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A STUDY OF SELF-REPRESENTATION IN *THE LIVING OF CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

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ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

***Charlotte Perkins Gilman'ın Yaşayışı: Bir Otobiyografi* adlı eserde**
Gilman'ın Kendini Sunuş Biçimi

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Otobiyografi edebi bir tür olarak özellikle yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısından sonra giderek artan bir önem kazanmıştır. Ancak, yapılan akademik çalışmanın alanı erkek otobiyografileri tarafından kaplanmış ve kadın otobiyografileri seksenli yıllara kadar ayrı bir edebi tür olarak kabul görmemiştir.

***Charlotte Perkins Gilman'ın Yaşayışı: Bir Otobiyografi* adlı esere odaklanan bu çalışma otobiyografi türünün kadınların kamusal alanda seslerini duyurabilmeleri için nasıl bir alternatif oluşturduğunu gözler önüne serer. Gilman'ın otobiyografisi çoğunlukla edebi bir metin olarak ele alınmamış; genellikle ikincil kaynak olarak referans gösterilmiştir. *Charlotte Perkins Gilman'ın Yaşayışı: Bir Otobiyografi* adlı esere edebi bir metin olarak yaklaşmak, erkek egemen sistem araçları tarafından baskılanan bir kadın için okurlarını harekete geçirmek amacıyla otobiyografinin nasıl özgürleştirici bir araç haline geldiği konusunda bize değerli açılımlar sağlamaktadır.**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman kadın kültürünün alternatif vizyonu açısından önde gelen bir figürdür ve otobiyografisinin yazılış amacı çağının diğer kadınlarına model oluşturmaktır. Bu çalışmanın amacı *Charlotte Perkins Gilman'ın Yaşayışı: Bir Otobiyografi* adlı eserde sosyal ölümsüzlük adına Gilman'ın kendini sunuş biçimini analiz etmektir.

Gilman'ın metinde kendisini sunuş biçiminin araştırılması doğal olarak onun sosyalist sorumluluğu, feminist vizyonu, Gilman'ın çağında Amerika'nın politik ve sosyal arkaplanı, metinsel kimliğini nasıl ve hangi şartlar altında oluşturduğu, Gilman'ın elde etmeye çalıştığı "kadına ait olmayan" hayat pratikleri ve geleneksel otobiyografi biçimlerinden neyi miras aldığı veya neye direnç gösterdiği konularına ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Otobiyografi, Kadın Otobiyografisi, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kendini Sunuş, Kişisel/Kamusal Kendilik

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

A Study of Self-Representation in

The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman:

An Autobiography

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Autobiography as a genre has received an exponential attention especially after the second half of the twentieth century. However, the field of this academic study was enveloped by men's autobiography, and it was not until 1980s that women's autobiography was accepted as a distinctive genre.

Focusing primarily on *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*, this study demonstrates how autobiography becomes an alternative route for women to use their public voices. Gilman's autobiography has not been studied as a literary text, but given a reference for secondary readings principally. Approaching *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* as a literary text will provide us valuable insights on how an autobiography becomes an emancipatory tool for a woman bound by patriarchal codes to call her readers to action.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a prominent figure for an alternative vision of female culture and the purpose of her autobiography is to represent herself as a model for other younger women of her time. The aim of this study is to analyze *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* as the presentation of the self for social immortality.

An exploration of the ways Gilman self-represents herself necessarily sheds light on her socialist commitment, feminist vision, political/social landscape of America in Gilman's time, how and under which circumstances she constructs her textual identity, "unfeminine" practices she pursues, and what she inherits from or resists to generic forms of autobiography.

Key Words: Autobiography, Women's Autobiography, Gender, Self-Representation, Public/Private Self

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INTRODUCTION

Before the second half of the twentieth century, autobiography as a genre had not been a worthy field of academic study. Until that time, studies in autobiography had not provided satisfactory results more than handling the autobiographies as texts about notable people's lives in history. With the formal analysis of all types of literature after World War II, the critical study of autobiography began altogether.

One of the prominent critics of autobiography, Georges Gusdorf wrote in 1956 in his essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" that "autobiography is not possible in a cultural landscape where consciousness of self does not, properly, speaking, exists" (Gusdorf, 1956: 30 in Friedman, 1998: 72). Gusdorf associates self-consciousness with the rise of European empires and outcomes of the Industrial Revolution, with its polarization of public and private spheres. Gusdorf acclaims that autobiography as a genre is the literary consequence of the rise of individualism as an ideology (Gusdorf, 1956 in Friedman, 1998: 73). At this juncture, it is not a bizarre coincidence that the nineteenth century witnessed the high tide of autobiography due to its emphasis on subjectivity. It is known that identification, interdependence and community that Gusdorf dismisses from autobiographical selves are vital elements in development of a woman's identity. However, nearly all of the surviving documents up to 1800 belong to white and upper-middle class men's tradition and were examined with the pack of their rules on the genre. Women's texts were relegated to a second-class status except for some attention paid to Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and Margaret Oliphant's *Autobiography* (1899).

Nevertheless, since the mid-twentieth century there has been a ferment activity to cover up women writers into the canon. Estelle C. Jelinek, writer of *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (1980), launched a milestone for the genre and process of women's legitimization in the canon took fire. Since then, women scholars and writers of the canon have located some parameters into the genre of autobiographical tradition. Thus, the context in which individualism means

separation of the self from the others was hovered and the textual error that fictionalized women's autobiography as marginal was challenged.

This study concentrates on autobiography as a theory, women's autobiography and *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*. (hereafter *The Living*) My interest in Gilman's autobiography is due to satisfactory lack of scholarship on it. When critics mention *The Living*, they consider it self-effacing, claiming that Gilman does not write of the truth of her life. The aim of this thesis is to alter this short-sighted scholarship and open up a new way of re-reading *The Living* and increase interest in this autobiographical text.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) is one of the leading intellectuals of Women's Movement at the turn of the twentieth century. However, her reputation as a prominent feminist began in the late 1960s with the second wave of feminism. It is really difficult to define Gilman's role in life with only a word. During her lifetime, she was concerned with many issues but the most important characteristic of her was "to stand for the potentialities of American Womanhood" (Berkin, 1992: 17). She was an active advocate of women's concerns and it is undeniable that her feminism affects the best of her writing and thinking. However, she did not like to be labeled as a feminist because of the restriction it put forward her humanist view. Gilman's ideas were circulated in a dozen of lecture circuits which brought her international fame. She was not only a lecturer though, she was also known as a writer, poet, journalist, feminist, humanist, socialist and a theoretician dedicated herself to the improvement of human race.

Gilman's impassioned belief in social evolutionary world process manifests itself in the body of literature she produced. Her most famous theoretical treatises are *In This Our World* (1893), *Concerning Children* (1900) and *His Religion and Hers* (1923). From 1909 to 1916 Gilman edited and wrote her own feminist paper, *The Forerunner*. Her utopian novel, *Herland* (1915) first appeared in *The Forerunner* like her other novels *What Diantha Did* (1910), *The Crux* (1911) and *Moving the Mountain* (1911). Gilman´s mystery novel, *Unpunished* was published posthumously

in 1997 by *The Feminist Press*. However, Gilman is best known today for her short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," (1892) in which she depicts a young woman's mental breakdown based on her own experience. Melody Graulich suggests that her autobiography (written in 1935 and published posthumously) carries out a similar purpose on a larger scale that “The Yellow Wallpaper” does: Both of the works can be viewed as a therapy of getting out of her own marriage (Graulich, 1994 in Brunk, 1999: 119).

In her introduction to *The Living*, Ann J. Lane thinks that it is important to read Gilman’s autobiography not only for who is speaking and why but also taking into consideration of the intended reader. Gilman championed a socialist commitment although young women of her time have a different sense of womanhood pursuing for their personal, emotional, and sexual satisfactions (introduction, xx). By the time Gilman began to write her autobiography, the reform spirit of the preceding twenty years moved sharply to conservatism. With the outbreak of World War I, optimist vision that The Progressive Era prevailed dimmed. Industrial conflicts at home led to Red Scare and Gilman was an outlander in this new order. Ann J. Lane suggests that *The Living* is a manuscript designed to challenge the individualist ethos of the day and in this book, Gilman tries to bring to mind the older vision of community (1990: 353).

Ann J. Lane states that all women autobiographers challenge to marginality to which all women have been attributed in the act of “moving from silence to speech” (xi). The purpose of Gilman’s autobiography is “to mark the path for other younger women” (Karpinski, 1992: 38). However, there is a tone of disappointment towards other women: “This is the woman’s century, the first chance for the mother of the world to rise to her full place, her transcendent power to remake humanity, to rebuild the suffering world – and the world awaits while she powders her nose…” (331). In *The Living*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman tries to prove how any woman in her time might contribute to social development of the world. Embroidered with Victorian values of womanhood, women in the nineteenth century America were silenced and expected to be content with their roles in the society. Domestic ideology

in the late nineteenth century can be seen as the result of culture's growing preoccupation with material success. Sentimentalizing woman's place at home as the protector of the household and representative of spirituality and home-centeredness, on the other hand positioning man as the king of public realm gave birth to the cult of domesticity. Separation of public and private spheres sharply camouflaged the exploitation of women's unpaid domestic labor in their private realm. *The Living* provides a valuable insight on how gender ideology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century restricts a woman. Gilman's personal experiences narrated in her autobiography (and most scholars find her body of works autobiographical) are means of evidence that she had to bear due to the gender inequalities in society.

Irving Louis Horowitz defines autobiography as a social injunction and "an arresting presentation" of the self; properly calls it a "performance". For him, autobiography is a tactic for making people to take seriously the words and deeds of their leaders for the purpose of giving instruction to others (1977: 173). In *The Living*, Gilman subordinates her private persona for this larger cause and represents a carefully constructed textual identity to reveal the potential damages of a patriarchal culture. Self-Representation becomes her last performance for her didactic purposes; she was afraid of that all her opinions would be buried with her and she wanted to leave a mark on earth for social immortality. Just before she died, she wrote: "I have no faintest belief in personal immortality—no interest in nor desire for it. My life is in Humanity and That goes on. My contentment is in God—and That goes on" (335).

In this sense, the aim of this study is to analyze *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* as the presentation of the self for social immortality. Gilman repeated many times that she had no interest or desire for personal immortality; she was interested with ideas. She wanted her readers to follow *The Living* as a prospectus as if healing an illness. *The Living* is her pay-back to society; a story of a woman who is able to move across the borders within a life devoted to social development. Although *The Living* was given reference by many scholars in their academic studies, it has rarely been studied as a literary text.

Analyzing Gilman's autobiography as a literary text will enable us to provide a critical eye on Gilman's time and understand a great writer who is ahead of her time.

The first chapter will focus on "autobiography" as a term, definition of autobiography, and historical overview of literary criticism of the genre mostly. It will also provide information about the generic tradition of autobiography which had been composed by men.

Chapter Two is about women's autobiography. The relation of gender with the genre and possibilities of women's self-representations will be the main points of discussion. It will also put forth women's autobiography's difference from that of men's in terms of form and content.

The third chapter aims at analyzing *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* as the presentation of the self for social immortality. Topics explored and developed are: construction of textual identity, public /private self, socialism and feminism, heroic models of identity, and political/cultural landscape of America in Gilman's time.

I. THE THEORY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Although people have been recording their own stories for a long time, autobiography was not paid a critical attention until World War II as a worthy field of academic study. Before that time, autobiographies were considered of interest almost exclusively for the information they provided about the lives of notable people in history, there was in effect no interest in style or form of life studies. As Robert Folkenflik quotes from Georges May's introduction to *L'autobiographie*:

> If one can imagine a chronological list, nearly complete, of the known autobiographies and a parallel list of all the critical and historical studies consecrated to autobiography, the first would only need several pages in order to lead up to the middle of the eighteenth century, then the second would only contain very few titles before the second half, if not the last third of the twentieth century. (May, 1955: 14 in Folkenflik, 1993: 8)

The texts being read and criticized were mostly written by men and women's autobiographies were excluded from the canon intentionally, except for some attention paid to Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Margaret Oliphant's *Autobiography*. Estelle C. Jelinek, one of the pioneering women studying on autobiography, states that while she was working on her dissertation in 1976, she could not able to find a satisfactory criticism about women's autobiographies except that for on Gertrude Stein and that is the originating idea of her book *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* published in 1980 (Jelinek, 1980 in Folkenflik, 1993: 9) . Sidonie Smith feels as if everyone in the world seemed to be interested in autobiography suddenly (Smith, 1987 in Folkenflik, 1993: 11). Before exploring women's autobiographies and its place in the canon, it will be useful to look through autobiography as a genre.

1.1. DEFINITION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

French autobiography theorist Philippe Lejeune states: "anyone who goes on 'autobiography'… is obliged to confront the problem of the definition, if only in

practise, by choosing what to talk about" (Lejeune, 1989: 121 in Brunk, 1999: 23). In *Autobiography*, Linda Anderson opens her introduction part with a similar sentence quoting from Candace Lang: "Autobiography is indeed everywhere one cares to find it" (Lang, 1982: 6 in Anderson, 2001: 1). A very brief definition of autobiography comes from Greek: *autos* signifies "self", *bios* "life", and *graphe* "writing". Taken together in this order, the words connote "self life writing".

In Larousse definition proposed in 1886, autobiography is the "life of an individual written by himself". *Universal Dictionary of Literature* uses a definition by Vepereau (1876): "literary work, novel, poem, philosophical treatise, etc. whose author intended, secretly or admittedly, to recount his life, to expose his thoughts or to describe his feelings" (quoted in Brunk, 1999: 23). According to Georg Misch, Larousse's definition is too open and somewhat ambigious to define autobiography:

> autobiography is unlike any other form of literary composition. Its boundaries are more fluid and less definable in relation to form than those of lyric or epic poetry or of drama, which, in spite of variations from age to age, from nation to nation, and from work to work, have preserved unity of form throughout their development… In itself [autobiography] is a representation of life that is committed to no definite form. (Misch, 1951, 4 in Brunk, 1999: 24)

For Linda Anderson, autobiography has been an insubordinate and "even slightly disreputable field" (2001: 2). Critics have been like invaders who treaded to an unexplored country. That's why Anderson thinks they have been in an effort to stamp their academic authority onto that virgin field. Considering these problems, Lejeune proposed this widely quoted definition: "A retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the devolopment of his personality" (Lejeune, 1982: 193 in Anderson, 2001: 2). In *Metaphors of the Self: Meanings of Autobiography*, James Olney says that a definition of autobiography is not possible. Scholars have been debating over and over about what constitutes autobiography and James Olney suggests that the possibilities of the genre are literary endless (Olney, 1972 in Brunk, 1999: 24). Even today, it is conflicting that some critics and theorists dwelling on the ideas of linguistic or poststructuralist models argue about the possibility of

writing an autobiography. For Samuel Johnson, “definitions are hazardous” (Folkenflik, 1993: 13) and for Georg Misch autobiography has ‘fluid boundaries’ and it has no definite form (Misch, 1951 in Brunk, 1999: 25).

However, accepting a non-definition for autobiography is too ambigious especially for feminist critics and it brings into light some theoratical questions: What makes autobiography different from other life writings such as journals, memoirs, diaries and autobiographical fiction based on writer’s own experience? If an illiterate person writes an autobiogaphy, could it be counted in the works of the genre?

Memoirs, journals, and diaries are generally thought of to be a form of life writing, but not by definition autobiography. It is not required from these writings to be post factum, emphasize on individual self, discourse entire life, feature a transformation or has a beginning, middle, and end. Rather, these kinds of life writings present a variety of subjects, day-to-day recordings or they do not hold the aspects of autobiographical identity formations that most scholars would consider crucial. For Felicity Nussbaum, memoirs, journals and diaries are considered inferior to more finished forms of narrative such as autobiography because of their discontinuous forms (1989: 16). As Donald Stauffer asserts, they are “not the record of a life, but the journal of an existence” (Stauffer, 1930: 55 in Brunk, 1999: 25). Beth Lynn Brunk states that these forms of self writing do not acquire the “same aesthetic qualities and artistic structures that most autobiographies do” (1999: 25). One point that differs autobiography from other life writing is the purpose of the writing act: Memoirs, journals and diaries are written to appreciate the memory, in most cases as a kind of theraphy, or as a family record whereas an autobiography is written to set autobiographer’s life apart from others to create a distinctive identity and make her life public information. Autobiographies are generally about the past of the writers and “diary” and “journal” terms are reserved for the present experiences. However, Folkenflik states that this does not mean past is on the primary road rather than present moment or moments, present provides a departure point that organizes the autobiography (1995: 15).

What about short stories, poems, plays, or novels that seems to be streaming from author's own life experience? Even unintentionally, cannot we help ourselves to write about our lives whilst writing fiction? Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Slyvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* are excellent examples of stories that dwell on writers' own experiences abot the mental instability and its treatment. To Brunk, they would not be labeled as autobiography because the author, narrator and the protagonist are not the same person, unless the author otherwise identifies herself as the protogonist. Namely, the "I" of the text is different from the name that appears on the title page (Brunk, 1996: 26). According to this stipulation above, Gilman's and Plath's texts could not be labeled as autobiography. Candace Lang claims that if the writer is implicated in the work in the broadest sense, one can call the writing piece autobiographical (Lang, 1982: 6 in Anderson, 2001: 1).

From another point of view, Philip Lejeune states that if the author's name is equal to the protogonist's, the work would still fall into the category of autobiography, not the fiction even the full text is false. Under Lejeune's definition, Rigoberta Menchu's autobiography *I, Rigoberta* (1983) is still considered autobiography although it was discovered after her death that little of her autobiography is actually true. However the "I" still belongs to Rigorita herself, the textual identity created and flesh and blood identity are not somehow identical (Brunk, 1999: 26). Linda Anderson considers this point from another view and brings forward a gender point. She wonders about the legal coequality of all signatures: "Does not sincerity itself, as Nancy Miller suggests, already imply a masculine subject, since women are less likely to be believed simply on account of who they are" (Anderson, 2001: 3)? Modes of subjectivity clung to Western and middle class creates some problems while holding the matter with gender as the view of the subject is accepted universal. Another question controversely might be asked: Is all autobiography to some degree necessarily a fiction? For many scholars, autobiography is the different kind of "storytelling", similar to history and stories of our lives are as much as a fiction like other stories that spring out of our imagination. Sidonie Smith comments in "Construing Truths":

> Memory leaves only a trace of an earlier experience that we adjust into the story; experience itself is mediated by the ways we describe and interpret it to others and ourselves; cultural tropes and metaphors which structure autobiographical narrative are themselves fictive; and narrative is driven by its own fictive conventions about beginnings, middles, and ends. Even more fundamentally, the language we use to 'capture' memory and experience can never 'fix' the 'real' experience but only approximate it, yielding up its own surplus of meaning or revealing its own artificial closures. (Smith, 1990: 145 in Brunk,1999: 27)

Rewording, autobiography is consequently fiction because it is a representation of a life, not the life itself (Brunk, 1999: 27). Leah Hewitt conveys that the autobiographer "hesitates between performance, description, and interpretation while balancing the demands of truthfulness and literary inventiveness" (Hewitt, 1990: 193 in Brunk, 1999: 27). She likens writing autobiography to walking on a tightrope between fact and fiction, experience and language. For many scholars of autobiography, it is impossible to tell the truth about one's life because of language problems and the impossibility and artificiality of translating experience into the text although some autobiographers might believe that they have scribbled the "truth" of their life onto the paper. An autobiographer's thoughts become paragraphs, life events are divided into chapters and the "truth" of their lives are assigned a page number. In this sense, autobiography is inevitably a fiction (Brunk, 1999: 27).

1.2. EMERGENCE OF THE TERM: "AUTOBIOGRAPHY"

Although the first published usage of the term "autobiography" was by Ann Yearsley, an eighteenth-century English working-class woman writer, in the preface to a collection of poems as "Autobiographical Narrative"; it is not difficult to guess that any term employed in literature in the eighteenth century by a woman would be condescended by literary critics. Until 1961, anyone curious about the first usage of the term autobiography would come across with the name of Robert Southey in Oxford English Dictionary: "This very amusing and unique specimen of

autobiography" (Folkenflik, 1993: 1). The first usage of the term by Southey changed with James Ogden's study on the biography of Isaac D'Israeli. Ogden found out that one of the commentators on D'Israeli's "Some Observations on Diaries, Self-biography, and Self-characters", the anonymous author, later identified as William Taylor of Norwich, added the first legitimate and conscious usage of the term autobiography into English which appeared in the *Monthly Review* in 1797: "We are doubtful whether the latter word [self-biography] be legitimate. It is not very usual in English to employ a hybrid word partly Saxon and partly Greek: yet *autobiography* would have seemed pedantic" (Folkenflik, 1993: 1). In a word, both the term 'autobiography' and its synonym 'self-biography' appeared in the late eighteenth century.

In France, known as a more linguistically conservative country, the term "autobiography" is first defined in *Dictionnarie de l'Académie Française* in 1836: "biography made by hand, or manuscript" (Folkenflik, 1993: 5). French dictionaries did not institutionalize "autobiography" as a term until this century, rather in French Larousse Grand Dictionary autobiography is defined as an English and American genre. They used to name "les mémoires", instead. Felicity Nussbaum proposes that the term "autobiography" was coined in literature by a German in 1796, with a collection entitled, "Self-biographies of Famous Men" (Nussbaum, 1989: 1 in Brunk, 1999: 24). Linda Peterson claims that this "unbroken English autobiographical tradition" dates back to mid-seventeenth century (Peterson, 1993: 80). Institutional recognition of the term in the canon occurred with the publication of a series entitled *Autobiography: A Collection of the Most Instructive and Amusing Lives Ever Published, written by the Parties Themselves* by the middle of the 1820s.

Pinpointing the emergence of the term "autobiography" in a specific time raises some questions, however. Robert Folkenflik states: "Of course, autobiography existed before the term came into being, just as one could catch a disease before it was diagnosed or named" (1993: 7). "All human beings are incorrigibly autobiographical" writes Harold Rosen in his book (1998: 1). Some critics of the genre mark some autobiographies written prior to that time as autobiography. One of

the prominent example is St. Augustine's *Confessions* written from 387 to 401. For Mikhail Bakthin, autobiography was originated in Classical Greek as they used "encomium" as the genre's base as "forms for depicting the public self consciousness of a man" (Bakhtin, 1981 in Brunk, 1999: 29). (Encomium is a Latin word deriving from Classical Greek εγκωμιον (encomion) meaning the praise of a person or thing.) He refers to Tacitus and Plutarch who wondered if it was acceptable to write a public account of one's life in Plato's *Apology* and Isocrates' *Apology*. For some scholars, *The Book of Nememiah* written in the fourth century B.C.E. is also autobiographical. Georg Misch states that autobiography emerged in the second and third milleniums B.C. as a form of "collective" autobiography (Misch, 1951: 19 in Brunk, 1999: 29). But the relatively coinage of the term autobiography does not refer to the practise of self-referential writing began in the eighteenth century. In earlier centuries, terms such as "memoir" (Madame de Stael, Glückel of Hameln) or "the life" (Teresa of Avila) or "the book of my life" (Cardano) or "confessions"(Augustine, Rousseau) or "essays of myself" (Montaigne) were used to refer for writer's self-reference through history, politics, religion, science, and culture. Nevertheless, there are various rich and diverse terms that anyone who studies autobiography needs to make crucial distinctions among: *life-writing*, *life-narrative* and *autobiography*.

Life-writing is a term used for diverse writings taking life as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, historical, novelistic or a self-reference to the writer. *Life-narrative* presents a narrower scope because it includes many kinds of self-referential writing, including autobiography. Smith and Watson suggest that life narrative might be approached as a departure point, "a set of ever-shifting self-referential practises that engage the past in order to reflect on identity in the present" (2001: 3). Contrastly, *autobiography* is a convenient term for a performance of life narrative. While autobiography is understood a term for life narrative, it has been many times challenged in postmodern and postcolonical practises of criticism in the twentieth century because of its focus on enlightenment subject. As autobiography celebrates autonomy of the individual and universalizes life story, theorists and critics of postmodern and postcolonial studies handle autobiography as master narrative of "the sovereign self" and challenges to the institutialization of this

concept and canonizing the representative life narratives. Canonization gives lesser value to other kinds of life writings produced at the same time and moreover it causes a refusal to accept them as "true" autobiography. Accordingly, the term "autobiography" is inadequate to describe the historical range and the diverse genres and practises of life narratives and life narrators in the West and elsewhere in the globe. In those critics' opinion, scholars such as Georges Gusdorf and Karl Joachim Weintraub celebrate autobiography as a "master narrative of civilazation in the West against many coexistent forms of life narrative" (Smith and Watson, 2001: 4).

Writing a number of volumes on autobiography, it is not surprising that one of the most important autobiography theorists, Georg Misch focuses on the autobiographies written in the eighteenth century. A growing importance of the genre in literature began with Romantic Period writers' usage of autobiographical form in their writings, such as Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Samuel Johnson prefers autobiography to biography because of antiheroic and domestic qualities the biography has:

> He [the biographer] recounts the life of an another, commonly dwells most upon conspicious events, lessens the familiarity of his tale to increase its dignity, shews his favourite at a distance decorated and magnified like the ancient actors in their tragick dress, and endeavours to hide the man that he may produce a hero. (quoted in Folkenflik, 1993: 7)

Thinking autobiography as a form of biography, Johnson does not need to use the term "autobiography". Why is the major tradition of autobiography being accepted begun with the advent of Romanticism in the eighteenth century? The answer is obvious: Romantic subjectivity and its expressive poetics. Seeeking for origins, Romantic writers narrated their own lives from their childhood casting more significance to their early years. For Romantics, each individual possesses a unified self that is distinct from all others which is also an expression of universal human nature.

If Mme de Stael, an observer, had known that the great age of English autobiography would have begun in the nineteenth century, she would probably have never written these words in 1800: “There is nothing at all in England of memoirs, of confessions, of narratives of self made by oneself; the pride of English character refuses to this genre details and opinions: but the eloquence of writers in prose often loses through too severe abnegation all that seems to come from personal affections” (quoted in Folkenflik, 1993: 8).

According to Laura Marcus, nineteenth century was a high tide of autobiography in respect to the value assigned to the authorship. The possibility of revealing the internal and literary genius without the need to refer to ‘outside judgements’ made autobiography a site to be contributed (Marcus, 1994 in Anderson, 2001: 7). Mary Jean Corbett speaks of Carlyle and Wordsworth while exploring the subjectivity in autobiography and conludes that “writing autobiography becomes a way of attaining both legitimacy and a desired subjectivity” (Corbett, 1992: 11 in Anderson, 2001: 7). For her, alienation and dangers of anonymity is prevented during the writing act of autobiography and modern authorship characteristic is featured with “the presence of the signature” (Corbett, 1992 in Anderson, 2001: 7). It is also the way for “serious” autobiography that is able to create a “sustained self reflection” and this kind of autobiography becomes distinct among the autobiographies which are written with a commercial purpose similar to those ones written by popular pop stars nowadays. The form in autobiography is vital to those nineteenth century autobiographers and an autobiography lacking integrity debases the self by “commodifying” it (Anderson, 2001: 8). People with notable respect in society have “historical importance” and privilige to occupy field of autobiography. A reviewer in *Blackwood Magazine* in 1829 alludes about the existence of a “legitimate autobiographical class which puts down the ‘vulgar’ who try to ‘excite prurient curiosity that may command a sale” (Marcus, 1994: 31-2 in Anderson, 2001: 8). Elite usage of autobiography explicitly forbade ordinary people to place themselves in literature. Furthermore, memoir received lesser value than autobiography in the literary hierarchy due to its lack of absolute seriousness that the autobiography holds. As Anderson cites from Laura Marcus: “The autobiography/memoirs distinction –

ostensibly formal and generic – is bound up with a typological distinction between those human beings who are capable of self-reflection and those who are not (Marcus, 1994: 21 in Anderson, 2001: 8). Other forms of life writing such as journal and diary could not fulfill the higher status of autobiography due to its chronological structure because autobiography was always treated as a devolopmental narrative which 'orders both time and personality' as Clifford Siskin puts forward: "an all-encompassing formal strategy underpinning middle-class culture: its characteristic way of representing and eveluating the individual as something that grows" (Siskin, 1988: 12 in Anderson, 2001: 8). However with a view that would come later, Felicity Nussbaum thinks that it would be wrong to classify eighteenth century diary and journal writers 'failing' to write developmental narratives and narrates: "what they found most "natural" was... something that recounted public and private events in their coherence, lack of integrity, scantiness and inconclusiveness" (Nussbaum, 1989: 16 in Anderson, 2001: 9). What must be taken into consideration is these forms (diary and journal) can be interpreted as the devolopment of the self socially and historically with a special date given to each entry. In fact, they had procured an alternative way of interpreting literary history of autobiography and cast doubts on whether there was just one definite and fixed form.

As discussed above, countless debates over what kind of genre is autobiography have been made. According to Linda Anderson, the true question is "how does the 'law of genre', to take the title of Jacques Derrida's famous essay, work to legitimize certain autobiographical writings and not others?" (2001: 9). According to Derrida, a genre should define itself in terms of "norms and interdictions". Thus if a genre defines itself "one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demercation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly or monstrosity" (Derrida, 1980: 203–4 in Anderson, 2001: 9). Fredric Jameson doubts about 'the ability of genre to operate as a law': "genres are so clearly implicated in literary history and formal production they were traditionally supposed to classify and neutrally to describe" (Jameson, 1981: 10 107 in Anderson, 2001: 10). Celeste Schenk views Jameson's argument as if it provides genre a "culturally constructed" point which prevents it to become an "ideal type" (Schenk, 1988 in Anderson, 2001:

10). Alastair Fowler presents a more positive view of genre. Fowler thinks that each work "is the child ... of an earlier representative of the genre and may yet be the mother of subsequent representative" (Fowler, 1982: 32 in Anderson, 2001: 10). Fowler's notion of "generic family" furnishes feminist critics an originating point. Mary Jacobus thinks that "a genre is always 'mothered' as well as fathered" (Jocobus, 1989: 204 in Anderson, 2001: 11). Referring to Derrida's conflicting idea of the law of genre as "a principle of contamination, a law of impurity", she thinks autobiography of a genre praising partiarchal law thus "delegitimazing women's writing" (Jocobus, 1989 in Anderson, 11). For Linda Anderson, women's writing or "any subject who is deemed to be different" paves the way for a re-reading of autobiography in terms of 'heterogeneity or trangressiveness' it tries to illegalize" (2001: 11).

Recently, scholars are trying to find new terms for autobiography because of the problems posed by the field such as 'autography' (H. Porter Abbott), 'Autogynography' (Donma C. Stanton) and, 'Otobiographie' (Jacques Derrida) in order to return to use of 'self-biography' (Folkenflik, 1993: 7). Also, recent critical tendencies in different fields give autobiography a visible and growing importance. Poetry is displaced from its priviliged position in literature and "nonfiction" seems to be taking its place as a form of literature like poetry, drama, or the novel (Folkenflik, 1993: 7). The search for reality in our century makes autobiography nearly the most valuable form of literature. In an age that feels distrust to the reality of history is more interested in reading first person narrations and one who witnesses the period with the subjectivity of him or her. Folkenflik likens the position occupied by autobiography to that of the poem held during the high tide of New Criticism, a time when such titles such as " *Macbeth* as a poem" and "*Wuthering Heights*: The Novel as a Poem" were common. The difference of autobiography as a literary form lies on the ground that one can easily accept poetry as an exemplary form of New Criticism whereas autobiography is multi-examplary form of literature. As Folkenflik argues the problematic point is that it asks questions about "fact and fiction, about the relations of reality and the text, and about origins" (1993: 12).

Robert Folkenflik deducts from all the debates about autobiography: "Autobiography has norms but not rules" (1993: 13). It is generally in the first person but there are some exceptions such as *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918) which is written in the third-person narration. The first autobiographical novel is James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and it brings out how the writer became the man who wrote the book that we are reading. The case of fiction draws a crude dividing line in the genre: Autobiographies are usually written by the protogonists of the narratives who bear the same name. But, there are some exceptional cases. Some have been written in colloboration with others and entirely ghostwritten. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1964) was written by Alex Haley. Folkenflik narrates that autobiography has a democratic potential because it suggests each person a possible autobiography reserved for him or her which creates a "historiography" that would enable anyone to tell his or her story (1993: 12). In this perspective, the weak canonical importance of autobiography seems to be an advantage. Consequently, autobiography serves as a battleground for the minorities, including women that have long been forgotten purposely in this field of genre that had been predominantly dominated by men. Thus, a new question emerges: Are men's and women's autobiographies distinctive or do they belong to the same definition of the genre? Stephen Spender, the British poet-critic, cites the dictionary definition of autobiography as "the story of one's life written by *himself*" but with a note "world that each is to *himself*" (Smith and Watson, 2001: 1). (emphasis mine). Then, what about the recognition of women autobiographies, when were they first put into print?

Several debates about the first autobiography of women have been made. Margaret Cavendish's *A True Relation of the Birth, Breeding, and Life* (1814) is overtly called the first autobiography written by a woman by most of the scholars although the title does not cover the word "autobiography". The editor of the book, Sir Egerton Brydges opens his preface with these words: "AUTOBIOGRAPHY is so attractive, that in whatever manner it is executed, it seldom fails both to entertain and instruct" (Folkenflik, 1993: 6). The first appearance of women's autobiography as a term in literature is in Elizabeth Wright Macauley's *Autobiographical Memoirs*

(1834) and Caroline Fry's *Christ Our Example: To Which is Prefixed an Autobiography* (1839). The first novel entitled with the term 'autobiography' by a woman was Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* which appeared in 1847. However, a researcher of autobiography should bear in mind that there are numerous women autobiographies which have been left on the shelf for centuries and wait to be (re)inserted in the canon of women's life narratives. Although a large number of male scholars deny to initiate women's life narratives (predominantly memoirs, journals and diaries) before nineteenth century, there have been footsteps of modern women's autobiography throughout the history.

An autobiography can be materialized in two forms: written and oral. Oral autobiographies give chance to enfranchise people for realizing their own experiences-or to say, realize themselves that once they have been denied from education and made illiterate. Literacy has been an important theme in the autobiographies of Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Jacobs. These "as-told-to" autobiographies complicate the definition of autobiography. Is a text autobiographical if it is "as-told-to" that was dictated to a scribe? Who is the author of the autobiography? To what extent can we trust to scribbling? Did the scribe write only the words that the author spoke? Whether if it is so, or not, does the text belong to the scribe at the same time? (Brunk, 1999: 28).

Especially in the Middle Ages, either they were illiterate or they had pretended so in order not to be labelled as a witch, women such as Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich spoke of their lives and someone else recorded them. Yet, there comes a question again: Is it possible for a person who is ilitarate to be the author of a printed text? Some critics think that this form lies between autobiography and biography. Some critics think that unless a recording of the spoken words exists, and it is not possible in the majority of these cases, one cannot be sure about the equivalance of the words spoken to written; hence the resulting text cannot be considered an 'autobiography' (Brunk, 1999: 28). To incline Laura Marcus, a recent critic of autobiography, 'intention' is ardently on its way to define autobiography on the part of the author (Marcus, 1994: 3 in Anderson, 2001: 2). In this sense, it is

obvious that if one approaches from this point of view, these ‘as-told-to’ autobiographies might be included into the canon. Marcus refers to Roy Pascal while explaining her opinions about ‘intention’: “Autobiography depends on the seriousness of the author, the seriousness of his personality and his intention in writing” (Pascal, 1960: 60 in Anderson, 2001: 3).

A different kind of self representation is self-portraiture. Courbet has clearly thought his self portrait as a kind of autobiography. Concerning his *L'homme a la pipe*, he wrote to his patron: “I have painted many self-portraits in my life, corresponding to the changes in my state of mind. In a word, I have written my autobiography” (Courbet, 1854: 220 in Folkenflik, 1993: 12). Even the composer, (as expected in the Romantic tradition), Richard Strauss was meant to write his musical autobiography with his composition *Ein Helden-Leben*.

1.3. HISTORY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CRITICISM: AN OVERVIEW

The criticism of the genre had been pushed back behind the curtain till the second half of the twentieth century. William C. Spengemann writes in *The Forms of Autobiography*:

> The Years that have slipped by since I began to work on this littlebook have seen autobiography move from borderlands of literary study to place a much nearer the priviliged center traditionally occupied by fiction, poetry, and the drama. Had I written this introduction even five years ago, I could have begun, as was then the custom among critics of autobiography, by lamenting the scholarly neglect of this worthy literature.Now that the genre has become critically respectable, not to say fashionable, however, prefaces like this one are obliged to open on a softer note, with some acknowledgement of the great deal that has already been said on the subject, as well as some justification for adding yet another handful of pages to the steadily mounting pile (Spengemann, 1980: 22 in Folkenflik, 1993: 9).

Most criticism till eighties concentrated on British and Continental autobiographies of famous men who created curiosity. Despite the growing interest

in American autobiography, British autobiographers engrossed the most critical attention. In spite of the many books and articles writtten about American autobiography, there was not a rewarding study of American autobiography.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, two books concerning autobiography were published: *History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (1907) by Georg Misch traces the growth of the concept of individuality from the self-representations seen in Egyptian inscriptions, through Greek love lyrics, Roman orations and Augustine's *Confessions* in his two volumes of books. Anna Robesan Burr's *Autobiography: A Critical and Comparative Study* (1909) focuses on British Quaker journals and French memoirs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in terms of personalities and occupations of their authors.

No studies of autobiography appeared during the next twenty years. However, critical analysis flared up with the publication of larger volumes of autobiographies. Following Burr's and Misch's footsteps, critics discussed the subject matter of autobiographies and shared a propensity for making moral judgements about the authors. For those critics of the twenties, there were slight diffrences about autobiography and biography, considering both merely the story of a person's life. In thirties, autobiography was widely accepted as a form of writing that includes letters, journals and diaries as well as biography.

With the formal analysis of all types of literature after World War II, the critical study of autobiography began altogether. The publication of two bibliographies of autobiographies- William Matthew's *British Autobiographies: An Annotated Bibliography of British Autobiographies Published or Written before 1951* (1955) and Louis Kaplan's *A Bibliography of American Autobiographies* (1961) contributed to the genre.

The question about the legitimacy of autobiography was asked during the fifties and sixties: whether or not autobiography was a genuine literary genre or a mere document of history. Contrary to critics of the thirties, an attempt to distinguish

autobiography from letters, journals and reminiscences and biographies was the matter. Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth in Autobiography* brings forward a formal distinction. According to Roy Pascal, "memoirs and reminiscences are works about others whereas autobiography is a ex post facto and consistent study of one's life" (Pascal, 1960 in Jelinek, 1986: 2). Robert Sayre's *The Examined Self* strictly rejects the equavalance of autobiography with biography, history, suggesting themes and techniques used by autobiographies and novels. (Sayre, 1964 in Jelinek, 1986: 2). Yet, some critics were against the limitations imposed by formal definitions and sought for more flexible definitions. In "Confessions and Autobiography" Stephen Spender proposes the acceptance of "subjective revelations", because he thinks that integrating public and private selves in autobiography sometimes paves the way for an ungainly form in autobiography (Spender, 1955 in Jelinek, 1986: 2). In Stephen Shapiro's opinion, autobiography overlaps with both literature and history and aesthetic function of autobiography is not the mere function of the genre, it also "educates and tests reality" (Shapiro, 1968 in Jelinek, 1986: 3).

The waning influence of New Criticism is unquestionable in the seventies. Also, the appearance of various autobiographies during the second half of the century and relativism engendered by sixties' cultural revolution relieve to move beyond from earlier traditionalist position to a more "shifting ground" suggesting that content and form are indistinguishable in autobiography. Francis Hart writes about the form of autobiography in "Notes from an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography: "The paradox of continuity is itself a problem to be experimented with, and it is a problem both of truth and form" (Hart, 1980: 32 in Jelinek, 1986; 3). James Olney sees all autobiography as a process; it is neither a form nor a content at the same time it is neither fiction nor history. Rather, autobiography is a metaphor of the self- a preordained construction self-image that figures out both the form and content of the life story (Olney, 1972 in Jelinek, 1986: 3). In *The Value of the Individual* Karl Weintrub views autobiographical forms as having evolved from stereotypical personality modes to the modern manifestation of each author's distinctive personality (Weintrub, 1978 in Jelinek, 1986: 4).

Philosophers and philosophically inclined critics such as Georges Gusdorf, Paul de Man, and Jacques Derrida, have been prominent figures about the theory of autobiography. Unquestionably, Freud's existence in literary theory has had an undisdainable role in the respect given to the autobiography. Charles Ryecroft claims that Freud's papers entitled "The Psychopathology of Autobiography" and "The Autobiographer as Narcissist and Exhibitionist" put forward the infantile fixation points and the unconscious phantasies of the autobiographer; thus impels the autobiographer to use his Id. (Folkenflik, 1993: 10). Nevermore, Freudian insights have been used by recent studies on autobiography: Jeffrey Mehlman has some studies on a Lacanian version and Jung's name was repeatedly used in James Olney's papers. But the most presentable and blanket study with a primary relation to Freudian psychoanalysis was Paul Jay's *Being in the Text* (1984). Folkenflik thinks that this is a surprising fact because Freud's "talking cure" provides an obvious model for the writing cure that autobiography offers (1993: 11).

As seen above, numerous definitions of autobiography were made, but no definition was accepted widely but all it implies a consensus: critics were still defensive about the legitimacy of autobiography as a literary genre in 1980s. Antihistoricists such as linguists, deconstructionists, and poststructuralists believed about the impossibility of the literary history of autobiography as its characteristics had not been defined yet. Critics focused on the content of the autobiography rather than strictly concentrating on defined form. To get on with the interpretive function of literary criticism, most female critics such as Patricia Mayer Spacks, Mary Mason and Lynn Z. Bloom accepted autobiography as a content. Prescriptive definitions of a "true" and "good" autobiography received less interest, the concrete and the personal was paid a worthy attention. Despite the wave of this egalitarianism, many critics still expected "good" autobiographies centering exclusively on the author anyway. For them, an autobiography should be representative and a mirror of the age and the autobiographier should be seeking after self knowledge to create a 'personal mythos' (Jelinek, 1986: 4). However, many critics reviewing new autobiographies are not gratified with the assumptions and expectations of this "ideal" autobiography. The rare attempt to integrate public and private selves, rather hightlighting the public and

excluding personal and intimate lead critics to fault such autobiograhies. From another point of view, giving the most intimate details that the readers want to know most is an unrealistic expectation for these reasons to William Matthews:

> Few autobiographers put into their books very much of that private, intimate knowledge of themselves that only can have. Oftener than not, they shun their own inner peculiarities and fit themselves into patterns of behavior and character suggested by the ideas and ideals of their period and by the fashions in autobiography with which they associate themselves. The laws of literature and the human reluctance to stand individually naked combine to cheat the expectations of readers who hope to find in autobiographies many revelations of men's true selves. (quoted in Jelinek, 1986: 5)

According to the criteria of ideal autobiography, personal details are inappropriate for a reflective, artistically celebrated life story. Due to consideration of domestic life, minor illnesses, and other "womanly" matters were mundane and frivolous, women autobiographies from earliest times to the eighties were not gone into the matter of autobiographical criticism. Due to the attempt to "gather the different elements of his personal life and organize them into a single whole" and begin his life story "with the problem already solved", women autobiographies were counterveiled with neglect and disparagement (Jelinek, 1986: 5). Linda Anderson thinks that Gusdorf's opinions which appeared in Olney's collection in 1980 about wholeness of the self offers the possibility of lessening the dangers of fragmentation although it is a widely used technique in women's autobiography: "Autobiography ... requires a man to take a distance with regard to himself in order to constitute *himself* in the focus of his special unity and identity across time" (2001: 5). (emphasis mine). The relation of autobiography to individualism and humanistic values it glorifies made autobiography unsuitable for common sense readings. Barrett Mandel thinks that every reader is with the same opinion about the "total distinct" characteristic of autobiography (Mandel, 1980 in Anderson, 2001: 6).

Definitions assigned for autobiography belong to a tradition which extols autobiographies written by men. To shed more light on why the characteristic of women's autobiographical tradition have been ignored, a brief look to the analyzed

autobiographies prior to 1980s by prominent critics of the genre will be useful before exploring women autobiographies.

Wayne Shumaker covers all major autobiographies by men from Augustine through Yeats, including special chapters reserved for Mill, Trollope and George Moore. Nevertheless, Shumaker was the first and only male writer who interfused women autobiographies, crediting several women in the eighteenth century. Yet, he cannot help himself ignoring twentieth century women autobiographers despite inclusion of men's autobiographers up to World War II in his book.

Numerous "great" lives were included in Spender's and Pascal's books such as Augustine, Rousseau, Montaigne, Goethe, Freud, Trotsky, Churchill, and Gandhi. Only Pascal pays some attention to Teresa's *Life* in his discussion of classical and early post-Christian autobiographies. Rober Sayre includes American autobiographies such as Franklin, Adams and James in his book. Mandel reserves a brief section for Gertrude Stein but pays attention to Augustine, Rousseau, Goethe, Cowper, Wordsworth, Franklin, Twain and Addams. Shapiro refers to Rousseau, Goethe, Gibbon, Collingwood, Freud, Darwin and Trotsky and Americans Franklin, Addams and Henry Miller. Francis Hart mentions life studies on Gibbon, Wordsworth, George Moore, Gosse, O'Casey, Wells, T. E. Lawrence, Basil Willey, C. Day Lewis, Goethe, Gide, Sartre, and Malraux plus a number of Americans --- Hemingway, Nobokov, Dahlberg, Richard Wright and Anais Nin. James Cox analyzes Franklin, Thoreau, Whitman, and Addams with a little attention given to Gertrude Stein. One of the most cited books on autobiography, *Metaphors of the Self*, does not have even a slight mention of women autobiographies. James Olney seemed to be playing the deaf to the Women's Movement and the high tide of women's studies in autobiography. Consequently, he reserved a single essay of Mary Mason in his collection. However, it was not only Olney who excluded women from the canon despite the second movement of the late sixties and seventies. Weintraub's study was composed of male writers of classic continental authors while Spengemann inks his table of content with classic male authors beginning with Augustine whom he considers the ancestor of all autobiographers. It is obvious that women's

autobiographies have not been analyzed and discussed as much as men's autobiographies.

II. WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

What is women's autobiography and when did it become a distinctive genre in literary canon? This question takes us to eighties, the decade that women autobiography critics made an attempt to (re)discover a tradition that has long been pushed back behind the curtain.

After publication of Mary G. Mason's "Other Voice" (1980) in Olney's collection, the studies on women's autobiography continued with Estelle C. Jelinek's *Tradition of Women's Autobiography* (1986), Sidonie Smith's *Poetics of Women's Autobiography* (1987), Carolyn G. Heilburn's *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988), Shari Benstock's collection *The Private Self: Theory and Practise of Women's Autobiography* (1988), Liz Stanley's *The Auto/biographical I* (1992), and Leigh Gilmore's *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (1994). All of the critical studies in 1980s and 1990s suggest that women's autobiography has been a distinct and separate genre from its origins and different from other works of autobiography produced by men. In Mary Ellman's words: "the working rule is simple, basic: There must always be two literatures like public toilets; one for men and one for women" (Ellman, 1968: 33 in Brunk, 1999: 32).

Nonexistence of women's autobiography in the canon is related to publication politics seen apparently throughout the history. Some of the most important autobiographical tradition of women date back to prior ages. Judy Long mentions Heian Lady known to us as Lady Sarashina who has been the subject of scholarly interest since the eleventh century, yet many of the critics did not pay attention to that work. In current studies over the three decades, there has been a ferment activity in women's history, literature and social sciences to alter the impression of absence that limited access to female experience. As Judy Long cites from Joanna Russ: "women denied access to the feminine literary tradition carry the heavy burden of having to reinvent it in every generation" (1999: 25).

2.1. GENDER AND GENRE

For women, gender has been vital for social construction of themselves. Women have experienced their lives under different politics and different centuries that shape a diverse history. This situation may result a division but dangerously, this division may result in manipulation with the purpose of allocation. Although gender is a fundamental principle for social organization, it is not theorized in most of scholarly writing. Therefore, it is essential that readers of women's texts have the task of uncovering the dynamics of gender. Reading with gender means understanding women's place in the society. It enables us to strip off the curtain that makes women invisible behind. In order to see what is behind; scholars have to recognize identities and collective experiences of women.

Women have been recording their own stories since ancient times but the main reason of the growing interest to autobiography in seventies is related to radical implications of feminist tradition. Radical implications of feminist theory in seventies put the fact that 'human experience is gendered' in the centre of their discussions. Feminist theory tried to reveal and interpret women's lives through analyzing the role and meaning of gender in those lives by referring to primary documents that are in a large number of forms such as biography, autobiography, life history, diary, journal or letter. Listening to women's voices, studying women's writings, and learning from women's experiences are vital for the feminist reconstruction of the world. Dynamics of gender materialize more clearly in personal narratives of women than that of in men's. For Personal Narratives Group, personal narratives of women enable to interpret the impact of gender roles on women's lives and provide suitable documents for highlighting the several aspects of gender relations: 'the construction of a gendered self-identity, the relationship between the individual and the society in the creation of gender norms, the dynamics of power relations between women and men' (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 5). It also provides a crucial point to examine women in terms of interaction between individual and society. The polarity of social constraints and the power of individual agency have been a matter of debate since the reading of a personal narrative should

place itself between the two. Although social constructions of gender encroaches the individual, they are shaped by the human agency on the other hand. Marx's often-quoted phrase may best highlight this situation: "Women make their own lives (and life histories), but they do so under conditions not of their own choosing" (quoted in Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 5).

The public authority of autobiography means claiming a new space for the female subject. For the reasons above, Domna C. Stanton employed the term of "autogynography" into women's literature to refer what is involved in a woman's writing. Stanton defines autogynography as 'an act of self-assertion that is essential to denial and reversal' of statute assigned to women under patriarchy. Autobiography gives the "I" to female subject. The autogynographic subject acts in a discursive context where heroism, authority and wisdom are the only features looked up in a man's dictionary. Stanton thinks that autogynography has a therapeutic purpose that is global and essential in a 'phallogocentric system' which defines a woman as an inessential object. She undermines the symbolic specificity of woman as 'the other' and searches why female texts are constructed through 'delineation of identity by way of alterity' (Stanton, 1984: 140). It is best illustrated in *The True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life* (1656) by the Duchess of Newcastle as Mary Mason puts forward (1980: 322):

> I hope my readers will not think me vain for writing my life, since there have been many that have done like, as Ceasar, Ovid and many more, both men and women, and I know no reason I may not do it as well as they: but I verily believe some censuring Readers will scornfully say, why hath this Lady writ her own life? … I answer that it is true, that is to no purpose to the Readers, but it is true to the Authoress, because I write for my own sake, not theirs; neither did I intend this piece for delight, but to divulge; not to please the fancy but to tell the truth, lest after ages should mistake, in not knowing I was daughter to one Master Lucas of St. johns, near Colchester, in Essex, second wife to the lord Marquis of Newcastle; for my Lord having had two wives, I might easily have been mistaken, especially if I should die and my Lord marry again (Stanton, 1984: 140 quoted from original book published in 1892).

Duchess confesses that she wrote out of the need to differentiate herself from others; rather she seems to respect her relatedness to others. Stanton thinks that it was not just a twist of fate that after three centuries later Beatrice Webb begins her *The Partnership* with a chapter entitled "The Other". In Stanton's opinion, the title both affirms the female subject and suggests that one cannot exist without 'the other'. Female "I" is not a simple combination of various selves; rather its lifelines are developed with the recognition of the other. Thus, female "I" denies the implicit 'phallogocentric order' which valorizes 'the totalized self-contained subject present-to-itself' (Stanton, 1984: 140). 'Phallogocentric order' is constituted by transmission of the author's phallic pen from father to son. Women are engaged in a gender-bound discursive situation and she thinks that they should privilege and promote female signature although some autobiographical critics manifest the death of the author with a purpose to reveal the evils of private property. According to these critics, private property system bars proliferation of new meanings and readings. Yet, removing female autograph would mean return to anonymity and insure of the "phallogocentric same". In this perspective, contrary to "generic fixation", female autograph stands as liberating rather than constraining (Stanton, 1984: 141).

Creating a self-writing record expresses a desire for a reader and needs an audience. Even the writers pretending to remain unknown have hoped to find a potential future reader, because autobiography is an act of writing for connecting yourself with the other. Judy Long thinks that knitting the act of writing and reading together strengthens the link between the subject and the reader (1999: 41). Most often, the intended audience for women's self-writing is other women. Women subjects imagine a female audience. Subtexts embedded in a woman's narrative are best absorbed by a woman rather than a male. It is a communal belief that male readers cannot read the texts as women readers do. Also as a reader, a woman may seek for female models to compare her life with. In fact, they search for the heroines with a heroic destiny that inspires them. It is impossible to think separately the subject and the reader while speaking of women's autobiography.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, women autobiography scholars turned their attention to 'difference' in women's personal narratives. Thinkers and writers who had found out some commonalities in women's experience previously were attacked for inserting universal and essentialist discourse in women's writing. This attempt was criticized by some scholars because of the demoting discourse it formulates: universal subject. However, Judy Long states that these writers had rarely written for eliminating the multiple voices of women. Rather, they revealed a feminist discourse to "hear diversity and expect complexity" (1999: 11). Besides, inverting a discourse into literature entails a consensus of shared common experiences.

Major and most debated version of "difference" becomes apparent through black feminists accusing white and middle-class women for placing chauvinism and white centrism while theorizing feminism. Those black feminists think that there is not a capital F in feminism but the word should be written in case conversion: feminismS. Speaking from multiple conditions despite the flapping conditions and oppressions exhibit de facto structure of feminism in which elite speak on the behalf of all others. Personal narratives of nondominant social groups such as women, racially and ethnically oppressed groups, lower class people and lesbians and gays provide a common ground for counter hegemonic insight as they point to the universal rather than the particular embedded in dominant ideology.

Another version of "difference" in feminism is women's difference from men. Feminism itself is a theory that shows its existence with a discourse of difference of women from men. Yet, for some postmodernist critics, feminism by definition encapsulates an "out-moded" essentialism and a "naïve humanism" that leads to build up "a realist notion of the self" (Stanley, 1992: 241). This criticism connotes to embrace indifference of gender in any case. Moreover, approving such a claim means to end feminism or entertains a risk of being an onlooker to reduction of the theory to textual strategies that can be used by anyone. In the wake of such criticisms, "material socially constructed realities of gender" is denied by some feminist postmodernists (Stanley, 1992: 242). Liz Stanley thinks that these two

arguments of difference create a twofold direction in discussing feminism. The first one- recognition of difference between women- leads to a fragmented voice, rebellion of the theoretical authority, harmony of different voices overlapping one another and conditions speaking to the 'local specificity of women's oppressions' and conditions. The other-the rejection of any material grounds for women's difference from men- moves feminism in the direction of theoretical certainty ironically. It reduces feminism to simple terms by insisting upon the virtues of ungendered feminism consisting of 'textual niceties' that men can engage as well as women. Sarcastically, gender remains twofold as Stanley argues: "one either insists upon the political importance of women's gender, so making visible men's, or one [latter] lets men's highly gendered views, arguments and theories pass as ungendered, generic" (1992: 242).

2.1.1. Differences of Women's and Men's Autobiography

Probably, it is Dorothy Smith who described best the effect of patriarchy on any genre with this poem:

> Men attend to and treat as significant what men say and have said.
> The circle of men whose writing and talk have been significant
> To one another
> Extends back in time as far as our records reach.
> What men were doing has been relevant to men,
> was written by men
> about men
> for men.
> Men listened and listen to what one another say.
> A tradition is formed,
> traditions form,
> in a discourse of the past with the present.
> The themes, problematic, assumptions, metaphors and images form
> as the circle of those present
> draws upon the work
> of those speaking from the past
> and builds it up
> to project it
> into the future (Smith, 1979: 137 in Long, 1999: 20).

The projection of maleness to universality pervades the literature on autobiography. When a critic speaks of universality, he cements a link among the male subject and the patriarchy. Masculinity is embedded in the lineaments of the genre and this gives rise to andocentric approach to the canon. In scholarly criticisms, masterworks of autobiography are characterized in terms of universal value or significance. These established features of autobiography had been prescribed by males who cited, examined or criticized the works by highlighting the events and issues of concern only vital for men. However, Judy Long thinks that autobiography is not universal; it is rather ‘parochial’ (1999: 16). If gender neutrality is embedded in the canon, the consequence is inevitably the denial of the dynamics of gender that shape literary works. Principles of men’s autobiography valorize significance, objectivity and distance that mirror men’s culture. Thus, exemplary men become model and standard for each other. In such a case, critical objectivity of the critic is overshadowed; one sidedness engenders a narrow perspective in literature which is composed by women as well as men.

Nevertheless, male critics show an intense interest stemming from a sense of connection between themselves and the autobiographical subjects. Identification with the male autobiographical subject leads to a selection of male texts and valorization of masculine narratives by the critics. A conscious identification with the subject helps reader to complete his ‘Hero Quest’, self-discovery. James Olney thinks that autobiography means the most because one can attain growing awareness of himself when he understands another’s life. The understanding whilst reading autobiography means a journey to find one’s real self from another point of view. In Olney’s words, one can learn from an autobiography: “what *man* has been, what forms have proved possible to *humanity*, which is a knowledge that one seeks with the intention more particularly of knowing what *men* is” (1972: introduction, xx). (emphasis mine). He does not explicitly address to gender but, he obviously reveals his insistence about masculinity of autobiography when he defines the focus of his book *Metaphors of Self* which is accepted as a milestone in autobiographical criticism by most of the male scholars. For Olney, his book is “a study of the way experience is transformed

into literature ... a humanistic study of the ways of *men* and the forms taken by *human* consciousness" (1972: 10). (emphasis mine). This patriarchal message illustrates the loss of sight of prominent scholars to the issue of gender. Another scholar whose book is devoted to the most prominent figures of American autobiography is Robert F. Sayre. His book concentrates on Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams and Henry James.

Traditionally, men are identified with knowledge, truth and reality as if being human means being male. Women's autobiography is an effort to undermine this partial construction and to create a more inclusive and more fully human conception of social reality. The strongest challenge to the absent of gendered 'I' is best summed up in Elizabeth Minnich's words: "a devastating conceptual error" (Minnich, 1986, 13 in Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 4). Women's narratives can be considered as "counter-narratives" as they undermine the expectations that they are written as they are supposed to (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 7). Women's personal narratives reveal the rules of male-oriented society and at the same time, they stand as a rebel against these rules. Counter narratives are battleground for liberating the world from andocentric hegemony. Any woman declaring the truth of her life unaware of other versions of reality that challenge the established truth paves the way for criticism of officially preserved faults and a very high sense of injustice that all women are exposed to. This kind of writing is sorted as "acceptance narratives". However, both narratives of acceptance and narratives of rebellion provide a vital entry to contest the system which originates these dynamics (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 9).

In "Gender and Genre" Judy Long regards genre as 'a social construction shaped by its own conventions' (1999: 15). She thinks that genres are constituted in a deviating community defining what is allowed to a writer and expected of a reader. There have been some 'concrete mechanisms' occupying 'the role of a filter' in the genre deciding which to include and exclude. From a sociological perspective, genres are like cops preserving the norm of acceptable behavior in the society and coercing an approval for social order. Gender neutrality of a genre masks a 'double-distilled masculinity' that obscures the inclusion of women into the canon (Long, 1999: 16).

Male scholars' models of autobiography were not disturbed until they were challenged by some militant female scholars. The most prominent figure of this movement was Estelle C. Jelinek. She contrasted male and female autobiographies; thus 'smooth surface' of autobiography was challenged. She used men's autobiographical writing conventions to make women's autobiography visible (Long, 1999: 18).

Narratives of men's and women's contrast with each other: Where male subjects portray themselves as separated, women represent themselves in connection with other people. Where men's stories are set in the public, women's stories are in the domestic sphere. While men stretch the limits of form, women write messy accounts. Men prefer to universalize experience, women's narratives retain contextualized. Men concentrate on the product, while women are interested with the process. Form, content and plot of women's autobiography differ from those of men and analyzing a woman's life requires to survey connection and dailiness. Before exploring the public/private self, form and content of women's autobiography, it will be useful to survey the elements of men's autobiography in order to understand that of women's better.

Judy Long puts forward four elements of men's autobiography. The first element of men's autobiography is "agency" (1999: 18). The male subject selects a pattern akin to a tradition of authorship and authority that emphasizes the agency in the narrative. Agency may stand as a problematic point in case of a female author. Women's daily recordings are not suitable for a chronological, linear narrative which is more convenient for accounting of a career. Judy Long puts up the argument that patterns are not established individually; rather they are relevant to the capability of access to the cultural norms which they are created accordingly. Women are not successful in terms of accepted success norms of generic plots. Judy Long states that narratives bridge the gap between the subject's mind and that of the reader. A satisfactory reading occurs with an agreement of these patterns. A gap in the expected pattern due to sex differences may pose some problems about intelligibility.

A text employing the accepted narratives is judged 'good' formed autobiographies; succeeds in engaging with the reader. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, in *Writing Beyond the Ending* (1985) parallels established plots to "seductive paths of feeling that are culturally mandated, internally policed, hegemonically poised" (DuPlessis, 1985: 5 in Long, 1999: 19). She likens such narrative structures to engines producing meanings that reflect the dominant ideology.

The second element of masculine autobiography is 'destination' (Long, 1999: 19). Among men's autobiographical tradition, autobiographies addressing to a destination in public have the most privileged places. Reading a notable man's autobiography is a ticket for the entrance into the public sphere, hence, writing an autobiography means reserving a place in history and claiming to a title for public heritage. In this sense, autobiographies are larger-than-life narratives in which the author signifies himself in the past, present and future.

The third cardinal feature of male autobiography is 'solitary subject'. A familiar narrative feature in autobiography is 'Hero Quest, a solitary hero en route to his destiny' (Long, 1999: 19). Hero's solitariness means self-reliance and this makes him worthy. The Hero archetype in literature is little impressed by the others and this is the "paradigmatic" feature of men's autobiography contrary to those of women's: It detaches connectedness between the hero and others, focusing on individualism (Long, 1999: 19).

Fourth identifying feature of men's autobiography is the 'suppression of emotion and inner life' (Long, 1999: 20). This self-abnegation is obviously seen in distinguished autobiographies of the canon. The risk of being regarded as 'female-hearted' is prevented by lying very little of his domestic life. Agonizing or intimate happenings, romantic relationships, domestic attachments are suppressed in these generic autobiographies. For an instance, in *The Education of Henry Adams,* the narrator does not have the slightest mention of his wife's suicide; rather this exclusion may be seen as an attempt to fuse into the public sphere of history and gaining objectivity (Long, 1999: 20).

Judy Long parallels autobiography to a 'battleground' on which women writers have a 'destabilizing effect on the field'. Female counter canon focuses on the 'conventional nature of autobiography' as a genre and limitations it inflicts on women's self-writing (23). Rediscovery and celebration of woman-authored texts cast some doubts on the generic feature of autobiography and shatter down the mirrors that reflect the discourse of patriarchy. Contrary to established features of the canon, women's autobiography inserts 'self-in-relation' and 'plural subject' instead of 'separated self' and 'solitary subject' (24). Women's texts emphasizing on multiple themes conflict with the acknowledged intention of male autobiography. Contemporary scholarship has recently been dealing with the women although male academic counterparts have not stoop to cite them in their studies yet. However, this one-sidedness results in bias even in contemporary literature. The ongoing neglect of women's lives will leave legacy of invisibility of women's autobiography to forthcoming generations.

A more comprehensive reading of women's autobiography requires the reinterpretation of personal quality of women's writing and analysis of public/private selves that has long been polarized. In "The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers", Mary G. Mason reminds of some advantages inherent in distinguishing literary works by gender but autobiography is a special issue in this sense. As a life is so intimately joined in the act of writing an autobiography, if one classifies the work of genre according to gender, she will cast important insights into the possibilities of self-writing. Then, it will be possible to bring male and female autobiography together and they may shed valuable insight on one another (1980: 321).

2.2. THE POSSIBILITIES OF WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY[1]

2.2.1. Relational Self of Women

Individualism is related to two concepts in terms of autobiography: self-creation and self-consciousness. However, this model of unique and separate selfhood puts restrictive interpretation when analyzing a woman's autobiography because the concepts of self-creation and self-consciousness are intensely different for women, minorities and many non-western people. Most of the marginalization and misreading of women's autobiographical tradition is engendered by inappropriateness of these concepts to a woman's text. Making a point of the importance of individualism means mopping up group identity that is vital for women's writing. Highlighting the separateness of identity entertains a risk for undermining the different socialization processes of male and female identity construction thus, make both of them same. Obviously, from both ideological and psychological perspectives, paradigms of individualistic self do not pay attention to collective and relational identities in the individualization process of women. Mary G. Mason suggests that "Western obsession with the self", "egoistic secular archetype", is not the central theme of women's autobiographical writing; on the contrary, the self-discovery of female identity seems to be related to the 'identification of some other', the recognition of another enable women to write about themselves honestly (Mason, 1980: 321). Such identification may seem the "loss of real self"; on the other hand it can be interpreted as relational identity of women. Although most of the male critics praise individualistic ethos and place relational identity in a subordinate position, it is women's real selves and not a loss; on the contrary it is a matter of fact. It is the outcome of the system that posits the man on the top of the hill in a literary canon and a western tradition that has made women other whether as goddesses or witches or "in back rooms who had creatively talked back to patriarchs, defied, resisted" (Smith and Watson, 1998: 7).

[1] The term is originally used by Beth Lynn Brunk.

2.2.2. Public/Private Self

When a woman places herself as the subject of the text, she is inevitably exposed to some problems posed by the tradition. An expectation to confess her life in a certain way calls for the norms that are shaped by a male vision. If the subject has a public life, like that of Gilman's, her autobiography *must* conceal the domestic life as much as possible. Manifestation of the self in this way engenders exclusion of many women from the tradition with rationale that they are not exceptional. This kind of public assertion is difficult and uncomfortable for many women. For Judy Long, a 'double standard' or 'double mind' is what a female autobiographer should pursue: "She must qualify for inclusion in the list of the notable men, but she must also prove herself as a female. A woman's qualification for each disqualifies the other" (1999: 14). This point of view is also brought forward by Sidonie Smith: "a woman autobiographer must place her self between paternal and maternal narratives, suspended between notions of male and female selfhood that connect her historical moment" (quoted in Gilman, 1990, introduction xxi). Character of the genre itself poses some theoretical questions stemming from the paradox between the female subject and autobiographical tradition. Public spaces related to business, politics and social life are reserved for men, what is left for women is her needle. The public/private polarity is a deadfall for the gender system. Recording a woman's life illustrates a dilemma: women write about lives that is no more their own making. So why do women write autobiographies? It is obvious that men write with the purpose of protesting his uniqueness and individuality, but what could have motivated women to scribble their own stories?

Autobiographical impulse is variable, but the major objective of women's self-referential writing is the desire to be known publicly and to assert her uniqueness. This is the most fundamental motivation for self-assertion and self-celebration. Any person who takes pleasure with her existence may want to leave a mark onto earth with a purpose of being exemplary for coming generations and extend her subjectivity beyond the time by recording it. The impulse may be secrecy, the need for catharsis or longing for a reader (Long, 1999: 29). One of the earliest

autobiographies in English was that of Margaret Cavendish's who did not want to be "a spectator rather than an actor" (Long, 1999: 28). The diary of Marie Bashkirtseff is another document that rejoices the self. She is often cited for her egoism and her desire to conquer time through the ages. The lines quoted below are written before her death in 1884 from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-four:

> Of what use of were pretense or affection? Yes, it is evident that I have the desire, if not the hope, of living upon this earth by any means in my power. If I do not die young I hope to live as a great artist, but if I die young, I intend to have my journal, which cannot to fail to be interesting, published ... I am certain that I shall be found sympathetic, and I write down everything, everything, everything. Otherwise, why should I write? Besides, it will be very soon to be seen that I have concealed nothing (quoted in Long, 1999: 29).

Her self-assertion avows her difference from most of women autobiographies as many women wrote with the established consciousness that they have no importance in history. From another point of view, all autobiographies are attempts for connection with others. Self-writing provides women a common ground for gathering diverse experiences together. Mostly, it is women's common fate to be unknown and those who take up the pen in their hands have the role of 'commanding an army of allies', other women. Judy Long thinks that it may be easier for a woman to place her autobiographical significance by linking herself to other women. She cites from Domitila Barrios de Chungara's *Testimonio*: "I don't want anyone at any moment to interpret the story I'm about to tell as something personal. Because I think that my life is related to my people" (Chungara, 1977: 15 in Long, 1999: 32). A similar case is obvious in Harriet Jacobs's autobiography. She put down her life on a paper to be known publicly for the sake of all mothers who were kept in slavery.

Another motivation for women's self-writing is the search for reality in their lives. It may be seen as a desire to convey the reality. Mary Mason links the concern with 'accuracy and verification' in women's autobiography. She exemplifies her thesis with two examples: Margaret Cavendish and Mergery Kempe. Of Cavendish she says: "In creating her book she was creating her proper

image, in creating her text she was creating her exemplary life", Kempe was "obsessed with getting it right" (1980: 322).

If the written piece is not intended for publication, it means that the writer's desire was to keep private for herself. From another point of view, secrecy shelters the fear of being noticed and enables women to write openly about themselves without fear or penalty. If self-referential writing is a process of self-discovery for women, secrecy prevents this writing from being de facto.

Function of catharsis is an undeniable motivation for women's writing. According to Fanny Fern, without the outlet of writing, women may fall into madness in the domestic round in which they are locked (Fern, 1971 in Long, 1999: 31). A diary, journal or autobiography serve as a "safety–valve" in the lives of women and allows a space allotted to them (Hoffman and Culley, 1975 in Long, 1999: 31).

In addition, women's pens function for "resistance and potential revenge"; a written word's power is proscribed when the secrecy of diary is violated by its publication. Publication of such writing addresses the men who did demote them. It breaks the wall between the personal and the public (Long, 1999: 32). An autobiography may serve as a foundation for protest to patriarchy that oppresses women systematically. A woman who cannot speak has ink for lying upon the page that she conceals everyday.

2.2.3. Form and Content of Women's Autobiography

Feminist autobiographies challenge the orthodox forms of autobiography by playing down the so established conventions composed by the fathers of the genre. Most of the women writing autobiography do not write with the recipient of autobiographical pact of confessional truth-telling, linear beginning from birth, continuing with maturity, resolution and ending with conclusion similar to a composition. Insistence on a unitary self is impossible in most cases if one takes into

consideration of different socialization processes of women. Moreover, many women have neither time nor skills to write simultaneous accounts of their lives. Few women have the chance to elicit conditions required by conventional autobiographical subject such as leisure, privacy and "a room of one's own"; masculine tradition of autobiography imposes his own forms, thus evokes some problems for women's autobiography: "Women who seek to emulate those models are like Cinderella's stepsister, lopping of their toes to fit into the glass slipper" (Long, 1999: 26).

Autobiographical stratagies used by women convey challenge to male tradition of autobiography. The risk of inserting women's autobiography is embedded in the polarization of the requirements of male oriented autobiography and requirements of femininity: "The propriety of feminine autobiography is dubious. "Autobiography is a self-display, opposed to the female virtues of modesty and concealment" (Spacks, 1972: 249 in Long, 1999: 27).

This valorized virtue of a woman, femininity, is rooted in the epithet that "silence is a woman's glory" as Aristotle states in *Poetics*. Throughout the history virtuous woman is defined by her absence or in a second status behind her husband. She does not talk, rather is talked by others. Correspondingly, women's self-writing is not suitable for standards. For an instance, some women have written only letters or journals to family and intimates forgotten in the chests and unnoticed in family archives. By employing a variety of narrative and stylistic strategies women have sought different dynamics of form and content. Judy Long finds out three narrative strategies in women's self-referential writing: "telling it slant", "telling it messy" and "telling it straight".

"Telling it slant" means to adopt a "necessary indirection" (Long, 1999: 37). One of Emily Dickinson's poems expresses this strategy best:

> Tell all the truth but tell it slant
> Success in circuit lies,
> Too bright for our infirm Delight
> The Truth's suberb surprise

As lightening to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind --- (Dickinson, 1935: 1129 in Long, 1999: 37)

"Telling it slant" refers to the social constraints under which communication materialized. It embraces communicative actions of a group in a less powerful position in a confrontation with a larger dominant group. Deviating from the pattern of male autobiography, women's autobiography is unstructured, embroidered with daily experiences of women's lives. While "telling it slant", the narrator does not assert the significance of her unique self in her writing, rather denies to take pleasure for her notable power.

Another way of "telling it slant" is writing fiction instead of autobiography. Pretending to be a fictional character rather than a factual blood and flesh makes women advantageous for coming over conflicts without the risk of accusations such as 'unfeminine egotism' and 'lack of modesty and intelligence' (Long, 1999: 39). Maxine Hong Kingston, June Arnold, and Audre Lorde are among women writers who used autobiographical fiction.

Early American women writers had not had even the slightest desire to fuse into the men's realm of literature. Demoting herself to second status "scribbling", not "writing", Margaret Cavendish contrasts herself with the Duke: "Also, he creates himself with his pen, writing what his wit dictates to him, but I pass my time rather with scribbling than wit writing, with words than wit" (quoted in Spacks, 1972: 248 in Long, 1999: 39).

'Subject Positioning' is another way of cloaking the assertion of subjectivity. Female autobiography may be disguised in religious memoirs, especially that of domestic memoirs, written by seventeenth century Quaker women with a purpose to draw attention to the Creator and their humble selves. Female memoirs are sometimes disguised as biographies of a husband, positing woman as an "appendix or appendage" as Long asserts (1999: 39).

Another form of narrative strategy is “telling it messy”. A woman’s life is associated with ‘dirt, diapers, injections, blood, repetitive labor, interruptions, lack of closure, obligations, intensity, and vigilance minutiae’ (Long, 1999: 40). Women’s ‘nonlinear expression of time’ does not allow the creation of a solitary hero; women do not claim the models of heroic identity. Women’s self-referential writing manifests ‘a process rather than a product’ (40). Daily practices of women have loose, intervallic structures in the way their lives are organized. Everyday recordings and domestic labor provide a compelling topic for feminist scholars whereas male social scientists generally shy away from them. Rules of male socialization discount emotions and emotional interactions that are messy. It is not only related to women’s autobiographical practices; women playwrights are also accused of not having a linear form and plot, women’s poetry is defined as too ambiguous, personal, detailed, connected and dedicated (40).

The third narrative strategy is “telling it straight”. Feminist scholars noticed an awareness of discontinuity between women’s experience and the conventional knowledge of their fields (Long, 1999: 41). Thus, feminist scholars in social sciences and literature tend to “tell it straight” to record the straight for correcting the distorted image of women; thus creating a new body of image for women in all fields. “Telling it straight” enables the correction of feminist analysis.

Also, women have sought a new narrative strategy that retains the intimacy and closure that their relationship has. Creating plural subjects hence a plural narrator is an example. This plurality expresses the group identity which is vital for feminist culture. Collective form of women’s autobiography is a possible form for women’s autobiography for Susan Stanford Friedman. By defining herself as the subject of the narrative, a woman is able to tell all the story of her sex, race or her family (Friedman, 1988: 74-75). This is a widely observed feature in autobiographies of women belonging to a minority or a marginalized group. For instance, African-American women position themselves in their community while writing their lives.

Women are represented in noncanonical, subordinated forms of writing. Some distinctive contents that shape women autobiography are 'dailiness, connection, relationship work, and emotion-work of women' (Long, 1999: 45).

'Dailiness' includes women's daily tasks and episodic experiences they all share in the web of their relations. As a woman's daily work constitutes a large part of her life, her consciousness is made up domestically contrary to men's public views. By centering dailiness in their self-writings, they challenge the established norms of autobiography that announces daily work trivial. For Judy Long, a woman's work is notable to a degree to which it controls daily life (1999: 45). It is valid for all women, not just the wives. A heavy burden of daily work can keep a young girl from school or familial responsibilities; may obscure a wife from presenting her artistic talent or gain economic independence. One instance for this stipulation is Harriet Jacobs. She could only write after fulfilling her responsibilities as a house maid. Housewifery can also block a woman from creative work and household can mask her subjectivity. The best example may be Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* that depicts a woman's story going into madness because of the heavy burden that patriarchy puts on her back.

Another hallmark for female autobiography is 'connection'. Women place themselves in the web of relationships but it is not only challenge to the tradition of men's autobiography; it has deep roots in female culture. The vocabulary of women connectivity is a ferment point of academic discussions. Scholars have employed various dimensions for developing the discourse on connectivity. Connection is not a static state of being; rather it is a tentative activity. It is not only the state of being-in-relation, but also a manner of relating to things or people (Long, 1999: 49). Living on her own by her own decision, Florida Scott-Maxwell narrates in her journal: "Although I am absorbed in myself, a large part of me is constantly occupied with other people" (Maxwell, 1979: 34 in Long, 1999: 49). However, according to Judy Long, valorization of connectedness and promoting empathy and care are not the natural characteristics of all women but they are related with female culture and female socialization (1999: 50). Research on sex differences show that different

sexes are socialized for connection and separation depending on their sex thus make up gender.

The third content of women's autobiography is related to two previous contents; dailiness and connection: 'relationship work'. Women are traditionally chosen for the roles of child rearing, counseling, advising, morale boosting and found responsible for the products of their work such as good relationship and a healthy child. Social science studies reveal the rational calculus of women in creating emotional climate. Marjorie DeVault's study points out to the efforts of women that try to create sociability around the family dinner time (DeVault, 1991 in Long, 1999: 51).

'Emotion-work of women' is the fourth element of women's personal narratives. Women's and men's relation to emotion are totally different. Women speak of emotion with an intense feeling as a resource for their self-representation with a positive purpose. On the contrary, men mostly shy away from emotions with a negative point of view, suppressing their feelings. For women, self-affirmation occurs with self-feeling. In male culture, highlighting emotion is the signifier of weakness. If a man masters his feelings, he can succeed in himself, improves himself. Being crowded with feelings towards other people risks the representation of the self as unique. Besides, emotion is threatening due to its relation with empathy, sympathy and responsibility (Long, 1999: 53).

The rejection of a masculine form of content is often indicated by male critics as unintelligibility. A critic comments on Kate Millett's *Flying* and ridicules it: "an endless outpouring of shallow, witless comment" (Kolodny, 1980: 238 in Long, 1999: 56). From a feminist point of view, Millett's formlessness is an innovative form that undermines the established universal form of autobiography illuminated by men.

It is not only critics of autobiography that reject content of women's lives unseemly, but also critics of poetry, art and fiction are not easy with such a portrayal

of a woman's life. Sylvia Plath and Kate Millett contest the myth of feminine and deal with experiences that are never mentioned in men's writing such as menstruation, lesbianism and "hissing in the kitchen". These uncompromisingly unfeminine contents lead to criticisms of these writers as scandalous, even deviant like writers in the arrogant eyes of male critics (Long, 1999: 56).

Woman-centered research with a specific impact on autobiography dislodges men from their privileged positions by reversing the traditional judgments of the canon. Autobiography has become a site for women to use their public voices although they have been systematically silenced throughout the history. Telling and reading a woman's life is a pursuit of identity but moreover it has a political aspect. The fact of women's self-assertion alters "the position of figure and ground, of subject and other": "Ours is the revenge of the dancing dog: if dogs can indeed dance, then thinking about dancing must change, as well as thinking about dogs" (Long, 1999: 57).

III. AN ANALYSIS OF *THE LIVING OF CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman is regarded as a milestone in American literature especially with her short story entitled “The Yellow Wallpaper”. There are countless essays on Gilman’s “Wallpaper”, that’s why Elaine Hedges reckons this image as “the white whale of women’s literature” (quoted in Karpinski, 1992: 9). Some scholars are interested in Gilman’s other works such as “The Giant Wistaria” and “What Diantha Did”. However, her satiric poetry and gothic tales have been paid a considerable attention by scholars. Some scholars are interested with her utopian novel, *Herland*. But her international fame came with the publication of *Women and Economics: The Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*. Her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* was not found frequently of special significance and mostly analyzed as a secondary source in academic studies. Those who are interested in her life writings seem drawing their attention to her journals and diaries that depict her private persona rather than the public persona she created in her autobiography. A careful rereading of Gilman’s autobiography will enable today’s readers to understand Gilman better, a woman who is ahead of her time. It is obvious that Gilman was more interested in future and did not like living in the past. So; why did such a person need to write an autobiography about her past experiences?

It is doubtful that Gilman had been aware of her foremothers who had written autobiographies. Ann J. Lane suggests in the introduction part of *The Living*: “Although she is part of a meager but nevertheless existent tradition, she was unaware of her place in it, itself testifying to the power of patriarchy to render invisible that which it does not value” (xi). Lane thinks that the autobiography is important and interesting and a careful reading of it will enable to teach much than we have thought contrary to Nancy Miller’s thesis that entire body of Gilman’s writing could be viewed as autobiography (xx). It is true that every piece of literature has some autobiographical shadows in it but demoting Gilman’s autobiography to a secondary source status is like reading Iliad and putting aside Odysseia.

On the other hand, Gilman herself sees autobiography as a poor thing; in a letter to Edward Ross she explains: "I have started in a feeble way on my Autobiography, but it does not interest me as much as it ought to. My real interest is in ideas, as you know" (quoted in Lane, 1990: xxxii).

Judith Nies finds Gilman's significance in the integrity of her life and her desire to be treated as a human being and her instant deed for being 'a producer rather than a consumer' (Nies, 127 in Karpinski, 1992: 7). Mary Hill, the writer of *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Making of a Radical Feminist 1860-1896*, writes that during her study on biography of Gilman, she found out that the truth and power of many of Gilman's theories stem from her passion and experience, and her historical significance is not only due to her brilliance but also the way she tried to live her life on (Hill, 1980 in Karpinski, 1992: 7). In 1985 biography of Gilman, Gary Scharnhorst adopts deconstruction method to Gilman's work, denying the implicit hegemony of her one work over another and eliminates author's voice from the text and handles it with objectivity (Scharnhorst, 1992 in Karpinski, 1992: 8). However, this postmodern approach to Gilman entertains the risk of oversimplification. Anyhow, Ann J. Lane, writer of *To Herland and Beyond: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1990), (hereafter *To Herland*) opposes such objectivity in her introduction for the book: "This is the story of my Charlotte. The shape of the personality and the life conform to what is known about her. The record provides the boundaries but does not offer the portrait .The portrait is essentially mine" (Lane, 1990: introduction, xi).

Although Gilman's entire body of writing inform readers about her life, diversity in her biographical information lead us to perceive how different gender politics have been interpreted from time to time. This politics of interpretation begins with Gilman herself. She constructs totally two distinct identities in her personal writings: a carefully constructed public identity in her autobiography and a fragmented and struggling woman in her diaries and letters.

3.1. CREATING A TEXTUAL IDENTITY

In *The Living*, Gilman's textual identity is constructed carefully to point out possible damages of a man-oriented culture and to illustrate how she became successful at overcoming these difficulties. Lane argues that "There is much in the book as in all autobiographies, of fiction, of self-deception, of purposeful misleading, of a refashioned and recrafted life, of a persona created for the occasion, but its greatest disappointment is that it is a book that does not have the author's heart in it" (1990: 353). Fleenor views *The Living* both "limiting and yet-revealing". It is limiting because from a point of view it submerges the life of the writer that of a victim; it is revealing because the whole work suggests the major conflict throughout her life: her female self (Fleenor, 1983: 117). According to Lane, Gilman's main conflicts in life are: "male or female, public or private, powerful or submissive, duty to the world or duty to the family" (1990: 68). In *Women and Economics*, Gilman herself expresses agonizing conflicts in her life: "We ourselves have preserved in our own character the confusion and contradiction which is our greatest difficulty in life" (Gilman, 1966: 331 in Hill, 1980: 31).

Unlike many female autobiographies, Gilman emphasizes her public life, "stressing her commitment to the social welfare rather than the private. She does write of her personal experience; but it is always generalized to the plight of other women" (Fleenor, 1983: 118). Ann J. Lane thinks that Gilman refused the "implicit egoism of Western autobiography" which had been composed by men and positioned herself as a helper to others and centering on her domestic life would be denying her real self in life in her introduction to *The Living* (xx). However; it was unusual for a woman of nineteenth century to represent herself as a public woman by coming out of her domestic crust. Some critics argue that the autobiographical persona Gilman created is not identical even similar to her true identity (Brunk, 1999: 110). Her autobiographical identity is constructed with a little stress on her domestic life; she seldom narrates personal disappointment, joy or anxiety. Instead, she lays emphasis on devastating periods of a woman's life as a mother and a wife. Gilman discovered that "the oppressive system drives women nearly to the edge of insanity". As Brunk

suggests that Gilman's autobiography can be viewed as a demonstration of her struggle to come over these difficulties of living on as a woman (Brunk, 1999: 107).

A study made in University of Haifa in Israel, entitled "Girls' Identity Formation as Related to Perception of Parents" brings up women's personal aspirations about self-identity as compared with their perception of mother and father. The results of the study, dwelling on Piaget's formulations about construction of a model identity suggests that "the mother is perceived as mainly responsible for the concrete stage of her children's development by fulfilling, within the family circle, nurturing and affective functions, while the father symbolizes a further step of development by combining also intellectual-abstract qualities and effective interactions outside the home. Each stage of development is successively built on top of the other, incorporating in its system the earlier stage. The subjects, especially first and only daughters, expressed a wish pattern of self-characteristics very similar to that perceived in their fathers. This could indicate their striving to combine both feminine and masculine characteristics" (Lifshitz, 1978).

It is not a coincidence that Charlotte Anna Perkins, born on July 3, 1860, in Hartford, Connecticut, built up a life that was constantly criticized for having masculine traits. The family she was born into was a typical Victorian one: a domestic dutiful mother and a public distant father. Gilman believed that women should be able to live on both a successful public life and a peaceful domestic life which combines feminine and masculine characteristics. It may be put out that her carefully constructed persona in autobiography is a heroic one; a portrayal of a public woman who is "bound by limitations but not victimized by them" (Brunk, 1999: 110). Then, what were her models while constructing this heroic identity?

3.1.1. Models of Heroic Identity

Carol Ruth Berkin refers to Gilman's diaries and points out to fabled roles that she seemed to play during her life. She points out that anyone who reads Gilman's diaries would come across with a rich fantasy world of a young girl trying

to come over the boundaries of life. In a diary entry written by Gilman, she likens herself to Princess Araphenia, the daughter of King Ezophon, whose mission is to save the besieged kingdom from enemies. Araphenia gets magical help from enchanted Elmondine. Elmondine helps her to disguise herself as a warrior-prince by giving a magic sword and an invisible horse. Out of thin air, Araphenia creates an army of a thousand men with the help of this fairy princess, saves the kingdom and throws her disguise. Thus, her father embraces this earthly young princess, his beloved child. In fact, the synopsis of the tale shows Gilman's longing for a pertaining father figure (Berkin, 1979 in Karpinski, 1992: 17).

The loss of a pertaining father figure in a young girl's life may result in several ways. In "Race, Daughters and Father-Loss: Does Absence Make the Girl Grow Stronger?" Janet G. Hunt and Larry L. Hunt suggest: "Among whites, the absence of fathers appears to slightly weaken sex-role identification but "release" girls for higher achievement. This is explained in terms of probable changes attendant with father-loss in the normal process of family socialization, which allocates girls to supportive rather than personal achievement roles" (Hunt and Hunt, 1977).

"What do I know is that my childhood had no father" says Gilman (5). Gilman's father, Frederick Beecher Perkins was a man of knowledge, thus contemplating his service to the world. "Service to the world" was one of the split points in Gilman's life. As a woman, she was torn between service to husband and service to the world during her life. Frederick Perkins was in the pursuit of knowledge and gave a prior rank to his personal desires in the interest of society, thus did not attach enough importance to his wife and children. He was not in the quest of financial success and also never seemed to care it. He had a passion for reading books and this fondness led him to be a librarian, write books and edit them. In 1858, he married his 31-year-old cousin, Mary Fitch Westcott. Gilman describes her mother as "the darling of an elderly father and a juvenile mother, petted, cosseted, and indulged" (7). Gilman's mother was a naive and frivolous maiden and a devoted mother to her family. Within less than three years she bore three children.

The eldest died but Thomas Perkins and his younger sister Charlotte Anna were lucky to live. Frederick abandoned his wife upon doctor's statement that another pregnancy would kill Mary after her third child's birth. (It is not known exactly whether Frederick Perkins abandoned his family because of this incident)

The result was a nomadic family life for young Charlotte, his brother Thomas and her mother. They had to move nineteen times in eighteen years, fourteen times from one city to another to live near their relatives. During that time they were nearly devoid of a father support despite his word. He did not keep his word many times. From 1863 to 1873 he reserved them a place near his relatives or installed them in rented homes but in either case he was completely absent and did not hesitate to leave his family with its own destiny in poverty. Upon all of these events, finally Mary Perkins decided to divorce her husband in 1873. She denied to make criticism about her husband even after her divorce and remained silent and faithful to her husband till her death. It was Gilman who was trying to imagine about the reasons of abandonment of her father and giving meaning to her mother's faithfulness at all times and conditions for such an absent figure:

> He made no official separation, said his work kept him elsewhere. No word of criticism did I ever hear, mother held him up to us a great and admirable character. But he was a stranger, distant and little known … The word Father, in the sense of love, care one to go in trouble, means nothing to me. (5)

In Gilman's childhood years, Frederick Perkins was no more than an occasional visitor to her: "Once he brought me some black Hamburg grapes. … There was a game of chess at which I beat him, or thought I did", when she was nine years old "one punishment, half-hearted and never repeated, at the same age; and a visit some two years later, when . . . he brought my twelve-year old brother a gun" she wrote (5). When she was fifteen years old, in February 1876, she made a diary entry upon her visit to his father: "Saw father. Had a nice long talk. Called me 'my child'. So nice" (February 18, 1876 quoted in Lane, 1990: 28). In *To Herland* , Lane suggests that it had been painful for Gilman being pleased just have been called merely "my child". Maybe her anger and disappointment of being abandoned by her

father brimmed up in years in retrospect at the age of maturity (1990: 28). At the age of thirty-seven, in a letter written to her second husband and her cousin George Houghton Gilman, she wrote: “I kissed my father in the Boston Public Library—not having seen him for years! He left me sitting there and being treated as a mere caller—I am about fifteen—and he put me away from him and said I must not do that sort of thing there. I made a little vow, to the effect that if ever my father wanted to kiss me he should ask for it” (February 1, 1899 quoted in Lane, 1990: 28). Whatever her acknowledged feelings towards her father were, she had a little contact with him during her lifetime: “Presently my father left home. Whether the doctor’s dictrum was the reason or merely a reason I do not know. … He was an occasional visitor, a writer of infrequent but always amusing letters with deliciously funny drawings, a sender of books, catalogues of books, list of books to read, and also a purchaser of books with money sadly needed by his family” (5). The only way to contact him during her childhood years was to ask readings lists to read. He had responded to his daughter’s letter as if he had been helping a student’s project. Even when Gilman visited him in her adulthood in her stepmother’s house, she seems that she had not forgiven her father, that distant figure. However, yearning for her father did not come to end; like every child does, she always missed him all her life. In *The Living*, one cannot recognize a direct anger towards him. After Gilman’s death in 1935, when the publishing company was about to put into print her autobiography, her daughter Katherine Stetson Chamberlain wrote to the company: “The last words Mama ever wrote were those penciled ones on the margin of my letter saying she wanted her father’s picture in the book” (August 26, 1935 in Lane, 1990: 34).

Mary Fitch Westcott and Frederick Beecher Perkins’s marriage was not a pure love match at the very beginning, never to say, it would never be. Frederick has married to her distant cousin after being turned down by his first chosen had married to another. Mary was ‘delicate and beautiful, well educated, musical’, and what was then termed ‘spiritual minded’ she was ‘femininely attractive in the highest degree’ speaks of her mother in *The Living*.

Mary Fitch Westcott had had many years ahead her before she married. But she did not use that time to develop her skills. If she had had used that time for improving herself, she might have been able to face the difficulties of life after Frederick had left the family. In Mary's time women used to marry at an early age and devoted themselves to their marriages whereas men were in the pursuit of a successful career: "If marriage was the only acceptable career for a woman, then rejection by a husband spelled failure at her life's work. It was undoubtedly difficult for a woman like Mary Westcott Perkins to turn against even a rejecting husband; her tendency would be to blame herself." narrates Lane about Mary's loyalty to her husband (Lane, 1990: 37). "Divorced or not she loved him till her death, at sixty-three … She longed, she asked, to see him before she died. As long as she was able to be up, she sat always at the window watching for that beloved face. He never came. That's where I get my implacable temper" wrote Charlotte Perkins Gilman (9). Throughout *The Living*, whenever Gilman mentions about her mother, she seems to understand her. She does not blame her mother but she connects her strict mood to her mother's lack of education: "If love, devotion to duty, sublime self-sacrifice, were enough in child-culture, mothers would achieve better results; but there is another requisite too often lacking—knowledge. Yet all the best she had, the best she knew, my mother gave, at any cost to herself" (11).

Ann J. Lane thinks that it is so punishing for Gilman that she could not even construct the sentence with 'I' as she uses the word "the child". In a way, she objectifies the situation and turns herself into "the child":

> She was honest enough to include it in her published memoirs, insightful enough to know its importance, but its implications, the pain entailed, seem to have been so awful to evoke that she needed to remove direct reference to herself by name from that paragraph. … These are observations that can have meaning, if at all, only to the adult Charlotte, looking back, trying to understand, perhaps trying to forgive. (Lane, 1990: 40)

Never to say, remembrance is a painful act for her. She remembers her mother's whipping as a punishment for offenses and finds it unjust: "Once, having done something for which whipping was due, I humbled my proud spirit and

confessed, begging mother to forgive me. She said she would, but whipped me just the same. This gave me a moral "set-back" in the matter of forgiveness—I've never been good at it" (13). From the quotation above, it may be concluded that she did not forgive her mother but it is true that she really tried to understand her.

Gilman likens her mother's life to a tragedy after father's fled: "There now follows a long-drawn, triple tragedy, quadruple perhaps, for my father may have suffered too; but mother's life was one of the most painfully thwarted I have ever known" (8). Ann J. Lane comments that Gilman did learn a great deal from her parents' marriage: The world was not too safe to trust in others. There are great risks of loving a man and bearing a child. And a mother's burden is severe. It is not clear that at which step Gilman was informed about doctor's warning about the risk of another pregnancy but if deemed it was in her early childhood, she may have blamed herself about her father's fled from home as her birth occasioned this situation (1990: 38). In *The Living*, she seems blaming herself for his father's abandonment: "I followed, on the afternoon of July third, 1860. If only I'd been slower and made it the glorious Fourth! This may be called the first misplay in a long game that is full of them" (8). However Charlotte tried to call upon for her mother's sorrows; she felt resentment towards her mother who was "absolutely loyal as a spaniel". Maybe, it was an expression of disappointment towards her who could not show affection to a needy child but loved a husband whom she saved his locks of hair and nail parings. She never expresses her resentment to her parents directly but she expresses it indirectly. While her mother was with her many years later Gilman's childhood, slowly dying of cancer, Gilman wrote one of her lifelong friends, Grace Ellery Channing Stetson, who would be the second wife to her first husband, Walter: "Mother sinks wavering downward. … [But] her being here has served me well---made me seem a live human creature to the others, and so made my words better weighed" (January 23, 1893 quoted in Lane, 1990: 41). This unfeeling statement stems from an unrecognized rage. Again, she blames her mother indirectly when she prefaces *Chapter VII: Love and Marriage* and finds reasons for her failure in marriage dating back to her childhood: "Looking back on my uncuddled childhood it

seems to me a sad mistake of my heroic mother to withhold from me the petting I so craved, the sufficing comfort of maternal caresses" (78).

However; it was not Mary's fault to be lack of education but it was the Nineteenth Century Victorian order that all women were submissive. She turns her anger to all women and patriarch while she speaks of the divorce decision that came up after thirteen years of the abandonment: "After some thirteen years of this life, mother, urged by friends and thinking to set my father free to have another wife if he would not live with her, divorced him. This he bitterly resented, as did others of the family" (9). The divorce decision was made up for Frederick's sake to reserve him a new wife. The wife was always a wife and needed to take care of his beloved even though he deserted her. In fact, it was the common fault of all women who were stuck up to cult of Victorian womanhood.

In Victorian period, women were positioned as the protector of family and home. With the rise of industrial movement in Britain and then in America women accepted sexual hierarchy and private sphere allocated at home. These domestic servants lost their touch with the production of business and commercial classes. It was believed that they were not passive and weak creatures of romantic fiction. Rather, they were figures of virtue whose duty was "service to others" with their moral superiority. Evangelical belief about the importance of the family, the constancy in marriage and women's moral values were the characteristics of this period. However, there is something forgotten in this equation: Once women were snapped off with production, they were also snapped off life. In such a case, it *is* impossible to link them with the growth of humanity. Barring human capacities referring to sexual differences is absurd and polarizing public/private spheres distinctly for the sake of society is no more than a lure.

Beecher family which Gilman's lineage belongs to was like the manifestation of this approved situation. Gilman's father was a Beecher and relatives of Gilman were notable people in American history: Harriet Beecher Stowe, the writer of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of the Plymouth Church of Brooklyn,

Isabella Beecher Hooker, an outstanding suffragist and Catherine Beecher, the writer of *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, were some of them. The family patriarch, Lyman Beecher was a Calvinist and a characteristic American reformer who dedicated his life to spread his ideas. All of the Beecher sons were ministers of the church and they were driven to analyze, question and communicate with public during their lifetimes. Beecher women were “virtually ministers”, “defending nation’s moral center” as home. Catherine Beecher is known in American history with her ideal of “domesticity with maternal self-sacrifice” (Lane, 1990: 24). In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe idealizes the same household role with women characters she fictionalizes such as Aunt Chloe, Emily Shelby and Eliza Harris. Isabella Beecher Hooker was a suffragist and founder of 1868 New England Suffrage Association. For all women of Beecher family ‘home’ played a central role and a way of human connectedness. Gilman’s grandmother, the fourth child of Lyman and his first wife Roxanne was the only woman who did not take an active role in public: Mary Beecher. She married to Thomas C. Perkins and became a devoted executor of the disciplines in household what their sisters sought for. The eldest child of Mary was Frederick, Charlotte’s father.

It is useful to know that Gilman’s inspiration derives from her great-aunts who were world-servers of their time and they constructed a model for Charlotte. Beecher family history was full of success stories and bearing Beecher heritage was a hard yardstick. Not all of the family members became successful; some of them could not make an impact on public even though they desired it. One of these ineffective people in family history was Gilman’s father, Frederick Beecher Perkins.

Despite her heritage with her great aunts, she was not regarded more than a charity relative in Beecher family. Besides, after the divorce of Frederick and Mary, Beecher family turned against her mother and excluded this pathetic, unwanted wife. In poor relations with Beecher family she had never had the chance to reach the rich cultural life of the Beecher kin. In *The Living*, Gilman accepts that she owes to his father because of her heredity but a tone of disappointment towards him is obvious: “By heredity I owe him much; the Beecher urge to social service, the Beecher wit

and gift of words and such small sense of art as I have; but his learning he could not bequeath, and far more than financial care I have missed the education it would have been to have grown up in his society" (6).

However, Gilman's main point of argument in her life evolved around a debate that had been initiated by her great aunts, but with a difference: Gilman did not agree the principles of her great aunts and disapproved the idea that placed woman as the protector of the household. Too strict roles they were for a woman to achieve her truest self in life and attain a human capacity. While her great aunts were passionate advocates of maternal domesticity, Gilman stuck up the entrance of women into the public sphere and demanded full equality. It is undeniable that they had been models for her with their public views but she challenged many principals of them and centered this resistance in the center of her life. Her personal experience with family and parental love did not prove to be like her great aunts had proposed.

Gilman's relationship with her brother is not satisfying, by the way. They were not friends and probably both of them were in search for the attention of their parents. Gilman remembers her father bringing a gun for her brother but nothing for her. Thomas's continual teasing of Charlotte causes her "to cultivate a black and bitter temper, rebelling at the injustice of it, steadily resenting what I could not escape" (92). In a deep emotional stress after the birth of Katherine, she paid an unexpected visit to Utah where he lived, she realized that she still had the grudge "for the teasing which had embittered my childish years" (92). Ann J. Lane refers to literary critic, Ellen Moers's interpretations about sister-brother relationship in Victorian period:

> rough-and-tumble sexuality of the nursery loomed large for sisters and that the play between brothers and sisters was the only heterosexual world Victorian girls were permitted to explore …Women authors of Gothic fantasies testify that the physical teasing that they received from their brothers---the pinching, mauling, and scratching we dismiss as the most unimportant children's games---took an outsize proportion. (Moers, 1976: 261 in Lane, 1990: 43)

Unfortunately, Gilman's memories were negative. In the forthcoming years the relations of two siblings were nearly bleak of natural affection. In 1878, Thomas

was given a chance to make an academic study and entered MIT but failed although Gilman had never had the chance of a proper education.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman had a brief school period beginning at the age of eight and ending at the age of fifteen because of the occasional moves they were supposed to do. Gilman's total schooling covers four years among seven different schools. Lane argues that the power of Gilman's ideas come from their originality as she sees things with an eye and brain that are not filtered through a conventional education system. If she had had a college education, she would not have conveyed the shocking truths with "jolting freshness" (Lane, 1990: 232). Despite brief schooling, she always supported herself by teaching, painting commercial cards and acting. She was invited to cultural events and schooling at intervals but she could not join them fully because of her economic position. In such a case, it is not surprising that bookkeeping is a significant element of *The Living*. The money she got from her lectures or debts are constantly mentioned: "Speak in evening church on 'The Heroes We Need Now.' Well received. Methodist minister calls. $3.50.", "Friday I spoke twice, $17.00" (194-195).

Gilman thinks that of all childish years the most important step was that she learnt to use of her constructive imagination. Her dream world was not a secret and she was proud and happy to share it with others until a 'pre-Freudian' friend of her mother warned her about "what this fantasy world would become". Her mother ordered her to give up and she obeyed because it was a "command" (23): "But obedience was Right, the thing had to be done, and I did it. Night after night to shut the door on Happiness, and hold it shut. Never, when dear, bright glittering dreams pushed hard, to let them in. Just thirteen. …" (24). Also her mother wanted her to quit reading novels and have no close friends, she was only allowed to read books on travel and some historical novels: "the only one I recall in those years-yes, and the only one I can think of before that was also reading something forbidden. I read the two volumes through, standing before the book-case and promptly looking for another book if mother came nearer" (32). It was quite normal for a young girl like Charlotte feeling like handicapped by her rearing up since she was both lack of

affection and banned from using her constructive imagination. However, this incident led to major events of her life in the way of constructing her identity and it would be the first move of her world of action. Once her mother warned her to apologize Mrs. Stevenson for a thing that she had not done, she did not do it even to please her mother. Though threatened by her mother with "leaving" her, she answered: "I am not going to do it,-and I am not going to leave you-and what are you going to do about it?" , the prize was a slap on her face (34). Yet, Charlotte did not care: "she might do what she would, it could not alter my decision. I was realizing with an immense illumination that neither she, nor any one, could *make* me do anything. One could suffer, one could die if it came to that, but one could not be coerced. I was born." (34). This rebellion against her mother manifests her declaration of independence which will spread into all periods of her lifetime against any limitations.

As a result, one of the great contributions of Gilman to social life is her interpretation about child rearing. As a woman who had the traces of poor relationship with her mother led her to think about this matter: "If unswerving love, tireless service, intense and efficient care, and the concentrated devotion of a lifetime that knew no other purpose make a good mother, mine was the best. To appraise the story of that motherhood needs a background" (6). She likens her mother to a hen who hatches ducks. For Mary Perkins, her two beloved little children were literally all. She brought up them with unusual intelligence and used new kindergarten methods taking heed to doctor's advices and reading medical books. What Mary Perkins could not achieve was her inability to keep in step with the needs of changing years:

> the excellent teaching in first steps could not cope with the needs of changing years; and the sublime devotion to duty, the unflinching severity of discipline made no allowance for the changing psychology of children whose characters were radically different from her own. She increasingly lost touch with them; wider and wider grew the gulf between. (10)

Mary Perkins felt pathos about her belief in love and affection in her early love affairs and her husband. Heroically, she determined that her baby daughter

would not suffer from the same fault; she made her mind not allowing her to carry that grief. Thus, her method was to deny all affection the child needs so that she would not long for it during her life: “I used to put away your little hand from my cheek when you were a nursing baby” once she told in later years to Gilman; “I did not want you to suffer as I had suffered” (10).This is endeavor of a woman lack of education for protecting her daughter from the evils of marriage and life. But it did not occur as Mary expected. Every child needs affection and Charlotte needed, too:

> She would not let me caress her, and would not caress me, unless I was asleep. This I discovered at last, and did my best to keep awake till she came to bed, even using pins to prevent dropping off, and sometimes succeeding. Then how carefully I pretended to be sound asleep, and how rapturously I enjoyed being gathered into her arms, held close and kissed. (11)

It was believed that the whole duty of a mother was to bring up children and give them every instruction they would need throughout their lives. Nursery schools and kindergartens had not reached to America in Gilman’s childhood but by the time she reached her maturity. Was it possible to know this without being educated? God-given wisdom to all mothers to raise children with train and discipline were the barriers in front of the human growth. Healthy and happy children must be brought up with *knowledge* is what Gilman stands up. A great majority of children were born to uneducated families with lack of knowledge about children upbringing and this situation engendered the misunderstanding and repression of children in mind and energy. She preached that children were raised under wrong applications and the solution was to open nurseries where small children are educated by professional women. She narrates: “Women specialized to piano, specialized to voice, specialized to cooking--- never to child development. That ‘comes with the baby’, forsooth!” (quoted in Gilman, 1990: introduction, xxxviii). Gilman’s mother was educated about the piano as well but she had to sell it when Gilman was two, “to pay the butcher’s bill, and never owned another” (9). Women had to be educated for a profession in order to face with difficulties of life and gain their economic freedom.

The incidents happened in Gilman’s childhood served to prepare her to the life that lay ahead her. They nourished her strong individual spirit, everlasting desire

to be an independent woman, and persistent devotion to hard work (Knight, 1994: introduction, xiv). When she was twenty-nine, she had already decided to contribute to the humanity by doing something meaningful:

> From sixteen I had not wavered from that desire to help humanity which underlay all my studies. Here was the world, visibly unhappy and as visibly unnecessarily so; surely it called for the best efforts of all who could in the least understand what was the matter, and had any rational improvements to propose. (70)

3.1.2. Public/Private Self in *The Living*

Throughout her life, Gilman was affected negatively by several factors: poverty, childhood training, and devastating patriarchal ideologies. She was torn between being a traditional woman of her time and being a reformer prominent with her public life. Economic system, traditional marriage, motherhood, and even feminism bound her because of the patriarchal rule in America during the turn of the nineteenth century.

Lane thinks that the overriding problem Gilman tried to overcome in her young womanhood was what to do with her life. Being twenty-one years-old maiden in the nineteenth century meant that you had to make a choice between public and private which means living on your life as a wife and mother or devoting your life to public work. In a context constituted by the notions of masculine and feminine sharply polarized, Gilman's search of identity and self-awareness were "tied up with her sense of self as woman and as person" (Lane, 1990: 67-68).

Gilman corresponded with her long-time friend Martha Luther on this problem many times. She could not imagine a marriage that would make her happy by permitting some alternative public options that she dreamed to be productive. For Gilman, career and marriage meant completely different points that could not be dissolved in the same pot. In a letter to Martha she wrote: "I am really glad not to marry. I *have decided*. I'm *not* domestic and I don't want to be. Neither am I a genius

in any special sense, but a *strong-minded* woman I will be" (July 29, 1881 in Knight, 1994: introduction, xiv).

As she approached adulthood, Gilman needed somebody in whom she could invest her trust and meet her need for affection as having an "uncuddled" childhood lack of affection from both her parents. In this sense, Martha Luther is an important figure in Gilman's life. It is the first time in her autobiography that she writes she is happy when she speaks of Martha: "We were closely together, increasingly happy together, for four of those long years of girlhood. She was nearer and dearer than any one up to time. This was love, but not sex. … With Martha I knew perfect happiness" (78). Gilman believed that her relationship with Martha would even "make up to me for husband and children and all that I shall miss" (July 20, 1881 in Knight, 1994: introduction, xiv). With Martha she seems to feel the courage to conquer the world. In a letter written in late July, 1881, she inks:

> Now *that* is just what I want. To be the sort of woman, handsome, self-poised, well-read, keen-sighted, refreshing-who men will delight to talk with. … gradually strengthening my now inconquerable desire for mental culture and exercise. … determination drop my half-developed functional womanhood, and take the broad road of individuality apart from sex. (quoted in Lane, 1990: 72)

Gilman's genuine feelings for Martha and their loving relationship was disturbed when a man named Charles A. Lane came and married with Martha: "Four years of satisfying happiness with Martha, the she married and moved away. In our perfect concord there was no Freudian taint, but peace of mind, understanding, comfort, deep affection-and I had no one else" (80). Gilman was devastated by Martha's decision to marry but always wanted to settle a special place in Martha's life and did not want to share her with anybody. She wrote Martha: "Can you live and grow on an *uncertain* consciousness of a grand man's love?" ; she also told her fantasy in a morbid state of mind: "We live in our big house. … You are to marry, of course, you would never be satisfied if you didn't, and after a certain period of unmerited, *his*, happiness, you young man is to drop off, die somehow, and lo! I will be all in all! Now isn't that a charming plan?" (August 29, 1881 in Lane, 1990: 76).

Martha and Charles A. Lane were married on October 8, 1881. Martha's loss for Gilman was "the keenest, the hardest, the most lasting pain I had yet known" (80). Lane points out that love relationships between women in the nineteenth century were common and special terms such as "Boston marriage", "sentimental friendship", "the love of kindred spirits" were used to describe these affections. Despite being deep, few of them sought a sexual affair as we imagine today. Such a relationship among women held the belief that women did not have sexual passion; rather these relations were in a spiritual degree. Lane thinks that elements of eroticism were obviously present on the side of Gilman but this did not mean to cut the edge of relationship with Martha. So, when she mentions her feelings in *The Living* as "love, but not sex", undoubtedly she was speaking of the truth (1990: 78).

Fleenor thinks that Gilman searched for mother figures, women that would give her trust and love she needed as she opposed her mother and her actions in her autobiography. For this reason, she wanted to create a female community around her, thus de-emphasize her dependence on men (Fleenor, 1983: 128).

On January 1, 1882, after Martha's marriage, she made a diary entry and reaffirmed her determination to live alone: "I am fonder of freedom than anything else. … I like to be *able* and *free* to help any and every one. … I decide to *Live*-alone" (quoted in Lane, 1990: 80).

A few days later, she met an aspiring artist named Charles Walter Stetson. Less than three weeks after, Gilman was proposed marriage which she quickly declined. In letters written to Stetson on February 20, 1882 she described him her conflicts about marriage and career:

> I am beset my childhood's conscientiousness. … the voice of all the ages sounds in my ears, saying that this [marriage] is noble, natural, and right; that no woman yet has ever attempted to stand alone as I intended but that she had no submit or else. …I have nothing to answer but the meek assertion that I am different from if not better than all these, and that my life is mine in spite of myriad lost sisters before me. (quoted in Hill, 1980: 47)

Despite her uneasy suspicions about marriage, she began to feel an increasing affection for Stetson:

> Followed a time of what earlier novelists used to call "conflicting emotions". There was the pleasure of association with a noble soul, with one who read and studied and cared for real things, of sharing high thought and purpose, of sympathy in many common deprivations and endurances. There was the natural force of sex-attraction between two lonely young people, the influence of propinquity. (83)

Lane suggests that although Stetson's and Gilman's akin childhood periods of loneliness made them closer to each other, Stetson's physical attraction was consequential for Gilman (Lane, 1990: 82). On the other hand, Walter Stetson was a man who had sought for physical relief with women and in his diary he confessed that he loved the purity in Gilman: "I loved all that I saw pure in her. … She was cleanliness to long for. Yes, I loved her purity of innocence, or perhaps, I told her so" (October 6,1882, *Endure*: 5 in Lane, 1990: 83-84).

Gilman's mind was not clear whether she should marry or not for the next two years: "I knew it [marriage] was normal and right in general, and held that a woman should be able to have marriage and motherhood, and do her work in the world also" (83). At this turning point of her life, she envisioned a life that would encompass domestic life and public commitment. She was torn between conflicting needs; a sense of determination and conviction came thereafter. Martha's loss, depression and dismay convinced her that she would not be happy by living alone but might bring happiness to her children and husband. In her chapter "Love and Marriage", she includes a long diary entry written five months before her wedding:

> With no pride, with little hope, with uncertain occasional happiness, with no glad energy and living power, with no faith and nearly none, but still, thank God! With firm belief in what is right and wrong, I begin the new year. Let me recognize fully that I do not look forward to happiness, that I have not decided hope of success. So long must I live. One does not die young who so desires it. Perhaps it was not meant for me to work as I intended. Perhaps I am not to be of use to others. I am weak. I anticipate a future of failure and suffering.

> Children seek and unhappy. Husband miserable because of my distress, and I --
>
> I think sometimes that it might be other way, bright and happy—but this comes oftenest, holds longest. But this life is marked for me. I will not withdraw, and let me at least learn to be uncomplaining and selfish. Let me do my work and not fling my pain on others. Let me keep at least this ambition, to be good and a pleasure to *some* one, to some others, no matter what I feel for myself. (84)

Gilman's self-confidence for being a self-made woman seems to be wavering downward in these days: "I esteem it [marriage] the crowning glory of my life that such a man … should think me worthy to be his wife" (letter written in March 26, 1882 quoted in Lane, 1990: 86). In their courtship when Stetson asked her to give up reading Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* with a rationale that Whitman describes all men such animals, she fulfilled this wish: "I am obliged to decline, as I had promised Walter I would not read it" (quoted in Hill, 1980: 33). Lane thinks that Stetson's attitudes towards marriage, women's place in society, and female sexuality were steadfast, and he was "strikingly conventional". He perceived Gilman's autonomy as selfish and threat to their future marital life and his tenderness and love for Gilman was no more than a wish to woo her (Lane, 1990: 82-93). "Charlotte is more like what is best in other women—more thoughtful, bland, gracious, humble, dependent" Stetson commented in his diary entry in March, 1883 (quoted in Lane, 1990: 94).

Gilman seems to pretend when she quotes that she is happy with Walter. On May 20, 1883, she made a diary entry announcing her marriage decision like a daily routine with no excitement and happiness: "Read part of Century. Nap. Retta calls for a few minutes. … Sup. Dress. Walter. I have promised to marry him. (Robert called) Happy" (quoted in Lane, 1990: 88). At the age of sixty five, when she remembers her marriage decision her tone is still chilly: "We were married in May, 1884. …" (84).

For a short time after their marriage, Gilman devoted herself to domestic chores as expected of a wife. But this lasted a short time. For a woman career-oriented and independent, it was very difficult to consume her life by doing

housework. Within a week after marriage, some “spontaneous rebellion” occurred: “I suggest he [Walter] pay me for my services; and he much dislikes the idea. I am grieved at offending him; mutual misery. Bed and cry” (quoted in Hill, 1980: 35). Knight suspects that “Charlotte needed to affirm her independence, and Walter resisted it every step of the way” (Knight, 1998: 39 in Brunk, 1999: 128). In short, marriage meant entrapment for Gilman. In *The Living*, she does not blame Stetson for their failure in marriage but only herself:

> We were really happy together. There was nothing to prevent it but that increasing depression of mine. My diary is full of thankfulness for happiness and prayers for deserving it, full of Walter’s constant kindness and helpfulness in the work when I was not well—the not-wellness coming oftener and oftener. (87)

Mary Hill thinks that “the first stage of breakdown is one of self-blame (1980: 37). Soon after, Gilman was pregnant and the second stage of her breakdown came to the fruition. Her depression deepened with “the baby?” in whom she felt “only pain instead of love and happiness”. She was not successful in giving her child, Katherine, the affection of mothering: “The tears ran down on my breast. … Motherhood brought no joy” (91-92). She again blames herself for all she lived and recalls her feelings when she became mother:

> You did it yourself! You did it yourself! You had health and strength and hope and glorious work before you—and you threw it all away. You were called to serve humanity, and you cannot serve yourself. No good as a wife, no good as a mother, no good at anything. And you did it yourself! (91)

In the winter of 1885, upon a doctor’s advice Gilman accepted the invitation from Grace Channing, her life-long friend who would be the second wife to Walter. In the hope of recovering, she travelled to California without Walter and Katherine, alone. “From the moment the wheels began to turn, the train to move, I felt better” she wrote (92). During the winter she stayed there and wrote collaborative plays with Grace, also did some painting. “Hope came back, love came back, I was eager to get home to husband and child, life was bright again” she wrote short before her leaving (94).

Within a month after her return, she was “as low as before leaving”. “This was a worse horror than before, for now I saw the stark fact—that I was well while away and sick while at home—a heartening prospect!” she realized (95). The tone of self-blame seems to change a tone of realization that her breakdown is caused by her marital failure (Brunk, 1999: 130).

At the same time this misery happened at home, Gilman tried to find refuge in physical strength by going to the gym and writing a column for *The People*, weekly published magazine of Providence, Rhode Island. However she was energetic in public affairs, she remained miserable when she returns domestic sphere. Not able to bear the pleadings of Walter and her mother, she was convinced to consult Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, a prominent specialist in nerve diseases particularly of women.

Gilman’s confrontation with Dr. Mitchell was a crucial moment in her life. Mitchell, at the height of his career, welcomed Gilman with these words: “I’ve had two women of your blood here already” (95). It was a bad start. Mitchell’s diagnosis for Gilman was “hysteria”:

> This eminent physician was well versed in two kinds of nervous prostration; that of the business man exhausted from too much work, and the society woman exhausted from too much play. The kind I had was evidently beyond him. But he did reassure me on one point—there was no dementia, he said, only hysteria. (95)

Few years before Mitchell confronted with Gilman he described hysteria as follows:

> Among women of upper classes … caused by unhappy love affairs, losses of money, and the daily fret and weariness of lives, which passing out of maidenhood, lack those distinct purposes and aims which, in the lives of men, are like the steadying influences of the fly-wheel in an engine. (Mitchell, “The True and False Palsies of Hysteria” in *Medical News and Abstracts*, 1880: 65 in Lane, 1990: 118)

Women in Victorian America had to stay behind as caretakers of their homes. The ideal woman was both locked into the kitchens and also expected to enjoy it. Some women were in the search of alternative lives but this attempt would end with marriage and children, like that of Gilman's. Mitchell's restrictive notion for ideal womanhood was realized in the "rest cure" he prescribed her after the treatment in sanatorium: "Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time. … Lie down an hour after each meal. Have but two hours' intellectual life a day. And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live" (96).

This advice was offered to a woman who dreamt a self-oriented public career as a writer and a lecturer. "I went home, followed those directions rigidly for months, and came perilously near to losing my mind" was the consequence as Gilman put it out (96).

Gilman believed that bursting her fetters from the role of a wife would make her situation better and decided to end up her marriage in the fall of 1887:

> We agreed to separate, to get a divorce. There was no quarrel, no blame for either one, never an unkind word between us, unbroken mutual affection—but it seemed plain that if I went crazy it would do my husband no good, and be a deadly injury to my child. … I left home and began to recover. It seemed right to give up a mistaken marriage. (96-97)

Lane thinks that Gilman's rejection of her marriage and Mitchell's rest cure is "the first major act of defiance in her entire life, defiance against the accepted rules of her world" (1990: 123). The effects of the breakdown were always printed on her memory even after nearly forty years when she wrote her autobiography: "such recovery as I have made in forty years, and the work accomplished, seem to show that the fear of insanity was not fulfilled, but the effects of nerve bankruptcy remain to this day" (97). Gilman moved California with her young daughter: "But the ensuing four years in California were the hardest of my life" she wrote. Nevertheless, she trusted herself to build up a new life despite ten dollars in her pocket, a few friends and a great responsibility of a fatherless child. When a friend of her asked her what she would do in Pasadena she answered "I shall earn my own living" (106).

Gilman stayed in Pasadena with her old friend Grace Channing and she was not yet thirty years old. She still felt "invalid", "a drowned thing, drifting along under the water and sometimes bobbing to the surface" (108). "Mr. Stetson" (as Gilman cites him repeatedly after divorce in autobiography) unexpectedly visited them there hoping for reconciliation but "it was no use". In "Writing out of Captivity: The Liberating Rhetoric of Women's Autobiography" , Beth Lynne Brunk suggests that *The Living* can be read as a captivity narrative in which Gilman cleverly employs rhetorical strategies to connote herself out of her captivities. She was neither torn from home like Mary Rowlandson nor kept captive with Harriet Jacobs. Rather, she felt captive because of the patriarchy's oppressive system on women. In this sense says Brunk "Her autobiography is a testament to that oppression and a demonstration of her struggle to overcome it" (Brunk, 1999: 107). This point of view seems to be convenient as Gilman describes her situation after her divorce was legally announced: "After I was finally free, in 1890, wreck though I was, there was a surprising output of work, some of my best" (98).

In Pasadena, she earned small amount of money by lecturing on diverse subjects and selling some articles for even ten dollars. Also, she joined a theatre group; there she both wrote and acted in plays with Grace Channing. In this two years' period, she wrote two magnificent literary pieces that brought her international fame: the story "The Yellow Wallpaper" and the poem "Similar Cases". The first is self-examination while the latter is a "satirical, playful slap at traditional thought and thinkers" Reading the first after the latter arouses a sense of diverse emotions that she was exposed to (Lane, 1990: 143).

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is a story that depicts a young mother's descend into madness caused by a husband who insidiously confines the woman's creativity. John, the "good" physician husband takes his ailing wife who is suffering from a nervous breakdown to a house for the summer. The protagonist narrates that John "is very careful and loving", similar to language that Gilman uses for Walter Stetson in her autobiography. Also, her husband is not the only one who asserts that she has a diagnosis; her Physician brother confirms her husband, too. Believing that she can

be hailed by writing a little that would furnish her a little rest and relief; she is ultimately threatened with intimidation: If she does not recover soon, she will be sent to Dr. S. Weir Mitchell whom she is terrified of meeting. Mitchell is portrayed even more dangerous than her husband, as a force "leading to her destruction". As her condition gets worse, the woman feels disgusted by the yellow wallpaper in her room. Within the wallpaper, there is a "strange, provoking, formless sort of figure that seems to skulk about". As the days pass, the shape supersedes a woman creeping behind the pattern. At night, the pattern mutilates into bars, like the bars on the windows and the woman in the wallpaper becomes visible, imprisoned. This imprisoned figure begins to shake the pattern as if she wanted to get out. Besides, it is nighttime when John is present and now she believes that John only pretends to be kind and loving. When she is surrounded by creeping women in the pattern, John was at the door calling for an axe to break the door. She is one of those creeping woman but not the one that will crawl back to the wall. When John enters the room, he faints and she escapes from her prison by creeping over him (Lane, 1990: 124-127).

Although William Dean Howells tried to promote Gilman by sending "The Yellow Wallpaper" to the editor of Atlantic Monthly magazine, the editor rejected Gilman with the note following:

> *Dear Madam,*
> *Mr. Howells has handed me this story.*
> *I could not forgive myself if I made others as miserable as I have made myself!*
>
> *Sincerely yours* (119)

On the other hand, the story was published in the same magazine in May, 1891 and made a "tremendous impression". A protest letter sent to editor best describes this impression: "It [The Yellow Wallpaper] seems to open the serious question if such literature should be permitted in print. … Should such stories be allowed to pass without severest censure?" (120).

Just as there were separate spheres for women and men in society, there were also separate spheres in literature. Meyering points out that the most familiar response towards this prejudice was denying that they [the women] had no intention for producing literature (1989: 7). This kind of self-deprecation also exists in *The Living*:

> I have written enough to make a set of twenty-five volumes of stories, plays, verse and miscellany; besides no end of stuff not good enough to keep. But this was all the natural expression of thought, except in stories, which called for composition and were more difficult—especially the novels, which are poor. (100)

Once, William Dean Howells asked Gilman to include the story in a collection, *Masterpieces of American Fiction,* she reduplicated her notion that the story was no more "literature": "I was more than willing, but assured him that it was no more "literature" than my other stuff, being definitely written "with a purpose". In my judgment, it is a pretty poor thing to write, to talk, without a purpose" (121). In Gilman's words, the whole purpose of the story was didactic as was the case in her autobiography:

> The real purpose of the story was to reach Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, and convince him of the error of his ways. I sent him a copy as soon as it came out, but got no response. However many years later, I met some one who knew close friends of Dr. Mitchell's who said he had told them that he had changed his treatment of nervous prostration since reading "The Yellow Wallpaper". If that is a fact, I have not lived in vain. (121)

Readers and critics have connected the story and Gilman's life accepting the story as a "literal transcription of her life" (Fleenor, 1983: 119). Gilman admits that the story has autobiographical shadows in it. One of *New England's Magazine*'s editors asked her whether the story was founded on fact, she recalls telling: "I gave him all I decently could of my case as a foundation for the tale" (121). She also wrote: "It [The Yellow Wallpaper] is a description of a case of nervous breakdown beginning something as mine did" (119). Lane suggests that "The Yellow

Wallpaper" is a "personal examination of Gilman's private nightmare" (Lane, 1990: 127).

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is sometimes counted in the works of Gothic tradition and a brilliant psychological study in which she used characters and situations that came from her personal experience. Fleenor thinks that Gothic with its themes of madness and disintegration for proof of women's systematic victimization has been used by women writers. According to her, female culture is the victim of a male-oriented society and the Gothic form with its "ambivalent female symbolism and its psychological effect has been congenial for expressing that ambivalent experience" is used for expressing women's fear of maternity. At this juncture, if fiction could be analyzed through autobiography, it would be possible to analyze autobiography through literature, the Gothic (Fleenor, 1983: 117-119). Lane thinks that "The Yellow Wallpaper" is "the only genuine literary piece she ever created and it is, also of all her fiction, the most clearly, the most consciously autobiographical" (Lane, 1990: 127).

Despite not having reputation like that of "The Yellow Wallpaper", Gilman wrote two more gothic stories entitled "The Rocking Chair" and "The Giant Wistaria" both published in *The New England Magazine*. All displayed similar themes; "all three are evidence that the conflict, central to Gilman's Gothic fiction and later to her autobiography, was a conflict with the mother, motherhood, and with creation" (Fleenor, 1983: 120). Besides, Gilman produced three Utopian novels, *Moving the Mountain* (1991), *Herland* (1915) and *With Her in Ourland* (1916). In all of these three novels, she envisaged perfect environments in which women could develop their own autonomy free from male habits of dominance. In "A Militant Madonna: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Feminism and Physical Culture", Patricia Vertinsky points out that Gilman's women in her works were unchained healthy women 'free from the rape of their minds as well as their bodies', meanwhile fulfilling their roles as mothers 'dedicated to the highest ideals of duty to family and duty'. One of the main concerns throughout Gilman's life is the will to remain healthy and strong during physical activity. "Her demands for purposive physical

activity, her pursuit of physical and mental well-being and her desire to become a professional writer were expressions of the rising aspirations of women in the struggle for identity and equality that she shared with other feminists of the late nineteenth century" (Vertinsky, 2001: 58-67).

It was impossible to ignore the importance of economic freedom while being a child of a divorced woman with no economic independence and being a divorced mother of a child. Gilman realized that private realm in which women were made princess of kitchens was the most important split point which forced women into enslavement that public kings wriggled. Inspired by her own life experiences, she published *Women and Economics: The Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* in 1898. In the last two decades of nineteenth century, Gilman's international fame soared with the publication of this theoretical masterpiece. For the next fifteen years, she was rejoiced with the acceptance of her ideas as an influential figure. Between 1900-1909, she published 234 non-fiction pieces and 54 poems. As for her public speeches, Gilman remembers the effect of them on her audience as "breathless, eager, deeply moved" (186). After her speech on "The Principals of Socialism", someone said: "I came prepared to deny everything that was said, but you haven't said anything but what is true" (242). Harriet Howe, a feminist writer, who heard Gilman speaking many times for public said: "the audience began to interrupt her with frequent applause, their puzzlement at first no doubt being due to hearing valuable ideas from a woman, a woman who had something to say and knew how to say it devoid of all platitudes" (Howe, 211 in Brunk, 1999: 112).

Carl N. Degler states in his introduction to *Women and Economics* that the book is autobiographical in its origins but for anyone who knows Gilman's life, it is a testament and reflection of this life (Gilman, 1966: introduction, viii). Gilman wrote the first manuscript that the publishers accepted in seventeen days in five different houses. According to Gilman, this book was "a blow to the scientific mind" (260). For William L. O'Neill, *Women and Economics* is "the most influential book written by an American feminist" (O'Neill, 1969: 131 in Karpinski, 1992: 6). This

pivotal nonfiction book made Gilman to be hailed as the leading intellectual for women's movement at the turn of the century. When she was asked why she had not put in a bibliography to the book she answered: "I had meant to, but when it came to making a list of the books I had read bearing on the subject, there were only two! One was Gendes's and Thompson's *Evolution of Sex*, the other only an article, Lester F. Ward's, in that 1888 *Forum*" (259). However, *Women and Economics* did not provide her the returns she expected: "The discrepancy between its really enormous vogue and its very meager returns I have never understood. It sold and sold and sold about twenty-five years" (270). *The Living* can be seen as a treatise that she uncovers her harsh economic conditions and oppression of her own life experiences at a larger scale rather than a theory like the one in *Women and Economics*.

Dwelling her ideas on evolutionary science, she argues that humans are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male counterpart for food and the only animal that its sex relation is an economic relation concurrently in *Women and Economics*. The more education opportunities women have the more freedom they will have outside the household. Her recipe was to design a large market for domestic industry. In Gilman's opinion, no wife would be forced to cook unless she is paid for this profession and she proposes kitchenless houses:

> If there should be built and opened in any of our large cities to-day a commodious and well-served apartment house for professional women with families, it would be filled at once. The apartments would be without kitchens; but there would be a kitchen belonging to the house from which meals could be served to the families in their rooms or in a common dining-room, as preferred. It would be a home where the cleaning was done by efficient workers, not hired separately by thefamilies, but engaged by the manager of the establishment; and a roof-garden, day nursery, and kindergarten, under well-trained professional nurses and teachers, would insure proper care of the children. The demand for such provision is increasing daily, and must soon be met, not by a boarding-house or a lodging-house, a hotel, a restaurant, or any makeshift patching together of these; but by a permanent provision for the needs of women and children, of family privacy with collective advantage. This must be offered on a business basis to prove a substantial business success; and it will so prove, for it is a growing social need. (Gilman, 1998: 242)

Men’s work is far more important in social order than women’s. Women’s economic rewards depend on the ability of the men whom they are dependent. This sexuo-economic relationship, as Gilman defines it, cripples human relations. As the sexual attraction grows between male and female naturally, human race created an ‘unnatural’, a ‘morbid excess in the exercise of this function’. Her critical judgment in the language of evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin begins then. For the development of species, there should be a perfect balance between “self-preservation” and “race-preservation”. Self-preservation illustrates the qualities that enable a human being to live on an individual life that evolves through natural selection whereas race-preservation means the qualities that are needed for the survival of the species, often detrimental to individual needs. Race-preservation is a product of sexual selection and it is related to gender norms. That balance is shaken only in human race as the human female is dependent on the male partner. In other words, man is shaped by natural selection; on the contrary, woman is shaped by sexual selection. In Gilman’s vocabulary, this morbid quality of sex-distinction is being “over-sexed”. Men are less “over-sexed” in this distorted balance because sexual life is only a part of his world as he has been responsible for the development of commerce, industry, religion, art and education. It is women that are “locked into a definition of themselves as sexual rather than human beings” (Lane, 1990: 242). Gilman thinks that there is not a “female mind”: “There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. As well speak of a female liver” (Gilman, 1966: 146 in Lane, 1990: 238). All activities in our civilization process are related to self-preservation and they belong to every individual in the society regardless of her/his sex. Race-functions in the arena of human progress such as economic, cultural, religious and scientific ones belong to race-functions. Economic progress of women is never developed because of the confining gender roles they are attributed.

From another point of view, men contribute to social development excessively and this leads to exaggeration of individualism. “She gets her living by getting a husband. He gets his wife by getting a wife” (Lane, 1990: 244). It is a common belief that men are the natural supporters of the family but Gilman argues that it means the violation of sociological law that anticipates the superiority of the

community. In this sense, the minimal presentation of society, the family is a retrogressive institution. The concept of family unit is changing and it should change. Gilman is hopeful in *Women and Economics* because there are many women who are in the pursuit of their economic freedom and once it is achieved, perfect balance between men and women that has been long sought for will be possible. Gilman has an answer to judgments that stands for the becoming of women masculine. The new-model women will be no less female than the previous one but they will be able to do more. Rapid changes have no connection with masculine or female traits but only have a connection with the advances of human development that belong to both sexes (Lane, 1990: 230-246). Gilman had great expectations for the forthcoming generation but unfortunately she would be disappointed towards the end of her life.

In social evolution, "the process of outgrowing the older form is accomplished only slowly and with great pain" (Lane, 1990: 250). In her autobiography, she states: "to think as we have thought before is much easier than to think in new lines; to prove new theories is so much more difficult than to accept established ones" (138). To create a better society for every one she subordinates her personal desires for public's interest. However, such self-denial entertains the risk of not being able to move beyond a role assigned to a traditional woman. A traditional woman lives for others, for her family, and Gilman achieves this on a larger scale.

Gilman had a low opinion of motherhood carried on with primitive instinct lack of necessary education. Lane suggests that Gilman expressed many times in lectures, in her letters and in her autobiography that 'to love a child' is not adequate 'to serve a child' (1990: 307). After her mother's death and several incidents happened related to her harsh economic conditions, she decided to move to San Francisco which is "not suitable for a child" (162). So, she sent Katherine to East near "her second mother", Grace and her father Walter; but criticized constantly for giving up her child. Her reasons as she put in her autobiography seem logical:

> Since her second mother was fully as good as the first, better in some ways perhaps; since the father longed for his child and had a right to some of her society; and since the child had a right to know and love

> her father—I did not mean her to suffer the losses of my youth—this seemed the right thing to do. No one suffered from it but myself. This, however, was entirely overlooked in the furious condemnation which followed. I had ‘given up my child’. (63)

Despite lecturing many times on mothering as an institution, Lane thinks that Gilman was never able to face the issue herself and she could not express her feelings on the subject properly (1990: 37). When she remembers those times in her autobiography she is not free of anguish: “That was thirty years ago. I have to stop typing and cry as I tell about it. There were years, years, when I could never see a mother and child together without crying, or even a picture of them” (163-164).

The shortest chapter in *The Living* is “Motherhood”. Throughout the chapter, Gilman mostly deals with her methods while rearing Katherine and the depression for the loss of Katherine is cited less. She was really angry with the critics who portrayed her like a devilish mother. Towards the end of the chapter, she seems confessing:

> What were those pious condemners thinking of? I had lost home and husband, my mother was dead, my father never close at all, was now removed across the continent. My recent “best-friend” had, as it were soured on my hands, I had no money at all—I had barrowed again to pay for Katherine’s ticket and to move, and left failure behind me, and debt. (164)

Lane points out that Gilman’s words of sadness for the loss of Katherine were always followed by her triumph in her letters to Houghton and Grace (Lane, 1990: 309). A similar case exists in *The Living*: The quotation above about her confessing is followed by her expression of self-esteem about rearing Katherine properly. Some years later, she asked her father with whom she sent Katherine to Walter about the child’s behavior in the train. She was satisfied with the answer she received: “She behaved as if she was trying to make it comfortable as possible for every one she was with” (164). It is identical with Gilman’s role in life; she lived on behalf of others, for the betterment of society for every individual. “She always did. She always has. …” she writes of Katherine (164). Gilman seems to feel accomplishment about modest behaviour of Katherine.

Although Gilman laments for Katherine's absence deeply, she was now free to travel and serve the public as she pleased. She attended Woman Suffrage Convention on October, 6, 1886 that was organized by the National American Suffrage Association. This association's importance lays in its being the beginning of organized American feminism (Rose: 1992 in Brunk, 1999: 134).

In 1894, she made up her mind for going San Francisco to settle a new life-alone. In April, her marriage with Walter was legally approved; many people criticized her due to her growing relationship with Walter and his new wife, Grace. Gilman was really satisfied with their decision to marry; her happiness was 'intense'. However, "That continued friendship was that the pure minded San-Franciscans could not endure" (167). She began to write a column for *The Impress*, but she was labeled an outcast, a devilish mother having strange correspondence between her ex-husband and her best-friend. A prominent woman doctor spoke of *The Impress*: "Yes, it is a brilliant paper, an interesting paper, but after what Mrs. Stetson printed in her first issue no self-respecting woman could have it on her table" (173). Also, her choice of sending Katherine to live with Grace and Walter meant the rejection of traditional roles attributed to women for selfish reasons. On Christmas Day 1892, she read in the *San Francisco Examine*: "There are not many women, fortunately for humanity, who agree with Mrs. Stetson that any "work", literary, philanthropic, or political, is higher than that of being a good wife and mother" (quoted in Lane, 1990: 170). While rebelling against the oppressive system of patriarchy, she was no more a devoid of rebellion. She neither denied the differences between sexes nor the importance of woman's traditional roles as a wife or mother (Vertinsky, 2001: 69).

The family was gone and the public that she had strived to make better turned its back on her. It was a collapse one more: "Thirty-five years old. A failure, a repeated, cumulative failure. Debt, quite a lot of it. No means of paying, no strength to hold a job if I got one. I decided it was time to leave" (176). She had a sense of courage to make a fresh start and she always would: "I was alive and had my work to do; I was escaping from the foulest misinterpretations and abuse I have ever known,

and I had a wholly reliable religion and social philosophy" (180). The train she got on moved to Chicago.

On her way to Chicago, when she was asked to inform an address, she wrote: "Charlotte Perkins Stetson. At Large" (181). From 1895 to her second marriage in 1900, this was her address. She travelled across the continent in these five years and gave many lectures to find out "what ailed society, and how most easily and naturally to improve it" (Lane, 1990: 182). An incident that would change her life occurred in 1897 when she dropped into George Houghton Gilman's office for legal advice whom she would marry for the second time. Very little is known about Ho (as Gilman called him), Gilman nearly wrote nothing about him. A little can be suggested about him from others had said: "a gentle, reserved, kind, and lovable man, who put the considerable strength and energy that he possessed into sustaining strong bonds of marriage and family rather than into advancing career" (Lane, 1990: 190). There are only brief references for Ho in her memoirs and only three references one can come across in *The Living*: "I was met with my cousin, G.H. Gilman of New York, and we were married—and lived happy ever after. If this were a novel, now, here's the happy ending" (281). Lane thinks that the letters circulated between Gilman and Ho are especially important because their love was created in these texts, sometimes eight or ten pages long. Gilman waited for three years to marry with Ho because she had doubts that stemmed from her first experience. She feared because she was not sure whether Ho would enter a relationship with her unaware her inner conflicts about the private and the public (Lane, 1990: 182-208). On June, 1900 they got married and Charlotte continued on her lectures extremely. Her fears were in vain. Ho was the "best of all". She seems never to regret for her decision: "He bore it nobly. If one marries a philosopher or a prophet there are various consequences to be met; Xanthippe loses her temper over it, Kadijah does not, I believe, complain, but it never is wholly easy" (281).

The second time Gilman refers Ho in *The Living* is her declaration of happiness: "My happiness in Norwich was in my garden, with Houghton as always, and with a few beloved friends" (333). This declaration seems irrelevant with self-

portrayal she created throughout *The Living*. However, it must be kept in mind that these words were inked by a woman who was disappointed by her diminishing reputation in the twentieth century.

The third time Ho was referred in the last chapter was when she discovered that she had breast cancer: “In January, 1932, I discovered that I had cancer of the breast. My only distress was for Houghton. I had not the least objection to dying” (333). “He suffered a thousand times more than I did—but not for long. On the fourth of May, 1934, he suddenly died from cerebral hemorrhage” (334). Never to say, it must have been the most crucial moment of Gilman’s life. She had lost everything that meant to her: her reputation as an acceptable world-maker and her beloved Ho. The decision with a sense of uselessness came thereafter: “I have preferred chloroform to cancer” (334).

3.2. *THE LIVING:* TRADITIONAL OR ATYPICAL?

Gilman’s autobiography can be considered both traditional and atypical. As a traditional autobiography, it starts with Gilman’s birth and biographical sketches from her parents’ lives and heritage. Then, it is followed with the events of her life. Actually, these characteristics distinguish her autobiography from other women’s texts because autobiographies written by women are not generally linear; they are fragmented. An exceptional characteristic of her autobiography which separates hers from nearly all others is the inclusion of her death. Autobiographical texts are authored by the person who lives the life and the death of the writer cannot be included in as a matter of fact. A few autobiographies include a chapter that is reserved for the death of the narrator. However, Gilman’s autobiography does end with the end. Gilman wrote twenty of the twenty-one chapters in 1926 and sent the manuscript to the editors the following year but it was not found worth publishing. She put the manuscript aside then. When she learnt that she would die soon because of breast cancer, she confronted one more time with the text as a woman waiting to die. By a bizarre coincidence, before her suicide an unknown editor had requested permit from Gilman to publish her essay which had been first published in

Forerunner on euthanasia entitled “Good and Bad Taste in Suicide”. In this article she developed her own suicide. Every human “owes to others the best service of a lifetime”, “If persons are beyond usefulness, of no service or comfort to anyone … they have a right to leave” (Lane, 1990: 360). Concerning her autobiography, “The Last Ten” chapter becomes both her suicide note and a part of the last chapter of *The Living*.

Does Gilman tell the truth of her life in *The Living*? Many critics argue that Gilman does not tell the truth of her life. Carolyn Heilburn thinks that her autobiography is a “flat” one in which she disguises the real woman. According to her, Gilman “recast herself” because she uses totally two distinct voices in her autobiography and her diaries (Heilburn, 1989: 24 in Brunk, 1999: 140). It is true that self-deception is visible in *The Living*; her weaker moments in life are not included as was the case in letters and diaries. Brunk refers to Mary Hill’s reading of Gilman’s letters: “Hill’s reading of her letters paints an image of a woman who is ready to be institutionalized; one for whom there is no hope for survival and who fears that she is no longer fit to be called a woman” (Brunk, 1999: 144).

Beth Lynn Brunk conveys that even the title of her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, connotes her philosophy for life. She could have chosen *The Life of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* but did not because she believed that her life is an on-going activity; it is not a product but rather a progressive process. In this sense, it is a contrast to the more typical choices for an autobiography title. Brunk argues from analogy that Gilman uses the word “living” many times throughout the text in quotation mark except for one instance to call her readers to action and make them think about its potential meanings: “She does reformulate the notions of autobiography to suit both the pattern of her life and the purpose for her writing” (Brunk, 1999: 137). Gilman herself points out the difference between ‘life’ and ‘living’:

> The difference is great between one’s outside “life”, the things which happen to one, incidents, pains and pleasures, and one’s “living”. Outside, here was a woman undergoing many hardships and losses,

> and particularly handicapped by the mental weakness which shut down her again, utter prostration and misery. But inside her was a conscious humanity, immensely beyond self; a realization of the practical immortality of that ceaseless human life of ours, of its prodigious power, its endless growth. (181)

Another point that distinguishes *The Living* from other women's autobiographies and at the same time that draws near to men's autobiographical tradition is her self-effacement often intermixed with bragging. In a typical autobiography written by a woman, it is unusual to represent the self with a sense of glorification. In the passage below, she seems to be bragging about her triumph after her breakdown. In order not to create the effect of bragging, she refers other people's comments about her to promote her worth:

> Since my public activities do not show weakness nor my writings, and since my brain and nerve disorder is not visible, short of lunacy or literal "prostration," this lifetime of limitation and wretchedness, when I mention it, is flatly disbelieved. When I am forced to refuse invitations, to back out of work that seems easy, to own that I cannot read a heavy book, apologetically alleging this weakness of mind, friends gibber amiably, "I wish I had your mind!" I wish they had, for a while, as punishment for doubting my work. What confuses them is the visible work I have been able to accomplish. They see activity, achievement, they do not see blank months of idleness; nor can they see what the work would have been if the powerful mind I had begin with had not been broken at twenty four. (98)

In fact, such a desire to be promoted dates back to her childhood. When a friend of her mother told that Gilman was "all froth and foam" was the time that Gilman began her character building. Six years later, she asked that woman whether she had the same opinion about her, the woman stated that Gilman "was the most determined and firmly based young woman she knew" (56). Gilman relates this with her success in character building: "Perhaps that relentless memory and determination to make her 'eat her words' shows some inner force of character, if only contradictoriness" (56). A similar incident happened with her mother when she blamed Gilman for being thoughtless. She accepted that her mother was right and got a move on placing other people's needs before her own. In two years' time, she heard a woman describing her as "so thoughtful of other people". "Hurrah! … another

game won!" she wrote (59). Instead of becoming miserable with others' negative comments, she strived to change her character for the better. These two examples from her autobiography illustrate that she is really proud of doing so even at the age of sixty-five, that's why she mentions them boastfully.

The form in in *The Living* is very similar to her dilemmas in life. The first part till her divorce with Walter describes a woman who had an unhappy childhood, a failed marriage, scattered expressions of self and self-distrust caused by numerous defective strategies on women. On the other hand, the second part portrays a woman of success and a skilled author, unwomanly practises she pursued to achieve what she wanted.

3.3. WRITING *FOR* AN AUDIENCE

In the introduction part of *The Living*, Ann J. Lane states that it is important to read Gilman's autobiography not only for who is speaking and why but also taking into consideration of the intended reader. Gilman espoused a socialist commitment although young women of her time had a different sense of womanhood pursuing for their emotional, personal, and sexual satisfactions (xxvii).

3.3.1. Socialist Commitment

While talking about Gilman's socialist commitment, it is important to portray her in the context of American Socialist tradition. American Socialist tradition is not based on Marxism. At the turn of the twentieth century, it was presented by Edward Bellamy, Lester F. Ward, Thornstein Veblen, and Gilman herself. These philosophers believed in socialist feminism and recognized that social transformation they longed for need not begin with a change in the mode of production; they did not share the idea that family was independent. On the contrary, those philosophers believed that family was a part of ideological structure and it could be transformed only through a change in the ownership of the means of production. Although Marxism had never rooted in American society, American socialist tradition had a

quiet but substantial effect on it (Zauderer, 1999: 152). American socialists differed from Marx in terms of class antagonism as they rejected it. They considered state as an altruistic force and family as an independent effect on society.

A significant point that should be taken into consideration while talking about Gilman's understanding of socialism is her nationalist commitment. She was an ardent advocate of Bellamy Nationalism. In the late 1880s, Gilman was in the circuit of lectures mostly for Nationalist movement and she began writing for Nationalist publications. Trancis Willard, Mary Livermore, Gilman's uncle Edward Everett Hale, and William Dean Howells were among most widely known "Bellamyite"s (Allen, 1988: 41). Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* is a manifestation of this movement. The novel suggests an economic system based on publicly-owned capital for social equality. In the book, an upper class man, Julian West, is transported from the nineteenth century to a utopian twentieth century. The twentieth century in the novel is portrayed as a socialist utopia in which government divides national product equally between all citizens as was desired in the nineteenth century (www.sparknotes.com). The novel was a real success and influenced many social, political and economic theorists of the day. Also, "Bellamy Clubs" branched out all over the United States for discussing and propagating the book's ideas. Polly Wynn Allen thinks that Gilman's poem "Similar Cases" which draws an anology between human and animal evolution and the inanity of resistance to either sustained Gilman on the "socialist celebrity map" in 1890 by bringing her widespread admiration and incalculable lecture invitations. (1988: 41). Early in 1896, when she was a delegate to a suffrage convention in Washington, D.C., a reception was given in honor of Gilman because of the success of poem by sociologist Lester F. Ward whom she had been a follower of since he published his "gynocentric theory" in 1888 in *Forum* magazine (Lane, 1990: 186). Gilman defines the theory as "the greatest single contribution to the world's thought since Evolution" (187).

In the twentieth century, while some Nationalists propagated that the most important aspect of nationality is one's identity; some of them defined the nation in

terms of race or genetics (www.wikipedia.org). Gilman was in the group of the latter. She believed in recognition of different races of men:

> The most marked change which has been wrought by a lifetime's experience is in regard to the recognition of different stages of growth, different kinds of growth, in the different races of men. The general love of humanity remains, with the continuing desire to help it onward but with wider sociological knowledge comes further understanding of the nature of that humanity, and the need of varying treatment according to race and nation. (329)

After twenty-two years in New York, she defines the city as an "exile". The city was "swollen rather than grown" because at the beginnings of twentieth century, New York was "multiforeign" (317). This concept made her think the question "What i*s* an American?". The answer she found for this identity question is "Americans are the kinds of people who have made a country that every other kind of people wants to get into!" (316-317). She was in a fear that Americans would become a minority in their own land because of the migration: "The petty minority of Americans in New York receive small respect from their supplanters. Why should they?" (316). These non-American people did low-paid work and they were a threat as they drove down the wages of native-born Americans. As a result, Congress passed a restrictive immigration act and it was supplanted in 1924 by the Johnson-Reed National Origins Act that seated an immigration quota for each nationality (www. america.gov). Yet, it is difficult to understand Gilman's point of view as she defines herself a humanist because being a humanist entails embracement of all people in any case disregarding ethnic factors.

Gilman defines her understanding of Socialism as below since economic independence of women is far more important to her:

> My Socialism was of the early humanitarian kind, based on the first exponents, French and English, with the American enthusiasm of Bellamy. The narrow and rigid "economic determinism" of Marx, with its "class struggle" I never accepted, nor the political methods pursued by Marxians. My main interest then was in the position of women, and the need for more scientific care for young children. (131)

To improve society wholly, women must be freed from their domestic cages and contribute to production. Women's progress was just a step towards human's liberation. Of course, Socialist women fought for human liberation but there was a point which differed Gilman from them: Socialists believed that women's liberation would come as a product of social triumph whereas Gilman believed in emancipation of women would lead the freedom at first hand (Lane, 1990: 231-232).

In "Home" chapter in *The Living*, she was really fed up with misunderstanding of socialism:

> Socialism, long misrepresented and misunderstood under the violent propaganda of Marxism, has been fairly obliterated in the public mind by the Jewish-Russian nightmare, Bolshevism. That "public mind" was never very clear on the subject, as was natural under the kind of they mostly heard; people used even to confuse Socialism with Anarchism---which are absolute opposites. (320)

Moreover, Marxists view consumption and reproduction as private activities determined by production. In a broad sense, consumption and reproduction lie outside of conventional economic analysis. On the other hand, consumption and reproduction are given the same emphasis by Gilman. According to her, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels's theory doesn't pay attention to prolonged period in childhood when we depend on others, thus it is lack of human experience. In Marxian vision of production and consumption, we produce ourselves as we consume, production is the process in which we spend our existing energy of earlier collective efforts; in this sense we must first destroy in order to create. (Zauderer: 1999: 156)

Gilman made an expansion by hazarding a remark about reproduction aspect in this convention. According to Gilman, Marks and Engels fail to see that we are born incapable of participating in the process of social production. In childhood, production and consumption do not occur simultaneously. We consume resources that belong to humanity before long years that we begin to work in working fields. Gilman believes that approximately during the first fifteen years of our life we have little control over our development (Zauderer, 1999: 156). At the age of fifteen, when

she confessed that she “was born” after her mother’s slap that is mentioned previously in this study, she understood that she was a “free agent”: “If I was a free agent, what was I going to do with my freedom? If I develop character as I chose, what kind of character was I going to develop? This at fifteen” (35). She found out the first duty of a human being in her “reliable system of development” as “to assume right functional relation to society-more briefly to find your real job, and do it” (42-43). Gilman was never pleased with herself when she was young that is why she was eager to organize a serious character building and study designed to lead her progressive perfection. (Allen, 1988: 37).

At this juncture, Gilman thinks that an individual owes to society and her work should be viewed as a pay-back because what we consume in infancy and childhood are the products of earlier generation’s labor. In an essay at Alameda Country Federation of Trades, Gilman states: “It is the right of the individual so cared for, because he is a constituent part of society. He, in return, owes to society all the labor which nutrition and education have made possible to him” (“The Labor Movement”, written in 1892, republished in Ceplair, *Nonfiction*, 69 in Zauderer, 1999: 154).

It may be suggested that *The Living* is her pay-back to society; a story of a woman who is able to move across the borders within a life devoted to social development: “Because God, manifesting himself in Society, calls for ever fuller and more perfect forms of expression, therefore I, as part of Society and part of God owe my whole service to the Social Development” (276). Gilman’s conception of religious action was ethical and in direct proportion with her socialist commitment. She was not a member of an official church, but a believer in progressive religion. Her religion was not a goal but an instrument championing her aim: “the improvement of the human race”. She was a fervent advocate of cultivation of social consciousness in the United States but she did not support a party; however, she was in close touch with Fabian thought and Edward Bellamy. Her nonpartisan role positioned her as an intellectual leader and she was applauded by many critics of the time:

> heroically formulating an unpopular philosophy and presenting it with the illumination of genius. Perhaps no other living woman can communicate with such a thrill the aspiration of social rightousness. Mrs. Gilman's philosophy is dynamic: it is essentially one of hope, courage, joy: and it is for America today. (Winkler, 51 in Brunk, 1999: 112)

This 'attention to service' or 'self denial' is seen even in her decision of suicide as she suffered from breast cancer by the end of 1934. Doctors told Gilman in March 1935 that she had probably six months to live ahead her. She decided to end her life because she believed it was justifiable 'cutting of one's life while any power of service remains': "But when all usefulness is over, when one is assured of unavoidable and imminent death, it is the simplest of human rights to choose a quick and easy death in place of a slow and horrible one. …Human life consists in mutual service" (333). By early August, she completed the revisions of her autobiography, selected the photos and cover and made the proofreading. On August 17, 1935 she took the chloroform that she had long been accumulating and died quickly and painlessly.

While it may seem heroic and a rational choice from the point of Gilman, Fleenor regards Gilman's suicide as not "an affirmation" of a successful life because protagonist in the autobiography is also a "wounded woman", "damaged, controlled by others". She thinks that Gilman tries to portray a woman of success "even to the point of omitting and misrepresenting some events" (1983: 129).

3.3.2. A Feminist or a Humanist?

It is really difficult to define Charlotte Perkins Gilman's role in life with only a word. During her lifetime, she was concerned with many issues but the most important characteristic of her was "to stand for the potentialities of American Womanhood" (Berkin, 1992: 17). She was a writer, socialist, philosopher, journalist, feminist, and a humanist. Her personal experiences narrated in her autobiography (and most scholars find her body of works autobiographical) are means of evidence that she had to bear due to the gender inequalities in society.

Gilman did not accept feminist label before her name; rather described herself as a humanist: “Which was true enough, except for the limited object, my interest was in all humanity, not merely in the under side of it” (184). Feminism was like a bar standing on her path that obscured her. She was not satisfied when the Suffragist Movement won the right for vote contrary to many people thinking that the movement was over. The world she dreamed was more different: “For instance, we have attained full suffrage for women. This was never to me *summum bonum* it was to many of its advocates, but I did expect better things of women than they have shown” (318). For Gilman, taking right to vote was only a piece in the big puzzle that waited to be sold. Woman question was such an important matter that could not be cloaked with just a given right. She believed fundamental changes in women’s lives and society in terms of economic and social institutions. For her, the progress of humanity is related to woman’s progress in society and it is more important than any other previous changes. The avenue was full of with prickles and a right to vote was just one of them to be trespassed to reveal the human potential of women:

> Full of the passion of world improvement and seeing the position of women as responsible for much, very much, of our evil condition, I had been studying it for years as a problem of instant importance. The political equality demanded by the suffragists not enough to give real freedom. Women whose industrial position is that of a house-servant, or who do not work at all, who are fed, clothed, and given pocket money by men, do not reach freedom and equality by the use of the ballot. (235)

Gilman was regarded as a suffragist by many who opposed the movement, on the other hand, suffragists abstained to associate her with the movement: “Similarly the anti-suffrage masses had me blackly marked “Suffragist”, while the suffragists thought me a doubtful if not dangerous ally on account of my theory of the need of economic independence of women” (198). She relates the details of it with the words of one of Suffrage leaders addressed to her: “After all I think you will do our cause more good than harm, because what you ask is so much worse than what we ask that they will grant our demands in order to escape yours” (198).

Although Gilman does not associate herself in feminist tradition of her time, it is an undeniable fact that her ideas are still points of feminist scholarly argument today. According to Lane, when Gilman insisted that she was not a feminist, she was completely wrong:

> As she said, she was a humanist; the world was masculinist and she wished to restore an equitable balance. She saw the submergence of women as a critical handicap retarding the best development of society, and it was in this context that she spoke of the social need to emancipate women. Nor was her argument for women's freedom rooted in a natural-rights position, which asserted that basic rights are inviolable and inalienable because they are rooted not in theology and history, but in human nature. She argued that women were narrowed by their position in society and that they therefore narrowed the lives of their men and children. (1990: 231-232)

Carl Degler is widely accepted as the dean of Gilman studies in 1960s with the rise of feminism with his retrospective study on Gilman and Feminism which appeared in *American Quarterly* in 1956, entitled "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism". This article prompted reprinting of Gilman's masterpiece *Women and Economics* and scholarly interest in her other works. Degler narrates that Gilman's self-portrait of a strong-minded woman makes her a typical feminist but such a typecasting is the result of the division between the sexes in the nineteenth century both in appearance and manner (Gilman, 1966, introduction, xxi).

As a woman married twice, she advocated that women should bear their own surnames. When publishers were uneasy with the change of her name from Stetson to Gilman with a rationale that she would lose money because of this change, she protested it: "Do you Think I would keep one man's name after I had married another, just for money!" (284). She thinks this point as a nuisance: "I had kept the name of Stetson after getting my divorce, on Katherine's account, having no faintest intention of ever marrying again. It would have saved trouble had I remained Perkins from the first, this changing of women's names is a nuisance we are now happily outgrowing" (284).

In the late-twentieth century Gilman was more celebrated as a writer of novels and short stories, notably with *Herland* and “The Yellow Wallpaper”; her social and political essays which originally brought her fame seem to be put aside. Yet, “this figure of female resistance and reform” produced a large body of literature across a variety of genres (Rudd, 1999, introduction: xi). In *The Living*, she indicates that William Dean Howells once called her as an optimist reformer:

> Mr. Howells told me I was the only optimist reformer he ever met. Perhaps because I was not a reformer, but a philosopher. I worked for various reforms, as Socrates went to war when Athens needed his services, but we do not remember him as a soldier. My business was to find out what ailed society, and how most easily and naturally how to improve it. (182)

According to Jill Rudd and Val Gough, what distinguished Gilman from a social satirist was her “persistent optimism”. She had an unyielding belief in individual effort to change things better and surprisingly (Rudd and Gough, 1999: x).

Although she never explicitly announces that she wrote for middle and upper class white women, she seems to be concerned with the betterment of their conditions. So, especially at times she was renowned as an influential intellectual figure, she did not need to identify with them. In this context, she imporsanates the role of a didactic mother. There is not a slightest mention about women of color in *The Living* despite their being double-pressed because of their gender and race. Today, she is often criticized for being ethnocentric and racist.

3.3.3. A Path Full of Powder

Berkin puts forward the purpose of *The Living* as “to mark the path for other younger women” (Berkin, 1979: 38). However, there is a tone of disappointment towards other women: “This is the woman’s century, the first chance for the mother of the world to rise to her full place, her transcendent power to remake humanity, to rebuild the suffering world – and the world awaits while she powders her nose” (331). Gilman wrote her autobiography for didactic purposes; she was afraid of that

all her opinions would be buried with her and she wanted to leave a mark on earth for social immortality. Just before she died, she wrote: “I have no faintest belief in personal immortality—no interest in nor desire for it. My life is in Humanity and That goes on. My contentment is in God—and That goes on” (335). In “Autobiography as the Presentation of Self for Social Immortality”, Irving Louis Horowitz suggests that autobiographies are written by people who “have a presumed stake in the moral order of things” and the writer both manifests her individuation and also “brings awareness into the public domain through the act of writing” (Horowitz, 1977: 174-176).

Until the rebirth of American feminism in 1960s, Gilman’s name had faded in literature; thirty years after her death her books were out of print. Women scholars were relatively fewer in number if compared to men at the beginning of the sixties and most of academics dealing with Gilman were male. Invasion of women scholars into academy occurred in the seventies with the momentum of women’s studies. Since then, Gilman has inspired feminist scholars with her fiction and life. Thanks to attempts of these editors and scholars, this larger than life writer seems to be taking her right place in literature recently. Barbara Solomon notes that after Gilman’s death, talk of her life and ideas that she feared to be buried with her are right:

> The 1962 edition of The Reader’s Encyclopedia of American Literature profiles three Gilmans, Arthur Gilman, Daniel Gilman, and Lawrence Gilman. No Charlotte. Similarly, the 1965 edition of The Oxford Companion to American Literature includes sketches of Caroline Howard Gilman and Daniel Gilman. No Charlotte.
> (Solomon, 1992: xvii in Brunk, 1999: 119)

The manuscript of *The Living* was ready by 1926; however no publishing company was interested in purchasing it. For two years she tried to sell it, eventually Macmillan Company expressed an interest but wanted some major revisions. Uninterested in keeping up with the work, Gilman put it aside and requested her life-long friend Zona Gale to write a biography of hers based on her autobiography. Gale only accepted to write a foreword so Gilman reluctantly turned back to write *The Living*. The text was published in 1935, after Gilman’s suicide. It was reprinted almost forty years after its first publication in 1972, 1975, and 1990. Ann J. Lane

expects the 1990 version to stay in print for a long time which will place the book on the shelves as a truly guide for future generations (xx). The first publication of *The Living* sold only 808 copies in the first six months and relatively less thereafter. Despite small sales, *The Living* was reviewed in *New York Times Book Review* and Sunday *Herald Tribune*. Yet, Lane thinks that these reviews are like eulogies more than critical assessments (xix).

According to Brunk, World War I has a great effect on this lack of interest in Gilman's ideas (1999: 116). The decade called "Roaring Twenties" followed by the World War I ended the optimism that had been once prevailed by American socialists. The women in 1920s were in the search of their personal satisfactions without any commitment to public service. Betterment of society, women and families were put aside and improvement of their own conditions was in fashion: "They remain, for instance, as much the slaves of fashion as before, lifting their skirts, baring their backs, exhibiting their legs, powdering their noses, behaving just as foolishly as ever, if not more so" (318). This shift from true womanhood to new womanhood was not the one that Gilman had sought. The result was a disaster according to Gilman:

> There is now nothing to prevent women from becoming as fully human in their social development as men; and although just now they seem more anxious to exhibit sex than ever, the real progress in humanness is there and will gradually overcome this backwash of primitive femininity. (319)

Gilman was aware of the outcomes of World War I on her career: "My work grew in importance but lost in market value" (303). The world she dreamed was still different. For this reason, she preferred not to include the details of the War in her autobiography. She only inked two sentences concerning the War: "The year after that- the War" (302), and after the War had ended: "The War came and passed" (317). In those years she "wrote more and sold less" (304). These years seem to mob her interminable spirit for the world improvement and she felt "uselessness":

> I worked steadily enough, writing whether I sold or not, unless, as was far too frequent, I was unable to work at all. For all my happiness at

> home and various glories abroad, I remained through all these years more sick than well; that is, there was more time spent in dull distress of mind and dreary helplessness than in my natural cheerful activity. In this long uselessness, I took up solitaire as a sedative. It is just next to doing nothing, and occupies the mind enough to avoid thinking, not enough to tire. (303)

It is important to cite a passage from *The Living* that she writes of the disappointment for not being invited to lecture at the Connecticut College for Women only twelve miles away from her house:

> After so many years of work for the advancement of women, with a fairly world-wide reputation in that work, and with so much that was new and strong to say to the coming generation, it seemed to me a natural opportunity. It did not seem so to the college. Once, for the league of Women Voters, I spoke in their hall—never otherwise. (333)

After this period, only two books were published: *His Religion and Ours* and *The Living*. The pile of rejections at a large scale from publishers shepherded her forward publishing her own monthly magazine, *The Forerunner* from 1909 to 1916. This magazine included short stories, poetry, reviews, sermons, essays, and novels and sociological studies in serial form. In seven years' time she published eighty-six issues by her own great effort both in energy and finance. As she was a fading figure in social life, her readers were few-half of what she needed to earn a profit. She recalls about its unpopularity in *The Living* and again criticizes her fellows: "But I found to my amusement that among women ten dollars for a hat is cheap while one dollar for a magazine is an unwarranted expense" (305-306). According to Jill Rudd and Van Gough, the people Gilman longed to discourse in her diaries and articles in *The Forerunner* were not forthcoming generations but her own contemporaries. They find Gilman's calls to actions genuine and firsthand (Rudd and Gough, 1999: introduction, xi).

Another reason for the lack of interest in Gilman's ideas was that when the right to vote was won in 1920 many thought that the movement was over. Few others agreed her. It is palpable that she is disappointed towards the end of her life because she witnessed that women quit only a small amount of repression only to engage

others which she regarded as little better: “I did expect better things of women than they have shown” (318).

Then, her conscious preference to make a distinction between herself and other women in *The Living* is deductible. She thought that the world needed women that are set forth in her autobiography committed to social service and women of those times had more to learn. She believes that women should follow the example of her life. She found out that some “buzzing” women who are interested in “social attention” would offer her a lecture without paying a fee: “I sat thinking how to tell them, without being rude and grossly ungrateful, that to expect a speech for nothing, of a professional speaker, was—well, shall we say unbusinesslike? - When women really grow up they will be more fair-minded” (273). She is really satisfied with the advances that women have made in the headquarters although she is a bit unwell:

> The fine women who were making such advance in all manner of business and professional achievements are going on, in increasing numbers. More and more our girls expect to work, to earn, to be independent. But on the other hand, the “gold digger” is as rampant as ever, as greedy and shameless. (318)

Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that despite the weaker persona Gilman depicts in her fictional works, she presents “virtually no distinct positive sense of personal identity” in *The Living* (Spacks, 1975 in Brunk, 1999: 140). But preference that she made for living on her life is consistent with the portrayal of the self-made woman in the autobiography. She repeated many times that she had no interest or desire for personal immortality rather she was interested with ideas. She wanted her readers to follow *The Living* as a prospectus as if healing an illness for social immortality.

Of *The Living* Lane writes “It is a manuscript designed to challenge the individualist ethos of the day, designed to evoke the older vision of community as a goal around which to organize a life. It is a statement of how to overcome the struggles of the private life in order to achieve public good. It is in many ways her mask” (1990: 353).

CONCLUSION

In his preface to *Metaphors of Self*, James Olney assumes:

> Autobiography is the literature that most immediately and deeply engages our interest and holds it and that in the end seems to mean that the most to us because it brings an increased awareness, through an understanding of another life in another time and place, of the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition. (1972: xvii)

According to this stipulation above, leading critic of autobiography does not make the slightest mention about difference of women autobiographies from those of men's. If one takes into consideration of diverse daily practices and socialization processes that women live in, it seems essential to place women's autobiography as a distinctive genre in the canon. Women's autobiography is distinctive because it has its own norms as women's and men's socialization processes differ from each other. However, this does not mean an exclusion of male-authored autobiographies. There are a number of men whose writing practises were perceived as mundane especially residing in marginalized communities. Established generic feature of autobiography belongs to white-upper class men's tradition and women's autobiography undermines the western obsession with the self. As Leigh Gilmore states: "Autobiography provides a stage where women writers born again in the act of writing, may experiment with reconstructing the various discourses—of representation, of ideology, in which their subjectivity has been formed" (1994: 85).

The features of autobiographies written by men and women differ in many ways: men write success stories to accomplish a hero quest while women focus on personal details and connections with other people truly connected with their relational self. However, criteria for the self-expression are truly connected with the goals and needs of the author.

Autobiography as a genre is so intimate that readers become active. Women read for the need of identification with heroines. The act of writing and reading autobiography is knitted with strict ropes and the task of the woman reader is sewing

that rope with her needle. In this sense, a reader is as much responsible for the product as the author. Gilman regards her audience responsible, too: “One girl reads this, and takes fire! Her life is changed. She becomes a power – a mover of others—I write for her” is often –quoted passage of her work (“Thoughts and Figgerings” quoted in *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, ed. Denise Knight, 1994: 855 in Karpinski, 2000: 36).

Gilman received letters embracing her success in literature and social field from countless distinguished people-Alfred Russell Wallace, H.G. Wells, W.D. Howells, Edward Bellamy, and others- but no letters could have been more effective than the letters she received from her women readers. In her young maidenhood, Marie Jenney Howe wrote to Gilman:

> I have read your book on “Women and Economics”. It seems to me that I have waited all my life to read this book. … I have recognized that society, in its organization and its institutions, renders economic independence impossible to the women who marry. … But you prove that society must alter. … My profession is preaching. I confess that at present I am seized with the desire to preach “Women and Economics.
> (quoted in *The Living*, introduction: xxxvii)

Being a prominent figure and leading intellectual in the first two decades of the twentieth century, she participated in many lectures to deliver her belief in social progress and gender issues. She was rejoiced with acceptance of her ideas. However, she became a fading figure in intellectual field with the outbreak of World War I as her optimistic vision for the betterment of the world lost touch with the fortcoming generation. The industrial revolution that took place at the end of the nineteenth century changed American society in a remarkable way. Older vision of community was replaced by individual success. This material success related to money and status quo entrapped the mothers of the world and they were unaware of the danger while powdering their noses. Gilman is ahead of her time because her perspective on gender issues are still points of feminist argument in the twenty-first century as Ann J. Lane comments in *To Herland*:

> [Gilman] offered perspectives on major issues of gender with which we still grapple: the origins of women's subjugation, the struggle to achieve both autonomy and intimacy in human relationships; the central role of work as a definition of self; new strategies for rearing and educating future generations to create a humane and nurturing environment. (1990: 3-4)

Cheri Register puts forth four aspects into consideration in order to classify the text as an effective feminist work. According to her, the text should: "serve as a forum for women, help to achieve cultural androgyny, provide role models, promote sisterhood, augment consciousness raising" (Register, 1989 in Brunk, 1999: 197). *The Living* holds the distinction of being an effective feminist work.

The text figures out to prove that any woman can move from silence to speech. Autobiography as a genre then becomes a forum that she calls her readers to action. Gilman positioned herself as a helper to others and living on as an independent woman in a landscape which valorized the separation of public/private spheres made her torn between service to the husband and service to the world. In order to achieve cultural androgyny, she defined herself as a humanist rather to be labeled as a feminist because she found Suffragists' demand too narrow for her crusade to gender equality. By stating that she is not a feminist but rather a humanist, Gilman tried to restore an equitable balance for both men and women. She insisted that women were kept within men's perlious, therefore narrowed both their and men's scopes. To improve society as a whole, emancipation of women would lead freedom for both sexes. Although Gilman defines herself as a humanist rather than a feminist, feminists still applaud her today for important analyses of exploitation of women in oppressive system, her lively comments on home, child care, gender relations and autonomy of women. As Heilburn indicates below, autobiography as a genre is a mean of autonomy:

> Women of accomplishment, in unconsciously writing their future lived lives, or, more recently, in trying honestly to deal in written form with lived past lives, have had to confront power and control. Because this had been declared unwomanly, and because many women would prefer (or think they would prefer) a world without evident power or control, women have been deprived of the narratives, or the texts,

> plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over- take control of- their own lives (Heilburn, 1988: 11, 16-17 in Smith and Watson, 1998: 3).

Gilman took control of her life and left *The Living* as a manifestation of her accomplishment overcoming defective roles she was assigned to. Exclusion of negative voice from the text is truly connected with her denial to depict women as victims. It is true to some degree that she is a wounded woman in her private life but, honesty degree she is willing to express while informing about her private life is her own choice. Her autobiography is sometimes straightforward and to a degree, it is lack of colorful description and depth-exploration of her feelings. She was criticized by some critics for self-abnegation because her weakest moments after her breakdown or her marriages in details are not mentioned in *The Living*. In this sense, laying little emphasis on her domestic life and stressing public is explicitly related to the status that she reserved for herself in life. Maybe, it is the degree which she wants to be remembered by the end of her life. Anyhow, it is *her* story.

She wrote her autobiography to provide a model of self-made woman who is constrained by the evils of patriarchy but not victimized by them. Instead, she urged women to develop their self-respects. Gilman's goal was to create a sense of awareness of the debilitating roles which women were assigned to act out. Her aim was to spark and show how any woman of her time could give up chasing after personal achievement and contemplate her "service to the world". Gilman did not have any fear of dying but as her main point of argument in life is living for others, she feared that her ideas would be buried with her. *The Living* is her legacy to future generations and approval of her didactic strategies; maybe her last attempt to call women to action. It is her manifestation for social immortality when she was looking her life back from the vantage point of her late sixties. Gilman herself regards her short stories, poems, plays and her nonliterary texts as tools to excess her socialist ideals and social context in which they are written. She had fervor to shadow on the lives of women and situating this fervor into her speech and writing was a remarkable aspect of her writing. Register adds that in a feminist work presenting women as helpless victims of their captivity is not acceptable. Rather than featuring

women who go insane and commit a suicide because of their misery, authors should create heroines who are capable of "resisting destruction" (Register, 1989: 24 in Brunk, 1999: 197).

The aim of this study was to analyze *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography* as the presentation of the self for social immortality. It has concentrated on how Gilman constructs her textual identity. It has surveyed a new site for understanding *The Living* as a literary text rather than being referred as a secondary source. Gilman's theoretical analyses were striking but so was also her constant testing of those thories in her life. Autobiographical information on how and why she depicted herself immortal for the sake of society enriched our understanding of the underlying practices of women's systematic victimization by patriarchy.

Ann J. Lane's *To Herland and Beyond* (1990) and Beth Lynn's Brunk's approved doctoral thesis *Writing out of Captivity: The Liberating Rhetoric of Women's Autobiography* (1999) were used as main secondary sources during this study. To make an eloborative study on the *The Living*, the thesis was divided into three chapters.

The first chapter concentrated on the theory of autobiography. Diverse definitions of "autobiography" by different writers were compared for better understanding of autobiography as a genre. Also, difference of autobiography from memoir, journal and diary were discussed. Emergence of the term "autobiography" put forth the distinction of autobiography from other terms such as *life-writing* and *life-narrative*. An overview of historical criticism of autobiography confirmed that autobiography has operated a male-centered genre and women's exclusion from the canon dates back to ancient times.

To shed more light on why the characteristic of women's autobiographical tradition have been ignored, the second chapter focused on women's autobiography. Women's autobiography belongs to a tradition which extols autobiographies written by men. Autobiography has become a site for women to use their public voices

although they have been systematically silenced throughout the history. Telling and reading a woman's life is a pursuit of identity but moreover it has a political aspect. Woman-centered research with a specific impact on autobiography dislodges men from their privileged positions by reversing the traditional judgments of the canon. The studies made especially after 1980s manifest that women's autobiography is different from men's autobiography and handling it with the pack of norms of men's autobiography will provide nothing useful for further studies of autobiography.

Chapter Three is the analysis of *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*. Construction of Gilman's textual identity, public/private self, socialism and feminism, heroic models of identity, and political/cultural landscape of America in Gilman's time were the main points of argument. Throughout the *The Living*, Gilman is successful in demonstrating the systematic oppression of patriarchy by creating a heroic identity and in stating that she is a *public* woman. She was misinterpreted many times as being a devilish mother and an isolated radical who refused the roles as a mother and a wife. She did not have any problematic points in natural sex-distinctions as they are rooted in human nature. Only, she could foresee that until the gender roles changed, it would never be possible to attain full human capacity both for men and women. Gilman had strong belief in social reform which would begin with the betterment of women's conditions in every area of social life. Although she commits a suicide by the end of *The Living*, she does not put forth physical reasons but only does her action because of a sense of usefulness related to her socialist commitment. She decided to end her life because she believed it was justifiable 'cutting of one's life while any power of service remains': "But when all usefulness is over, when one is assured of unavoidable and imminent death, it is the simplest of human rights to choose a quick and easy death in place of a slow and horrible one. …Human life consists in mutual service" (333).

Gilman was a world-maker and an optimist reformer. Although she praised her theoretical works more than literature she produced; her novels, short stories and poems have inspired many people. *The Living* operates as an alternative for women

about how each of them might live her life and follow example of a woman who could use her potential in public sphere. It is a book of liberation and rebellion.

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