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Diplomski sveučilišni studij anglistike; smjer: nastavnički (dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2023.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Ja, **Petra Mesarek,** ovime izjavljujem da je moj **diplomski** rad pod naslovom **Sexuality, Gender Roles and Relationships in the Novels of D. H. Lawrence and Edith Wharton** rezultat mojega vlastitog rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima te da se oslanja na izvore i radove navedene u bilješkama i popisu literature. Ni jedan dio mojega rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno nije prepisan iz necitiranih radova i ne krši bilo čija autorska prava.

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Sadržaj mojega rada u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenoga i nakon obrane uređenoga rada.

Zadar, 13. srpanj 2023.

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1. Introduction

At the beginning of the previous century, two major events shook the world and society: the First World War and the Great Depression, which affected not only one country or one society, but the whole world. In between those two events people celebrated life because of the abrupt way they were reminded of its fragility. At the end of the 1920s, the Wall Street stock exchange crashed, causing millions of people to lose all their money. With that came the drastic overnight changes, making society backtrack again to the bare struggle for livelihood. These kinds of changes shook society and caused it to be especially careful about any hints of social disobedience. Due to this, unwritten societal rules became very strict, and anyone could lose their status and respect in a matter of moments or at a whisper of gossip.

Women were the ones especially scrutinized for such ‘crimes’ due to the belief that women were supposed to be the epitome of piousness, innocence, and purity at all times. Luckily, this slowly began to change owing to authors such as D. H. Lawrence and Edith Wharton, and social figures such as Sigmund Freud and Ellen Key. They put focus on women's emancipation, with an emphasis on their sexual satisfaction, instead of repression, limitation, and abstinence. They also pointed out that having a satisfying sex life was just as important for wives as it was for husbands. The view of sexuality and the meaning behind it shifted from being suitable primarily for procreation to being associated with emotional intimacy and physical pleasure for individuals. The major difference between men’s and women’s sexuality was that men’s was far more accepted than women’s. Male sexuality and sexual desires were a topic that was open for discussion in society while women’s sexuality and sexual desires were frowned upon and considered taboo. Not only was it not allowed to be talked about, but women’s sex drive was also repressed as it was seen as an answer to male desire and something women should not express or possess. The attitude about women’s

sexuality changed over time due to the ability to regulate conception. It enabled women to limit the number of children they had and offered new opportunities for sexual expression that did not result in procreation. However, this newfound sexual freedom applied only to some.

During the Roaring Twenties gay culture flourished in New York and its nightlife. It became almost normal to spend one's evening at a drag ball or a nightclub with gay, lesbian, or transgender performers. However, this did not last long – after the end of Prohibition in 1933, the state of New York established regulations backed by State Liquor Authority which forbid such events, prevented gay people from employment at these establishments, denied them service, and did not allow them to even gather at the premises. On the other side of the Atlantic, specifically in Great Britain, homosexuality was more widespread than it was portrayed to be. Branigan mentions Dr Matt Houlbrook who spoke on the matter at a gay history conference at the National Archives in London in 2004, saying that "what's remarkable about the 20s and 30s was how open and widespread it was in some places. In some circumstances it was very, very visible and strong and vibrant and rich" (Branigan). He also goes on to say that there were many drag balls organised and held throughout the decade, but they were held in high secrecy and would only be discovered if the police found out about them. "The very nature of the drag balls means that you only find out about them when the police found out about them because they were driven by the whole need for secrecy. But all the evidence points to these being weekly events, often with 50 to 100 men present" (Branigan). At the time being gay was still considered a crime in Great Britain and thus many risked prison sentences when trying to meet up with a potential partner. A way of finding other gay men was through personal advertisements in newspapers, but that was also considered to be too risky. "In 1920 the publisher of a magazine called the Link, and three gay subscribers were each sentenced to two years of hard labour on charges of indecency and conspiring to corrupt public morals" (Branigan). At this time, any sexuality that did not

conform to heteronormative sexuality was still taboo, causing many authors who spoke on these matters a great deal of trouble. Authors who wrote on such topics had their work censored and lost the opportunity to have their work published in their country, or even went to prison.

The goal of this master's thesis is to present, analyse and interpret the view on sexuality, gender roles, and relationships in early 20th century America and Britain based on two novels: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) by D. H. Lawrence and *The Age of Innocence* (1921) by Edith Wharton. The thesis will focus on the themes of women's sexuality, men and masculinity, women and femininity, social class, adultery, innocence, gender roles, relationships, marriage, women's rights, and 20th-century society in general. These texts portray behaviour that was considered scandalous at the time, and thus their public reception will be dealt with as well.

The method that will be used in this work is content and contrast analysis, with the goal of studying and giving a detailed overview of the conservative aspects of 20th-century society, social views of sexuality (particularly women's sexuality), and presenting the themes of sexuality, gender roles and relationships in the 20th-century literature. Furthermore, the paper will provide an outline of instances of censorship and the effects it had on society and the authors of censored novels.

2. Interwar 20th century society of the United States of America and Great Britain

2.1. American society of the 1920s

In the 1920s, America had a breakthrough in politics and society that was starting to redefine the American values which were upheld until that point. American intellectuals started to question traditional materialistic values and started to alienate themselves from societal rules and expectations. However, the stock market crash that happened in 1929 cleared these changes and reinstated the original state of depression and peril which stemmed from World War I. Davis explains that some of the most cherished American values became hard work, material concern, practicality, and hard-nosed realism (262).

One of the reasons the quality of life got better is the rise of minimum wage for workers. Filajdić explains how the new motto of the society became the catchphrase "buy now, pay later" which also contributed to the appearance of the first credit loans which eased payment but also started what we now know as consumerism (20). This was also an era when one could have changed their social status overnight because people could become rich very fast (but also lose money quickly) through the stock market exchange. Such overnight fortune created the myth of the American dream which attracted so many immigrants to the United States (Filajdić 20).

Between the two major events, World War I and the Great Depression, society prospered and celebrated life trying to forget the hardships it went through just mere years prior. However, the gap between genders has reached its peak in the 20th century and especially in America. Kerber refers to a very important quote by Alexis de Tocqueville from 1835 which perfectly describes gender politics in America: "In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace with one another, but in two pathways that are always different"

(9). Kerber also explains the separation Tocqueville made of the male and female spheres, which were at the time present in many societies in the world. In the years before the 1920s women were given freedom and independence, as long as they were unmarried. They had the freedom of attending colleges, maintaining jobs, and having romantic partners but, as soon as they married, they were expected to remain in the domestic sphere of being a housewife and a mother: “The inexorable opinion of the public carefully circumscribes [her] within the narrow circle of domestic interests and duties and forbids her to step beyond it” (Kerber 10).

However, this all changed rapidly with the start of the war. Women were forced to leave their domestic sphere and start doing the jobs men left behind. The ideal of women’s sphere and place dissipated and could no longer be taken for granted. ”They recorded the values of women’s sphere, validating women’s moral influence on their husbands and lovers, ascribing world-historical importance to women’s maternal role, and claiming for women a nature less sexual and more self-controlled than the nature of men” (Kerber 20). The republican ideology which has taken precedence in America noticed that the choice and work women got served social and political purposes which sufficed to challenge the traditional women’s sphere and brought it nearer to the ‘men’s world’. However, this small act of limited emancipation was not translated into acknowledging women’s sexuality.

In the 1920s women reinvented their position and role in society and were now completely different from their predecessors, which granted them the title “New Women”. Freedman describes these New Women as still failing to vote in a greater number than men, but with manners and morals that differed majorly from previous generations due to being exposed to work and conditions that were usually reserved for men only. They also had a legal and economic position that greatly improved, making them social and economic equals to men (Freedman 373). Women of the era gained the ability to vote but were uninterested in politics, did not know how to inform themselves about it, and therefore many did not use that

right at all. In the 1920s women had jobs and worked - some of them had office jobs or worked in factories while others chose professional jobs at homemaking. This opportunity for earning an income created a sense of independence which was seen as threatening to the husbandly and paternal authority. Nevertheless, that was still not enough for the new modern woman – she wanted more sexual freedom.

A part of the feminist movement in the 1920s was also women's sexual freedom, specifically contraception. Traditionalists at the time even feared the downfall of the family, with the widespread use of contraception by married women. However, women were grateful for this sexual freedom since it did not bind them down to domestic life and it gave them independence. Women were traditionally required to remain virgins until their wedding day or were forced to marry the partner they had premarital sexual intercourse with. Sexual freedom gave them the ability to have sexual experiences without the obligation of marriage and the domestic life of a housewife. Lorber says that "for women themselves, the positive outcome of this long battle for legalised woman-controlled contraception has been both greater sexual freedom before marriage and planned parenthood after marriage" (3). This also meant that women were now more independent in choosing their sexual partners as they could easily leave their partner if they were unhappy without the burden of shame or pregnancy.

During this sexual revolution adultery was still seen as the greatest shame a woman could bring to her family, but the case was not the same for men. If a man chose to have a mistress, no one in society would think of it as disrespectful due to it being seen as 'normal' for a man to have sexual desires outside of his marriage. However, this exception did not apply to women, and those who did have an affair were shamed, rejected from society, and left on their own. In America, there was even an "Unwritten Law" for such events.

Part of the American legal system and has institutionalised the cuckold's vengeance by permitting direct action. The husband, upon discovering his wife and the marital

> interloper in the act of adultery, might choose to kill the marital interloper then and there without later suffering a conviction for homicide. (Weinstein 227)

Moreover, women of the time were required to have chaperones when they left the house due to the fear of being seen with a man.

> Women, who wanted to escape from the imprisonment of the home and get rid of the system of chaperonage, had to put up with this interpretation of a 'transfer of power over women to outsiders.' Going out with relative strangers without the protection of a chaperone was considered dangerous enough by itself but being financially dependent upon this 'outsider' enlarged the danger considerably. (Wouters 331)

Even though the status of women in American society improved at the turn of the century, they were still under the constant supervision of men around them. The jobs they had allowed them a sense of financial independence from their husbands and the legal fight for their right to vote allowed them to choose their political representatives. The New Woman emerged with more sexual freedom which allowed a step back from the domestic sphere and a step towards the independent, strong, modern women of today.

2.2. British society of the 1920s

On the other hand, European feminists tried to do exactly the opposite – that is, they tried to blur the boundaries which separated the spheres of women and men thus allowing women to be more than just housewives and mothers. Men were allowed to be whatever they wanted, and they could choose any job, any field, and any education they wished while women only had the option of domestic life.

In the 1920s, British women found the independence they lacked in previous years. Suffragettes were fierce in their fight for voting rights and finally gained them in 1918. It was a revolutionary year for Great Britain not only because of women's voting rights but also

because of the ending of World War I. During the war, women took on jobs that were usually given to men, such as working in munitions factories, on railways, and in the air force. Due to these changes, they formed alliances previously reserved for men only, such as the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Women's Royal Naval Service, and Women's Royal Air Force. According to the 1921 Census, there were more female professions recorded than ever before – thus having the first female policeman, female barristers, medical professionals, and architects (The Findmypast team).

This era was marked in British society by the appearance of the Flapper girls. The term flapper "originated in Great Britain, where there was a short fad among young women to wear rubber galoshes (an overshoe worn in the rain or snow) left open to flap when they walked. The name stuck, and throughout the United States and Europe flapper was the name given to liberated young women" (Sauro). They became a symbol of the 1920s with short hair, Cloche hats, tiny dresses, and smoking cigarettes. Moreover, as women needed to take on more laborious work many opted for pants over skirts.

As for domestic life, since the Victorian era families have become smaller as it was most common to have 3 to 4 children on average. Middle-class families could afford a maid who lived with the family and helped with the household duties while for working-class families that was a luxury they could not afford. Pregnant women gave birth at home and those well-off could have a live-in maid at their home two weeks prior and one month after the birth (Johnson).

When it comes to birth control and gender, Fisher conducted research on the 1920s birth control and how it affected men and women of Oxford and South Wales. She interviewed couples whose birth year averaged around 1912 and whose year of marriage averaged around 1934. There were 107 people in total, 59 interviewees were from South Wales and 48 from Oxford. Fisher chose two contrasting working-class communities - Oxford

was a flourishing car industry and college region while South Wales had a declining coal and steel production industry. In the years between the two World Wars, birth control campaigns were mostly targeted towards women and started to promote 'female' birth control methods such as the cervical cap. However, as it was found in the research conducted by Fisher, women were less prone to buying and being responsible for contraceptive measures in their households.

Moreover, there was little information on birth control and contraceptives according to Fisher: "Birth control information and ideas about appropriate reproductive behaviour were frequently conveyed through discussions, chit-chat, jokes and gossip about sexual topics rather than just through communication about family, parenthood and children" (165). Furthermore, Fisher states that men had more knowledge about birth control and how to acquire it than women, and their flow of information was more varied and developed. More than 50% of her female participants said they did not know birth control methods and practices before they were married and - once they were married - all their information came from their husbands. This lack of knowledge caused them more trouble understanding vague birth control advice given to them by mothers or friends and made them even more confused. One such instance is described in the case of Edna: "Edna's friend told her 'To take the kettle off the fire before it boils over'…didn't know what she meant…what's a boiling kettle got to do with a baby!" (Fisher 169).

On the other hand, men's knowledge was more extensive and diverse – they knew about contraception, sexually-transmitted diseases, and even aphrodisiacs: "You'd hear somebody saying something and you'd go out and find somebody and try and experiment, that's the way you find out" (Fisher 170). Consequently, male participants talked more about contraception while female participants talked more about abortion. Birth control was seen as a 'male' duty and responsibility while women were more responsible for the aftermath - the

abortion. This was due to the belief that birth control was private and more connected to talking about sex while abortion was connected to a medical procedure and did not relate to the sexual act itself.

> Women's knowledge networks concerning abortion and induced miscarriages appear to have been more extensive and less covert reveals, perhaps, the significance of a birth control method that could be discussed without mentioning sex and without a woman needing to present herself as having any responsibility for sexual activity. (Fisher 171)

Moreover, Fisher argues how this knowledge of birth control (or lack thereof) set the tone for the gender differences that occurred. Men were seen as the ones taking control when it came down to contraceptive activity and women were passive in it. Women proclaimed not to have any involvement in the responsibility or the protocol of birth control methods. They usually left it to the husband to be taken care of. Husbands were the ones who would go out to buy condoms. Women put all their trust in their husbands who were the ones deciding on withdrawing - which was a widely used method at the time. By being passive in the choice of contraceptives, women supported instead of challenged the expected sexual roles. They let their husbands control the outcome of their sexual activity and therefore continued the passive behaviour which was seen as respectable. On the other hand, Fisher makes notice of male involvement saying that "men, however, had to retain the ability to determine when, where, how often and by what means sexual activity would involve contraception" (177).

The 1920s in Great Britain were revolutionary due to new methods of birth control rising, the appearance of Flapper girls, and the general admittance of women in the working field previously reserved only for men. Sexuality and sexual activity were still not talked about, and many young women only found out about the basics once they got married. Even though contraceptives became widely used, they were still controlled by men when it came to

deciding whether and if to use them. Gender roles did not change drastically and men stayed portrayed as the ones taking action while women were passive.

2.3. Notable feminists of the 1920s

All these changes would not have been possible without the relentless work of women who fought for their place in the world. Many of them are now forgotten but their work still lives on in the form of many rights women have today that otherwise would not be possible. One of these women is a British politician Margaret Bondfield, a trade-union leader and the first-ever woman to obtain Cabinet rank in Great Britain. She started her work life as an assistant at the modiste but the work conditions were wretched and erroneous. Therefore, "she joined the National Union of Shop Assistants when it was formed and started her journey into politics. In 1899 she was the only woman to delegate to the Trades Union Congress, and in 1923 became the first female chairman of the union" (Tikkanen). She was elected to be in the Labour Party that same year and as such became a member of the House of Commons. "Seven years later she became Minister of Labour in Ramsey MacDonald's second administration. This made her the first-ever woman to hold the position of Minister in the British government" (Tikkanen).

Another British feminist and revolutionist was Dr. Marie Stopes, the founder of the first-ever British birth control clinic in 1921. Even though her views on birth control caused controversy during the 1920s, she succeeded in her attempt to normalise contraceptives in Britain. Her main goal for the clinic was to provide women with a choice, saying:

> If I had my way, every woman should have as many happy, healthy children as she wanted, and when she wanted. She should be able to control her maternity. Three-quarters of us who are living today were not wanted. We came and were put up with: or our mothers hid the bitterness in their hearts. (Rogers)

She published a book in 1918 titled *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* which was aimed at married couples and became an instant hit with numerous editions being published in the 1920s. Her book stirred up the polite society of the time with its advice on sex, intimacy, and the importance of female pleasure (Robson-Mainwaring).

On the other hand, the most prominent American activists of the time were Josephine Baker and Ma Rainey. Both were women of colour and had to fight their way in a world that discriminated against them and segregated them based on their skin colour. They were singers and performers who, thanks to their immense talent, were respected enough to make a change in the world. Josephine was a civil rights activist and, in addition to performing, she was a spy for the French Resistance during World War II. "From the very beginning of her life, Josephine Baker went against societal norms and pushed boundaries in terms of female sexual expression which, in turn, paved the way for liberal change. She took pride in the power of being different and made a total disregard for the idea that women should be silent" (Norwood). Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, on the other hand, was a blues singer who found success during the 1920s. "Due to the immense scale of her popularity, white people defied the rules of segregation in 1920s South America to watch her shows. These performances were some of the first few occasions that the integration of race occurred in South America" (Brandman). Not only did she fight against racial segregation, but she was also an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, having been identified as bisexual herself. She represented a minority that was often neglected in society and was a voice that spoke out about inequality.

One of the key social figures during the 1900s was Ellen Key who was an outspoken feminist dedicated to making women's and children's lives better. She was a Swedish writer who made a great impact on the women's movement throughout Europe and made her first appearance in an American journal in 1912. In her book *The Century of a Child* (1900) she speaks up about many negative aspects of women's lives that affect not only themselves but

also their children. She advocated for the rights of women and children by sharing views about women's working hours, banning night shifts for mothers of young children, and insisting on maternal leave lasting longer than six weeks. Moreover, she was calling out the unfairness in gender roles and expressed her disapproval in the following words:

> A woman is not solely a sexual being, not solely dependent on man, the home, and the family, no matter in what form these may exist. Only in this way could a woman fulfill her destiny as a wife and a mother with really free choice. Only in this way could she secure the right of being regarded as man's intellectual equal in the fields of home and family, the recognition that in her way she was just as complete a being as he. (Key 70)

Not only did Ellen Key represent mothers and future mothers, but she also supported women who preferred to stay childless. She firmly believed in marrying for love and made sure women had the right to abandon unhappy marriages.

3. Sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

In the 1920s women's sexuality was still a taboo topic and was not to be discussed in public. The slow and radical change from dependent housewives to independent women caused some changes in the view of sexuality. Mottier states that the "sexologists routinely reproduced the double sexual morality of the time by picturing 'normal' women as passive and chaste, with a natural preference for monogamy, and by presenting male promiscuity as caused by 'the sexual demands of man's nature'" (34). Influenced by this view, the general public shamed women who were more promiscuous and sexually active, while men were praised for the same behaviour. Female sexuality was dismissed as it was seen as a reaction to male desire and it was believed to be motivated only by reproductive and maternal instincts. On the other hand, male sexuality was regarded as inherently vigorous and powerful, motivated by desire, and not aimed only at reproduction. Mottier describes how this double standard was represented at the time saying:

> They placed women in the role of guardians of public and private morality, thereby reproducing the prevalent social models of femininity of the time, which based female respectability on virginal purity or married chastity, while the immoral, 'depraved' behaviour of sexually promiscuous women defined them as 'whores' either metaphorically or literally. (52-53)

In *The Age of Innocence*, there is barely any mention of sex, and all the sexuality that is mentioned comes from the character and mystique of Madame Olenska. However, sexuality does not only mean to be overtly sexual, as it can be observed in the character of May Welland where her sexuality is described as the lack thereof. In the novel, she is portrayed as being innocent and unknowing. She chooses to hide her sexual urges and desires in order to be portrayed as the epitome of purity and piousness. On the other hand, *Lady Chatterley's*

Lover openly discusses women's and men's sexuality in different lights and positions. From the beginning of the novel, the characters of Connie and Hilda are described as having studied abroad and having multiple boyfriends – this differs from novels of the time due to the freedom it has given female characters and the way it describes premarital sex. In fact, the sexual experience of a young lady before getting married is normalised and expected.

3.1. Feminist views of sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928)

Lady Chatterley's Lover is a story about a woman who is dissatisfied with her marital life of sterility, due to her husband's illness and goes on a journey of discovering sexual passion and love. Connie is married to Clifford or Lord Chatterley, who sustained a major injury during the war and has been confined to a wheelchair, unable to move his legs or make use of his genitals. Having been very active and sexually driven, Connie feels her life is missing something and is completely miserable living at Wragby with her husband.

> This inability to sustain intimacy is dramatized more vividly in the inadequacy of marriage. Lawrence often calls attention to the "negation of human contact" between Connie and Clifford, presenting this negation through the narrator's omniscient diagnosis of the deathliness of their marriage, through Connie's growing frustration and desire for some kind of touch between them, and most obviously through Clifford's own diatribes, in which he constantly argues that the "universe is physically wasting and spiritually ascending". (Journet 64)

To escape this feeling, Connie goes on long walks in the woods that surround the manor where she finds her husband's gatekeeper Mellors, and their love affair full of sexual encounters begins.

It can be argued that Lawrence portrays women's and men's sexuality in completely different ways. The men in the novel are seen as dominant and active in pursuing their sexual

pleasure, while women or woman – Connie – is passive and submissive when it comes to sexual encounters. Through such a point of view, it is seen that Lawrence has put the highlight on the male sexual pleasure which he deems more important than the female.

This perspective is seen in Connie's first encounter with Mellors, which she describes as a sort of sleep, where she is merely a puppet to his desires and waits until he is finished: "She lay quite still, in sort of a sleep, in sort of a dream" (Lawrence 116). Much of the novel can therefore be seen as controversial, such as this instance that reminds more of a sexual assault than a consensual sexual act, since the novel is written from a female perspective but female sexuality is approached from a male perspective. Most of the encounters between Connie and Mellors are described in a similar fashion where Connie is disassociating herself from the act and is being taken by Mellors who is always dominant and commands her: "His face was pale and without expression, like that of a man submitting his fate. "'You lie there!' he said softly: and he shut the door so that it was dark, quite dark" (Lawrence 116). Mellors is very mysterious and secretive about his past and does not let his emotions show. Connie is the one who professes her love to him multiple times but all Mellors ever responds to her is "aye". To a reader, this may be an indicator that their relationship is more physical than emotional and it makes less sense how their love prospered to the point of them having a child and divorcing their partners. He describes all his past loves as passive and undesirable of him which would imply that he coerced them into the relationship in the first place. He does not describe the intimate and emotional parts of the relationship, just the sexual part in which the woman in question did not want to have a part in. His relationship with his ex-wife deepens this notion of him not liking women unless they were giving in to his sexual desires - he talks of her as the most awful being and his urge to shoot her.

Millett also points out how the male sexual organ is all that matters in these instances of intercourse while female organs are a thing that is acted upon. (240) What is more, there

are no mentions of foreplay whatsoever in the descriptions of sexual encounters, making the act itself seem more unpleasant for the female partner. It is also pointed out that Mellors has an orgasm every time they have sex, while Connie's is described explicitly only once in the novel, making the reader feel like she reached her peak only once throughout their relationship. This is even mentioned at the beginning of the novel where the narrator states the woman should never think of herself and her own orgasm and should always let the man get his satisfaction before hers: "for she had only to hold herself back, in the sexual intercourse, and let him finish and expend himself without herself coming to the crisis" (Lawrence 7). It was believed at the time that women could orgasm from vaginal intercourse only, and all the other options were not even considered, as male orgasms were the ones put in focus. Mottier even shares a quote from Hite's report on female sexuality which perfectly describes this situation: "Lack of sexual satisfaction is another sign of the oppression of women" (61). Women often ignored their own needs in favour of providing men with sexual pleasure and thus became victims of 'sexual slavery'. Consequently, Lawrence confirms this notion because he too does not give his female character the satisfaction of an orgasm, making her once again the sexual object for his male character's desire.

Another misconception portrayed in the novel, a common belief at the time, is that women did not like or desire sex and they only took part in it to please their husbands or partners. This is especially highlighted when Mellors is discussing his previous lovers and stating that two of them did not desire him at all - and that led him to marry his wife who was the only one that wanted to have sexual intercourse with him.

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes men as "insisting on the sex thing like dogs" and that "a woman has to yield him what he wanted, or like a child, he would probably turn nasty and flounce away and spoil what was a very pleasant connection" (Lawrence 7). This explains previous claims that men in the novel are described as wanting

and initiating sex, while women are passive and simply complying with their wishes without any thought put in about their wants or needs. Moreover, it is mentioned again in the novel when Connie has her affair with Michaelis: “This physical desire he did not satisfy in her: he was always come, and finished, so quickly: then shrinking down on her breast, and recovering somewhat his effrontery, while she lay dazed, disappointed and lost” (Lawrence 29).

Early in the novel, Lawrence catches the attention of his female readers due to the way he describes Connie and Hilda while they were students at university. He grasps their attention by praising women: “They were just as good as men themselves: only better because they were women” (Lawrence 6), “The only unfortunate thing was that men lagged so far behind women on the matter” (Lawrence 7). This makes readers expect a bit of feminism and an understanding of the female mind and sexuality. However, as the novel goes on and Lawrence describes more sexual encounters between a man and a woman, it is evident that the female understanding from the beginning does not translate and that the woman has been yet again reduced to a sexual object of male desire. Kristinsdóttir mentions that the men in the novel, with emphasis on Mellors, are described as “having an entitlement to sex and that a woman should follow every wish the man has without even considering what she wants” (19). Moreover, the men also talk in great lengths about women and what their sexuality is like, and the attitude they have towards sex without even considering allowing a woman to truly express those feelings herself and join their conversation.

Furthermore, this view states that the novel is mostly focused on the masculine element symbolised by the phallus. This is distinctively present in the praises that Mellors gets for his phallus, but the same praise is never used to describe female arousal or even to name the female sexual organs appropriately. Instead, Lawrence decided to call them “secret places” or “secret entrances” (223). Askerova even states that “Lawrence reserves much space for praising the phallus in every aspect possible and thus calls Mellors’s penis “live bird”,

"the other power", "proud" and "lordly" and it makes Connie anxious, startled, and afraid" (18). Millett points out that it is a woman who describes the erect phallus. Connie uses words such as "overweening", "towering" and "terrible" to describe Mellors's erect penis (239). Apart from the narrator making remarks such as "cunt" and "the mound of Venus" to describe the areas that Mellors is touching on Connie's body, there are "no references to or descriptions of the female genitals - they are hidden, shameful and subject" (Millett 239-40).

On the other side of that spectrum, Balbert says that Millett and other feminist authors have completely misunderstood Lawrence's intention and meaning behind his writing. According to Balbert, the real target and intention behind Connie Chatterley's characterisation is "her gradual acceptance and ultimate understanding of Mellors's brand of loving which suggests the full extent of Lawrence's disgust with what he disparagingly calls the "modern" notions of sexuality and commitment popular in the 1920s" (133). Lawrence makes a note of the more enlightened views of passion, gender roles, courtship, and marriage and ties them with the hypnotic automation of intuitive sexual impulse. Feminist disapproval of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is mostly pointed at the structure, premises, and ethics of the novel, but more recently even at the alleged sexism of Connie's and Mellors's characterisations. Authors such as Millett put the novel in a negative perspective, namely discussing that Lawrence has trouble accepting women as human beings. "Indeed, there is a sense in similar expressions of resentment over this novel that for Lawrence to focus so intensely on the sexual education of a female in some way suggests a short-changing of her potential as a - their jargon insists on one word here – "person""(Millett 134). This is an expected reaction that Lawrence predicted from his adversaries. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was written to express the contempt Lawrence felt towards the society which rejected his work. The dismissive remarks of feminist authors indicate that the critique of this novel frequently avoids the unity of the novel to isolate Lawrence as bitter and hateful towards women.

Those instances in the novel that Millett sees as anti-feminist can be counteracted by Balbert's claims which position the novel differently. When asked for the key of the hut Mellors responds to Connie's diplomacy attempt bluntly, but it can be noted that the sexual tension can be felt by both parties: "He saluted and turned abruptly away. She had wakened the sleeping dogs of old voracious anger in him, anger against the self-willed female. And he was powerless, powerless. He knew it. And she was angry against the self-willed male" (Lawrence 134). This is opposed to Millett's claims that Connie was the passive one, being acted upon and not feeling the same as Mellors did about their sexual encounters. Mrs. Bolton remarks on her husband when discussing how a woman must 'give in' to the man, saying how her husband Ted would 'give in' to her, even if she was in the wrong. This confirms once again the equality with which Lawrence wrote about men and women. Another instance that Millett mentions is the exchange between Connie and Mellors on the topic of his ex-wife and other former lovers. Millett only mentions the first part of Mellors's answer to Connie: "When a woman gets absolutely possessed by her own will, her own will set against everything, then it's fearful, and she should be shot at last" (Lawrence 349). She omits the question that Connie asks him about it and his final answer: "And shouldn't men be shot at last if they get possessed by their own will?' 'Aye! - the same!'" (Lawrence 349).

It seems that men are not excluded from these narratives and are dealt with in the same manner as women. Feminist critics must confront Lawrence's theories on language and sex which are part of the way in which Connie is treated by her sexual partners (Michealis, Clifford, and Mellors) before disregarding the novel as sexist and degrading to women.

On the topic of Connie and Mellors's first sexual encounter, Balbert contradicts Millett by expressing how she ignores Mellors's past and his experience with women. She does not take into consideration his anxieties and hesitation and merely describes him as a player: "She takes for granted a minor sexual performance that he cannot be sure is even in him; he must

summon up his phallic imagination from the recollections of his buried instincts" (Balbert 147). Before Connie met Mellors, he had not made love in a long time, he had been weakened by pneumonia and had been living in his cabin alone. Not only that, but his previous experience with women made him suspicious and distrustful of them. Therefore, this sexual encounter he had with Connie was not something he practiced often. It was just as unusual and different for him as it was for Connie.

When Connie was still in college she is described as having multiple boyfriends and sexual encounters before marriage. In this part of the novel, Lawrence describes her experience but also makes an example of what he most dislikes – sex without guilt. Connie's affairs during this time were merely done out of boredom or peer pressure. She had passionless, meaningless sex with men whom she did not consider interesting or worth her time. She used sex for her advantage and would often hold herself back from having an orgasm for the man to climax first. In that way, she would have them in her grasp and only allow herself the pleasure of an orgasm once they were already too entranced with her and became her puppets.

> Rather she could use this sex thing to have power over him. For she had only to hold herself back in sexual intercourse and let him finish and expend himself without herself coming to the crisis: and then she could prolong the connection and achieve her orgasm and her crisis while he was merely her tool. (Lawrence 40)

Naturally, when her husband becomes paralysed after the war, Connie becomes frustrated with the lack of sexual intimacy and soon takes on a lover. Connie does the same thing she did in university with her first extramarital affair – Michaelis. He plays into her game of using sex as a relief from the depression she was in. This desperate state was caused by her celibate life which soon becomes too much for her and suddenly she is merely tolerating her husband. The only way of relationship building between Connie and Clifford is through conversations

that revolve around the same, everyday, mundane events. Balbert states that Connie "wastes away listening to tired, bruised, and pretentious men denigrate sex with their self-serving and escapist discussions" (160). Moreover, when talking to his friends Clifford continues to dismiss the relevance love and passion have in lovemaking and so does Michaelis. Connie is rather desperate when she gets involved in an affair because she lacks emotional and sexual relations in her life. Michaelis is a submissive and adoring lover who is obsessed with his physical relationship with Connie.

It is this kind of meaningless relationship which have developed during the 1920s that Lawrence critiques. He focuses on Connie and Mellors's relationship which is born out of passion and desire for one another. He puts light onto their relationship which overcomes the hurdle of their marriages and the scandal it may cause in their society. Their relationship is filled with passion which is most important to Lawrence's characters. Therefore, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* highlights the importance of women being in a loving and nurturing relationships and fighting for what is right for them instead of staying in meaningless and loveless marriages out of fear of societal rejection.

Sexuality was a major taboo topic in Britain, partly as a result of censorship policies and the aftermath of previous censorship cases, which hindered the spread of knowledge about one's sexual urges and desires. Lawrence was on the opposite spectrum of this and wanted to transform the nation's knowledge and view on sex and female sexuality. He was accused of selling pornography in his novels but Sigel revokes that by giving a definition that Lawrence puts forth about pornography: "Pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it" (75). Lawrence wanted to transform sex and the free speech around it and to do so he accepted being censored. He further discusses his views on pornography in a pamphlet he wrote in 1929 titled *Pornography and Obscenity*. He writes about sex and pornography calling it "that sort of writing or painting which tends to stimulate or encourage the practice

by either sex or private masturbation" (Draper 315). Lawrence made clear that his definition of pornography explains why many older authors such as Rabelais and Boccaccio are not pornographic. He states that such novels may not injure the mind of a child because they produce an amount of sexual excitement of the right sort, not the wrong one. According to him, what does injure the minds of children and adults is the secrecy that surrounds the whole subject of sex – making it seem like it is a 'dirty little secret'. The younger generations have very little respect for sex and treat it as a joke. Lawrence despises that kind of attitude because he believes it destroys the emotional meanings and possibilities of sex. Draper says that this pamphlet "may well mark an epoch in the history not only of censorship but of the reasonable appreciation of the realities of sexual morality and sexual honesty and decency" (317). It is this interest in the discussion of sex and sexual preferences without the immanent secrecy that has led Lawrence to be considered controversial and scandalous. He wanted to take off the taboo label that was attached to sex and bring it closer to the public. He wanted not only to entertain but also to educate.

3.2. Use of sexuality in *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

In contrast to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *The Age of Innocence* takes on a different perspective. One of the main female characters in *The Age of Innocence*, May Welland, is almost entirely stripped of her sexuality or passion and is always described as innocent and unsuspecting. The other main character in the novel is Newland Archer, a young lawyer freshly engaged to May. He goes on a journey of discovery throughout the novel, where he falls in love with another woman – Ellen Olenska aka Madame Olenska. Newland and May are engaged to be married but the two seem to do it only to please their families and fulfill their duties. Although they love each other, their love seems bland while Newland's love for Ellen seems more intriguing and extraordinary. Hutchinson confirms that Wharton repeatedly enforces Newland's view of

May as “empty, unknowing, unsoiled virginity” (441). Hutchinson also points out that Wharton labels May as “Diana” - the virgin Roman goddess of the moon and hunting - to prevent her from being potentially sexualised. She even makes her seem disturbed and shaken out of her composure when her fiancé Newland kisses her on the lips. However, this is cleverly done by Wharton for May to be a liable contrast to Madame Olenska, her cousin who comes back to New York from Europe after the collapse of her marriage to Count Olenski. At the beginning of the novel Ellen is introduced with much more sexual appeal but by the end of the novel, her passion is subdued as well.

May and Ellen are represented as opposites and therefore Wharton gives her readers two perspectives on sexuality based on that contrast. Since the novel is written from Newland’s perspective, readers can only see these two women as he describes them. As Cain writes, Newland sees May as “good but superficial, created by her class and culture to be polished and refined, without depth or mystery” (95). However, throughout the novel, it is discovered that May is not only a woman of depth and complexity but also aware of her husband’s affair. She knows how to read Newland but he is oblivious to knowing how to read her or Ellen. She makes the most of her marriage which she is aware is an unhappy one. Newland sees her as innocent and naïve. In the first chapter, he has lilies-of-the-valley delivered to her every day, but coming upon yellow roses he decides to send them to Ellen because they seemed too bold and too strong for May: “He had never seen any as sun-golden before, and his first impulse was to send them to May instead of the lilies. But they did not look like her - there was something too rich, too strong, in their fiery beauty” (Wharton 20). Newland associated this beauty more with Ellen than with May, therefore he decided to send the roses to Ellen. May is seen throughout the novel as influenced by her family and the society she grew up in – she is well-mannered, quiet, and innocent – all admirable qualities but in contrast to Ellen seems dull and bleak.

Throughout the novel, May's sexuality is not mentioned nor hinted at, up until the moment she uses her sexual and reproductive abilities for her own gains. Wharton's heroines are bound to know their way around sex and sexuality but Wharton does not explicitly describe the encounters they may have, they are left unspoken. This is also evident when May announces her pregnancy to Newland, despite the fact their sexual encounter has never been mentioned before.

> "'As far as that? But I'm afraid you can't, dear…' she said in an unsteady voice. 'Not unless you'll take me with you.' And then, as he was silent, she went on, in tones so clear and evenly pitched that each separate syllable tapped like a little hammer on his brain: 'That is, if the doctors will let me go… but I'm afraid they won't. For you see, Newland, I've been sure since this morning of something I've been so longing and hoping for.'" (Wharton 216)

May uses her reproductive ability to manipulate Newland, which stands as a testimony of her character and the lack of innocence she was portrayed with until that point. In this, she can be seen as sly and cunning because she uses her pregnancy to manipulate Newland into leaving Ellen and being with her.

Ellen on the other hand is different from anything Newland had seen before. She speaks her mind freely, dresses as she pleases, lives wherever she wants to live, and does not abide by the societal or familiar rules set upon her. Newland is captivated by her otherness and the contradiction she is to May. What makes Ellen subversive is her ability to speak her truth instead of being polite and lying. Ismael and Hussien even indicate that "New York reacts so violently against Ellen because she says subversive things that challenge its hegemon" (1198). A prime example of this is her comment about the Ludyens' house being "gloomy" (Wharton 79). This shocks Newland due to the fact that almost everyone thought the same but no one had ever mentioned it out loud to avoid being rude and because "New

York studiously avoids the truth and fears privacy" (Ismael and Hussein 1198). She is opposite to May because May is trying to marry the man she is engaged to and Ellen is trying to divorce her husband. May obeys the rules of society while Ellen breaks them by doing things that are frowned upon and considered shameful. While one is the epitome of a righteous woman in society, the other one is nearly exulted from said society.

Ellen is unable to hide her emotions and always speaks her mind which makes her in a way innocent. She never means harm when speaking her mind and the fact that she did not want to be just a mistress to Newland and betray her cousin is another prime example of her purity. Michelson argues that *The Age of Innocence* "is about a world in which marriage and fidelity to the social code meant entrapment - not securing love but foreclosing the possibility of it" (181). However innocent the women in the novel may be depicted, Erlich mentions that they know "how to work within that convention and maintain the appearance of innocence while knowing well enough about all aspects of life" (17). May hints at this possibility when she states: "You mustn't think that a girl knows little as her parents imagine. One hears and one notices – one has one's feelings and ideas" (Wharton 95).

The representation of women's sexuality can be seen in the first few pages of Wharton's novel where Ellen first appears in the theatre in her dress which is different than those of American women. American women of the society wore dresses that had low-plunging necklines and bodices which accentuated their hips. Ellen came in wearing a dress that was belted under her chest and worn over a sheer slip. The first dress mentioned, with a bodice, gave women less movement in their bodies and made them barely able to breathe but also made them sexually attractive to male lust. Corda states that this occurred so that they "can therefore be seen as means of the sexual double standard to reduce women to their body and, hence, their sexual availability for men" (23). Ellen's dress allowed her to move freely and made her less exposed to the male gaze.

What is more, Ellen has limited the ability to be seen as a sexual object and has portrayed her body in its natural form without trying to bend it in a shape that men find desirable. It is interesting to note that for Ellen this kind of dress is normal and she did not wear it to draw attention to herself but is rather unaware of the commotion the dress causes: “The wearer of this unusual dress, who seemed quite unconscious of the attention it was attracting, stood a moment in the centre of the box” (Wharton 7).

4. Gender roles in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

Since the beginning of time, men and women were differentiated based on their gender and the expected roles those genders required of them. For many centuries women's bodies were considered far less superior due to the assumption that female genitals were just a version of male penises but smaller and internal. Since then, the clear distinction and difference between male and female anatomy has been made but the same gender hierarchy remained. Mottier claims that 19th-century evolutionist Herbert Spencer even went as far as to proclaim that the "woman's inferior intellectual capacities were caused by the fact that she had stopped at an earlier stage of evolution in order to free energy to fulfil her role in the reproduction of the species" (33-34). The popular belief used to be that the inherent biological differences between men and women affected not only their social roles but also their sexual behaviour and needs. However, Lerner considers gender to be just "a socially constructed idea of what is male or female; it is independent of sex, and a biological male can choose to express "female" gender or vice versa" (3).

In his novel, Lawrence makes a distinction between gender roles by using binary oppositions to describe the dynamic between men and women, not only in the domestic/urban sphere but also in a dominant/submissive sense. In the case of binary opposition man vs. woman, according to gender stereotypes, the man would be portrayed as 'strong', whereas the woman is portrayed as 'weak' and thus the male part of this binary opposition would be valued higher than the female part. When it comes to Lawrence and his descriptions of gender roles, the binary opposition is strongly visible due to the roles the man and the woman play – men are always dominant, active, and passionate while women are mostly submissive, passive, and indifferent towards sex.

When it comes to these gender roles, there is a notion of the inferiority of women in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in particular. Clifford thinks of himself as superior in terms of his materialistic wealth and class position over the workers who work in his coal mines. He repeatedly shows signs of indifference toward their living and working conditions and only cares about the expansion of his company to make more money. He acts the same when it comes to his household. As the head of the house, he is superior to his servants and his wife, which Connie resents. However, when compared to other men in the novel, he is seen as inferior to them, especially Mellors, due to his paralysis and inability to produce offspring: "Clifford being fragile by his paralysis rendered him alienated and motionless. In his opinion, sex is just a 'habit' of a couple which could only promote the mental intimacy between men and women" (Dixit and Malviya 164). Moreover, women are presented as inferior financially and physically which comes as a contrast to the historical aspect of the time. As was discussed earlier, the 1920s were revolutionary in Great Britain as women entered the workforce and were able to provide for themselves and were not dependent on their families or husbands. They gained the right to vote, express their political opinions, and made bold fashion statements that displayed their attitude. Due to this difference in perspectives, the novel can be read as a critique of 1920s society. In reality, women were given more sexual freedom with the introduction of birth control pills and the emergence of birth control clinics.

On the other hand, Mellors never loses the sense of Connie being his superior in class, treats her as such, and even resents her for it at times. This ties into his desire to assert himself physically towards her since he cannot reach her on her socio-economic status. He is constantly aware of his position and the lack of financial wealth that Clifford gives her and is embarrassed when Connie says that she does not care if people find out saying: "You've got to remember your Ladyship is carrying on with a game-keeper. It's not as if I was a

gentleman" (Lawrence 124). Mellors cannot get over this notion of Connie's superiority due to the embedded gender role that a woman must be inferior to her man.

However, this is not the only notion where Lawrence discriminated against women in his novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and fell back on the traditional gender roles which were assigned to men and women. Millett describes how, in the novel, Connie had the only job of assisting men in her life or being a servant to them in some sort. "Constance Chatterley was her husband's typist and assistant: she only ceases to serve this unworthy master when she becomes Mellors's disciple and farm wife. At no point is she given the personal autonomy of an occupation. Even in the guise of a servant, Mellors has infinite assurance and a solid identity; Lady Chatterley appears as an embarrassed impostor beside him" (Millett 244).

This goes on to say that the female protagonist of the novel could never be seen as doing a job or earning her own money. She is only seen as help to the men in her life, when she stops serving one, she is immediately transferred to serve another. She cannot function independently or even think of a life where she would be alone, without a man in her life. Her character is always dependant on a man which also relates to the reality of the time when a woman was seen as worthless unless she was married.

The same can be said about Mrs. Bolton, a nurse that comes to take care of Clifford as Connie's replacement. She is perceived as motherly, and caring, and has built a beautiful friendship with Clifford after his initial disapproval of other women who had taken care of him previously. Mrs. Bolton entered Wragby as a nurse to care for Clifford and free Connie of chores that come with her job. She often compares men to children which is why her stance was quite bossy and loud but around Clifford she became shy and silent. Lawrence could have made this pairing into a wonderful story of a man and a woman having a platonic friendship, but he still used it as a way of shaming women and making Clifford take advantage of Mrs.

Bolton by caressing her breasts and making her enjoy these perverted touches as if any touch, however inappropriate, delights any woman.

> It was sheer relaxation on his part, letting go of all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that was really perverse. And then he would put his hand into her bosom and feel her breasts, and kiss them in exultation, the exultation of perversity, of being a child when he was a man. Mrs Bolton was both thrilled and ashamed, she both loved and hated it. Yet she never rebuffed nor rebuked him. (Lawrence 291)

In this case, Clifford took advantage of his superiority to Mrs Bolton and Lawrence made his readers aware of the notion he has been using throughout the whole novel of women's inferiority to men. Mrs. Bolton was thrilled because she thought she finally had the interest of someone superior to her, from the upper class, which she always admired. However, it was rude and inappropriate of Clifford to take such advances toward her. Kumar Doley further exemplifies that "Mrs. Bolton, who used to be an assured, bossy woman, now becomes nervous and shy, almost frightened and silent before Clifford, who has made her feel small and behave like a servant. In such a patriarchal household, Clifford is the master who is in control of everything" (47).

In contrast, Wharton displays gender roles in the novel through the Archer family. Newland, as the oldest son of Mrs Archer, takes on the role of the "man of the house" and provides both for his mother and his sister who do not work and have never even considered being employed. He is the one who tends to the financial aspects of Archer family, gives out allowances, and takes care of the house while women are busy with their needlework. On many occasions, Newland is the only one in the family that is educated and reads books, while Janey is disgusted by them.

It is essential to read and gain an education to provide for one's family because, without it, one could not get a high-paying job. In the 1920s, American women did not get

proper education and were urged to replace education with caring for their families and households. Many colleges in America even refused female students at the time so getting a proper education was a major challenge for women. Newland, having an education and being a young lawyer, was able to provide for his family in his father's absence and make sure his mother and sister did not lack anything.

Although Newland is perceived as more free-minded than the rest of the men in the novel, he still does exude superiority over women in his life. He treats women as victims by failing to consider their feelings and thoughts, just like all the other men which are seen in the novel: "And he contemplated her absorbed young face with a thrill of possessorship in which pride in his own masculine initiation was mingled with a tender reverence for her abysmal purity" (Wharton 5).

He is so focused on himself that he even misses the signs that May is not as ignorant as he believes her to be. He often criticises her shallowness and superficiality but when May starts to speak for herself, he is only irritated by her involvement. In the end, Wharton punishes Newland for his blatant disregard for the lives and feelings of women. Not only has his adherence to patriarchal norms made it impossible for him to wed the woman he truly loves, but his lack of respect for May - whom he still considers to be "lacking in imagination" and "incapable of growth" (Wharton 208) after her death - has also allowed her to ruin his hopes of an 'escape'. However, in the end, Newland decides to continue being 'old-fashioned' by adhering to and upholding his obligations to his family, giving up a potential future with Ellen a second time.

The fact that Ellen was separated from her husband was the first indicator of her rule-breaking in a society that despised divorces (hence why she was only separated and not fully divorced). The reason for that was that Ellen's husband was abusive towards her, which is why she considered it normal to leave such a man. However, Corda implies that if Ellen had

been brought up and married in New York, such a thing would not even come to her mind due to the societal rules on marriage that were held in high regard, even when it comes to abuse (24). Women were forced to stay married even to abusive and unfaithful husbands because their reputation in society was more important than their safety and mental well-being. Ismael and Hussien discuss in their article that Ellen "is the victim of infidelity and asserting her strength of character by choosing to leave her husband. This is not the way society viewed the situation. In elitists' minds, a man's infidelity is not a violation of the code yet a woman abandoning her husband under any circumstances is" (1198).

Furthermore, women in the novel are defined by their spouses, which highlight society's disregard for women and, specifically, the wife's individuality. For instance, after marrying Newland, May becomes Mrs. Newland Archer. The same happened to Regina Dallas when she became Mrs. Julius Beaufort and thus lost her own identity and is recognized only by her husband's name. Their marriage not only determines their social status but also determines their value because 'a married woman' is valued higher than 'an old maid'. This holy status of family and marriage is what binds women to their husbands no matter how awful they may be - as is the case with Mrs Beaufort who is trapped in a marriage with a disgracing and unfaithful husband.

In addition, another social rule Ellen broke was related to the class. She would frequently visit Mrs. Struthers's parties, held every Sunday; even though she was advised not to since Mrs. Struthers was considered lower-class than her upper-class family. She enjoyed conversations with and the presence of artists and musicians at the party which was also considered to be undesirable, due to their low income and nomadic way of living. She mentions to Newland when he comes over that her former house was always full of artists and she misses it: "Madame Olenska said to Archer, with her grave smile: 'That would be charming. But I was really thinking of dramatic artists, singers, actors, musicians. My

husband's house was always full of them'" (Wharton 68). She is in this instant reminded of how dull New York is, especially because she is always surrounded by the same people. Corda explains 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" (24). Even though she does not fit in, she does not do so intentionally. After she claims to love artists, she confesses to Newland that she wishes she was not so different from everybody around her.

> "'I used to care immensely too: my life was full of such things. But now I want to try not to.' 'You want to try not to?' 'Yes: I want to cast off all my old life, to become just like everybody else here.' Archer reddened. 'You'll never be like everybody else,' he said. She raised her straight eyebrows a little. 'Ah, don't say that. If you knew how I hate to be different.'" (Wharton 92)

She flaunts established social norms by her choice of living as well – she chooses to live in a house located in a reputable but outmoded area and thus making her appear poor. Many members of her family do not condone this because it tarnishes their reputation, and thus beg her to move somewhere else. However, she stands by her own beliefs and does not pay attention to current trends or societal rules. She "wants to feel well and free without having to obey artificial rules made up by society which make life unnecessarily uncomfortable" (Corda 25). Another challenge that Ellen Olenska presents to the Edwardian image of how a woman should be is the fact that she lives by herself with the only company being her maid. To explain, at the time it was considered inappropriate for a woman to live alone – she should live with her family or her husband. Furthermore, Ellen's relationship with her maid resembles more a friendship rather than servantship; she gives her simple yet affectionate pet names like 'my dear one' and lends her a cloak. Not only is this a gender issue, it is also a

class issue. Even though Ellen is supposed to be superior to her servants, she considers her maid an equal which was unheard of at the time in New York households.

Through the character of Ellen Olenska Wharton demonstrates that domestic responsibilities have less of an impact on the New Woman and that being happy and fulfilled does not stem from only being a good housewife. This contrasts the society of the time and the belief that motherhood and marriage are essential components in women's lives. Being free from domestic responsibilities allows Ellen to luxuriate in the public spheres of New York City and Paris, taking part in the arts and intelligent talks, rather than accepting such restrictive gender roles.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, D. H. Lawrence and Edith Wharton made a colossal impact on literature with their works. They were both brave enough to write about taboo topics, such as female sexuality and adultery. They put their works on the line with the possibility of it being banned or censored and never being read by anyone. Still, they persisted in their views and it eventually benefited them. Edith Wharton even won a Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Age of Innocence* in 1921. It was with writers like them that society started to accept changes concerning women's rights and sexuality.

Published in the years between the two World Wars, these two novels surely brought some form of escape to people who needed it at the time. Both gave insight into the position of women both in the United States and Great Britain. Even though *The Age of Innocence* is already a hundred years old and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is not far behind, the problems and themes they portray are quite relevant today. Adultery has not become worldwide accepted and it still results in people getting cast out of the society they live in. Today it is not as much frowned upon, but it is still unacceptable and disgracing. It has since become even more common, and with divorce being openly available, many couples have separated due to adultery.

As this work pointed out, in Lawrence's work female sexuality was explained through the eyes of a male writer. He chose to portray gender roles as binary oppositions meaning one was seen as better than the other. Morris mentions Lawrence's preference for male characters to be stronger and dominant while his female characters are weak and submissive. She says: "His fiction, and even more so his non-fiction, appears to advocate feminine submission to and submergence in the phallic power of masculinity as the only 'naturally' fulfilling and balanced relationship between the sexes" (Morris 126). However, his critique on modern-day

relationships remains relevant, and the emphasis he makes on women being with men who are fulfilling and passionate about them.

On the other hand, Wharton has depicted ways in which sexuality can be used without being overtly sexual. The women she created lack knowledge about or fail to admit to having sexual feelings and urges. This is done in order to maintain their innocent outer appearance which makes them uninteresting and appear dumb. However, she succeeded in highlighting different gender roles that were expected from women: from behaviour, housing, marriage expectations to fashion. She made a clear distinction in her novel from Old New York society rules to European society rules.

Literature and magazines that appeared at the start of the 20th century contributed greatly to the image of the New Woman. She was independent, in control of her sexuality, and was able to work. Nevertheless, her main focus remained homemaking, motherhood, and maintaining innocence as a confirmation of gender roles which were held in high regard. Edith Wharton puts forward a more experienced, Europeanised image of the New Woman but keeps the conservative views when it comes to gender roles. Lawrence, on the other hand, delves deeper into female sexuality while also maintaining traditional gender roles in his writing.

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7. Sexuality, Gender Roles and Relationships in the Novels of D. H. Lawrence and Edith Wharton: Summary and key words

In the interwar years of the twentieth century, the emancipation of women and the fight for women's rights became more prominent. The arrival of New Woman shook the society and introduced changes that helped shape the modern woman we know today. Women were no longer required to have a man's presence in all aspects of their lives – they could acquire jobs and have their own financial freedom and independence. Although they were allowed to vote, many of them still did not use that right since they were not briefed on politics. The 1920s were marked in history as the Roaring Twenties and the era of flapper girls, lavish parties, and more sexual freedom which was a result of introducing birth control pills to the public. Similarly, the literature of the time progressed with said changes and so the works of D. H. Lawrence and Edith Wharton came to be.

This thesis analyses *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Age of Innocence* (1921) based on their shared themes of sexuality, gender roles, and relationships. Both novels deal with main characters who are unhappy in their marriages and commit adultery in a society that appreciates innocence and purity highly above everything else. The former being from a woman's perspective while being written by a man and the latter is from a man's perspective while being written by a woman.

Key words: D. H. Lawrence, Edith Wharton, sexuality, gender roles, relationships, Lady Chatterley's Lover, The Age of Innocence, marriage, adultery

8. Seksualnost, uloga spolova i međuljudski odnosi u romanima D. H. Lawrencea i Edith Wharton: Sažetak i ključne riječi

U međuratnim godinama dvadesetog stoljeća emancipacija žena i borba za ženska prava dolazi do izražaja. Dolazak Nove žene uzdrmao je društvo i unio promjene koje su pomogle oblikovati modernu ženu kakvu danas poznajemo. Ženama više nije bila potrebna prisutnost muškaraca u svim aspektima života – mogle su se samostalno zaposliti i imati vlastitu financijsku slobodu i neovisnost. Iako im je omogućeno glasovanje, mnoge od njih to pravo ipak nisu iskoristile jer nisu bile upućene u politiku. Dvadesete godine prošlog stoljeća u povijesti su zabilježene kao Lude dvadesete i doba lepršavih djevojaka, raskošnih zabava i više seksualne slobode, što je posljedica uvođenja kontracepcijskih pilula. Slično tome, književnost tog vremena napredovala je u skladu s navedenim promjenama i tako su nastala djela D. H. Lawrencea i Edith Wharton.

Ovaj rad analizira *Ljubavnika Lady Chatterley* (1928.) i *Doba nevinosti* (1921.) na temelju njihovih zajedničkih tema seksualnosti, rodnih uloga i međuljudskih odnosa. Oba romana bave se glavnim likovima koji su nesretni u svojim brakovima i čine preljub u društvu koje visoko cijeni nevinost i čistoću prije svega. Prvi je iz ženske perspektive kojeg je napisao muškarac, a drugi iz muške perspektive kojeg je napisala žena.

Ključne riječi: D. H. Lawrence, Edith Wharton, seksualnost, rodne uloge, međuljudski odnosi, Ljubavnik Lady Chatterley, Doba nevinosti, brak, preljub