereby Capote, just like Wharton, debunks society's artificial ideal of marriage at any cost as well as blind conformity to society's rules.

As we have seen, a free and independent woman like Truman Capote's Holly Golightly, as well, does not remain untouched by society's stereotypical gender roles. However, she is torn between both roles: the traditional family type and the modern independent one. Both roles alone do not make her happy which is why she is in "pursuit of some ideal of happiness" (Rudisill and Simmons 100) and longs for a combination of both; but the pressure that cultural norms and the fear of difference exerted on North-American women as well as on men of the post-war era did not yet allow for that.

4.4 The Transitional Man and His View on Women

Women's new gained gender identity caused much displeasure among American men after World War II since they felt emasculated by women's new found self-confidence and their drastically enhanced interference in the male sphere. However, they also had to suffer from women's growing unhappiness at home and knew that something had to change. According to Mead, "women–and men– . . . [were] confused, uncertain and discontented with the [then] present definition of women's place in America" (qtd. in Chafe, *Paradox* 176). Accordingly, BAT shows that many men in mid-20th-century America still

clung to traditional gender roles but that at the same time their perception of women's – as well as their own – roles underwent drastic change.

Just like many "men displayed little evidence of egalitarianism when it came to gender roles" (Chafe, *Paradox* 198), the novella's men are for the most part depicted as conservative concerning gender identity. Hence, they often feel superior to Holly and disapprove of her unconventional nature and life-style. Joe Bell, for instance, reacts "squeamishly" to the idea that Holly might have "shared the [African] woodcarver's mat" (8) and O. J. Berman deems her crazy to rather travel and make experiences instead of marrying a "respected" guy. He already "'tried with tears running down . . . [his] cheeks'" to "'talk her out of . . . '" "'all this crap she believes'" and her envisaged husband sends "her to head-shrinkers" (30) because her progressive behavior just not appertains to women, and women simply must marry. Berman does not in the least care about Holly's own longings and feelings – towards the respected guy as well as in general – which shows that he does not see her as an individual but rather as property of men who decide what is good for her. The same accounts for Doc Golighty who just knows – without even bothering to ask her – that Holly is "'sorry for what she done [running away] . . .,'" and that "'she wants to go home'" (70) since a woman just "'belongs home with her husband and her churren'" (67). He simply ignores the fact that Holly had run away from him because she was not happy with her role as passive wife but wanted to start a new more adventurous life which shows that even he does not really care for Holly's wishes. Indeed, he is a horse-doctor who loves wild things; however he tries to tame them instead of respecting their independence. In accordance to that, Sid Arbuck, as well, pretends to know that Holly likes him because he is a "liked guy" even though she has just shut the door in his face (13). Furthermore, he unsolicitedly touches her and tries to convince her that she has to let him into her apartment because he picked up her check earlier which mirrors men's "expectations that women would automatically acquiesce when they asked them to sleep with them" (Chafe, *Paradox* 198). Hence, the novel's men rather treat her like a sex-kitten or minor child instead of respecting her as an equal. This sense of male superiority and lack of respect towards women becomes also obvious by the fact that Berman rarely calls Holly by her name but refers to her as "kid," "doll," or "honey" (29, 32; cf. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 260). Correspondingly, the men are attracted by Holly's "girlish enthusiasm" (Garson 39) and Mag's stutter since both arouses their manly "protective feeling" (44). Doc Golightly even marries Holly when she is only fourteen years old. Mag's "tallness" and "assurance" instead rather intimidate them (44). Furthermore, Berman kicks Holly's cat (33) and thereby symbolically Holly's independence and her ideal of a liberal home since the cat, esp. its (non-existent) name, like the furniture, symbolize Holly's dream of finding a place where one can really feel at home and belong to (cf. 40). Even

José who is usually more open-minded than the rest of the novel's men cannot cope with Holly's unconventional character. Although both seem to be happy, he, too, is not her "idea of the absolute finito" (76). Holly complains that "'[h]e's too prim, too cautious'" and that he cares too much about what other people think of him (82). This can be seen, for instance, when Holly suffers from a hysterical breakdown after learning that her brother Fred, a soldier, had been killed. Instead of caring for the well-being of his girlfriend, José is above all concerned how such a behavior might affect his reputation and political career (77 ff.). The fact that the cat still has no name while he and Holly are engaged and Holly still suffers every now and then from the mean reds also shows that José is too conventional to make her feel at home. Accordingly, he eventually leaves her since his ideal of family and his career are more important to him. Likewise, Rusty Trawler, who was once even engaged to Holly, as well as Berman, who always pretends to really like her, distance themselves from her at the end (95). They do not appreciate her behavior and do not want to be connected to such an unorthodox woman in order to not endanger their own reputation.

The patriarchal conservatism and sense of male superiority that dominated America at that time becomes, besides, most obvious by the perspective the novel adopts. Like Wharton, Capote also presents a female problem and life exclusively through the eyes of a male spectator. Holly is not given her own voice and, hence, partially silenced. Except for the few moments in which she slightly opens herself to the narrator, her true inner longings and feelings are withheld from the reader. So, on the one hand, the novel brings up a widespread female problem, but on the other hand, it apparently does not deem the issue worthy enough in order to provide a complete insight into the torn emotional world of women in mid-20th-century America. In accordance to many women who could not openly speak about the "problem that has no name" – since that would have disturbed the established order and cast a shadow over the own family – but drowned it down instead in alcohol and tranquilizers (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 176, 196), Holly, too, is forced to keep up appearances and is denied to openly express her sorrows and desires. Thus, like ONY, Capote's (male) upper class New York – though more liberated – still prizes the community's reputation and order over the individual's well-being.

Nonetheless, the novel's unnamed narrator is mainly well-disposed to Holly which not only makes her appear for the most part in a positive light – despite all her unconventionalities –, but also mirrors the changes that had taken place among post-war men, as well. Indeed, even he feels intellectually superior to Holly (62), deems her "*[t]raveling*" "provocative" (42) – implying that a woman's place is at home – and accuses her once of behaving like a prostitute (63). However, he is one of the few men who fully appreciate Holly as the person she is without trying to press her into a predefined role; not least

because he is rather a member of America's middle class and because he as a homosexual is also a cultural outsider and has to struggle with prejudices and rejection as well. For instance, when she offers him her help because he does not manage by himself to sell the stories he writes, he does not feel intimidated although he clearly occupies the inferior position at this point. Furthermore, he learns to not price his own wishes and feelings over hers: "Suddenly, watching the tangled colors of Holly's hair flash in the red-yellow leaf light, I loved her enough to forget about myself, my self-pitying despairs, and be content that something she thought happy was going to happen" (87). In the end, he is the only one on whom she can fully count and who sides with her without being ashamed of her unwitting involvement in a drug-smuggling scandal and subsequent arrestment.

The fact that Holly calls the narrator from the beginning on Fred, which is not his real name, further underlines the narrator's open-minded character and acceptance of the new progressive woman. Fred, namely, is Holly's brother and the only man so far whose affectionate behavior made her feel completely secure and accepted and at home. He was her only sibling "'that ever let . . . [her] hug him on a cold night'" (18), and he is "good with horses" (40). Hence, he knows, as well, how to deal with a "wild thing" like Holly, accepting and appreciating free creatures instead of caging them. However, Fred dies in the end which shows that such a liberal way of thinking and appreciation of the new women was not yet possible in the US.

José, too, can be seen as one of the novel's new men. Although he is to some extent conservatively-minded, he loves Holly and largely accepts her diversity (99). He, furthermore, sees sexuality as a mutual and enjoyable matter (48), instead of caring only for his own satisfaction. Moreover, "he's *friendly,* [and] he can laugh . . . [Holly] out of the mean reds" even though they do not occur that often anymore since they are engaged (77) which exemplifies that Holly has partly found through him a place where she wants to belong to. However, the fact that José is not an American likewise underlines the conservative character of the US in contrast to other countries and cultures (cf. 3.2).

Nevertheless, even the novel's other (American) men who predominantly act according to conventional gender roles display every now and then modern and more open-minded attitudes – in general and towards Holly in particular. Berman, for instance, though he wants to remain anonymous, immediately hires and pays a lawyer in order to help Holly to get out of jail after she had been arrested (95). Furthermore, he had offered Holly the possibility of a professional career when she was in Hollywood. Indeed, "only" as an actress – a job not as progressive as a typical male job would have been (cf. Breines 163). Yet, Holly would have been working and become financially independent which was by no means a matter of course in mid-20th-century America. Addi-

tionally, it is worth mentioning that Berman – as well as other men – is intimidated by Mag's tallness, but he also feels attracted to her (44 f.). This might not only be due to her stutter, but also because roles started to change and self-confident women became desirable as well.

Doc Golightly, too, bares some modern traits. As already mentioned, he is a horse doctor and, thus, fond of "wild things" – although he has not yet really learned how to handle them correctly. Holly praises "the sweetness of him, the confidence he can give to birds and brats and fragile things . . . " (73) like also women were at that time to some extent. He loves and cures "wild things," and even though he tries to bind them, he, too, helps to strengthen them so that they can (re)gain their independence (74). Furthermore, he does not want to scare Holly by his sudden appearance in NYC and therefore asks the narrator to forewarn her. This shows that he also has regards for Holly's feelings. Accordingly, he eventually accepts her decision to not return to her family and even wishes her luck (74). Besides, he also displays traits that were commonly regarded to be rather female. In contrast to the idea that "[m]asculinity (as defined by patriarchy) is usually associated with being large, loud, and active, with non-emotional aggression . . . " (Benshoff and Griffin 205), Doc Golightly is rather emotional, even cries, and instead of demonstrating male authority and superiority through his posture, he stands "in front of her [Holly], hang-dog and shy" (72). Thereby, Capote displays a new kind of soft man who is not afraid to express his feelings and to admit, to a certain extent, some kind of weakness.

Presenting the novel through the narrator's eyes, however, also mirrors another development that took place among men: the slow acknowledgment and liberation of homosexuality. According to Haskell, "The repressiveness of the fifties . . . forced the homosexual writer to disguise himself. For him, the frustrated woman who purported to express heterosexual desire was really a cover, an alter ego, a pretext and outlet for themes and feelings he was forced to hide" (251). Accordingly, Holly can be also perceived as Capote's alter ego since both share the same longings, fears and attitude to life (Clarke 382, 404). However, the homosexual narrator, too, "is obviously meant to be the young Capote, starting out as a writer in New York; even the birthdays are the same . . . " (Garson 38). Thus, by making a homosexual the center of the novel, Capote clearly shows that men's image and behavior had begun to change, as well, and that more and more had the courage to break through conventional gender roles and stand up for their otherness (cf. Baym, Introduction 1179 f.). Indeed, the narrator's sexual orientation is only hinted at, but nevertheless is there (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 62). Like Holly, he longs for personal freedom and unpunished self-expression. He adores her for her self-confidence which he himself unfortunately still lacks. Holly teaches him to ride horseback as well; however, his efforts to become also an independent "wild thing" end in a near ca-

tastrophe (87 ff.) which shows that American society was not yet ready to accept homosexuality. Nevertheless, Holly has opened a new door for him and directed his life into a new, more successful and self-confident future (cf. Hassan, “Birth” 113).

In this context, BAT already displays a development that will also be central to SATC, namely the alliance of women and homosexual men. In addition to female friendship, this alliance functions to some extent as a surrogate family for both women and homosexual men. Both have to face similar problems and prejudices and have to prevail against patriarchal gender roles. Thus, although Holly is engaged to José, she spends much time with the narrator since José leaves her “a good deal alone . . . “ due to his job (80, 84). Through the narrator’s presence, she compensates what is missing in her relationship with José. Furthermore, both wear masks after having stolen something, hence having acted in an unconventional and unappreciated way (55). They have to hide for what they have done and keep up appearances instead of being themselves and avow for their unconventionality. This exemplifies that mid-20th-century American society was still unready neither for female nor for homosexual liberation.

Thus, even post-war men had indeed begun to open up concerning society’s rigid gender roles. However, still a large and mainly male part of the American population regarded these early beginnings of feminism as “’a buried threat to the basic tenet of world order, male supremacy’” (Byars 72). In order to counteract this development, the male-dominated film industry produced movies which should demonstrate the consequences of too much female power and thereby promote the re-establishment of traditional gender values. As the next chapter will show, the movie version of BAT also aims to restore traditional gender roles but, at the same time, indicates that an irresistible change concerning the behavior of men as well as of women within society had begun.

4.5 Censored in Translation: From Novella to Movie

In 1961, a movie version of Capote’s novella was released. Instead of sticking completely to the original plot, however, several changes were made. While the novella’s Holly illustrates attitudes of a new female consciousness and suffers, like many women at that time, from the conflict regarding traditional and modern womanhood, the movie’s Holly is much less progressive and self-confident, appearing often like a child as well as inferior and submissive to her male counterpart. These changes were made, above all, due to the cultural sentiment of the time.

Indeed, the 1960s were a decade of rebellion and radical upheavals. During the very first years, however, American society was still influenced by the

conservative 50s, losing its innocence only after Kennedy was shot and the Vietnam War started (cf. Dika 89 ff.; Baym, Introduction 2085). Nevertheless, as presented above, women's role had started to change and female liberation was gaining ground. Not only many men, but also women, were terrified by these societal changes, fearing, above all, the decline of traditional family values. Thus, the very influential American movie industry experienced a feminist backlash. Since many people of that time went to the cinema, and women especially admired famous actresses and often saw them as idols for themselves and their lives, movies were an effective medium to convince people of certain point of views. Thus, promoting and idealizing virtuous and passive women in the movies instead of reflecting authentic aspiring women, Hollywood tried to keep women in real life down and push them back into an adequate, uncomplicated and inferior role, thereby maintaining or rather regaining men's predominance (Haskell, *Reverence* 12, 36 f. 323; Wasson, *Fifth* 18). According to Boyer et al., for instance, "Career women were largely replaced by 'dumb blondes,' cute helpmates, and child-women" (649). Further, Haskell points out: "The new liberated woman was nowhere in sight . . . . The closer women come to claiming their rights and achieving independence in real life, the more loudly and stridently films tell us it's a man's world" (328, 363). Moreover, the still existing production code made it difficult for movie makers to include sex into their films. Even though the code's restrictions were already loosened to some extent at the turn of the decade, especially female sexuality was still a marginal topic and almost impossible to depict overtly or at all (cf. Neumann 468 f.; Monaco 56 ff.).[4] As a consequence, Capote's headstrong, unadjusted and almost revolutionary Holly indeed remains unconventional during most of the film – even though in a much weaker form than in the novella –, but in the end she, as well, develops into a more traditional Holly who becomes converted and disabused by a man.

The major change that was made to render the movie morally more adequate and digestible is the heterosexual love story that was added to the original plot. According to director Blake Edwards, this was made "for audience approval" (Wasson, *Fifth* 144). In Capote's novella, the narrator is homosexual and Holly promiscuous and a call girl; but since homosexuality and plentiful female sexual activity were considered amoral in 1960, they were cut out from the movie (Wasson, *Fifth* 110). Instead, screenwriter George Axelrod turned the bold plot into a "traditional romance" (Wasson, *Fifth* 84) that, mostly, matched the morality standards and expected gender roles of that time.

[4] According to Haskell, however, the production code not only oppressed women by depriving them of their own sexual joy, but helped to, finally, portray women as active, intelligent and working individuals instead of mere passive sex objects for men (30).

The relationship of Holly and Paul, Capote's once unnamed narrator, bears traces of conservative gender stereotypes in itself. While Capote's narrator is a rather shy type of man who, according to Holly, "'wants awfully to be on the inside staring out'" (48) and has not yet found his own identity, esp. his place within society (apart from the novella's end), the movie's Paul appears to be more dominant. For instance, he often talks in a rather harsh way to Holly and 2E, his lover, and even wants to throw Holly out of his apartment when she makes a cheeky comment. Holly, on the contrary, is, mostly, far from being dominant. Instead, she takes a more submissive role; for instance, when she tries to soothe Paul after the aforementioned comment concerning his relation to 2E, assuming that he pays her for sex, thereby calling him indirectly a call boy and largely exacerbating him. Moreover, Holly needs Paul's support to explain to Doc Golightly that she will not come home with him. In the novella, she was perfectly capable of handling the situation herself.

While Capote's Holly always wants both to be independent and to belong (but on her own conditions of course!), the movie's Holly performs a volte-face transforming from an independent wild thing to an insecure and unfulfilled woman who wants nothing more than to belong to a man. The movie implies that she has just superficially worn a mask of independence, but beneath has always longed for nothing else but male security (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 165). Where Capote shows that individuality and togetherness do not have to exclude each other but should be accepted by society as a perfect hybrid way of living, the movie, eventually, deprives Holly of her own individual character and underlines that women can find complete fulfillment and happiness only as a wife, i.e. by finding identification through a man. Being alone, she is a phony (although a real phony), but as part of a couple, she, finally, becomes a real woman. Hence, even though Holly is not overtly punished in the movie for being immoral (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 167) and even granted a – supposed – happy end, she is neither allowed to keep her very own personality. Changing her attitude according to society's expectations prevents her from punishment and, of course, Edward's version implies that Holly is happier than ever with this new-found insight concerning love and men. But is the privation of one's own deep beliefs and independence not punishment as well? I am sure Capote would scream "yes," for his Holly, as I have already shown, rather keeps on searching for what she believes in instead of giving up her "ego" just to conform to societal rules: "'I'd like to have my ego tagging along. I want to still be me when I wake up one fine morning and have breakfast at Tiffany's'" (39). Therefore, just like the pseudo-rebellious *Rebel Without a Cause* did six years earlier (cf. Benshoff and Griffin 224), Blake's movie aims to run rings around women and to lure them back into their traditional sphere of domesticity as happy mothers and wives.

Accordingly, by adding the character of 2E to the story, the movie aims to demonize sexually active, self-confident and financially independent working women whose power and control over men means a threat to masculinity. 2E is not only displayed as arrogant and cold, but also functions as a destructive force concerning Paul's manliness. As long as Paul has an affair with her and is financially dependent on her, he is depicted as a failure, privately as well as "jobwise." Only when he rebels against her dominance – thereby regaining the superior position – he becomes a man and is finally able to win Holly over and to domesticate her. Furthermore, as he states, *he* is now the one who can help a woman instead of being all the time himself helped *by* a woman (Capote's narrator, in contrast, is fine with Holly helping him). Hence, on the one hand, the movie reflects the notion that a "'[m]odern man needs an old-fashioned woman around the house'" (Wilson qtd. in Chafe, *Paradox* 187) in order to be happy and efficient. On the other hand, it not only discredits progressive and successful women, but also effeminate men and thereby tries to restore traditional gender roles (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 83 f.). At this point, besides, the sexual double standard becomes evident. While 2E is punished for her immoral extramarital affair by being depicted as pretentious and by being, eventually, rejected by Paul, the latter instead is given another chance to regulate his life and prove himself a worthy and desirable man.

Furthermore, Holly is shown as not being capable of managing her own life all on her own in order to become a happy woman. Indeed, she is shown living alone and getting along somehow, but at the same time her lifestyle causes her a lot of trouble which, eventually, can only be resolved by a protective and strong-willed man who takes care of her and directs her to an adequate female life and behavior (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 82). Indeed, also Capote's Holly gets herself into trouble due to her naivety and is dependent on male help in order to be released from jail and to successfully "'jump[. . .] bail'" (102). However, against all odds, she stands her ground and eventually takes direct control of her life again. She continues to follow her personal dreams, instead of just giving in and adjusting to patriarchal expectations.

The movie's theme song further underlines the censored image of Holly. While the novella's song emphasizes her freedom-seeking nature, "Moon River" with its unsophisticated melody rather serves the purpose to shine a light on her simple nature and to expose the "authentic . . . regular, down-home Holly" (Wasson, *Fifth* 132, 122 f.). As a result, the song makes her appear more fragile and childlike and, hence, an acceptable proper woman.

Holly's outward appearance, as well, was changed in order to match the cultural standards of that time. Though her hair is still varicolored, for example, it is not "short as a young man's" but long and always arranged in a very elegant and feminine way. Audrey Hepburn's physique also matches the "flat little bottom" of Capote's Holly. The movie poster, however, shows an ideal-

ized version of Holly by giving "the figure a little more through the hips and the bust . . . " (Wasson, *Fifth* 182).

Female nudity, of course, is avoided in the movie. While Capote describes more than once that Holly showed herself naked in front of the narrator, director Blake Edwards makes sure that Holly is always dressed and not too much skin exposed. Likewise, Holly's illegitimate pregnancy is completely cancelled as well as her frank sexual talk with Mag, and the party she gives is attended by both men and women while in the novel it is – for Holly's enjoyment – only men (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 91).

Choosing Hepburn as Holly can also be seen as a kind of censoring. Even though she perfectly fits the tomboyish outward appearance of Capote's Holly (cf. Haskell, *Reverence* 268), she is not in the least sensual but has a rather puritan "goodie-two-shoes"-image, "incapable of a base instinct or the hint of sexual appetite" (Haskell, *Reverence* xiii). Capote, instead, imagined bombshell Monroe for the role and opposed the casting of Hepburn (Clarke 348). Monroe, however, would have been too sexy and seductive and would probably have caused an outburst of horror since Hepburn's Holly already shocked some people and made them complain about the movie's moral-less leading female character (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* xix, 185). However, since Audrey was known to be an innocent "good girl princess . . . praising the virtues of wifedom" (Wasson, *Fifth* 46 f.), she could play Holly without making her seem like a fallen whore, but rather like a fragile woman in need of help. Thereby, of course, Capote's Holly is deprived of some of her individual and unconventional personality, transforming her from an initially independent "wild thing" to a man's lap cat. At the same time, however, casting Audrey as an alleged call girl made the bad not look so bad anymore. If Audrey Hepburn, "'this very good girl . . . '" plays someone like Holly Golightly, then this new woman and her luring joyous lifestyle "'can't be wrong, right?'" (Pogrebin qtd. in Wasson, *Fifth* 190). Thus, Hepburn on the one hand weakened Capote's progressive intentions, but on the other hand made the story of an unconventional woman accessible to and even loveable for a broader audience. Most importantly, the movie, thereby, was able to convey and promote at least some of Capote's modern ideas and societal changes which, otherwise as well, would not have been possible to show at that time. So, while Capote's Holly was "one of the world's weirdos . . . " who did just not fit into American society of that time, "Audrey Hepburn, the good girl princess, would . . . [finally] bring Holly home" (Wasson, *Fifth* 69).

Accordingly, despite all the censoring and moralization, the movie version also introduces a new kind of women. Indeed, Blake's Holly was not as progressive as Capote's, but she was more modern than many other Hollywood characters in mid-20th-century America and "presented an affront to the status quo" (Wasson, *Splurch* 61).

Due to the rise of television and American's enthusiasm for this new medium which could be enjoyed within the comfort of the own home, Hollywood was in a deep crisis. In order to not vanish completely, the movie industry had to offer the audience something new that made it again more attractive to go to the cinema instead of staying at home watching television. Since teenagers were the major target of the movie industry, the task was to lure them somehow out of the house and into the theaters. And what could be more luring for teenagers than sex?! (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 90, 110 ff.). In consequence, "the sexual taboos long governing Hollywood began to fall wayside" (Quart and Auster 73). As critic Judith Crist points out: "'This was not an age of innocence anymore. Suddenly we had the ability to come edging out in the open with sex. It was getting to be the sixties" (qtd. in Wasson, *Fifth* 111). These changing times should also be reflected in the movie version of BAT. A "contemporary romantic comedy for the modern generation" (Wasson, *Fifth* 85) it should be, "[n]ot one about 1950s people who shrink from sex before marriage, but one about modern people who embrace it," thereby challenging the still prevailing double standard (Wasson, *Fifth* 84, 89). Thus, even though the movie version of Holly Golighty is stuffier than the novella's and can, eventually, find real happiness only as the girlfriend of a strong man, she is still sexually active and by no means a monogamist.

Accordingly, also her "little black dress" is still used to underline Holly's sexual nature as well as her "individual personality as opposed to a prefab femininity" (Wasson, *Fifth* 130). It renders her a "'bad girl'" who is self-confident enough in order to not care about "prevailing values and standards of attractiveness" (Breines 148 f.). Even though open nudity was avoided, allusions to Holly's nakedness are made, for instance when she – in the presence of Paul – covers her body only with a little jacket and remarks that she has no nightgown on.

Furthermore, the movie's Holly still does not consider finding a husband at all costs the primary goal in life. Instead, she is allowed to live alone in a New York apartment, thus being independent and managing her life on her own according to her individual liking. This kind of female behavior was by no means appreciated at that time and, hence, many women who suffered from the "feminine mystique" envied Holly for this possibility and wanted to be like her: "'She was a single girl living a life of her own, and she could have an active sex life that wasn't morally questionable. I had never seen that before'" (Pogrebin qtd. in Wasson, *Fifth* 190).

Holly's unconventionality and difference even in the movie is underlined by its jazzy soundtrack. Jazz music, in general, was perceived a rebellious and sexual form of music, especially since it is derived from African-American culture. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, Jazz was rather disliked by middle- and upper-class society. Bohemians and Beats, however, embraced

jazz since they identified with its maverick status (Breines 141 f., 164; Mailer 1010 ff.). Holly, as we have already seen, is cast in the same mold. When director Blake Edwards thought about the movie's soundtrack, he realized that composer Henry Mancini and Holly "had nonconformist cool in common . . . " since Mancini preferred, and upgraded, a "swingin' big band sound" which was usually negatively used in the movies for the depiction of sexuality over a "traditional symphonic approach" (Wasson, *Fifth* 112). The latter, however, was not completely ignored. Just as Holly combines traditional and modern attitudes, Mancini combined symphonic and jazzy tunes, underlining thereby both parts of Holly and, at the same time, creating not only a new hybrid woman but also a new kind of hybrid film music (cf. Wasson, *Fifth* 174).

Even though Holly, as already mentioned, was physically idealized in the movie poster by giving her more female curves in order to match the beauty standards of the time, its creator Robert McGinnis was also advised to make her appear sexier (Wasson, *Fifth* 182). Matching the beauty standards was a rather conventional issue since women have always been supposed to look (sexually) attractive to men in order to find and keep a husband (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 7). And since men were the ones supposed and allowed to gaze, the movie poster, of course, had to offer something that is worth to be gazed at and, in the ideal case, to lure them into watching the movie. Being sexy, however, was less a healthy means to eventually find a future husband and procreate but rather to seduce, and seducing definitely exceeded women's permitted and desired degree of sexuality in mid-20th-century America. Therefore, Holly was put the cat on her shoulders which, indeed, softens the portrayal of sexiness (Wasson, *Fifth* 182). Nevertheless, Hollywood's intention to slowly strike a new path becomes, thus, clear as well.

Even Paul, whose character was invented to make the "male lead" appear "less effeminate" (Wasson, Fifth 83 f.), bears some progressive traces. Although the movie searches to promote and restore traditional masculinity, it also depicts a new kind of sensitive man that had developed in the post-war years and slowly found its way into American cinema since the 1950s (cf. Haskell, *Reverence* 358). Hence, Paul is for instance frequently emotional, especially when it comes to his love for Holly. Furthermore, as already mentioned, he is a kept man, financially dependent on a woman, and struggling with what was perceived men's major goal in life: a career. Indeed, these traits have a rather negative connotation and Paul eventually has to overcome these obstacles in order to become a man and restore patriarchal order. Nevertheless, by picking these themes up, the movie acknowledges and mirrors that even male gender roles had started to alter and that men were no longer automatically the superior sex.

Thus, despite all the cutting and changing of borderline subjects concerning women – and men – and sexuality that made Capote's novella as special

and unconventional as its protagonists themselves, the movie version of BAT was still "'a progressive step in the depiction of women in the movies . . . " (Crist qtd. in Wasson, *Fifth* 167). Nevertheless, it also shows how much Capote was ahead of its time. In his novella, he could (almost) bluntly express his radical ideas, but in the powerful and influential métier of movies, progression had to shift down a gear.

4.6 Conclusion

As we have seen, Truman Capote's BAT mirrors the cultural tensions that ruled America in the mid-twentieth century. The novella adopts a progressive attitude by not only reflecting the domestic female ideal that was praised by society, but also especially by illustrating modern ideas concerning equal gender and sexual roles which more and more women as well as men embodied since World War II. However, Capote makes clear that neither the conservative nor the feminist extreme alone is a solution for female fulfillment and happiness. It rather needs a combination of both in order to live a full life. How provocative the novella was at the time of its publication also becomes evident by its mitigated movie version, first screened three years later. Even though the changing image of women – and men – within society remains the primary strand and Holly keeps to a certain extent her air of rebelliousness, the movie takes above all due to the invented heterosexual love story and the changed ending a much more conservative stance. However, Capote's Holly not only exhibits the female struggle for equality and societal acceptance. Instead, she also functions as an alter ego of Capote himself, who, being homosexual, faced lifelong prejudice and rejection because of his deviance from the cultural norm (Haskell, "Unmourned" 138 ff.). Therefore, BAT can be seen as a general criticism of post-war America and its narrow-mindedness towards people who were different. Capote calls for more acceptance of minority groups, and despite of the rather tragic end of the ever-searching Holly, he transmits a glimmer of hope through her cat. The latter, eventually, finds a home and is given an individual name which emphasizes that simultaneously being free and belonging does not have to be a utopia, but is absolutely compatible. At the same time, Holly's ongoing journey makes clear that America still had a long way to go before it could achieve those goals (cf. Chafe, *American* 225); and whether they had, actually, been achieved up until the end of the 20th century will be discussed in the next chapter.

5 Women at the Turn of the Millennium: *Sex and the City*

Even though SATC was aired for the first time in the US 40 years after BAT had been published, the very successful TV-series takes up again a question that had already been thematized by Capote: do modern ambitions and traditional longings necessarily have to exclude each other? In the 1990s and beyond, is it still not possible for women to be independent and successful as well as a loving and caring wife and mother? And does the wish for a secure home and family necessarily indicate a feminist backlash? Or does female independence, for which American feminists had fought in the 1960s and 70s, not mean just this – to have the right to choose?! Do modern women necessarily have to strive for a career and be rather skeptical and hostile towards men in order to be not perceived submissive or inferior? And are women, career-oriented or not, who long for the stability and security of family life automatically old-fashioned and are destroying the gains of the Women's Movement?

"No" says for instance Betty Friedan: "I fought for the right to choose, and will continue to defend that right . . . " (*Second* 22). Therefore, what characterizes the post-feminist Millennium Woman is diversity. Women at the end of the century – and at the turn of the Millennium – do not have to be either the one or the other, but combine many roles and images at once (cf. McLaughlin et al. 9). Accordingly, SATC's Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte present all different types of woman. At the same time, though, neither of them is reduced to only one stereotype, but they all display both modern and traditional attitudes, however to a differing extent.

Hence, the following chapters will show that the series clearly promotes acceptance for all kind of female lifestyles and celebrates individuality, siding with modern women and praising traditional ideals. Nonetheless, SATC also makes clear that both progressive as well as conventional women have to face prejudice and hostility towards their chosen lifestyles. In addition to that, SATC's female protagonists are, on the one hand, granted much more opportunities and liberties than Ellen or Holly at the beginning and in the middle of

the 20th century. On the other hand, society's conventional ideal of women as primarily mothers and wives still hovers above their heads like the sword of Damocles.

The analysis concentrates on all of the four female protagonists and even on some supporting characters in order to include as much of the facets that characterize women and men in the era of the Third Wave Feminism. Furthermore, all of the series' seasons and episodes will be taken into consideration as well as both movies since the development of the women's depiction is particularly interesting.

5.1 Historical Background: Women since the 1960s

While "the American feminist movement had . . . " chiefly lain idle since the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, "in the 1960s, a new spirit of self-awareness and dissatisfaction stirred middle-class women" (Boyer et al. 673). Encouraged by feminists like Betty Friedan who dared to make the flawless middle class veneer crumble by openly addressing "the problem that has no name," American women joined forces and more vigorously than ever restarted to claim gender equality. Taking their demands for women's liberation in terms of education, occupation, sexuality and self-determination in general to the street and forming several activist groups, second wave feminism was born. The first step to escape domestic servitude, the feminists said, was to become financially independent (Chafe, *Paradox* 194 ff.; Boyer et. al. 673 f, 705.). Accordingly, more and more women strived for higher education and new occupational possibilities. As McLaughlin et al. point out, the 1960s witnessed "sharp increases in women's educational attainment" (50). Not only did the number of female enrollment at colleges rise, but also the variety of subjects broadened. While women in the 1940s and 1950s were often restricted to typical female fields of study, such as "home economics, child development and interior decoration" (Chafe, *Paradox* 180 f.), in order to prepare for their careers as mothers and wives, they now increasingly entered disciplines like law, medicine and business administration that had usually been reserved for men (McLaughlin et al. 38 ff.). As a result, women's career choices and possibilities were enhanced and the number of women participating in the labor force steadily advanced. This entailed both more self-fulfillment as well as more financial independence and above all it made them more self-confident and "full and equal partners in the family community" (Chafe, *Paradox* 196; McLaughlin 47 f., 93). Furthermore, in the early 1970s, many states passed laws that prohibited occupational discrimination on grounds of sex. Hence, wages increased (though still not measuring up to men's), and more and more educated women could actually enter the (male) professions they had studied for (Boyer et al. 705 f.; McLaughlin 48, 90, 102; Chafe, *Paradox* 223). Indeed,

"[d]omesticity remained an option, but it was no longer the *only* option" (Boyer et al. 674).

Accordingly, women's life course and the significance of the family in it largely altered. Instead of marrying and having children at a relatively early age, women now concentrated first of all on their careers. As a result, marriage and motherhood were delayed or even completely skipped which brought women's lifestyle especially during early adulthood closer to men's. The family in general became less important and ceased to be the primary means of female identification as women started to concentrate more on their personal fulfillment and individual needs. Being financially independent, they did not need to marry anymore, making a living on their own. Hence, more and more women remained for a longer time or even life-long single, marriage and birth rates, correspondingly, declined, divorce rates skyrocketed, and the number of single mothers rose. Indeed, many women still did not reject relationships and men per se; however, the institution of marriage had become redundant from an economic point of view. A growing number of couples, therefore, preferred to live in common law marriage in order to maintain their independence and avoid obligations that might restrict individual longings and eventual personal reorientation (McLaughlin et al. 32, 42 f., 51 ff., 63 ff., 69, 89, 135). Furthermore, women who decided to start a family were no longer supposed to quit working but could now combine career and family (Chafe, Paradox 200; McLaughlin et al. 90 ff.). While women in the past had usually worked before and/or after having had children, "the 1960s marked the beginning of a shift away from the traditional sequencing of family and employment roles" towards a combination of both (McLaughlin et al. 97). Additionally, an increasing number of couples refrained completely from having children which shows that men and women did no longer "have to have children to fulfill their union as husband and wife" (McLaughlin et al. 154). Most important for all of these developments is the fact that the public approval of such life choices steadily increased, both on part of women and men (McLaughlin et al. 149, 172 ff.; Chafe, Unfinished 420).

One of the most drastic changes in women's lives that was achieved during the 1960s and 70s concerned their sexuality. The sexual revolution brought female as well as sexuality in general from the bedroom into the open. Free love was practiced, sex unrestrainedly talked about and homosexuality increasingly lost its stigmatization. Magazines encouraged women "to enjoy recreational sex" (Boyer et al. 685), movies, television and theaters openly depicted and discussed nudity and sexuality, and more and more women engaged in pre- and extramarital intercourse, in part even to a larger extent than men (Boyer et al. 684 f.; Chafe, *Unfinished* 422). While during the 1960s premarital sex was for many Americans still only acceptable in connection with love and a subsequent marriage, during the 1970s it became an integral and natural part

of the lives of both men and women without a necessary involvement of love, relationship or marriage (McLaughlin et al. 86). "Individual sexual fulfillment" was now deemed "healthy and very important" for both sexes (Udry qtd. in McLaughlin et al. 86), and the invention of the birth control pill and the legalization of abortion revolutionized in particular women's degree of sexual freedom and self-determination at that time. However, not everybody was fond of these developments; especially the older generation complained about the decay of family and moral values (Boyer et al. 685).

The sexual liberation found its end in the mid-1980s with the emergence of AIDS, the latter "chill[ing] the ardor of open sexuality" (Boyer et al. 685; McLaughlin et al. 87). Indeed, sexual activity per se did not cease, but both men and women became more careful and moved from free love to "'Safer Sex'" (Boyer et al. 710). However, not only sexuality was slowed down during the conservative Reagan-era in the 1980s and beyond. Feminists complained about a backlash. Even though "[e]xtraordinary changes continued to occur in the family and workplace . . .," women received several setbacks, such as the failed ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, new obstacles and opposition on the part of conservatives concerning their right of abortion as well as persistently minor payment and job distribution (Chafe, Paradox 214 ff.; Boyer et al. 706). Additionally, more than a few men as well as women felt threatened by the evermore progressing mergence of traditional gender roles. Thus, many women were less activist and rediscovered domestic values (Chafe, *Paradox* 214, 237). As Maasik and Solomon point out, "It became culturally fashionable to embrace a 'new traditionalism' . . . [and] by the late 1980s *Time* had declared that feminism was dead . . . " (441). Even though working women by the 80s had become a largely accepted normality and even movies, for instance, had started to side with them, the media still depicted them for the most part in negative terms, i.e. as unhappy and unfulfilled (Haskell, *Reverence* 390 f.). Female sexuality, too, was on the one hand embraced by the media, especially in order to spur consumerism, but women who were not only "sexually *available,*" but rather self-determinant or aggressive, were depicted as "monster[s]" (Maasik and Solomon 443). Furthermore, "the very word *feminism* itself was demonized" (Maasik and Solomon 442), and many women refrained from typically feminist attributes, such as a natural outward appearance and plain clothes. Instead, they again embraced typically female attributes, such as wearing makeup and attractive clothing in order to feel and appear more desirable to men. And although many men claimed to not feel threatened by successful women, they mostly continued to marry women less successful, and women often complained to not find a man due to their higher education and profession (Dowd).

Despite all these setbacks and turn backs to conventional gender roles, at the end of the 20th century, women had as many possibilities and liberties as

never before. Even though the sexual double standard had not yet been completely overcome, female non-marital sexual activity both almost equaled that of men's and was approved of by the majority of Americans (McLaughlin et al. 85 ff). Gender segregation in terms of income, working fields, and position, indeed, continued to exist (Chafe, *Paradox* 223 f.). However, college enrollment and labor force participation likewise continued to grow as well as women's "entry . . . in the traditionally male professions . . . " (McLaughlin et al. 102) so that in the first decade of the 21st century, women "make up almost half of American workers . . .," occupy to some extent also high-prestige and managerial occupations and even earn in a higher number than men college degrees ("Female" 49 f.). Hence, while career women during the post-war period were largely stigmatized and an exception to social norms, they had now become a part of everyday life (Chafe, *Paradox* 222). Also in terms of lifelong singleness, delayed marriage, divorce, cohabitation and single-parenthood, the increasing trend of the 1960s and 70s proceeded. Likewise, the fertility rate declined to an all-time low, and large numbers of women even postponed the birth of the first child up until their thirties in order to first concentrate on themselves and establish themselves an independent standing within society (McLaughlin et al. 53 ff., 70, 123 ff.).

Hence, even though marriage and/or children were still an integral part in the lives of most women and considered essential to lead a fulfilled life (McLaughlin et al. 186), the family was by no means the only goal anymore. Women now wanted to have it all and combine both their old and their new roles and were mostly not willing to give up either the one or the other. At this point, however, new problems emerged. While men, indeed, had also started to engage more in the domestic sphere, "their roles as fathers and husbands . . . [remained] secondary to their role as providers." Women, on the contrary, not only remained in major charge of the household and child-rearing, but were also supposed to equally respond to their public and domestic roles which however proved often a problematic task: "With heavy demands on her to be successful at both endeavors, the employed mother finds her roles in conflict" (McLaughlin et al. 121, 149). Moreover, women were often denied their right to freely choose which lifestyle they wanted to lead since holding an occupation over the years had become an economic necessity instead of a longed for liberty, especially for single women and mothers, but not exclusively ("Feminist" 50; Friedan, *Second* 23, 72 ff.).

Accordingly, women at the end of the century were on the one hand more liberated and manifold in their opportunities and lifestyles than ever. On the other hand, however, society still perceived them primarily in their roles of mothers and wives even though female occupation was largely approved of. In addition to that, new problems that had evolved out of the altered social structures still prevented them from being equal to men, but instead kept them

struggling between old and new gender roles as will become clear in the following chapters.

5.2 Living in an Age of Un-Innocence: Emancipated Female Lifestyle

"This is the first time in the history of Manhattan that women have had as much money and power as men plus the equal luxury of treating men like sex objects" (1/1). These are the words of Samantha Jones in the very first episode of SATC. They very well sum up the central core of the TV series: the emancipation and equality of women at the end of the 20th century. Women are no longer bound to the home and reduced to the role of innocent mothers and wives. Instead, women like Carrie, Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte have finally gained what women like Ellen and Holly had desired but still been refused: personal freedom, independence – both in terms of men and finances – and the liberty of self-expression. The Millennium Woman has conquered spheres that had been classified for many years as typically male and, thus, developed a completely new lifestyle in which clear-cut gender roles are no longer valid.

The most obvious indication for women's new gained freedom and SATC's progressive stance concerning women's role within American society is the fact that the series is completely presented from a female perspective. Thereby, women are not only granted their own voices, but it also reflects society's changed sentiments and interest towards women's true thoughts and feelings. As Marshall and Werndly remark, "Historically, represented talk on television has been male-dominated . . . . The medium has tended to deny women the opportunity to talk, and this can be linked to the wider social world in which women have not had the same rights to speak as men" (87). At the turn of the millennium, however, women are given center stage; hence, their status as independent individuals is, eventually, acknowledged.

Correspondingly, the four friends do not hesitate to use their voices and demand their own rights and desires. Instead of being silenced, they are self-confident individuals whose opinions count as much as men's. While women according to Victorian morality, for instance, were not supposed to criticize men in public (Crowninshield 331), SATC's women complain about them in public as well as at home. According to Miranda, it is in the genes of women to pick at their men (6/4). They do not silently accept men's bad behavior but vociferously react against it. In a restaurant, for instance, Samantha throws water into Richard's face because he was unfaithful and spreads flyer in the whole city which stigmatize him as a cheater (5/1). Furthermore, they have largely adopted a male way of talk and use swearwords, for the most part without restraints and sometimes even excessively (Samantha: "Shit, motherfucker, fuck, shit." Miranda: "There is a shit-motherfucker-fuck-shit-situation?" (6/5)).

As the friends are not silent but speak frankly, they speak most frankly about sex which likewise is "gemeinhin mit einer stereotyp männlichen Redeweise assoziiert" (Künnemann 28). As Akass and McCabe point out, "*Sex and the City* challenges prohibitions and breaks the silence, so that women can begin to tell their stories and speak about sex differently" ("Ms" 196). Sex is not a taboo anymore, but rather central to women's lives. Every Saturday, they meet for brunch and unrestrainedly talk, among others, about their sexual adventures or problems. Hence, sex talk is not only allowed, but also ritualized as an integral part of a modern female lifestyle. Indeed, Charlotte's elite sorority friends, for example, do not appreciate it and are shocked by her addressing Trey's impotence openly. However, the fact that Charlotte, who usually functions as the series' "moralische Instanz" (Künnemann 28), does not give in to the criticism of the "Kappa Kappa Grandmas" (as Carrie's overvoice calls them) but adheres to what she has said, is just one of the series' many ways to validate female sex talk (3/16). At the same time, however, it becomes clear that many members of New York's upper class are still rather piqued when it comes to sex, especially in connection to women.

Nevertheless, the friends do not only talk about sex, they also practice it. As the name of the series already implies, sex plays a central role in their lives. They fully embrace their premarital sexual activity and self-confidently claim their own joy in it. They are very open-minded, promiscuous, engaging in both pre- and extramarital sex, hetero- and homosexuality, thereby celebrating their own sexuality and becoming "Repräsentantinnen des *third wave feminism*" which picks up "those aspects of second wave thought that focus on a woman's right to pleasure" (Künnemann 29; Henry qtd. in Künnemann 29). Samantha, in particular, displays the achievements of the sexual liberation. She has "sex like a man," which means without feelings and immediately dumping the guy afterwards, thus making men a sex toy for women and not vice versa. She only uses them to satisfy her own needs and thereby clearly moves from being a passive object to being an active subject. She has taken the control in bed and instructs, for instance, her lover Smith what he has to do in order to please *her* (6/11). In SATC, sex is not a male privilege anymore or a mere marital duty which women have to fulfill without enjoying it. Samantha, as well as most of the series' other women, insists on her "civil rights of sexual freedom" (Zieger 103) even though society, and sometimes even her friends, still frown upon her sexual aggressiveness. When Carrie, for instance, (unconsciously) reacts a little judgmental after having caught Samantha giving a delivery guy a "blow job" in her office, Samantha vigorously states: "I will not be judged by you or society. I will wear whatever and blow whomever I want as long as I can breathe and kneel" (5/4). So, despite all the hostility and prejudices she has to face throughout the series concerning her very sexual and open nature, she never gives in to society's pressure but stays true to herself. This

shows that the series clearly promotes and approves of her diversity. Indeed, at the end of the series even she becomes domesticated to some extent (cf. 5.3). Nevertheless, the subsequent movies allow again for her firm belief in singleness and sexual liberty and even celebrate it at the end of the second movie with fireworks (Samantha below having sex with a stranger on a car). So, instead of being depicted as "monsters" or being "punished for being sexually active . . . " the women's "sexual 'selfishness' . . . is rewarded and praised . . . " (Henry 75). Not having premarital sex is even depicted as fatal. Charlotte, even though no virgin, wants to wait until her bridal night before making love to Trey. The night before she cannot resist anymore and wants to spend the night with him. However, it turns out that Trey is impotent and it is too late to cancel the wedding. This sexual problem eventually leads to the first separation of the couple (3/12, 3/17). Furthermore, the series' open display of female sexuality not only acknowledges women as sexual agents, but also shows, especially through Charlotte, that even among the upper class female sex is mostly no longer "subversive" (Brooks 193).

However, SATC's women not only dominate and control men in bed but also by looking at them. According to Haskell, it is almost exclusively men who "respond to nudity per se, that is, nudity isolated from the romantic values of psychology and context or to parts of the body isolated from the whole." Hence, "body art, from pinups . . . to nudie magazines, is designed to appeal to homosexual and heterosexual men rather than to either type of woman" (*Reverence* 250). In SATC, however, this pattern is clearly revised (cf. Künnemann 24 ff.). Just like Capote's Holly who already liked to look at a naked male body, all of the women in the series actively gaze at naked – and dressed – men, thereby making the "wielders" to the "objects of the gaze" (Greven 36) and likewise liberating themselves from their usually sexual inferior position. Men are continuously on display, not only for the protagonist's enjoyment, but of course also for the enjoyment of the series' mostly female audience (cf. Bignell 169). By adopting the girls' POV, the camera allows us to enjoy the sight of well-built naked baseball player in a locker room (2/1), half naked firefighters during a calendar competition (3/1), and of course of the Absolute Hunk, Samantha's boyfriend Smith whose half-naked and styled body – his penis however only covered or rather hinted at by an extra-large Vodka bottle – is exhibited on an XXL-poster on Times Square for everyone to gaze at. The fact that this depiction entails Smith's breakthrough as a model and actor not only disproves Haskell's statement, but also supports female lust as something positive and powerful. Besides, at this point it becomes clear that at the turn of the millennium, it is no longer only the woman who has "to make herself attractive enough for a man to come home to" (Haskell, *Reverence* 29). Men, as well, have to make an effort in order to win women over and meet

their expectations since the latter do not "automatically acquiesce" anymore to men's sexual demands (Chafe, *Paradox* 198; cf. 4.4).

In addition to their sexual liberty and satisfaction, their personal freedom and fulfillment are the friend's greatest good. As Brooks points out, many Americans have moved from a "we"- to an "I"-"ethos" (135), and "living for [one's own] pleasure no longer makes the same rebellious cultural statement it once did" (203). Hence, apart from Charlotte, all of the women are highly skeptical when it comes to marriage and prefer for the most part to enjoy their independent single lifestyle. Although they do not reject men, marriage is not their primary goal in life since they perceive this institution as a cage which would finally bind them to the domestic sphere and deprive them of their autonomy and individuality. When Carrie finds out that Aidan plans to propose to her, she even has to throw up and states that her "body is literally rejecting the idea of marriage" (4/12, 4/15). This shows that marriage is just not a natural thing to do for a woman. It is less a symbol of love and connection between two loving persons, but rather a symbol of male power over women. This becomes clear when Carrie, eventually, refuses to marry Aidan. She loves him and wants to spend her life with him. Initially, she even accepts his hand in marriage, but afterwards she more and more doubts if this was the right decision, suffering from panic attacks and trying to postpone it as long as possible. According to Aidan, marriage is just what people do and he tries to push her, but Carrie refuses to do things only because society dictates them. She prefers to live her life the way she likes it; and when it turns out that Aidan wants to marry her so quickly not because he loves her so much but because he wants to make her his property ("Carrie, I want the whole wide world to know that you're mine.") since he does not trust her, they end their relationship (4/15; cf. Henry 73 f.). Just like Ellen and Holly before her, Carrie wants monogamous love and security, somebody who is by her side, but she is not willing to enslave herself and sacrifice her personal freedom and happiness for this. Accordingly, when observing a wild carriage horse (one of the many allusions to Holly and BAT in general) she states: "Maybe some women aren't meant to be tamed. Maybe they need to run free until they find someone just as wild to run with" (2/18).

Likewise, SATC underlines at various points that the importance of family and domesticity for women has considerably declined at the turn of the Millennium. For example, Carrie, Miranda and Samantha do not cook (Carrie even defines it as an "unnatural act" (2/6)) or decorate (Miranda hires an interior designer when she moves (2/7)) but are "*domestically disabled divas*, die das Häusliche als traditionelle Sphäre hinter sich gelassen haben" (Kusmierz 15; cf. Schicke-Schäfer 31). Furthermore, they strictly oppose children – often being "convinced that marriage plus children equals death . . . " (1/10) – and thereby society's idea of motherhood as women's true fulfillment. In fact, the

complete absence of the four women's own mothers seems to establish motherhood as a new taboo according to Akass and McCabe (the fact that Miranda's mother only plays a role when she *dies* can also be seen as highly symbolic in this context) ("Ms" 193). Who needs a biological family or create a family which ties you down and limits your independence when you can have four friends who accept you just the way you are and function as a surrogate family? Their friendship gives them more than most men can which is why they decide to be "each other's soul mates . . . and let men be just these great nice guys to have fun with" (4/1). Hence, even though they want a man, they do not need one because their friendship makes them feel secure and complete which also recalls – including the 3rd wave dogma of diversity – the power of feminist sisterhood and solidarity of the 70s (Sielke 46). As Bubel remarks, the four friends "are presented satisfied with their lives at the end of almost each episode. This is mainly due to their friendship network . . . " (39). The same accounts for their relation to their homosexual friends. Like in BAT, in SATC women and homosexuals are also displayed as allies against oppressive society and abusing and imperfect heterosexual men. They share their emotions and sorrows, openly talk to each other which often is not possible with heterosexual men and accept each other just the way they are. As Carrie states, "The gay guy is the single's gal safety net" (5/5). Thus, like Holly and her neighbor, Carrie and Stanford as well as Charlotte and Anthony "share an intimacy that isn't tethered to their erotic or financial needs. In other words, they can love each other *freely*, the way no two married people can" (Wasson, Fifth 63)[5]. Besides, Carrie and Samantha do not refrain from having sex with married men while Charlotte divorces Trey when she is not happy anymore. Carrie and Samantha already have had abortions and Miranda thinks about having one. These facts underline that in SATC – in contrast to especially AI – the individual's well-being is prized over family duties and commitment.

That the series clearly promotes a single lifestyle becomes also obvious by the fact that, at least initially, Carrie & Co. are "anything but desperate" about their singleness (Shalit qtd. in Sielke 36). Indeed, they search for Mr. Right (cf. 5.3), but in the meantime they enjoy their lives. They are independent and do not need a man to define themselves and feel fulfilled. As Carrie states, for example, "Samantha didn't need a man to make her feel positive" (5/5). In fact, Samantha, the notorious single who not only rejects marriage but even relationships, can be seen as the most fulfilled and satisfied of the four. Except for few exceptions, Samantha does not worry about men and relationships as the

[5] The fact that the name of Carrie's best homosexual friend Stanford Blatch recalls the name of suffragist Harriot Eaton Stanton Blatch might be interpreted as a further sign of solidarity between heterosexual women and homosexual men and link them in their struggle with society's conventional norms.

other three often do, but simply and happily acts out her sexual and emotionless adventures. This shows that "Single-Frauen glücklicher weil unabhängiger im Leben sind" (Schicke-Schäfer 44) and that "[w]omen 'need to need men less in order to enjoy them more'" (Greer qtd. in Shail 97). Accordingly, when attending the baby shower of a former friend, Carrie & Co. are the only singles present and deemed pathetic by all of the married mothers. By exposing the latter's inner thoughts, however, SATC makes clear that these middle and upper class suburban housewives are only overtly happy, but covertly mourn their pasts as powerful and individual single women (1/10).

Furthermore, instead of giving their lives meaning through marriage and motherhood, the four friends indulge in their careers. They all have college degrees and pursue full-time jobs that underline their progressive characters and mirror women's changed lifestyles and societal role. Miranda, as a lawyer, pursues a once typical male profession and is even a partner in the firm she works for. Samantha and Charlotte, too, occupy executive positions thereby supervising not only women but also men. Their jobs are central to their lives. Not only does their work grant them financial independence, but it also fulfills them and secures them a certain social status. Miranda and Samantha, for instance, earn even more than their boyfriends Steve and Smith, Charlotte can outlive her passion for art through her job, and Samantha enjoys the power and influence she receives through her profession. Carries' occupation as a writer of a sex column even sets the frame for the whole series, the latter thereby clearly validating working women. That self-accomplished success is nowadays equally or even more important for women as a family becomes obvious when Carrie's book release party is introduced "through known signifiers well used for the fairy tale-wedding" (Akass and McCabe, "Ms" 185 f.): "There is one day, even the most cynical New York woman dreams of all her life . . . She imagines what she'll wear, the photographers, the toasts, everybody's celebrating the fact that she finally found – a publisher. It's her book release party" (5/5). The same accounts for the fact that all of the four women are for the most part of the series thirty-, or even forty-something single working women and not happy housewives. Even when Miranda and Carrie get married, they keep their jobs and mock women who do not: "It's so retro. Ok, I've got a big rock on my finger, now I can stop pretending to care about my career (3/3). In addition, all of the four friends (as well as many other characters) are not only intelligent and working, but also desirable and, hence, not depicted as monsters. Therefore, the series makes clear that career or working women in general are by no means less womanly and attractive and that holding a job is not at odds with their sex.

At this point, it is also interesting to mention the women's conspicuous consumption. While Wharton's women use conspicuous fashion-consumption in order to display family wealth and "how they *are*" (high-class conservatives

who oppose change, cf. 3.3), Samantha, for instance, uses it in order to demonstrate her progressiveness and what she can "*do*" (Coates 73, my italics), thereby clearly adopting a usually male attitude. Thus, she buys a four thousand dollar Birkin handbag which is "not even . . . [her] style," as Carrie remarks, just to show the world that she has the means to buy it: "Oh honey, it's not so much the style," Samantha responds, "it's what carrying it means." "It means you own four thousand bucks." "Exactly! When I'm touring around town with that bag I know *I've* made it!" (4/11, my italics). She is proud of her professional success and her conspicuous consumption serves to underline her financial independence and ability as a woman (cf. Bruzzi and Gibson 127).

Moreover, the women's fashion also functions as a major characterization device that underlines their progressiveness. In particular, Carrie's and Samantha's individual and unconventional fashion styles are a strident expression of their individual and unconventional personalities and lifestyles. Far from being simple, their dresses are as extraordinary and trendsetting as the women themselves and make them shine out of the masses just as Ellen's red cloak and Holly's little black dress did. Samantha's plunging clothes and short dresses with their gaudy colors and wild patterns above all underline her passionate, open-minded and self-confident nature. Miranda instead often wears suits instead of sexy dresses, thereby stressing her rather male working lifestyle. Furthermore, among her friends, she is the one who initially cares the least about her looks and, thus, feminine beauty and does not even hesitate to go out wearing just a baggy overall. Carrie and Charlotte, besides, wear also ties which mirrors their adoption of once male character traits (cf. Bruzzi and Gibson 115 ff.).

While it is fashion that serves the women as "a means of personal expression, . . . it is specifically New York that offers . . . [them] this freedom" (Bruzzi and Gibson 117). As the series' title already indicates, "the city" functions almost as a further protagonist. SATC contains myriads of allusions that NYC is as free and progressive as the four friends are and they love their city for giving them manifold possibilities and life choices. For Carrie, NYC even functions as a surrogate boyfriend since it grants her more liberties and fulfillment than many men do. The city is her "one big love" (5/1) and hence it is no wonder that her final decision to live in Paris ends in a fiasco. This also mirrors the shifts that have been accomplished in the course of the 20th century. While Ellen has to return from ONY to Paris to be free, Carrie, at the end, has to return from Paris to NYC to find her happiness.

In this context, Carrie in particular can be linked to the city's progressive bohemian culture and be defined as a free spirit, not least since she works as a writer. However, as Brooks points out, in the 90s "the bohemian and the bourgeois were all mixed up" (10) and, thus, even upper class members have become more open-minded and free-spirited as can be observed using the ex-

ample of Charlotte, who is the classical "Bobo," combining elite heritage with art, i.e. bohemian attitudes.

Thus, while Ellen and Holly are not yet allowed to succeed and have to leave the country and New York's upper class in order to maintain their individual and progressive personalities, SATC's women are, eventually, all granted their own happy ending regardless of their chosen lifestyle. This proves that at the turn of the millennium being different and diverse was finally possible and even desired (cf. Brooks 113, 127).

However, despite their love for freedom, independence and a modern lifestyle, the women in the series still have conventional sides or have to struggle with society's conventional expectations which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.3 Facing a New Backlash?: Conservative Ideals and New Problems

"Welcome to the age of un-innocence, no one has breakfast at Tiffany's and no one has affairs to remember." These words are uttered by Carrie in the first episode and seem to clearly distance the Millennium Woman from women of early and mid-20th-century America. Appearances are deceiving, though, and even SATC displays and promotes many conservative traits that connect the series' characters much more to those women and their old-fashioned times than one might think on first sight. Despite all their forwardness and the new spheres they have conquered, many of the depicted women still hold on or struggle with traditional values concerning gender roles and are still far from being equal to men. At the same time, however, the series makes clear that attributes that were once deemed old-fashioned and oppressive can no longer be perceived in such restricted terms at the turn of the millennium.

Among the four friends, Charlotte and Carrie can be particularly considered the rather conservative ones (even though Carrie to a much lesser extent than Charlotte). Among others, this is underlined by their education and professions. Charlotte is an art major while Carrie works as a writer of a sex column, both rather female fields. Charlotte's conservative ideals have a lot to do with her elite WASP heritage. In the first episode, for instance, her date says: "I understand where you are coming from and I totally respect it. But I really need to have sex tonight" after she had refused to go all the way due to her moral conviction concerning proper sexual behavior. Although Charlotte is by no means a nun, she is generally rather modest and piqued when it comes to sexuality. She largely refuses to use swearwords and is often shocked by Samantha's unrestrained sex talk and behavior (cf. Künnemann 30). According to her, "Sex is something special that is supposed to happen between two people who love each other" and she asks Samantha, "When are you gonna learn that you can't just sleep with everything that comes along" (3/16). Indeed,

Samantha does not let herself be silenced or her sexual enjoyment be spoiled neither by Charlotte nor by society, whereby, as already pointed out, the series clearly awards women the same sexual liberties as men and makes Samantha a pioneer in this respect. However, the fact that even she is shocked by another woman's aggressive sexual behavior in public (3/16) shows that there still are and should be limits when it comes to female sexuality. She also becomes slightly criticized for her carefree lifestyle; for instance when she has to do an AIDS test and, fearing to have caught the disease, is confronted with the possible consequences of her permissive behavior (Künnemann 31). SATC's approving stance in terms of sex is also weakened by the fact that Samantha's sexual activity is mostly displayed with a comic undertone. As Künnemann observes, "Wir haben es . . . nicht mit einer Abkehr in ein puritanisches Reich des erhobenen Zeigefingers zu tun. Aber es ist dennoch auffällig, dass exzessives Sexualverhalten in der Serie wiederholt eindeutig satirisch, überspitzt, ja als Karikatur präsentiert wird" (31). Furthermore, the sexual double standard is still to some extent intact. This becomes clear when Miranda fears to be a whore because she had sex with more than 40 men while Steve, almost a little proud, confesses that he has slept with more than 60 women (3/6; cf. Nelson, "Sister" 94). At this point, it is also worth mentioning that indeed, all of the women have premarital sex and do not deem it wrong; however SATC also presents a new generation of twenty-something women who return to old-fashioned values by "saving themselves for marriage" (2/17) because they are annoyed by all the sex that is popularized and made such a big topic. While in the first half of the 20th century female sexuality was rather made a non-topic or suspiciously eyed, at the end of the century it has replaced marriage as the major focus in women's lives. As a result, Carrie's 25-years-old short-time assistant, for instance, feels "like these previous generations of women have devalued sex . . . [so that] it's not even special anymore" (2/17). Therefore not only a few younger women start to refrain from sex again and return to more conventional values.

Even when it comes to women's career and financial independence, the series partially adopts a more conservative point of view. Although Miranda and Samantha date men who are less affluent than themselves (and by making Miranda marrying Steve and Samantha "going steady" with Smith, SATC seems to validate these changed gender roles), Carrie and especially Charlotte mostly long for or date rich men who make them all kinds of expensive presents and thereby permit the women to keep their high-class lifestyles. Carrie, indeed is working throughout the series, but her salary is not high enough to cover all her costs. Aidan and Big, instead earn enough money to be easily able to buy her apartment when it goes co-op, while Carrie herself cannot afford to and even her friends, who offer her the money, could only loan her parts of the needed money (Charlotte, finally, gives her all the money; however she,

too, can only afford to do that by selling her wedding ring, which, of course, was actually paid by Trey) (4/16). Carrie also almost never pays when dining out with her boyfriends. This might be of course because men are supposed to act like gentlemen, but it might also be an indication that men earn more money and can rather permit themselves to pay. And, besides, the idea of the paying gentleman also stems from the cliché or rather the fact that men usually earn more money than women – if the latter have an income at all (cf. Dowd). Hence, SATC seems to render women at the end of the century still partially inferior and dependent on men when it comes to finances (cf. Merck 49). Into the bargain, when the four friends read the wedding announcements in the paper (3/3), the bride's professions are all mentioned in the past tense just as it was the custom in the 1950s "as if the marriage would obviously end . . . [the bride's] career" (Brooks: 18). And indeed, Natasha, Big's first wife, immediately stops working as soon as she is married and even Charlotte quits her prestigious and high-income job after having married Trey. Even though Charlotte usually is rather conservative as well, this decision does not seem to be easy for her. She would love to dedicate all her time to her family. However, giving up her job means giving up her passion for art and also giving up her independence which she has built up during the preceding years. Eventually, her conservative nature wins, and she does not regret her decision, using her free-time to the fullest extent and transmitting her managerial personality from job to private life where she as well keeps on organizing and managing things. That is, she does not give up her skills and what she enjoys to do, but she, nevertheless, gives up her financial independence. Indeed, her friends initially do not approve of "what they see as her limited new life as a stay-at-home, wanna-be mom" (Henry 72); but Charlotte insists on her right to choose – thereby referring to the principles of the women's movement – and, thus, not only her friends accept her decision, but also the series makes clear that devoting oneself only to the domestic sphere does not necessarily mean to be old-fashioned and inferior to men. Instead, all lifestyles are alright as long as the woman is happy with her choice and, above all, granted to freely decide which lifestyle she prefers (4/7).

Furthermore, all of the four friends still define themselves to a large extent through their outward appearance and use their looks in order to attract men. Even Miranda, who often appears rather tomboyish with her short hair and business style, has almost "an anxiety attack" when she has a date with "the most gorgeous man . . . [she has] ever met and . . . can't figure out what to wear" (3/17). Samantha, too, "correspond[s] to conventional beauty standards" (Bubel 37) by regularly having cosmetic surgery which "society nearly demands of . . . " women (5/5). The women's sexy clothes, moreover, still expose them to the male gaze. This becomes already obvious in the series title sequence. According to Akass and McCabe, the look "of the Japanese tourist

with his camera . . . hold[s] her [Carrie] as object in the male gaze," and they conclude that "[j]ust at the moment the woman breaks her silence . . . what she has to say appears so radical that it must somehow be disavowed" by this form of male control ("Ms" 179). However, the four friend's sexiness is not necessarily a bow to patriarchal ideals of feminine beauty but rather highlights that "women today can be feminist *and* attractive to men" (Gorton 157). At this point, SATC clearly takes a stand which had already been addressed in the 1970s by Gloria Steinem: "Feminists do not all look alike, nor should they," and a woman's choice to wear for instance a short skirt has nothing to do with her political or emancipatory conviction (qtd. in Gorton 159). Accordingly, the series' women also enjoy to be looked at and this is not because their outward appearance is the only way through which they can define themselves. But just as they do not want or accept to be reduced only to their looks, they do not want to be reduced only to their intellect which, as we know, they definitely inherit. Being a woman for them includes both the shell and the interior, and depriving them of one or the other is in both cases a form of oppression. Hence, the Millennium Woman wants to embrace both her traditional feminine as well as her new masculine side and shows that "[t]he admission of girliness . . . doesn't mean the loss of female independence and power" (Ferris and Young 4).

Even though the series clearly validates the choice to live a single life, under the pressure of society who still perceives singles as enemies, lesbians (1/3) and lepers (2/4), the four friends (Samantha to a lesser extent) often doubt if they are really "Single and Fabulous!" (2/4) or if they might have chosen the wrong lifestyle. Indeed, society accepts working single women, however only until a certain age. After having sowed their wild oats, women are still expected to embrace marriage and motherhood. The series more than once indicates that being a single is a form of "stunted adolescence" (1/3) and only having a family means having "a real life" (6/9). Hence, throughout the series "wird der sichere 'Stand' der Single-Frauen in der Metropole gleichzeitig behauptet und hinterfragt" (Kusmierz 14). For Carrie, "the loneliness is palpable" (5/5), and even Miranda fears that she is "gonna die alone" (2/5). Thus, SATC seems to indicate that women at the end of the century are as unhappy as women in the 1950s – only for different reasons – and seems to question "die Bedeutung der politischen Bewegung der 1960er Jahre . . . " According to Sielke, the series, thus, becomes "Teil eines politischen backlashs, der . . . mit der vermeintlichen Ordnung der American 50s liebäugelt" (43).

Accordingly, finding a husband or at least a boyfriend is still central to or even the primary goal of their lives and, thus, the whole series evolves around their search for Mr. Right (only Samantha is an exception here) and "bekommt auf diese Weise durchaus konservative Untertöne, indem etablierte Geschlechterrollen nicht vollkommen verabschiedet werden" (Künnemann 30).

Especially Charlotte's professed goal is to "mate for life" (2/6), but also Carrie often makes her happiness dependent on men and remarks that "a single gal spends most of her life searching for the perfect male" (6/13). Hence, the series presents myriads of New York women who desperately attend workshop after workshop in order to learn how to behave and look and make sex and where to go in order to attract and finally win over a man. Furthermore, SATC also reinforces the value of the family and still hesitates to radically challenge topics that are too conflict laden by making Miranda – who usually rather sympathizes with Hänsel and Gretel's witch than with "these brats [who] come along an start eating her . . . " "dream house" (1/10) – finally refrain from her plans to have an abortion in order to keep concentrating on her career (4/11, cf. Henry 72)). So, despite the series' forwardness, "the social expectation that women should marry, settle down and have kids remains" (Nelson, "Sister" 84). As a result, all of the four friends become domesticated at the end of the series – being "portrayed as careworn and a little too old to be out on the circuit any more" (Whelehan 207) – by finding happiness and fulfillment only in a monogamous relationship or marriage (the following movies, as already pointed out, however, show that at least for Samantha this does not hold true).

But does "find[ing] happiness by settling down . . . " (Brunsdon, General 122) necessarily indicate a retreat from progressiveness? As conventional as Carrie's, Miranda's, Charlotte's and Samantha's development from once happy singles to reformed happy wives and girlfriends might seem, it rather displays the Millennium's Women wish to have it all: "The fact is, these women value their economic and sexual independence, but at the same time still want relationships with men" (Nelson, "Sister" 93). For ONY's members, marriage was nothing more but "a dull association of material and social interests held together by ignorance on the one side and hypocrisy on the other" (Wharton, *Age* 29). In contrast, SATC's women are not willing to "settle for anything less than butterflies" (5/8). They do not strive for relationships or a family because society dictates that this is just the right thing to do for a woman, but because "romantic commitments" can also bring "personal and emotional satisfaction" (Corral and Miya-Jervis qtd. in Henry 73). They do not need a man anymore, but they would like to have one. Like Holly, they keep on searching as long as they have found the man with whom they can both feel secure and loved as well as maintain their independence and individuality. They want to combine old with new longings, old with new security and in contrast to AI and BAT, SATC finally allows for that.

Likewise, Miranda – conservatively – decides to have a family, but – progressively – she does not sacrifice her independence for that. Instead, she maintains her personality and shortly after having given birth to her Baby, "Miranda was back at the office and she was politically incorrectly happy to be there" (5/5). This choice of words, however, not only implies that society still

frowns to some extent at working mothers, but, again, raises the question on how far SATC indicates and contributes to a feminist backlash. Not only is her return to work described in these ambivalent terms, but she is also often displayed to be completely overloaded by her attempt to be a "'Superwoman'" (Boyer et al. 706) who tries to do justice equally to both her career and her family. However, while the media for the most part only forgives these "Women Who Want to Have It All . . . when, and if, they choose to opt out of the workplace in favour of motherhood alone . . . " in order to promote "the advantages of abandoning ambition and opting for home, hearth and heart" (Gibson 139), SATC indeed illustrates the problems that accompany women's wish to combine the domestic with the public sphere. Nevertheless, the series does not judge this decision. Although even Miranda herself after a while has the impression to be a bad mother and, thus, decides to work less, she merely cuts her working hours back to still 50 hours a week (6/6), the number itself ironically revising both her supposedly adaption to social conventions as well as the critique that working mothers are bad mothers. This becomes further underlined in the second movie in which even Charlotte, who desperately desires to confine to societal norms and be a good full-time mother, almost suffers from a nervous breakdown and thinks to be a bad mother because she can barely cope with her domestic duties. Besides, she even confesses that being a mother only – even though this is everything she has ever dreamed of – does make her happy but not always fulfils her. It is Miranda who, finally, has to cheer her up since she as a working mother seems to be even more capable of organizing family life and dealing with the new situation of motherhood. As Barnett and Baruch found out,

> [W]omen between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-five who combine work, marriage, and motherhood do the best of all women their age in general psychological well-being. They have more control over their lives, which now seems essential to health; they are able to satisfy their needs for achievement and mastery as well as for pleasure and intimacy; and they use the flexibility that comes with combining roles to slough off the dreary, most burdensome part of either role. They are thus less at risk than the housewife whose whole identity is tied up with life at home, which she can never completely control, or the man whose whole identity is tied up with success in the job, where he is not the boss. (qtd. in Friedan, *Feminine*[2] xxiii)

Nevertheless, both learn to deal with the new situation. Miranda, eventually, manages to combine both spheres and SATC clearly validates this new female lifestyle (as well as Charlotte's old-fashioned one). Nevertheless, at this point it becomes also obvious that women still are unequal from men since Steve, indeed, helps Miranda with the child-rearing; however, she is the only one who has to reduce her working hours and seems to suffer from the double burden while Steve appears always fresh and cheerful and only now and then

has the baby (at least as long as they are still separated). Furthermore, being a single mother for most of the time, Miranda is not even granted the opportunity to choose if she really wants to be a working mother or not.

Finally, also the women's fashion and looks underline both their (growing) conservative sides as well as their wish to combine old and new gender roles. Charlotte's clothes often recall the 1950s, for instance when she wears petticoat and polka-dotted dresses. Furthermore, she often wears rather bourgeois jackets and lady's suits which reveal her elite heritage. In the course of the series, Miranda's hair becomes longer and her clothes much more feminine (even though she still wears suits and the hair is still rather short), thereby commenting her development from determined single to embracing her new role as working mother. Carrie's notorious fashion style is for the most part a mixture of old vintage and new haute couture pieces. Thus, it clearly emphasizes her manifold post-feminist persona. Even the fact that Audrey Hepburn's Holly Golighty more than a few times seems to function as a style role model (cf. Bruzzi and Gibson 118) comments on her wish to combine the old with the new. Moreover, her clothes become less sexy in the course of the series since, as she states, "it is time for ladies my age to cover it up" (5/4).

Thus, although all of the four friends sooner or later embrace traditional ideals, especially when it comes to men, family and relationships in general, they do not return to a conservative early- or mid-20th-century lifestyle. Hence, while some critics interpret the several references of the series to BAT and AI as a commitment to conservative times and values (Künnemann 30; Kusmierz 7; Merck 49), I propose that it rather links progressive women of old and new times who strive for personal fulfillment by both being independent and feeling loved and secure. And this wish for security and togetherness is neither old-fashioned nor a backlash but simply a human need (cf. Jermyn 209).

5.4 The Manifold Millennium Man and His Relation to Women

According to Friedan, "[t]he signs that machismo was dying in the U.S. appeared about the same time as the women's movement emerged in the sixties" (*Second* 131). Thus, while in AI and BAT the majority of the depicted men are still rather conservative – even though they already inherit progressive traits, as we have seen – the majority of SATC's male characters can be considered rather open-minded when it comes to women's status in society and gender roles in general. The series makes further clear that even men have started to question the rigid terms of what society perceives as ideal masculinity and hence have adopted new (female) attitudes. At the same time, however, it becomes obvious that many men still feel threatened by the blurring of gender roles and, thus, continue to hold on to traditional images of women and men.

Not only women have become more independent and less domestic, but also men are less family-oriented and rather concentrate on their own well-being. As presented 3.4, in early 20th-century America, men, too, felt trapped by the duties of family and marriage even though they of course have had more liberties than women. Likewise, the single Millennium Man increasingly renounces family life because he does not want to "lose the independence he now values for travel and new personal interests" (Epstein qtd. in Friedan, *Second* 137). Accordingly, many of SATC's men are not willing to commit themselves but rather remain independent without any obligations toward a woman or children and concede the same right to women. In the first episode, for example, several men openly comment on this topic and state that just as they do not want to bind themselves to family duties, "women should just forget about marriage and have a good time." Moreover, the credo of Samantha's lover and boss Richard is "Who needs a wife when you have a life" (4/12), and up to the very last episode, Big is not interested in a solid relationship. Indeed, he even got married, but like Newland he feels suffocated by his wife's domesticity. He prefers an adventurous life which is why he is again and again drawn back to wild and autonomous Carrie.

Accordingly, while in early- and mid-20th-century America men largely preferred innocent and nice women who did not challenge male superiority or sexuality, at the end of the 20th century men are rather fond of emancipated and experienced women and the fact that women have developed from passive "'sex objects'" to self-confident and active "'sexual beings is more turn on than terrifying'" (Billen qtd. in Merck 59). For Charlotte's brother, for instance, sleeping with Samantha "was a freakin' great thing" in contrast to the two years of sexless marriage to a frigid woman (2/15). While Charlotte accuses Samantha for having sex with everybody, he does not judge her but enjoys her experience and open-mindedness. Furthermore, Richard is extremely attracted by the fact that Samantha does not back down when he yells at her and says: "I love that you're not scared of me" (4/12). Trey and Steve, as well, do not feel emasculated when Charlotte and Miranda propose to them although this is usually seen to be the man's task (cf. Brooks 17).

Likewise, most of SATC's men are not intimidated by the fact that their girlfriends or wives pursue careers or even earn more money. Apart from Trey, none of them asks the four friends to quit their jobs, and Berger, Carrie's boyfriend, is – at least initially – proud of Carrie's success when her book is sold in Paris. Smith, too, is perfectly fine with the fact that Samantha is vocationally much more successful than he is and even accepts Samantha's help to spur his career without problems. According to Samantha, "he's a whole different generation. Younger guys aren't threatened by strong women having power" (6/5). Hence, he is not deterred by Samantha's dominant and harsh behavior – neither in bed nor outside – but keeps on courting her even though

she often treats him badly. While Samantha only wants to have sex with him, he wants emotions and a relationship. He does not reduce her to a mere sex object – as she for instance does with him – or tries to control and push her into monogamy but accepts and appreciates her independent spirit.

The same accounts for Aidan whom Di Mattia terms "the sensitive new man" (24). For example, he has no problems when Carrie prefers to go out without him in order to make her "single self and . . . [her] couple self . . . coexist" (4/14). Although he would like to join her, he does not value his own desires over hers. This attitude can also be observed through Harry, Charlotte's second husband. While in AI it was May who supposedly "shall never worry . . . " as long as Newland is happy (Wharton, *Age* 178), it is now Harry who is contented as long as Charlotte is happy. When she asks him if it was alright for him to keep a dog that was given to her as a present, he just says "Everything that makes you smile like that, we'd be crazy not to" (6/16). This does not mean that at the end of the 20th century men have to take a backseat, but now they also have regards for women's emotions and longings. This becomes further clear when Samantha is desperate about losing her hair during chemotherapy. When she says to Smith, "There is no way that you can relate to what I'm going through," he simply shaves his long hair – even though it is his signature feature as an actor and model – so that she feels not too bad or alone in her grief. Neither emotion is superior or inferior, so instead of ignoring women's dilemmas and unhappiness by merely "laugh[ing] them away" (Wharton, *Age* 176), men do not only care for them, but also share them and try to help their girlfriends and wives to be happier.

However, men at the turn of the millennium not only largely accept women's changed behavior and lifestyle, but they have adopted many female traits as well and enjoy them. This does not only mirror the ongoing convergence of traditional gender roles, but also shows that even men have often had to suffer from society's rigid ideal of soft and domestic femininity and strong and successful masculinity (cf. Maasik and Solomon 444; Shail 100; Cloud 59 ff.). Hence, just as more and more women and men have started to completely abjure family life, likewise a growing number of men has become more devoted than ever before to the family. As Friedan points out:

> In many respects it seems as if men and women are moving in exactly opposite directions. Where women seem to be moving out of the home to fulfill themselves in men's world of work, men seem to be disentangling themselves from definition by success in the work world and shifting toward a new definition of themselves in the family and other new dimensions of self-fulfillment. (Second 133)

Accordingly, in SATC there are many men depicted who strive for nothing else but marriage but cannot find a woman. One of Carrie's early dates, for example, says when she breaks up with him: "I don't understand you women,

all I hear is 'I want to get married' . . . and none of you says yes, what the fuck . . . I'm so tired of going through women, I just want to get married" (1/3). Likewise, Steve thinks more about the well-being of the whole family when they look for a house in Brooklyn while Miranda does not want to move there because she is "a Manhattan girl." He tells her: "Miranda, this isn't just about you anymore . . . We're a family" (1/16). Moreover, SATC's men even perform more domestic tasks than the series' women, such as cooking. They are also often more emotional which shows that especially since the 1960s men more and more "could be sensitive, tender, compassionate . . . could admit they were afraid and they could even cry – and they were still men (Friedan, *Second* 131). Hence, Steve, for instance, cries several times, Aidan shouts at Carrie "You broke my heart!" in the open street when she tries to win him over again (after having cheated on him) (4/6), and more than a few of Samantha's one-night-stands are devastated when she does not call anymore. Likewise, Steve, throughout the series, is much more romantic than Miranda, and Smith wants to hold Samantha's hand while she does not want to (6/11). Even "Big subverts Carrie's expectations of Manhattan men" as the emotionless sex through his "revelation that he has 'absofuckinglutely' been in love" (Di Mattia 20).

SATC also depicts the new metrosexual man who is much concerned about and often defines himself through his outward appearance. For instance, Aidan's obsession to work out in order to not "get all soft again" (4/7), his huge toiletry kit full of "speed-stick deodorants . . . musk . . . [and] Rogaine" (for prevention as he states) (4/13) as well as Charlottes fashion- and Martha Stewart-loving friend of whom she is not sure if he is "a gay straight men or . . . a straight gay men" (2/11) illustrate that at the turn of the Millennium gender roles are blurring and more and more "straight urban men [are] willing, even eager, to embrace their feminine sides" (St. John).

Consequently, homosexuality is no longer a problem in SATC – either concerning men or women. While Truman Capote could only slightly hint at his narrator's homosexuality and the movie version even omitted this feature completely, in SATC homosexuals are wide in the open and according to Carrie the "normal people" (for instance in contrast to her former high school boyfriend who now lives in a mental institution due to – of course – family issues) (6/10). This reflects the ever increasing tolerance of diversity and so-called unorthodox behavior among and on the part of men and women (cf. Chafe, *Paradox* 221). Furthermore, gender switching is made a major topic from the beginning to the end. Since the very first episode, transsexuals are an ever recurring part of the series, and in the second movie, Carrie for instance is Stanford's best man wearing a tuxedo and high heels. Hence, in SATC and in NYC and America in general gender becomes more and more "an illusion" (3/4).

Despite all openness, however, the mingling of the genders also poses a problem for more than a few men depicted in SATC. They feel uncomfortable with and threatened by women's new masculinity as well as men's new femininity and, thus, still display typical male behavior. According to Di Mattia,

> *Sex and the City* renders a landscape where the rules of heterosexual relations are in a state of flux – with . . . men unsure what is expected of them in both public and private roles. Faced with a newly independent, sexually liberated woman, hegemonic masculinity repositions itself as an unstable identity in need of revision. (18)

Unsettled by this development, several men still react with hostility to or are deterred by women's new behavior. When Samantha for instance prefers to put up a fight – thrusting and swearing – with noisy prostitutes instead of staying in bed like a nice girl with her lover who is "close," the latter is put off by her aggressive – and apparently castrating – behavior. Fearing that she is "gonna pull a Lorena Bobbitt," he quickly leaves stating: "You freak me out!" (3/18).

Likewise, the women's professional success does not always prove to be unproblematic. As Miranda remarks, "Men are threatened by powerful jobs," which is made obvious when she is speeddating. As soon as she reveals that she is a lawyer by profession, all men lose interest in her. Pretending to be a stewardess, however, she immediately manages to get a date (3/12). Even Steve refuses to have Miranda pay for dinner or a beer, and when she wants to buy him an expensive suit in the early days of their relationship which he cannot afford, he breaks up with her. He says that he does not "feel good about . . . " himself in a relationship in which "there [will] always . . . be things out of . . . [his] reach" (2/10, 6/14; cf. Nelson, "Sister" 89). This exemplifies that at the turn of the millennium, many men still define themselves through their jobs and perceive a career as a male domain in which they have to prove their worth and masculinity (cf. Haskell, *Reverence* 4, 28). This becomes most obvious through Berger who seems to be intimidated, as well, when Carrie buys him a shirt he cannot afford because his career does not work out while hers is flourishing. Indeed, he initially states to be proud of Carrie's accomplishments; however, he sulkily rejects her offer to help him and is obviously troubled by her vocational superiority. He admits that he does not want to be "the guy that is threatened by . . . [Carrie's] success" (6/5). Nevertheless, he cannot escape traditional ideas of masculinity which is further emphasized when he is offended because Carrie criticizes a detail of his book (6/4). Hence, like Newland more than a hundred years before, Berger is partially progressive, loving Carrie's unconventionality and unique character and – theoretically – deeming women to be equal and free just like men. However, he does not manage to deal with a progressive woman like her – feeling inferior and emas-

culated – and, eventually, quits the relationship (merely leaving a Post-it on her computer, the medium of her success). This does not only show that "the perfume of female power is [still] a turnoff for men" (Dowd), but underlines the fact that today's men – just like women – are torn between the changing gender roles. On the one hand, men are still seen as the strong sex and have to prove their worth above all by means of their professional achievements. On the other hand, the public promotes gender equality and men are supposed to respect women as equals. These expectations towards male behavior however are conflicting, and, hence, many men feel swamped by independent and strong women. In accordance to that, Aidan leaves Carrie because he cannot accept her unwillingness to marry him (cf. 5.2), and Big – initially – prefers nice Natasha over wild Carrie since he is not able to tame the latter (2/18; cf. Schicke-Schäfer 35).

Accordingly, several of the men in the series try to uphold typical masculine traits. Steve, for example, tells Carrie in an almost appalled manner that "Guys don't talk about shit like that" (5/6) when she asks him how Aidan felt after their break-up. This shows that men "don't talk about their feelings to other men. It's part of the masculine mystique . . . " (Friedan, *Second* 130). Moreover, the protagonist's obsession to work out must not necessarily be believed to be merely a part of men's new aspiration to fit masculine beauty standards, but might also serve as a way to regain male control over women since men's "muscles are all they have over women today" (Cloud 59).

SATC's men also partially still indulge in the sexual double standard and deem sex inappropriate for respectable women. Trey, for instance, denies Charlotte at first her sexual identity and needs by seeing her "only as his virginal wife, not a sexual plaything." When she wears an erotic nightgown in order to make him see *her*, he is shocked and states: "Come on Charlotte, you're my wife, that's not you, take it off" (3/16). Trey defines his ideal woman according to her role as innocent mother and wife just as it was custom in mid-20th-century America as well as according to Victorian morality (cf. 3.1, 3.3). This becomes particularly clear when he lies between his mother and Charlotte in bed and says, "This is heaven" (4/5). Besides, Trey's conservatism concerning gender roles is further made obvious when he suggests Charlotte to quit working after their marriage (4/7). Additionally, one of Miranda's lovers wants her to engage with him in dirty talking, but as soon as she says something too dirty and emasculating ("You really like it when I slip my finger in your ass.") he dumps her. Hence, many men still prefer pseudo-innocent women who sexually please them but are not too dominant (cf. Akass and McCabe, "Ms" 189).

The fact that women at the turn of the millennium are still often seen as inferior and less respectable by men becomes also clear through Big, since he habitually calls Carrie "kid." Moreover, Carrie's boss at vogue refers to her as

"cookie" and rather sees and treats her as one of his children than as a grown up woman (4/17). Into the bargain, in the second movie, Miranda's boss does not deem worthwhile a woman's opinion and silences her by holding up his hand every time she tries to say something.

Many of the series' men are also indifferent to women's longing for a proper and satisfying man (Bignell 168) and can, hence, still be considered as self-centered and caring more for their own well-being than for women's. This becomes among others clear when Berger leaves Carrie. He does not quit the relationship in a fair way by talking to her but he simply leaves overnight and breaks up with her on a Post-it. Indeed, he does not do that because he is totally indifferent to Carrie's emotions, but because he is afraid. Nevertheless, he chooses to go the way of the least resistance knowing that his behavior will hurt Carrie but accepting this fact to feel better himself (6/6). Big, too, often prizes his own well-being over women's. For instance, he plans to move to Paris without talking to Carrie about it even though they are in a steady relationship. This proves that her emotions are less important to him than his own professional interests (2/12). Likewise, he unscrupulously starts an affair with Carrie even though married to Natasha. Indeed, Carrie, too, thereby betrays Aidan; however, while she does not "want people to get hurt," Big does not "give a fuck" if they get caught or not and even has sex with Carrie in his marital bed (3/11). Finally, also Aleksandr, Carrie's boyfriend, who is usually so "attentive" towards women (6/18), wants Carrie to give up her whole life and identity in NYC in order to follow him to Paris where he needs to go in order to pursue his own profession. Indeed, he does not force her, but likewise he does not consider the possibility to do as she likes, namely to stay in NYC. Instead, he gives her an ultimatum: either she comes with him to Paris or they break up. Eventually in Paris, he prefers to work instead of spending time with Carrie; he even slaps and tries to silence her when she wants to talk to him about her unhappiness. Significantly, it is the capitalistic and American Big who eventually rescues her from the arty and Russian Aleksandr (6/19, 6/20). On the one hand, this is a direct contrast to AI and BAT where foreign and bohemian people were mostly displayed as more progressive than bourgeois Americans, and thus underlines American and NYC's modernity at the turn of the millennium. On the other hand, it also mirrors men's still prevailing superior image since it is Big who – like Holly's neighbor – has to rescue the woman – who seems to not be able to really take care of herself and her well-being – out of a self-induced dilemma.

This shows that gender roles even at the turn of the millennium still persist and often determine people's lives. Women still are often perceived as inferior by men and patriarchal society even though the latter respect and accept them much more than at the beginning or the middle of the 20th century. Molly Haskell wonders if some day "men and women will come to each other on a

basis of greater mutual understanding . . . [and if] men [can] love women as their equals" (xvi). As SATC shows, they still cannot, at least not completely; however they are approaching.

5.5 Conclusion

According to Heywood and Drake, "the 'third wave' [can be characterized] as a movement defined by contradiction," striving for "multiplicity and difference . . . in affirmative ways" (8 f.). Correspondingly, SATC's Carrie, Miranda, Charlotte and Samantha are hybrids who do not let themselves be pigeonholed or stereotyped, neither by society which still values women primarily as mothers and wives, nor by feminists who deem equality to be achievable only by renouncing all that has defined classical femininity so far. The series aims to pledge for acceptance of diversity since feminism and emancipation do not necessarily mean to abandon old stereotypes in order to create new ones, but rather to free women from external oppression and give them the chance to individually design their lives the way they want to. Neither men nor women shall dictate how to live a life. Hence, SATC illustrates that women at the turn of the millennium long to embrace life in all its facets, inheriting and cherishing both tradition and progression. Therefore, "the series [not only] makes a persuasive case for the single life, but also . . . . nods to its past and responds to contemporary variations on these themes" (Nelson, "Sister" 85).

Indeed, SATC's women are not as revolutionary as Ellen and Holly had been in their respective times; however, the fact that the series was deliberately aired on HBO – a private channel which is not subjected to governmental censorship like public television – shows that many parts of the US still hold on to conservative gender roles. SATC can thus be assigned a pioneer function, especially when it comes to the depiction and open discussion of female sexuality (cf. Künnemann 27 f.).

Each of the four friends is eventually granted her very own and individual happy ending: Carrie married to Big but still rejecting children ("That's just not us." (Movie 2)), Miranda successfully combining the joys of a career and a family, Charlotte dedicating all her love to her family and Samantha still enjoying her carefree lifestyle as a working single. Hence, nobody is punished for either life choice but everything is accepted and cherished. Even though SATC "reveal[s] the continuing cultural ambivalence about female sexual agency . . . " (Henry 80), and shows that at the end of the 20th century society still perceives women primarily in domestic terms, they no longer are reduced to this idea. Diversity finally has become acknowledged for the most part and despite all the still prevailing gender roles and conflicts, women nowadays have enough power and self-confidence to defy existing social ideals and more and more manage to push their individualities through.

6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to show that American women have undergone lots of change in the course of the 20th century. While Ellen is largely oppressed by ONY's patriarchy and has to leave the country in order to maintain her independence, Holly is already permitted more liberties, but still cannot succeed in post-war America. Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte instead have successfully entered the public sphere and gained sexual and personal liberties that were denied to Ellen and Holly. At the same time however, all of the discussed women are similarly subject to prejudice and hostility concerning their progressive and liberty-seeking natures and have to bear up against society's continuously prevailing ideal of the domestic woman. Likewise, at the end of the century, women have to justify their partial return to traditional values which is largely considered a feminist backlash. In addition, today's women have to face new problems by struggling in their attempt to combine both the domestic and the public sphere for which society now holds them equally responsible, while men's primary domain has largely remained the public sphere. At this point, it is debatable as to which extent women have actually become liberated. Women might have gained as many possibilities and liberties as never before, but until today they are not completely free. Being still primarily perceived as mothers and wives and at the same time often being forced to work out of economic necessity (no matter if married or single), women nowadays are often double-burdened and denied any lifestyle choice. Therefore, they have gained a position that working and lower class women already inherited at the beginning of the 20th century and largely suffered from. Hence, can we really speak of an improvement when it comes to women's altered lifestyles or should we rather consider it a deterioration? In order to achieve gender equality, is it really desirable to make primarily women take over the male sphere while men often still reject the female one? As illustrated, men, indeed, have started to adopt more female traits; nevertheless it has mostly been the male lifestyle, or more specifically, the desire to have a career which has been considered the benchmark in order to gain equality and to

lead a (more) fulfilled life. Likewise, according to several feminists, today's women do not have to be double-burdened, but can lead an equal life "if only they can get rid of their mothers' expectations (the remnants of the old feminine mystique) that they can't fulfill themselves as women, or will somehow miss out on life, if they don't have children" (qtd. in Friedan, *Second* 73). But is it not a paradox to criticize society's artificial gender roles for not doing justice to women's nature and at the same time idealize an equally artificial construct like a professional career and to prize it over biological – hence natural – instincts like reproduction? As Friedan remarks, "isn't motherhood, the profound human impulse to have children, more than a mystique?" (*Second* 73). Hence, why have natural desires like parenthood and likewise love and the desire for togetherness become the enemy that has to be superseded in order to gain equality? As pointed out in the analysis, while women in early and mid-20th-century America have been denied their masculine sides, nowadays women are often denied their feminine sides. Is this not some sort of oppression and devaluation of women as well? In this context, especially BAT – where a satisfying combination seems to be not yet possible – and SATC – where conventional desires cause a crisis of conscience among independent women – pose the question if being emancipated at the same time means that women have to completely abandon their desire to have a family and if choosing this kind of lifestyle automatically means that women occupy an inferior position. Is the need for a relationship and security always a sign of (female) weakness and dependence? Is it not worthwhile to spend one's life with a loved person? Especially in times like these with all its pressures and difficulties created by society, the wish to feel secure and to have company should not be considered a sign of dependence.

I think society – the American and Western society in general – moves in a dangerous direction. Instead of valuing human togetherness, today's focus is on capitalization and money. Therefore, natural human relations have to take a backseat and are even considered disturbing and backward. Maybe people should start to move away from social artificiality and instead value natural human desires and instincts more than capitalistic aspirations. For it was this society which created gender roles in the first place and drove a wedge between the two sexes. In order to achieve equality, both spheres should be made equally attractive to both sexes instead of largely demonizing one and idealizing the other. Because, by striving mostly for the public sphere as a means of gaining equality, women, indeed, have come a long way, but they are still far from having arrived.

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