

## THE THEME OF DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES IN «THE REVOLT OF «MOTHER» BY MARY ELEANOR WILKINS FREEMAN»

Exploring the 19th century American Women Literature we came across with the issue of women “trapped” in household work which was one of the constituents of the notion of Domesticity.

**Key words:** duties, trapped, desperate, conflict.

Изучая 19-ый век, век Литературы Американских Женщин, мы столкнулись с проблемой женщин "захваченных" домашней работой, которая была одним из составляющих понятий семейной жизни.

**Ключевые слова:** обязанности, ловушка, отчаяние, конфликт.

The period of 1820 to 1860 in America is known as the period of an ideology of feminine behavior and an ideal of womanliness or as “Cult of True Womanhood”. Barbara Welter in her article “The Cult of True Womanhood” describes the roles of wife and mother and expected to cultivate Piety, Purity, Submissiveness and Domesticity in all their relations, also their

'sphere', or domain of influence, which was confined completely to the home.

A nineteenth century middle-class family did not have to make what it needed in order to survive. Men could work in jobs that produced goods or services while their wives and children stayed at home. When husbands went off to work, they helped to create the view that men alone should support the family. This belief held that the world of work, the public sphere, was a rough world, where a man did what he had to in order to succeed, that it was full off temptations, violence and trouble. A woman who ventured out into such a world could easily fall prey to it, for women were weak and delicate creatures.

A woman's place was therefore in the private sphere, in the home, where she took charge of all that went on. While performing all their commitments they were not satisfied with the attitude men showed them. They are enraged and don't want to keep their silence no longer. These very existing circumstances are vividly depicted in Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman's short story "The Revolt of "Mother", where the main idea is conveyed through the characterization of "Mother", a humble woman, who stands up for herself, revolts against the patriarchal regime, against the injustice towards females, and thus proves to be heard not only by her husband and by the society as well.

The main hero in the "The Revolt of "Mother" is the typical woman of the 19th century, who was brought up to be subservient to men. America was a completely patriarchal society at the end of nineteenth century. The men represented the authority in the family and society and the female represented the domesticity, the gentleness and the loyalty to the husband. Women had always been perceived as lesser beings than men; women thought to be less intelligent, weaker, and generally less important than men. We clearly see these differences between sexes in "The Revolt of "Mother", where Sarah asks her husband what a few men doing in the yard and Adoniram answers her: "I wish you'd go into the house, mother, and tend to your own affairs". So Adoniram Penn represents this male dominance over the female. His ideas represent the typical role of a man of the 19th century, a man who occuppies of the work and who believes he does not have to explain everything he makes to his wife who is supposed to attend to the home tasks and not to question what the husband makes. Adoniram experiments a

change in his behavior during the story. Sarah talks to him in order to expose the need of a new and better home for them and their children. During this discussion Adoniram hardly expresses his opinions and he behaves as if he didn't care what his wife is claiming: "I've got to go off after that load of gravel, I can't stand here talking all day".

Sarah accepts her domestic role, but never permits her independent spirit to be stifled. Sarah tells her daughter Nanny that women must accept their fate. Nanny her daughter is engaged and consequently worried about having a wedding at their house and she wishes about a better one. The author presents Nanny as a delicate, and beautiful girl, whose most prominent trait is naivety. She knows nothing about life and men: "You ain't found out yet we're women – folks Nanny Penn .... You ain't seen enough of men – folks yet to". When Nanny realizes her mother's plan she gets surprised but she helps Sarah without any complain. Nanny also fears her father's reaction ... "Nanny was full of nervous tremors". But both daughter and son confine in their mother "An inborn confidence in their mother over their father asserted itself". Sarah's son Sammy is the only boy in the family knows about the building of the barn. He is little but sly boy, who always tries to look as if he were a man. He always imitates his father's voice, gestures.

The conflict reaches its peak in the exposition where Sarah's heart-rending speech takes place. She claims the need of having a decent house to live in. while Adoniram is gone on a trip, Sarah understood that it was her chance to change. Thus, she decides to move the household into the new barn with her children's help. The biggest change we see in Adoniram's behavior, seeing the changes his wife has stipulated with the home, in spite of being rude an aggressive he accepts his wife's decision.

Searching woman's identity in "the Revolt of "Mother", we clearly see how Sarah tries to solve her problem. In the story it is a matter of dignity, and Sarah becomes aware that she has the right to decide for herself. Moreover, domestic tasks are emphasized and seen as a part of a woman's identity.

Mr. Hersey is the village minister that represents the moral establishment. He makes a brief appearance in the story, where he visits Sarah Penn to the new barn to convince her that maybe she is doing wrong and that her behavior is

inappropriate for a woman. But he has no arguments to refute hers. He is described as a pathetic sickly man who can only talk about the Scriptures but not about things that are beyond religion.

The author is a regionalist writer, she puts emphasis on local color settings and characters. In order to depict all features she uses detailed descriptions. The description of characters involves not only in their appearance, but their psycho, and customs, features that present them objectively and truthfully. The landscape is also described to make the sense of place an important element to the story. Barn and its environment represents men's world, the world of work. Penn's yard is littered with farm wagons, pile of wood, and there are only noises of men working. This environment represents the dominance of technology and man over nature (identified with women). The dry and arid landscape can be compared to Adoniram's character, serious, and rasped.

Concluding the article we can say that women in the nineteenth century were subservient and ladylike to a fault. Instead of the calm that

characterized Sarah Penn's personality is marked by the surprising independent and rebellious spirit she shows when she rejects to keep on living in a poor house and decides to move the house into the new barn his husband has built, against the opinion of the last one. Sarah's rebellion is not only against her husband, she is also showing her own character and she is reacting against the role she is supposed to play in a society which has always treated women as secondary and submissive people.

As a woman Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman accurately shows the struggle that woman encounter in her short story "The Revolt of "Mother". In order to avoid censorship, the author shows the rebellious content of her story disguised as acceptable, domestic scenes of female submission. In her story Mary Eleanor Wilkins deals with questions as female subordination an lack of power and offers a subtle way to face up to these problems. So in "The Revolt of "Mother" Wilkins is setting a norm for women in being decisive, independent, intelligent and ambitious, all characteristics traditionally thought to be male.

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