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AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI BÖLÜMÜ  
DOKTORA TEZİ

**WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS SELF-DISCOVERY:  
HALİDE EDİB ADIVAR'S *MEMOIRS OF HALİDE EDİB*  
AND EDITH WHARTON'S *A BACKWARD GLANCE***

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2010

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### İMZA

## ÖZET

### Doktora Tezi

(Kadın Otobiyografilerinde Benliğin Keşfi: Halide Edib Adıvar'ın *Memoirs of Halide Edib* ve Edith Wharton'ın *A Backward Glance* Adlı Eserleri)

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Otobiyografi yazarın kendisini yeniden yapılandırma öyküsüdür. Yazar otobiyografik anlatısında beklenti, önyargı ve ihtiyaçlarıyla zaten değişime uğramış bellek izlerini yorumlayarak, sosyo-kültürel unsurlar, dil olanakları ve yazın gelenekleri bağlamında geçmişini yeniden kurgular. Geleneksel otobiyografi mahiyet ve meşruluğu kabul edilen özerk, rasyonel ve özgür erkeğin hikâyesini temel alır. Metin ve gerçekte yaşananlar sorgulanırken yazarın metne akseden varlığı mı yoksa yazarla benzer olayları yaşamış bir topluluğun ortak tecrübesi mi esas alınmalıdır çelişkisi kadının hikâyesinin özgünlüğünü destekler niteliktedir. Kadın yazar metninde ataerkil toplumun kendisine yüklediği rolleri benimsemeyen kadını seslendirme kaygısıyla onun kendine özgü bilincini ve yaşam yaklaşımını dile getirir. Kadın ve erkek otobiyografilerine yansıyan toplumsal cinsiyet kimlikleri arasındaki belirgin ayrım, çevre koşulları ve çelişen sosyal dinamikler sebebiyle kız ve erkek çocuklarda ruhsal gelişim sürecinin farklı seyretmesinden kaynaklanır. Kız çocuklar erken dönemde içselleştirdikleri ilişki örüntülerini sürdürmek eğilimiyle kendilerini yaşam boyu kurdukları ilişkilerin parçası olarak tanımlarken, erkekler keskin çizgilerle belirlenmiş bağımsız kimlik oluşturma çabası içindedir.

Bu çalışmada, yaşam tarzları ile sosyal değişim ve kültürel dönüşüme katkıda bulunmak gayesiyle gerçekleştirdikleri girişimler açısından çarpıcı benzerlikler gösteren iki kadın yazarın otobiyografileri, Halide Edib Adıvar'ın *Memoirs of*

*Halide Edib* ve Edith Wharton'ın *A Backward Glance* incelenmek üzere seçilmiştir. Her iki yazarın otobiyografisindeki bireyselleşme aşamalarını açıklayabilmek ve kendilerini nasıl tanımladıklarını göstermek için benlikleri çözümlenip parçalara ayrılarak çevreyle ilişkileri ve geçmiş yaşantıları sosyal, kültürel ve psikolojik etkenler bağlamında incelenir ve bu parçalardan yeniden bir bütün oluşturularak benliklerin yeniden anlamlandırılması ve keşfi gerçekleşir. Erkek yazarların gölgesinden sıyrılarak benlik keşif yolculuğunda her yönüyle kendini ortaya koyan Halide Edib sözünü ve yaşamını sahiplenmiş, metinde “özne” olarak kendini konumlandırmıştır. Bir sanat emekçisinin kariyer çizgisini yansıttığı otobiyografisinde Edith Wharton ise kadınla özdeşleşen suskunluğunu koruyarak anlatısında adeta görünmez adımlar atmış ve kendini yazar olarak kabul ettirmek için geleneksel normları aşamayıp metninin ancak “nesnesi”olabilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Halide Edib Adıvar, Edith Wharton, İlişki Analizi, İlişkide Benlik, Kadının Benlik Tasviri, Kadın Otobiyografileri

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Doctoral Thesis**

**(Women's Autobiography As Self-Discovery: Halide Edib Adivar's *Memoirs Of Halide Edib* And Edith Wharton's *A Backward Glance*)**

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**Autobiography is a statement of reconstruction of self. In his/her autobiographical narrative, the writer interprets the memory traces already transformed by personal expectations, prejudices and needs, and fictionalizes the past in the context of socio-cultural factors, linguistic tools and literary traditions. Autobiography in the conventional sense is based on the legitimate story of an autonomous, rational, and independent man. When the autobiographical text and the writer's actual experiences are questioned, a paradox emerges that also proves the originality of woman's story. The paradox is that of choosing between the account of writer's life-story mirrored in the text or the shared experiences of community that has passed through similar stages. The female writer, in an effort to represent the voice of woman which resists the feminine roles imposed by the patriarchal society, expresses her specific consciousness and approaches to life. The gender-based distinction observed in autobiographical writings results from the environmental conditions and conflicting social dynamics that modify the course of psychological development in boys and girls. Girls tend to continue the relational patterns they have internalized in their early formative years and define themselves as part of their lifelong relationships, whereas boys make efforts to form an independent identity determined by their strong ego boundaries.**

**In this study, the autobiographies of two women writers are selected: Halide Edib Adivar's *Memoirs of Halide Edib* and Edith Wharton's *A Backward***

***Glance.*** Remarkable parallels between their lives and the significant roles they take in the social change and cultural transformation of their country make them worthy of comparison. To explain the writers' stages of individualization and to display how they describe their distinctive selves, textual identities are retrospectively analyzed and broken into parts, and their past experiences and relationships are examined within the framework of familial, social, cultural and psychological factors, and these fragmented parts are arranged into a new whole to reinterpret and realize the discovery of the selves. Released from the shadow of male writers, Halide Edib who describes her journey of self-discovery in all its aspects, and positions herself as a distinctive "subject" taking full responsibility of her words and life Edith Wharton on the other hand underlines the career path of an art laborer in her autobiography, leaving almost invisible footprints as if to preserve the silence identified with woman, and remains merely an "object" of her work and fails to surpass the traditional norms in order to be accepted by the society as a writer.

**Key Words:** Halide Edib Adivar, Edith Wharton, Relational Analysis, Self-in-Relation, Female Self-Portrayal, Women's Autobiography

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### WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS SELF-DISCOVERY: HALİDE EDİB ADIVAR'S *MEMOIRS OF HALİDE EDİB* AND EDITH WHARTON'S *A BACKWARD GLANCE*

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## INTRODUCTION

The topic of this study is the construction of the autobiographical self in women's autobiographies through relationships with family, friends and community. Autobiographical writing is a kind of remaking process from bits and pieces of memories where the writer becomes a bystander or a participant. The writer tries to represent his/her past life and experiences in the present. During the process of writing the author has to decide which to include in his/her autobiography. The writer's personality traits, cultural and social background, prejudices, motivations, textual purposes, the reader's expectations and reactions and physical factors such as differences in the functioning of memory and imagination influence the author's selection and organization of his/her life-story. However the natural and socially constructed differences between men and women play the dominant role in the determination of author's choices are reflected in their art and writing (Green & Mason, 1979; Howarth, 1980; Jelinek, 1980; Olney, 1980; Siebenschuh, 1989; Stanley, 1992; Smith & Watson, 1998; Duchet, 2000; Michielsens, 2000).

Studies on female psyche and development reveal that a woman determines her existence through an awareness of her self with respect to others; the character of a woman is formed by her interactions with the surrounding outside world. The self-in-relation not only indicates a crucial fact about women's psychology and the impact of gender on human subjectivity and experience but it also emphasizes the subjugation and oppression women have long tried to resist. The self who expresses her identity in terms of her relations has the opportunity to represent her self both as an individual and as a part of a collective whole. That is why this concept stands as a potential power to end the marginalization and exclusion of womanhood which is associated with the non-rational, the body and the emotions and defines the male identity in terms of female otherness. In other words, the existence of the autobiographical subject as an isolated individual neglects the basic elements that should be present in the development of a woman's identity, i.e. women's need to identify themselves with the other women whom they believe they have much in

common, their undeniable nature of mutuality and strong affiliation with the community. The female consciousness is constituted in relation to the traditional, historical and socio-cultural roots of gender differences. Unlike men, women are not given the privilege to experience self as individual beings because instead of a separate identity of their own they possess a common group identity imposed by the prevailing norms of the culture. Women have long been silenced under the rule of man but this has not ruined their perception of identity, and on the contrary inspired their participation in the literary world to constitute an active and visible self. Therefore women using the genre of autobiography they attempt to leave a trace of their unique female existence against the patriarchal order and challenge, thus define themselves in the framework of interpersonal relationships and society. The newly formed self in their life-narrative is not entirely personal or collective but a combination of the shared and the exceptional since it aims to ensure the survival and freedom of both the writers and their readers (Rowbotham, 1973; Friedman, 1988; Felski, 1998; Waugh, 1998; Chodorow, 1999). Hence to analyze the autobiographies of women and disclose their textual selves one should be able to closely examine the varied backgrounds of the relationships and experiences included in their writings. In the context of this theoretical framework two autobiographies Halide Edib Adivar's *Memoirs of Halide Edib* and Edith Wharton's *A Backward Glance* have been selected for analysis.

These texts have been chosen as a case study because of the writers' valuable efforts in their time to contribute to women's equality and development and strengthening of their role and position both in private and public sphere. The similarities between the two writers as regards their families, character features and literary and intellectual ventures bring them together for comparative analysis. Both come from rooted and well-known families. They have received good education being exposed to different languages, cultures and masterpieces of Western civilization and had ample opportunities for the cultivation of their talents although they have strived hard to earn and use them because of the women's subordinate position and masculinist biases. Edib, though, not as much clearly as Wharton has been influenced by Henry James's psychological realism and his characters that have

ambivalent connections with society and nature (Başçı, 2003). Father or male influence at home plays an important role in the formation of female identity and subjectivity as they feel emotionally closer to their fathers rather than their mothers. Their social abilities provide them various occasions to take part in the international community of renowned literary artists and intellectuals. In addition to the likeness of their initial writing experiences, obstacles that stand in their way, their bold and decisive steps, vulnerable emotional worlds and marital break-ups, their endeavors focus on questions of representation and empowerment. Halide Edib structures her life-story chronologically. In the first part of her *Memoirs* starting from her early childhood days she narrates within the framework of her life the historical period until the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and in the second part she makes references to the events that happened until the end of the World War I. Tension between the contrasting customs and values of East and West provides the context for Halide's early development. Throughout the narration the reader is presented with colorful portraits such as her conservative grandmother, her progressive father Edib Bey and the household servants of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Thus Edib through these real life persons and their lives, attempts to relate her self to others revealing the gradual formation of her own character and individual notion of truth. Edib Bey's decision to remarry and the subsequent transition to polygamy come as a contradiction of little Halide's earlier notions and Westernized upbringing. Years later, she is involved in a similar tragedy which ends with divorce when her first husband insists on marrying his latest concubine. Apart from her turbulent private life she also touches on the major social and cultural reforms in the Second Constitutional Era (II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi) which provide Edib's initiation into social life as activist, journalist and public speaker. She begins writing in various journals as a literary columnist about women's issues and independence. Her articles bring her closer to other women from different classes and help build stronger connections with her people.

In her picturesque autobiography *A Backward Glance* Edith Wharton narrates the story of how a woman of her period and class becomes a writer. In addition to her prodigious inborn gifts, rational optimism and persistent passion Wharton's

interaction with her family, the American upper-class, the European culture and society, many male intellectuals and lifelong friends has a considerable share in molding her into the woman she has become. In her preface she tells her initial motive and journey of self-discovery and empowerment and her concise philosophy of life. Besides she warns her reader that her autobiography goes beyond the revelation of surface facts about its owner. She blends different narrative forms to serve her ultimate purpose of describing the evolution of her distinctive talent, imagination and artistic sense. Throughout her autobiography Wharton reveals, despite familial and social disapproval, her constant efforts and aspiration to stand firmly as a woman writer and art laborer in the man's world of literature. In her travel impressions she vividly portrays the social, intellectual and artistic marvels of European civilization before the war. She also mentions her profound and enduring friendships whose support has encouraged her on the way. She reserves an interesting chapter for Henry James who has been her intimate friend and mentor. She does not say much about her marriage and portrays herself as a woman mostly happy with her husband though their relationship ends in divorce. Around 1920 her chronicle unexpectedly finishes with her reminiscences of the grim and dark war years and the struggle to survive in the newly formed world.

The first part of the thesis introduces the genre of autobiography. Different definitions of the term autobiography and various approaches are given to detail its development and interpretation. The constitutive elements of autobiography memory, subjectivity and relationality are explored interdependently to show how they contribute to the formation of the autobiographical self or subject. The second part focuses on women's autobiography starting with how it has emerged and developed in different and new directions. The difference between the female and the male selves are studied in terms of the constitutive elements of autobiography. How Turkish and American women view the aim and act of autobiographical writing process and leading women autobiographers and their works are included at the closing of this chapter. The third part is where the analyses of the female selves in the autobiographies are carried out. The aim of the thesis and the historical, social and cultural contexts are outlined. At first the life and works of the two writers in

general and their autobiographies in particular are examined. The identities of the writers in childhood and youth and years of maturity respectively are analyzed and broken into parts for examining their past experiences and relationships within the context of familial, social, cultural and psychological factors. In the conclusion part the results of the analyses are comparatively discussed to prove that Halide Edib describes a woman's journey of self-discovery in all its aspects whether they be strengths or weaknesses whereas Edith Wharton projects in particular the career path of a woman writer drawing more closely on masculinist standards of autobiography.

## PART 1

### AUTOBIOGRAPHY

#### 1.1. What is Autobiography?

According to Olney, autobiography may be practiced and interpreted in many ways, such as the impulse of life changed by the individual's living and unusual intuitive configuration, natural responsiveness to objects, events and lives surrounding him, ethical gist of the self's reality or "participation in an absolute existence far transcending the shifting, changing unrealities of mundane life" (1980:239). These interpretations do not indicate a time-bound and linear journey from the past into the present guiding the readers to the roots of the subject's both conscious and unconscious existence. Many speculations have been made about life-narratives since their initiation into scholarly studies. The proliferation of autobiography and its unwillingness to be defined in terms of prescriptive approaches and generic constraints stem from its ontological references or various arrangements of one's reality.

*Bios* constructs the center of autobiography and it means the course of life or lifetime and also implies the notion of spirit, the knowledge, expression and performance of consciousness, transcendent truth, or an individual pattern of living and distinct character traits. These meanings attached to *bios* bring about appealing topics of research and discussion for literary scholars, e.g. the complex process of refurbishment in the present, of a lifetime that is previously spent and no longer existing: "When *is* has been transformed into *was*, when the unique moment of the present slips into the huge abyss of the past, if it remains in any sense real at all, then it must be within a new and entirely different order of reality from that informing the present..."(Olney, 1980:237). As things change within time and there is no exact and sharp representation of reality, it becomes a dilemma for the autobiographer to write about his past self without being interrupted by the ideas, feelings and perceptions of the present self. Furthermore, the mind's triadic formation allows alongside the past

and present selves the surfacing of a future self entrenched in the unfolding of a life “Every explicit process involving self-consciousness, involving a definite sequence of plans of actions and dealings with long stretches of time, has three fold character. The present self interprets the past self to the future self”(Whitehead, 1921:31).

William L. Howarth’s description of autobiography as a *self-portrait* makes reference to a twofold entity involved in mutual contact. The self being conscious of others as well as his/her individual identity contemplates on matters develops thoughts and acts upon thinking. A portrait comprises aspects of space and time, appearance and truth, painter and model each of which has specific calls. In a self-portrait the artist is the model of his/her own art posing and painting at the same time. Exploring in the mirror overturned images known only to his/her self does not allow visual scrutiny because when s/he moves to paint a hand the hand must also move. His/her image is already finished but “s/he must begin with the invisible, with lines more raw than bone or flesh, building volume and tone, sketch and underpaint, into a finished replica of himself. So s/he works from memory as well as from sight, in two levels of time, on two planes of space, while reaching for those other dimensions, depth and future”(Howarth, 1980:85). Despite the fact that words and paint are different tools using unlike ways of selection and organization life-narratives may be deemed as fictional forms of this *objet d'art* focusing on the essentiality of memory and vision, problem causing elements of time and space, and plan for growth and decline.

A writer does not usually meditate on the complete nature and permanence of his past experiences and thus have no intention of craftily converting his/her being into a self-portrait until s/he begins writing his story. Evidently, this new painted self-portrait does not look like exactly his/her original model; rather it reveals a skillful discovery of life by the narrator. Since similar to other forms of literature it makes use of all narrative devices such as structural components and their problematical relations, in an obligation to follow only few constraints like truthfulness, constancy and unity, it would not be right to say that autobiography is entirely composed of factual information and literary imagination has trivial meaning



in the writing process (Howarth, 1980). Autobiography writers mainly inspired and lead by their personal memories use letters, journals, photographs, conversations and historical knowledge in their texts to share, confirm complement or comment on reminiscences of the past since the acts of remembering always involve rhetorical acts of contention, verification, reasoning, persuasion and questioning which indicates the narrator's desire to convey his/her version of life experience (Smith; Watson, 2001).

The most important constituent element of autobiography is the character or the image portrayed through the narrator's memory. This character is molded by his/her textual purposes and his/her approaches to the issues of identity, space and history. Because the character has the dual function of a storyteller and a hero, using a specific technique based on linguistic tools like style and imagery, s/he recounts the sequence of events in his/her past and also endorses its part, it should not be sharply associated with the writer. Even though they both refer to the same person and bear the same name, they do not share the same moment and setting as the narrator knowing all about the story is always a step ahead of his/her hero. In order to leave enough room for the element of suspense in the text, however, s/he stays close to his/her hero's unawareness until when the past draws nearer to the present and thus different representations meet and correspondence occurs between the hero's actions and the narrator's ideas (Howarth, 1980).

Another crucial strategic factor is theme, namely an individualistic idea conveying also a description of an epochal image, produced as a result of the writer's general viewpoint, spiritual beliefs or political and cultural stance that give an autobiography its meaning or helps form consistency with his actual reflection. Each writer who uses a specific autobiographical method that is most obviously revealed in his/her thematic conclusion tries to reach his/her reader by setting up a relationship based on mutual concerns and shared interests. The elements of autobiography each of which connects to a solitary compositional feature, the writer, the work and the reader function as stable counterparts in order to develop a particular sequence of relationship moving from reason, to process, to content. A sequential consideration

of these elements will develop and broaden literary perspectives about the generic practice of autobiography providing the researcher with an outline of the author's writing plan which reveals the difference between his/her autobiography and other autobiographies, and hence determining how s/he positions himself in the field of life-narrative studies. As a result of this analytical approach to the genre, there occurs a resistance to the labeling of autobiographical texts in relation to the concept of reality, decency, content or artistic value since the scholars of autobiography do not always stick to the same conventional standards believing in the notion that each work should also be analyzed in its own right (Howarth, 1980).

Literary scholars would naturally agree that one of the main problems they confront in the field of autobiography is a text produced in any generic form may reflect its owner and hence any writing may be autobiographical or include elements regarding the life-story of the author, depending on the reader's approach to the text. Since the eighteenth century, autobiography has been considered as an individual literary genre that triggers off hot debates about the varying concepts of authorship, personality, self-depiction and boundary between the world of truth and the universe of illusion (Anderson, 2000). According to Liz Stanley, a researcher interested in lives as a way of emphasizing the centeredness of the relationship between individuals and social structure, an autobiographer knows who s/he is and this piece of information s/he possesses about his/her own self forms his/her textual identity. To best explain her autobiographical concerns, she uses the definition given by the Auto/Biography Study Group "...concern with the political ramifications of the shifting boundaries between self and other, past and present, writing and reading, fact and fiction ...The writer/speaker, the researcher and author, are certainly not treated as transparent or 'dead', but very much alive as agents actively at work in the textual production process.."(in 2000:41). Hence life-writing research and theory relates to a variety of social customs that utter opposing and at times incoherent views about selves, identities and lives. These passing moments take place during the social processes in a day and factual information about lives is collected, swapped and rearranged within the framework of life and relationships between individuals (Stanley, 2000).

Many are drawn to autobiography because it mirrors the life of a specific individual, but one should not set aside the social models that produce and shape our perception of the individual. Each society presents models specific to its culture. In order to build oneself, a subject adopts these models and modifies them along with his/her own personality and develops a blend of values. Writing an autobiography includes facts and events alongside social images and cultural merits. It is inevitable for tension to exist between the individual and the society it belongs. However descriptive representation of a single self accepted by the society manages this tension. In autobiographical context questions concerning the gender identity and the involvement of social models in its formation and account and thus generation of a meaning for the life experience, appear to be essential (Duchet, 2000).

It is generally known that the term autobiography was first used by the nineteenth-century poet Robert Southey in 1809. However before him, at the end of the eighteenth century in a review ascribed to William Taylor it was proposed that instead of the hybrid term self-biography, autobiography would fit in more appropriate. Felicity Nussbaum (1989) asserts that even if there was conformity among scholars about its definitions it was by the 1830s that the term autobiography was started to be widely accepted. Autobiography may be defined simply as the act of rendering personal experiential past life into a piece of script and presenting it for public use. The recent publishing history reveals that due to the absence of decrees, prescribed constraints or compulsory assessments in the field that regulate the writer's activities during the process of autobiographical construction it has become a genre often practiced by professional literary men for whom it signifies the most exceptional and self-conscious of literary performances for instance Vladimir Nabokov, Roland Barthes and earlier autobiographers such as St. Augustine, Michel de Montaigne and Jean-Jacques Rousseau as well as common people or scribblers who would never claim of being a writer at all (Olney, 1980).

On one hand, it is believed that an autobiographical text which is generated as a consequence of basic writing performances is considered to be the most indefinite work of art since no general norms about its specific structure, jargon and

observances are offered to the scholar and thus it is not plausible to grasp autobiography as a literary form in its own right. However, on the other hand another assertion due to the researcher's refusal of the very existence of autobiography emerges which proposes that all types of literary texts are actually autobiographic in nature, i.e. one can not tell whether a text is a novel, a poem or a criticism because the generic borders even the sharp dividing lines between the established disciplines are removed and thus all texts, though some unconsciously, merge under the umbrella of autobiography. This feature of life-writing implies that what appears to be an autobiographical text may also be perceived by different kinds of readers as historical, psychological, philosophical, sociological or literary analysis (Olney, 1980). The movement of autobiography from the periphery to the prominent center of the literary activity has helped its development into a basic art work for different fields of study and it has been only through autobiographical acts that these fields are described and arranged in detailed form.

...autobiography-the story of a distinctive culture written in individual characters and from within-offers a privileged access to an experience (the American experience, the black experience, the female experience, the African experience) that no other variety of writing can offer...this special quality of autobiography-that is, that autobiography renders in a peculiarly direct and faithful way the experience and the vision of a people, which is the same experience and the same vision lying behind and informing all the literature of that people-...This new academic dispensation brings together a literature that is very rich and highly various, heterogeneous in its composition- a literature so diverse that it cries out for some defining center; such a center autobiography has been felt to provide. To understand the American mind in all its complexity-so goes the argument-read a variety of American autobiographies... (Olney, 1980: 13-14)

In an autobiography the writer narrates his/her life-story; however this is not as simple as it sounds since it demands the convergence of incompatible entities. An author's portrayal of his/her developing self differs extensively from another author's description of the same persona because although they observe the same individual the image they perceive is not the same. What the autobiographer has in mind when

s/he goes back in the past and remembers his/her earlier experiences is a disparate offer not himself since s/he acts as if s/he is some other putting the bits and pieces of a life with which s/he is familiar to recount a complete story and he points out things agreeable to people around him entering into a neighbor's eye-view of himself and hence keeping his/her unconscious inner psychic reality in the background (Spender, 1980). Therefore the difficulty of the narrator, who assumes the task of telling every experience as a distinctive incident in time and space happening for the first and last time, is that s/he is compelled to engage in the conveyance of two lives to build up a mirror-like reflection, the first one looked from outside to elicit his/her social and historic character fabricated as a result of his/her successes, characteristics and communal bonds and the second one seen from within to reveal what loiters at the back of his/her eyes and mind. Despite the concerns and problems the writer has to tackle, the act of autobiographical writing turns out to be a motivating process as "he can describe through the history of his meeting with the people and things outside him, those opposite beings whom from the back of himself he sees coming towards him, the very sensation of being alive and being alone" (Spender, 1980:116).

## **1.2. Reading Autobiography as a Means of Self-Record: Criticism and Method**

Looking back at the history of autobiography, it has been noticed that there are divergences among scholars about who begin autobiography; although everyone knows what autobiography is they hardly agree on the conceptualization of the subject, for example a scholar may say that the first autobiography was written in 1834 by W. P. Scargill, entitled *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister*, or by Rousseau in the 1760s, *Confessions*, or by Montaigne in the sixteenth century, *Essays*, depending on how strong his/her insistence upon the use of the term by the author is and also in what manner, firm or flexible, s/he defines autobiography and its syllables, *auto* meaning self, *bio* life and *graphy* act of writing in terms of the essence and the impact of translating life into a text (Olney, 1980). Many of the first autobiography critics were interested in the subject of *autos* regarding how autobiographical writing covers the phases of discovery, construction and imitation

of the self all at the same time. The critics who focus on *autos* were likely to consider *bios* as the person's whole life up to the time when s/he picks up his/her pen and begins writing his/her tale, his/her emotional state at the moment of writing, the small stories of the characters who had taken part in the framework story of the individual or any mishmash of these and myriad other meanings attributed to *bios*. The changes of interest from *bios* to *autos* from the story to the individual had a significant impact on the development of field studies and lead the way to philosophical, psychological and literary appreciation (Olney, 1980).

Before concentrating on *autos* again there were three essential postulations about the writing of life-stories, first, that *bios* can refer to only an individual's life path or a crucial segment of his/her past; second, the writer's intention should be to recount his/her experiences in an objective manner and ensure the outside existence of the inner self; and third, the *autos* did not cause any problems at least on the reader's part, no queries were made in autobiographical studies for the introduction of self-related concepts such as deceit, description and existence and what the critics tried to explore was basically the individual's recitation of previous happenings and thus they did not pay any attention to the philosophical, psychological, historical and literary backgrounds and inferences of the autobiographical text. In short, the addition of the *autos* to *biography* has made no difference since the approach to self was neutral and autobiography was merely considered as a section of biography which was also categorized in the field of history. This assumption brought about autobiographical debates among scholars only on the topic of the content narration which was "a direct response to the recollected life as transmitted through the unclouded, neutral glass of the *autos*" (Olney, 1980: 21). Besides, in some cases, the critics analyze the texts according to what extent they reveal the reality or whether the author who is supposed to tell the whole truth to his/her reader intentionally or instinctively make some changes in details and distort the historical facts or not, however this notion of authenticity relates to the reliability only regarding the *bios* of the autobiography laying down the *autos* with its own motives and trueness that any past observation of the *bios* can not guess at all. As a result of the re-concentration on the *autos*, i.e. the character's perception of its uniqueness that plays an essential role

in the formation of the autobiographical structure and thus the fulfillment of the self-realization process, the genre of autobiography became one of the main topics discussed in literary debates. An individual self underlies all literary works whose bare or disguised existence throughout the text provides information protruding particularly at each turning point and the nonappearance of this self would result in the classification of the text as an unimportant piece of work (Olney, 1980).

The *bios* is an autobiographical part that the self puts together in writing, however when the completed work is studied it will be seen that at the beginning neither the *autos* nor the *bios* exists in refined form possessing a distinct and recognized identity or history. Through another component of autobiography, the writing performance, the “I” and its past life are interwoven and a strong concrete bond is formed and hence they adopt a specific nature and image incessantly mirrored back and forth between themselves. However at this very moment French scholars like Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lacan make a critical contribution by pointing out that the text which has its personal life and the self that is not actually present before writing in due course turn out to be a substance of text having no power related connections with its author and thus the consequential text is a imaginary tale of a made up character and another story is found behind the story introduced to the reader. If this story so-called autobiography is broken down into its parts to make a cross-check, the doubtful existence of the self and life will be revealed as proof for the invented autobiographical subjects and distorted truth. The composition of an insightful and bewildering entity or self that no one has ever seen or touched which involves making something else of someone’s life and the discovery of new opportunities in oneself is a crucial fictitious task that should be carried out by the autobiographer and the reader also should take part in the process in order that the self as product is both the invention of the writer and the reader (Olney, 1980).

Having considered the insidious and slippery nature of autobiographical studies, Philippe Lejeune brings out another definition of term autobiography as “a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own

existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality” (in Anderson, 2000:2). Although this basic definition was widely accepted by literary critics, he himself was not fully pleased with it due to the missing link that relates autobiography and contiguous narratives like biography and fiction. Autobiographical features may show changes in some cases but one feature is always present and this resemblance can only be justified by the author’s intention. The notion of intention has always been one of the main topics argued in autobiographical studies. Even though it seems to signal the autobiographer’s solemn attitude to his/her authorship New Critics of 1930s and 1940s considered intentionality as a misleading notion because it points out that the author behind the words promises his/her audience that s/he is the only one to call upon as the source of unity since what s/he intends to tell is nothing but the truth. Critics’ sharp resistance to the concept of intentionality embedded in the text may be as a result of their focus on the process of trimming down the various pieces of the self-narrative to a key meaning to analyze what the author actually communicates (Anderson, 2000).

Karl Weintraub, an American historian, views life-story as a significant valid evidence of the idea of authorship which denotes the authors whose writings directly point at themselves since they are the sole controlling mechanism over their own texts, and therefore he emphasizes that in an attempt to completely grasp the autobiographical meaning conveyed at many levels, the reader should possess appropriate earlier knowledge about specific textual implications to take a conscious walk in the author’s shoes and thus empathize with him/her during the course of reading through similar rebuilding of his/her textual position as regards his/her life.

A hallmark of autobiography is that it is written from a specific retrospective point of view, the place at which the author stands in relation to his cumulative experience when he puts interpretative meaning on his past. This moment, this point of view, needs to be recaptured for a proper understanding of the autobiographic effort; so must the motivation and intention of the author for writing autobiography at all. Thus the historical investigator can at times be led into complex analyses. The manner of the text, the very mode of writing, usually has to be



seen as an important means whereby the author reveals his self-awareness (Weintraub, 1978:xviii).

When viewed from Lejeune's perspective the notion of author becomes more complicated to define because he endeavors to legitimize the author's identity and help him/her gain ground among other texts putting forward an autobiographical pact or contract to show respect and admiration to the writer's individuality and trueness, i.e. s/he is no different from how s/he appears in his/her unique self-descriptive language, revealed wholeheartedly in his/her autobiography (Anderson, 2000). French social and literary critic Barthes asks in his work *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975), which includes a collection of autobiographical essays to reveal his overall cynicism about issues accepted as natural by almost everyone in the society and hence serves as a touchstone for evaluating contemporary autobiography, the profound philosophical question *Do I not know that, in the field of subject, there is no referent* bringing about another critical question *Who is this "I", then?* to indicate that autobiography is an aesthetically referential art whose main referent is the self or subject in the text and to reveal the destiny of the genre in the period of post-structuralism when deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis have blown up identity and representation models.

Furthermore Michael Sprinker and a number of other scholars refer to contemporary self-writing as an insidious and troubling characteristic of modern culture, i.e. "the gradual metamorphosis of an individual with a distinct, personal identity into a sign, a cipher" (in Eakin, 1992: 3). In other words, how the term subjectivity is perceived has changed leading to a paradigm shift in Western culture reflected in the development of modern autobiography. According to Paul Jay's thesis introduced in his book *Being in the Text* (1984) which studies the evolution of the form and function of self-reflexive writings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, new ideas about the nature of oneself resulted in a difference from the conventional models of the autobiographical form and gave way to a text embracing disparate and multiple identities or plurality that came out after the assumed unity of the innermost self is dissolved and also a reality with no foundation.

Barthes's unsettled-even paradoxical notion of to what extent private experience may be conveyed in language is plainly revealed in his passage entitled *Coincidence* where he talks about the recordings of himself playing the piano in association with the act of self-hearing. He points out that during this act when he is able to catch the various mistakes he has done, an exceptional meeting of the past and present takes place that eliminates any remark producing only some good composer's rediscovered music, not at all the reality of the actual text. Barthes proceeds to think about his project of *hearing his own self* and forms a bold analogy, contrasting scholars like Rousseau and Pascal (For further details see Pascal, 1960; Rousseau, 1953) who have centralized truth though in varying appearances, between his unforeseen musical experience and autobiographical writing; i.e. as he comments on his past works the idea of abolition instead of the truth becomes the core element in communicating oneself just like the musical rediscovery made after listening to his piano recital.

Consequently, Barthes's perseverance about his claim against the conventional models of life-writing reveals the character of the missing referent in the field of the subject; he mentions that his intention is not to express or depict the reality of past happenings and restore himself as one say of a monument since he is not after his previous self on the contrary what he merely does is to stay far from Rousseau's promise of self-revelation which constitutes the basis for contemporary autobiographical research in the West and operate within a self-contained signifying system and hence produce an independent R.B. personality free of reference, retrospect or mimesis of any sort making an anti-autobiographical pact with his reader, i.e. although in an autobiographical text the author, narrator and the protagonist bear the same name, this does not lead to a referential consequence due to the illusion of an absolute correspondence between signifier and signified, between language and the real. On the inside cover of the original French edition it is inscribed in Barthes's own handwriting that "it must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel" eliminating even the slightest possibility of any simple association between R.B. who speaks and himself who writes his life-story (Eakin, 1992).

In other words, Barthes defines autobiography, *the book of the Self* as an art of self-abolition where the groundless subject to be expressed is merely an effect of language detached at the level of proposition but maintained through working consciousness when an experiential description of subjectivity is given and thus what happens during the practice of autobiographical writing is narrating coincidentally the story of an “I” unavoidably linguistic and textual in nature: “*Writing myself...* I myself am my own symbol, I am the story which happens to me: freewheeling in language, I have nothing to compare myself to; and in this movement, the pronoun of the imaginary, “I”, is *impertinent*; the symbolic becomes literally *immediate*: essential danger for the life of the subject...” (in Eakin, 1992:6) While discussing in autobiography the inability of language to convey the pure existence of experience, that is the presence of the gap between one’s *being*, his/her private life and the linguistic tools used for its expression, it should be kept in mind that since language is far from serving as an independent and scheming subjectivity instated within the traditional borders of self-reflexive writing and belongs to others, the writer’s discourse would have to be run by some variety of what Barthes calls *Doxa* denoting the established public opinion, despite the changes in his feelings as a result of the stress occurring between personal and communal languages: “Such is the trajectory of language’s energy: in a first impulse, to listen to the language of others and to derive a certain security from this distance; and in a second, to jeopardize this retreat: to be afraid of what one says...” (in Eakin, 1992:9)

The private language uses *jubilatory discourse* whereas the other uses the intimidating discourse of the *Doxa* that depicts how actually painful it is to be isolated. Barthes who prefers the former in his life-story, i.e. the writing “I” presents his identity in his ink, constitutes in his uninviting style a *jubilatory discourse*, explains his textualization process as the act of binding an image system to protect and present an “I” governed concurrently by two complementary urges or forces, recto and verso of the performance of the “I” who writes, particularly emphasizing the motion of disguise at the expense of revelation and signature in view of the subject’s alienated nature, its appearance in language and the prospect or absence of reference: “I display myself, I cannot avoid displaying myself...but I wrap myself in

the mist of an enunciatory situation which is unknown to you: I insert into my discourse *certain leaks of interlocution* (is this not, in fact, what always happens when we utilize that shifter *par excellence*, the pronoun “I” ?) (in Eakin, 1992:14-15) However these two seemingly diverging motives may be considered as each other’s double or complement when the instrument of language is accepted to denote a unique sign for the unsaid.

Autobiographical texts have existed since the ancient times. Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* was one of the first works in which he tells his life-story of conversion and it became the model for religious autobiography. There were also travel narratives, memoirs and recordings of contemporary political and social events which gained popularity amongst elite males. Rousseau’s secular autobiography *Confessions* (1782) are considered by most literary critics as the initial text written in the genre. In the nineteenth century well-known writers such as George Sand, Alfred de Musset, Chateaubriand and Daniel Stern produced autobiographical writings that lay particular emphasis to Romanticism’s introspection. The twentieth century is prolific in terms of life-writing; marginalized writers such as women, homosexuals and immigrants wrote their stories. Especially the 1990s may appeal for autobiographical studies as the popular culture was overly preoccupied with the notion of identity. Boundaries between the private and public lives were almost removed in consequence of the various technological developments and profound socio-cultural changes in the society and thus people began to show keen interest in the lives of others as well their own (Edwards, 2005).

Early scholars of autobiography like Georges Gusdorf adopted an individual approach to self-writing. According to Gusdorf, to restructure certain obscure premises in the field of autobiography one must probe into the importance of the act of writing a life-story and the probability of its achievement. To begin with, it would be appropriate to underline the fact that autobiography is restricted to time-related and spatial aspects, this means it has not always existed and it primarily belongs to the Western culture conveying a meticulous apprehension specific to the Western man which has been useful in his orderly invasion of the universe and hence has

provided intercultural communication. Actually, to make a journey in the past, to remember experiences and details about what has happened for building in narration is an individual performance which has recently started by few practitioners interested in the design of his/her textual image believing himself/herself worthy of discovery. The writer aware of the essentiality of his/her presence in the world wishes to leave his/her trace giving witness of himself/herself even from beyond his/her death and thus assuring his/her everlasting subsistence. S/he makes references not only to himself but also to his/her autonomous surroundings so that his/her image is somewhat eased; for the autobiographer seeing himself/herself from outside as if s/he is someone else or allowing others to see him/her is a congenial literary activity (Gusdorf, 1980).

Autobiographies are the late products of Western culture because it was just until recently that the great value of individual life-narratives has become a preoccupation. In the history of civilization generally an image of a self living in harmony with the society is drawn since for him/her his/her existence depends on others and instead of a conflict-based relationship s/he prefers to build a mutually supporting one maintained everywhere in the community; that is, not a soul is entitled to own his/her story, the privacy of the individual is sacrificed as all lives are so well knotted to each other and all men play a limited number of hereditary roles and hand them down to the coming generation just as his forebears have done and hence no person can occupy a specific center in societal life. This system of living puts obstacles in the way of persistent individual innovation and development while establishing the stability of the social and community identity and hence reserving no cultural space for consciousness and expression of the private self in writing. The idea of successive timeless repetition should be disregarded for the emergence of autobiography because the author who undertakes the task of narrating his/her life is aware of the continuous transformations and the unpredictable aspects of the self and incidents, i.e. the past and the present are not the same and what happens until or at the moment of writing will not be seen again in the future. In the light of these the autobiographer intends to make his/her own time-proof image that will stand opposed to all disappearances caused by change: "History then would be the memory

of a humanity heading toward unforeseeable goals, struggling against the breakdown of forms and of beings. Each man matters to the world, each life and each death; the witnessing of each about himself enriches the common cultural heritage” (Gusdorf, 1980:30-31). The man wonders about himself, his own fate and his independent quest for meaning of life. As an agent in charge the man, who brings together people, lands and power and originates regulations and knowledge, aspires to leave the mark of his existence in nature. The presence of many life-writings or exterior initiations of notable persons among literary works is both an indication of men’s eternal ambition to be remembered at all times and change of interest from public to private history of not just the ground-breaking men but also the silent men whose voices, deeds and victories also deserve to be conserved in the universal memory. It took so long for this reformation to occur as it was related with the development of the person’s consciousness which was paid attention after all else. Surprisingly, one is more interested in observing the things he sees around him instead of taking a close look at his own nature (Gusdorf, 1980).

Considering the man’s outer world, the revealed portion of the iceberg as an apparently perceived space where people have clear-cut intentions, actions and movements, his spiritual inner world in life will be deemed relatively vague in essence. Many studies on human psychology have underlined man’s intricate and painful struggle with the discovery of his reflected self which is another “I”, a more delicate and susceptible duplication of me filled with a blessed quality. The writer using the genre of autobiography as a mirror of his/her own image breaks free from all the other reflections and pursues incessantly the call of his/her existence in an attempt to illuminate the most hidden aspects of his/her individual persona and hence becomes free and naked in his/her recently found world. According to historians and anthropologists autobiography can be viewed in its specific cultural moment to scrutinize the performance of the task itself, to make its objectives clear and to determine whether the text will achieve success or not. The autobiographer endeavors to give a coherent account of his/her personal history gathering the broken parts of his/her life and then rearranging them as a complete draft. In the course of writing the author does not put side by side immediate images but s/he makes a sort

of film using a script written beforehand in order to go back over a phase or a development in time; s/he gets out of his/her story where s/he acts the starring role for s/he needs to watch himself/herself from a distance and construct an objectively designed text which provides harmony and uniqueness across time. This idea seems quite normal as everyone has a past and when narrating his/her past the writer who is already the subject of autobiography becomes the object (Gusdorf, 1980).

The biographer who writes about someone else's past can not be so sure of his/her protagonist's intentions, s/he tries to depict the external form or the appearance s/he observes, therefore s/he should develop a sensitivity to pick up and interpret the critical clues that help him/her constitute a more authentic tale. However, the situation changes when it comes to autobiographical writing since there exists no wall or borderline between oneself and his/her image and s/he thoroughly can see his/her desires and thoughts, make judgments about himself/herself and cut off confusions that may arise and thus end up with the representation of the possible truth. Most autobiographies are rooted in these basic motivations and many prominent men write their life-narratives in order to eliminate the risk of being buried in the ground with slighted accomplishments. Individual life-stories are written to praise men providing the historian with some remarkable evidence, such as official information and intentions evaluated by acts, which he can make use of like other evidences. The reader should not thrust the narrator's account of events absolutely and view what he has said as his contribution to his private story (Gusdorf, 1980).

The operations of his/her memory and consciousness while making this contribution are essential because they relate to the accuracy and reliability of truth. The restoration of the facts and sequential arrangement of pictures from the past that crop up impulsively in his/her thinking is also carried out for the contentment and healing of an uneasy psyche and this process necessitates the unity of action and approach coming from within. The focus on the inner does not mean to deny the outside happenings and their influences. It is true that what is experienced in one's surroundings proves limiting and at times decisive in character formation but

research has shown that “the essential themes, the structural designs that impose themselves on the complex material of exterior facts are the constituent elements of personality...and man far from being subject to the ready-made, completed situations given from outside and without him, is the essential agent in bringing about the situations in which he finds himself placed”(Gusdorf, 1980:37).

He participates in the design of the spot where he once lived and gives it its final shape that is presumably an authentic expression of his own spirit; life-writing therefore is a way to knowing oneself as it constitutes a life in its entirety. To look at the memories of the past with respect to the present moment provides merely a piece of a person’s existence, so when writing his/her story one should go the long way to reach a complete self, i.e. one is compelled to position what s/he is in the framework of what s/he has been, making connections between the present, past and the future. In view of this, self-narrative is a further interpretation of an individual’s life which is closer to reality as the consciousness functions like a filter of experience regarding all the details about the subject, its standpoint in time and place. Keeping in mind that the narrator who recalls his/her past has not been for a long time the same person, his/her autobiographical writing will not merely replicate the earlier events in his/her life but it will generate a ghostly illustration, already a much remote, unfinished and vague form that appears in the world eternally gone.

As one would expect, the narrated past to a certain extent will resemble the actually lived past but somethings like its original tissue and firmness are lost on the way. A closer connection is built between the writer and his/her work’s content and the life which has existed in scrappy form at the moment of remembering is then step by step put together in an attempt to discover a new identity beyond time and space. This textual identity should be comforting in the sense that it reveals in general a fulfilled life which has not been wasted in the pursuit of useless knowledge. In other words, the autobiographer who aims at individual liberation starts a new mode of dialogue within himself/herself and with others both as persons and societies and subsequently mirrors his/her preceding experiences in the text: “he chooses not revolution but reconciliation, and he brings it about in the very act of reassembling



the scattered elements of a destiny that seems to have been worth the trouble of living” (Gusdorf, 1980:39).

The author retraces the history of his/her life so he may be deemed as a historian. In the face of difficulties that emerge due to malfunctioning of memory and tendencies to distort reality, s/he is expected to depend on his/her sense of critical objectivity and fairness to ensure the precision of his/her narrative portrait and the recollection of events as they occurred. The writer knows if s/he endeavors to bring the past back to life it will be a pointless act because what happened in the past remains in the past and to believe in the complete restoration of the past in the present is an illusion. Working like an historian in charge of his/her own life story the author journeys in time assuming his/her experiences to be unified in what s/he was and what s/he has become. Once upon a time s/he was a child, s/he was young and then s/he became a mature man and those days were long gone handing over the right to speak to the man of present day. This man who is the only one to have a say in autobiography portrays the different stages of his identity development from his perspective at the instant of writing so for him the separation between the stages never exist and thus the narrative is used to provide a cohesive life structure.

The writing product can not represent the exact image of the person as it opens out gradually in the present and the autobiographer tries to do what needs to be done employing all the available resources in spite of the mind’s conscious plans and missions that merges with instinctive drives and aspirations. If life is believed to be a man’s battlefield where uncertain diversities of men, conditions and various conflicts challenge each other unavoidably tension and fear of the unknown will arise out of this dilemma-based situation which is unlikely to be revealed in self-narrative as the end of the battle and his fate is already known to the man. However one should not put aside the fact that because the autobiography is expected to be consistent and based on reason at each instant in writing the narrator knows little about what will happen to his/her protagonist and the course of his/her life as things may change according to his/her perception and worry of organization: “the act of reflecting that

is essential to conscious awareness is transferred, by a kind of unavoidable optical illusion, back to the stage of the event itself” (Gusdorf, 1980: 41).

In some cases, the author makes alterations, adds or leaves out some details in his/her text but it can't be said for sure that this attitude indicates a purposeful intention to mislead the reader since it is highly a possibility that what is done has been done out of the necessity to turn into motionless and unchanging this past life which was moving. The author seems to be free in making his/her textual choices of various types but actually s/he is not, his/her independence is bounded by its own impetus because autobiographical writing involves going through a formation process of data that is formed already. The narrator who from the beginning knows the outcome of his/her story deals with meaning related problems as s/he is supposed to give meaning to the situations that have numerous meanings or none at the time of their occurrence. During this stage the human memory is likely to mal-function producing gaps and deformations which lead to the erroneous selection of details to be retained in the narrative. S/he comes up with a private reality that is not a plain testimony of his/her existence but an effort or the performance of a man trying to reconstitute himself in his own image at a specific time in the past as a result of his dialogue within himself based on understanding beyond veracity and falseness.

In addition to being a private historical document, autobiography is also a work of art or symbol of consciousness reflecting the inner land in outer space and it has aesthetic worth embedded in its stylistic harmony and the splendor of its representations. The author tells his/her experiences in an attempt to make a self-discovery but this process is not an indolent consideration of his/her individual existence. S/he strives for his/her truth laid bare through his/her confession of the past which is actually carried out as an act in the present. It is impossible for one to bring back the past so what operates in autobiography is making a draft of the past for the present and including in that draft things which are still worth mentioning and have merit. Time-related perceptions merge so as to construct a self exceeding its own historic margins. As the writer makes confessions about his/her past in relation to the present-day predictions s/he deconstructs himself/herself down to his/her

essence in search of a self unwrapped as a result of not a previously known truth but a dynamic intellect. Autobiography describes a person's concealed inner world in the light of his actions in his current environment, so he appears to the reader "not as s/he was, not as s/he is, but as s/he believes and wishes himself/herself to be and to have been" (Gusdorf, 1980:45). The autobiographer who plays the main character in his/her own story reviews his/her destiny and illuminates his/her past to portray a constitutional picture of how s/he has existed in time. Yet this picture is never completed and the writer does not aim for a concluding word about his/her life since the nature of an individual and the way s/he observes his/her life from outside as an omniscient narrator lead to continuous changes; therefore the individual becomes at all times a making or a doing and the dialogue between life and itself on the lookout for its own truth is unlikely to finish.

However, still despite the notion of the changing self some literary critics insist on the position the conscious, individual "I" at the core of autobiographical writing (Bruss, 1976; Olney, 1980). In fact as regards the structuralist and post-structuralist principles, there is no consistent and complete self and the identity of this supposed self is related to those of other selves and no clear boundaries exist between them; the self is no longer deemed as a stable unit on his/her own but an outcome of certain ideologies and hence it is not viable to discuss the existence of precise parameters for self-distinction. These ideas lead to the exploration of individual subjectivity from various perspectives, for instance Michael Sheringham who analyzed French autobiographical texts concludes that during the writing process, the author becomes alienated from his/her text, what s/he actually is differs from what is revealed in his/her autobiography and hence s/he becomes the textual other. His/her reader also turns out to be the other as s/he isn't familiarized with his/her notion of self. Moreover, his/her textually present identity should include others that contributed to his/her self-formation. Briefly saying, autobiography tries to depict in a consistent manner an "I" that is actually inconsistent and subject to change. At the same time, the "I" revealed in autobiographer's narration should leave a complete and consistent impression on the reader.

The wish to monumentalize the self, to take advantage of art's shaping powers in the effort to transmute the incoherencies of a life into the regularities of a story, is often perceptible in autobiography, but it may conflict with a desire to tune in amidst the cacophony of experience. The sense of a disparity between the self as a historical phenomenon, perceptible in a life history, and the self as something outside and perhaps at odds with history is a recurrent theme. To perceive this...points rather to a picture of autobiography as a passage through and a constant negotiation with different forms of otherness (Sheringham, 1991:viii).

Carl E. Rollyson (1978) who also agrees to Sheringham's self of multiplicity, states that writing a biography, where one makes all efforts to give details about the lives of individuals, offer reflections on or interpretations of their implicit feelings, ideologies and intentions and represent their unique contradictory selves, is a complicated and confusing task in nature. As a result of his analytical approach to biography genre he identifies two specific reasons about why a writer would get involved in such an undertaking, i.e. to introduce a plausible textual figure and recreate a whole person without merely emphasizing facts after an authentic measurement and assessment of the impediments that block the way to a complete understanding of the subject's life-story and hence designing an appropriate narrative form, structure and style that makes the meaning of one's life accessible to others.

As Virginia Woolf, who throughout her writing career always echoed the biographical and autobiographical texts that she practiced, and parodied and experimented with in so many ways, points out that the biographer finds himself/herself in a situation of dilemma; on one hand a biography is viewed as complete if it is capable of revealing several identities, whereas on the other an individual character is probably composed of many fragmented selves and manifold identities. Andre Maurois depicts life as "a multiplicity of vital energy at the heart of a single soul where the man possesses a wide range of personalities that from time to time grouped together or trails each other within it" (in Rollyson, 1978). When considered from this perspective the term multiplicity refers to the lack of a constant personal identity, an identity in question as man does not reveal a unified form of existence due to incompatible tendencies that evolve from diverse layers of the

obvious, conventional or at times unvoiced personality, perplexing the biographer in quest of one's authentic self. In reality the textual subject remains mysterious to a certain extent no matter how the biographer at work makes every necessary effort to ensure all knowledge s/he obtains from his/her informant are consistent with the available factual materials and chronology and therefore assume the reliability of accounts of his/her subject's life.

### **1.3. Elements of Autobiography**

According to Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet autobiography which is shaped in relation to the restrictions raised by written communication and specific literary traditions emanates from the autobiographical discourse that provides a holistic vision of a subject's life by means of expressing the self conversions as practiced through a lifetime. What the narrative identity reveals in the text makes it viable to ensure both the permanent existence of the character in the time and the constant maintenance of the self. The process of telling one's life consists of narrativisation, fictionalization and textualisation; events and facts are presented in a dynamic, chronological and contributory form within a path and the life course is planned according to the models of life experience established in a social and historical milieu and made specific by the fictionalization of the self. The subject does not merely move within factual borders but is also portrayed as a character living in a textually constructed world denoting certain formal and structural features which allocate relation between the self, the community that plays a part in his development and also the society as a whole. As regards women's autobiography this course draws on diverse female roles, models and representations classified by society that constitute and resolve her particular identity and status in unison.

After the organization and interpretation of the available autobiographical data, the narrative discourse is likely to form as a closed meaning system with the purpose of assuming a role beyond a mere informant and thus conveying the rareness and the depth of oneself by a distinctively constructed text, for instance themes may be organized into a specific pattern founded on oppositions playing concurrently at

geographical, social, cultural and symbolic levels to connect reality, incidents and scenes in such a way that traverses the central thematic arrangement generated by the standard life course scheme and a particular connotation structure loading words with symbolic meaning and ideology to underpin the configurative consistency (Duchet, 2000).

This complex process of telling one's own life-story requires mental work and effort along with distinctive artistic talent. In her *Auto/biographical Discourses* (1994) Laura Marcus highlights the slow but sure relationship building in the nineteenth century between autobiography and the craft of authorship which was not appreciated as regards the text's appeal to its potential audience and expected sales situation but only in connection with the presentations of the self. Autobiography changes the writer's position in his/her work helping him/her gain literary authority and subjectivity, therefore what the writer of particular genius lays bare about his/her own identity in his/her autobiography is worth exploring and the outside judgments and opinions are ignored. In accordance with this idea, sober narrative recitation of one's history arranging both time and the character in line with a reason or target, should be distinguished from commercial autobiographies which often disgrace the self and intimidate the morality of the genre and hence people of superior reputation or historical value and ones capable of unremitting self-reflection should be treated as autobiographical subjects. When written about these subjects over a period of time steady modifications are made, self is given meaning in diverse ways through concession and challenge within the text and the individual self gradually develops and reaches its final form (Anderson, 2000).

Whether this textual self is fictitious or real has been at the centre of many hot debates since the emergence of the genre. Paul de Man, too, in his essay entitled *Autobiography as De-Facement* puts emphasis on the issue of distinguishing between fiction and autobiography. He says that the experience to decide whether life-writing should be considered as fiction or fact leaves the researcher stuck between incompatible thoughts and thus going through the unsteady consequences of the tight spot s/he can not solve, s/he feels like, in de Man's words, "being caught in

a revolving door” (Anderson, 2000:12). What he finds remarkable about autobiography is its display of a feature common to all texts, the call for metaphorical verbal communication. Since all knowledge including self-knowledge necessitates figurative language or tropes to be used, autobiographers are left with no choice but produce fiction in the appearance of truth or present an illusion, i.e. s/he attempts to inscribe in the text full lines of the face to be described or how the self looks like with the intention that his/her fictionalization is veiled by writing. De Man’s textual figure “I” which forms the autobiographical subject making reference to a signifier or a chain of signifiers within language in autobiography is first deconstructed, dissolved into words and separated confronting incapability of representation and then all fragmented selves gather in rhetorical sense and becomes fiction. According to some critics this absolute reliance on the fictitious view of autobiography may denote the intention of withdrawal from the responsibility of authorship and writing out of personal necessity rather than for specific audience or the concealment of mysterious images of fear, remorse and unease in the past. Furthermore, to remain silent or to abstain from self-disclosure about certain parts of one’s life tells the implausibility of basically remembering or representing affliction (in Anderson, 2000). Thus at this point how memory functions and its impact on the writing process should be analyzed to understand the autobiographical act as a whole.

### **1.3.1. Memory**

Memories bring to mind the earlier events and episodes from life by working as a function of present consciousness, i.e. to compose a self history one should count on the intricate analysis of the self’s current subsistence which involves the possibility of describing in the narrative something that never existed in real life. During the remembering process the writer puts a distance between his/her true and textual identity and assumes a role that belongs to a different world. S/he reveals the prior incidents in the image of the present; the life-story in present time is formed as a result of the past. The author expresses a constantly changing truth composed of perception, consciousness, memories and the environment that merges both the inner

and the outer worlds of an individual. Memories and the current concept of truth are mutually connected; the present instant and the particular intuitive mark of the person produce memories and in turn the memories play an essential role in the framing of the existing moment as they attach in a meaningful manner the past and present events. When memory remembers and interprets multiple types of information it may bring out some misunderstandings due to its deformation or conversion of things and thus complete trust in memory as a reliable connection to a true self-history for both the shape and the details of narration would not appear sensible (Olney, 1980).

During the process of autobiography where the experiential facts are changed into *objet d'arts*, the author chooses between things, puts them in a certain logical order and then combines them to develop a complete narrative of an individual's life. As the producer of this prose fiction the writer attempts to represent his/her past experiences as they were lived; besides his/her concession of the inherently found limitations and coercions of any text written for publication, to recount his/her story s/he applies the practical methods of artistic literature. However, the autobiographer's usage of his/her exclusive imagination does not indicate that his/her self-reflexive writing is based on the preconditions of imaginative discourse. Since it is from the restricted perception of his/her present self that the writer narrates the reality of the past s/he already knows, s/he pours his/her imagination into the narration to prevent the occurrence of meaning uncertainties resulting from cognitive perplexities s/he confronts during the constitution of his/her life-story. Telling one's own life is not a process that can be handled easily; the writer needs not only to remember the private facts about his/her past but s/he also has to organize them for the discursual construction of his/her identity in the text. In some cases at the moment of writing as regards the writing purpose and for the sake of composing a cohesive story and offering an artistic setting to his/her reader and thus changing his/her life into a narrative design the writer may compromise some realities or details that lead to inconsistencies between the life being signified and the mode of its signification raising questions about the concept of textual authenticity (Renza, 1980).



The notion of a life-narrative basically as the gathering of the familiar past by means of verbal strategies lays emphasis on its mergence with the fictional text which may be defined as "...trained on its own present; it posits a total world composed of setting, characters and action whose definitive representation is kept in narrative abeyance like the still, unravished bride of imagination. It invites us as readers to fill in the blanks, to supplement the world with our own experiences in order to become simultaneous with its temporality" (Renza, 1980:275). The critical endeavor of the reader will become obvious if the autobiographical text is deemed as a never-ending and fragmentary prologue with no middle or end where the lexical "I" fails to represent the author's actual existence. In other words, the autobiographical work being a replication, copy or deliberate action of a living subject involves the separation of the writing identity and his/her textual version since the narrator who tells his/her story and verbalize the earlier events is different from the person who has really lived the story and thus what is recounted as experience brings forth an unvoiced identity of the author's soul that is beyond wordly expression (Renza, 1980).

Human consciousness makes a distinction between what goes inside one's mind and what happens in the outer space flashing pictures that are taken for granted as one's true story. Generally it is supposed that a person's ideas and his/her perception of reality mutually reflect each other and the psyche forms the self and his/her tale. The mind is the single part which is conscious of itself; therefore a person is likely to associate his/her identity directly with the consciousness. In fact, the conscious mind is embedded in the concealed, namely from where the consciousness instigates. Similar to all artistic compositions, life-writings are based on a more profound reality of existence. The problem with consciousness is its likelihood of deception; however though it deceives others it cannot lie to itself when it has identified the facts because it will not know what it should lie about (Earle, 1972 in Mandel, 1980). To remember the past and to write the truth of what you have remembered are two different stories. This truth rooted in one's existence is gradually built during the course of writing by means of tone, mode of expression, textual characteristics and intuitions. One should not write using merely the pictures

in his mind since these pictures which could lead to bogus onsets or blind alleys will not serve properly as textual sources. To cast off any possibility of distress in writing that may occur as a result of dependence on memory pictures, transcendence of these pictures and thus development of real experience are necessary. The autobiographer includes in his/her text whatever s/he chooses from his/her past life and his/her writing of truth constituted on a basis of subjectivity strange to his/her ego, is just slightly related to the first memories s/he holds in his/her consciousness. In other words, memories that spontaneously exist in one's psyche are triggered by a current event and they focus more on the secrecy of the present in place of the past. If not overpassed these flashbacks of personal history cannot go a step further or elucidate their particularity disappearing rapidly within time. The backside of these pictures should be interpreted to move towards a meaningful reality as the pictures on their own imply no sense at all. In order to publish mediocre autobiographies most authors prefer to leave out some memories and do not unveil the whole past in their narrative. Some few authors are courageous enough "to let the truth of their experience illuminate the deeper relevance of these pictures in the context of their total existence. It is the *context* disclosed through writing that is the autobiography" (Mandel, 1980:52).

Considering the close connection between memory, language, social truth, contemporary ideology and individual capacity differences one can easily surmise the intricacies of the selective process of remembering lead by the autobiographer's experiential fragments and the subsequent stage of narrating that is engaged with arranging facts and details in chronological order to form one's life-story. The problem with the memory does not merely come from forgetting things, various other factors are involved. As the time passes the memory suffers from disruptions which lead to meaning shortfalls in the frame of reference where experiences are initially placed, the emergence of paradigmatic changes causing not just emotional problems but also cognitive difficulties and thus alterations in the lexis and the meanings attributed to certain concepts and value systems, i.e. the gist and configuration of the cognitive maps the author draws on are transformed making it hard to accurately narrate prior happenings and experiences (Michielsens, 2000).

Writing an autobiography is to analyze one's history or a specific historical period limited to one's lifespan, so what you do is go back in time, and make deductions with regard to earlier events using sentences shaped by the present. Hence it would be right to say "Recalling old cognitive maps is like shaking the roots of a person. The stories come down like leaves from a tree. Not only do they represent 'the facts'; they also tell how a person has been working on the story of his/her life" (Michielsens, 2000:185).

The writer first deconstructs his/her past and then attempts to rebuild his/her consciousness in his/her narrative giving meaning to what occurred in his/her life. However, since in time the writer is obliged to stay even with the ongoing socio-cultural changes of life in general and thus make sure that his/her own life keeps on, s/he becomes part of the boundless story telling process in which certain periods are charged with symbolic sense transforming the realities into legends and consequently the memory of the flow of events is modified. Concepts acquire vital importance as an essential fraction of people's strategies in the maintenance of continuity regarding the expected life changes. As the concepts shaping the experiences lose their previous senses there appears almost always a paradoxical gap between the concepts of the present and the past and in some cases it becomes difficult to combat the cognitive turmoil resulting from this uncertainty and find a common ground amongst them.

How the autobiography writer forms permanence in his/her life is related with experiences and emotions that are managed, renovated and sometimes let down by frames. In the course of bringing back the past and the production of memories these dynamic frames are re-enacted and the connection between unlike frames varies according to the characteristic traits, the socio-cultural and political conditions of the narrator and the potential reader who through intersubjective relationship makes the mutual interaction and construction possible. This explains why people reflecting on the same thing have tendency to develop dissimilar perceptions or portrayals that bring about diverse forms of behavior. What is more to this variety is, to make future predictions about an individual, event or notion people rely upon their first

impression judgments and are not likely to change them afterwards. Although life-narratives include the private conceptions of oneself, what occurs during the writing process is quite the mixture of the private and the public; telling memoirs is to exceed the time-limited boundaries, understand the choices once made and convey them to the present day's reader feeling uneasy of actually not ever making a choice of one's own (Michielsens, 2000).

The author's memory and his/her operation of general cognitive processes have a considerable impact on the literary power of autobiographical texts and the reader's dream world inspired by his/her artistic image pouring out of the pages. Therefore, to learn about how a man's mind works when he performs autobiographical acts and acquire knowledge of the dynamics of specific writings will provide better appreciation of the self-narratives and the author's production process. The writer sets out a goal in composing his/her autobiography; s/he transmits his/her recollections via the prism of his/her aspirations and presents them to the reader fulfilled with his/her artistic skills providing mutual interactions. The immediate effect of memory may be observed while the writer carries out mind research to find some indications about where to locate things and restructure his/her memories. What follows next is the adornment and restyling of reminiscences one after the other. Also new meanings are attached but without any touch on the essence of the originals. In this context then it would be proper to make no distinctions between a craftsman's perspectives, a biographer's concepts and the common functions of memory since they all seem to converge at a specific instance in life-stories (Siebenschuh, 1989).

When a writer narrates his/her past s/he does not merely endeavor to build an image of himself/herself based on his/her experiences, s/he also wishes to underline his/her reasons of reflecting on the development of himself/herself. Telling lives is a recurrent human activity as it is one's natural need to reorganize his previous experiences for finding resolutions to difficulties or possess balanced personality traits in the present. When the narrator sits down to write his/her own tale s/he begins to make use of various approaches or basic plots and scenarios by means of his/her

memory that functions to choose, highlight, and reshuffle the past happenings, therefore it will not be wrong to establish a firm correlation between the fictional processes and the motivating spiritual needs. During the course of narration some scenes appear to be more important when compared with the others, so they are positioned at a central point within the descriptive system that will as a whole work out the textual identity allowing the storyteller to communicate himself/herself in an individual manner. Cognitive processes that enable particular self-expression are affected by cultural values, i.e. the various roles the self assumes in society, the organization of the life path the self follows and the decision making when it comes to choose between things to be remembered or put aside. The eminent literary men, for example, go through a culturally more complex designed self-revelation process because of their refined plan for life that emanates from multilayered intelligence and self-understanding and specific approaches to important events and contexts in history, philosophy and arts and their exceptional gift of playing up their own stories (Siebenschuh, 1989).

In an autobiography no writer is actually himself/herself because in the constitution of autobiographic self factors such as memory, experience, identity, embodiment and agency plays an essential role. Memory as both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts, through the process of remembering provides access to past events and experiences and places the present within the past. Remembering which consists of the reinterpretation of the past in the present does not refer to simple experiential recovery from a stockpile but also to the past given meaning by the subject in the act of recalling. Hence due to, for example, the nonexistence of a supportive milieu that both helps information flow and rewards truthfulness, it is hardly ever possible for a writer to faithfully narrate what s/he has lived through even supposing s/he seeks to portray the reality of the autobiographical subject, namely himself/herself. Daniel L. Schacter, who investigates the psychological and biological aspects of human memory underlining the difference between its conscious and nonconscious forms, states that memories do not function like duplications of the incidents themselves but rather as records, therefore altering fragments of experiences develop into complicated structures that form life stories

(in Smith, 2001). One comes across many instances which denote the roles of memory and imagination in narrating individual lives. Lillian Hellman's complex styled three volume autobiography is analyzed with respect to personal history, life as art, the role of memory in constructing various selves and how the potential reader responses and factors related to the reader's class, culture, means of communication, sense of objectivity and immediate situation take part in the writing and assessment processes. In her autobiographical text Hellman concentrates on the nature of her relationship with her inner self and others and she introduces herself as a person and a writer revealing how she remembers and deals with many past meanings. In search for reality of life, she describes the tension she was to overcome in her first volume *Unfinished Women* (1969) about her wondering memories that did not follow a set pattern, thus she could only rely on some of them not all as they consisted of various sounds and pictures independent of time and order and as an autobiographer she hadn't got the slightest intention of putting them into place (Brown, 1985).

When writing an autobiography, naturally the author attempts to frame an appropriate design by means of organizing documents and memories sequentially and forming a meaningful whole, however the human memory is not restricted by the elements of time and order; instead it is bound by unreasonable configurations, metonymies and obscure symbolisms due to its poetic nature. Even when well-documented, memory cannot be taken for granted as authentic story of one's life since it tends to rearrange the past events using a groundless process of elimination of disagreeable or conflicting identity fragments which are secret defects the individual had to keep to himself/herself for maintaining and incorporating a positive personality structure in the autobiographical work. William C. Spengemann, who has been among the workers in the field of autobiographical studies with the aim of seeking pathways through all the life-writing western culture has produced, stated that the earliest autobiographer St. Augustine's *Confessions* constitute a model for Western autobiography with its three mingled forms of self-knowledge conceived to be shown up in their own ways and have a relationship to long-established autobiographical receptions such as confession, regret and poetic, that is to say life in autobiography is conceptualized as history of the self which provides a sequential

development of selected events and conscious motivations arranged into a narrative pattern which also shows the author's views in relation to the common beliefs of its predetermined audience, as a philosophical process of an individual's self-discovery and as poetry giving way to the revelation of a self shaped by literary elements (Brown, 1985; Heidtmann, 1984; For further details see Spengemann, 1981). When considered from this perspective, *The Confessions* is a crucial achievement as it offers the three forms "from which every subsequent autobiographer would select the one most appropriate to his own situation... and presents them in a sequence that rehearses the entire development of the genre from the Middle Ages to the modern era" (Heidtmann, 1984:206-207). Hellman, who sharply distinguished in her text these different approaches to life, changed the concept of contemporary autobiographical writing from mere dates and historical records to memory and its processes by a writer protagonist performing, improving, contemplating and questioning all the way through.

She puts forward that imaginary pieces of life can be considered as contemporary fiction but not as reliable life-writing since those constituents develop into "a fascinating tone-poem, steeped in dream/disguise states of semi-awareness with sharp, irrational leaps and turns of motive, character and event", introducing two metaphors related to information about her autobiographical memory, i.e. it is a ragged combination of things piled up and autobiographical life exists as a puzzle with missing parts seeing that it actually refers to the author's perception of reality and the way she interprets her past with its distinctive shades does not have much in common with the real truth (Brown, 1985:3). For this reason she assumes the task of carrying out a quest for true life and self-definition and meanwhile, hence turning inward and filling in the gaps in order to produce an integrated looking portrait of authenticity. Actually in this process of self-understanding and pictorial construction of the authorial subject, whatever method she employs, due to the compulsory limits or variations on available information and concepts of intentions, beliefs, reasons, purposes and motives, the writer as image maker at best attains only a ballpark figure of what the subject is or was truly like. As more put together, eventually parts of an image detailed with fresh data will appear, moving towards a more rewarding and

graceful truth. Historical facts and the truth revealed in autobiographical writing are tested with the similar rules of probability and uncertainty applicable in scientific research, therefore a person's auto/biographical self or the psychology of a character develops as a result of incorporated data present in the mind of the observer and since the image produced will not precisely resemble the nature of the person it would be suitable to indicate, instead of the identity, the correspondence as the auto/biographer's operational objective (Blum, 1981). Loren Eiseley, who in his description of the textual identity includes the reader's transformation by the autobiographical effect, relates a writer's mind to a concealed attic of a craftsman:

There are pictures that hang askew, pictures with outlines barely chalked in, pictures torn, pictures the artist has striven unsuccessfully to erase, pictures that only emerge and glow in a certain light...They represent no longer the sequential flow of ordinary memory...The writer sees back to these transports alone, bare, perhaps few in number, but endowed with a symbolic life. He cannot obliterate them. He can only drag them about, magnify or reduce them as his artistic sense dictates, or juxtapose them in order to enhance a pattern (in Heidtmann, 1984:208).

What appeals to the literary critic more particularly about the writing process is the autobiographer's attempt to adopt a form or a style consistent as much with the relentlessly changing life pattern and fairly recognized motivations and relationships of the protagonist as the apparent content, i.e. his skill and power in the projection and proper representation of memory in narrative and meeting the requirements of a maturely envisaged autobiographical form. Hellman vividly illustrates the stages of autobiographical process by an effect known as *petrimento* in painting which makes reference to old conceptions replaced by later choices; as the clock keeps ticking events transcend time and space changing from opaque to transparent and then to manifold appearances and consequently indicating stylistic, perceptual and more effectively data variations (Brown, 1985). These later choices existing concurrently in diverse universes of discourse may offer facts for the psychologists, valuable sources of information for the historians and a diagnostic range of linguistic tricks for the literary critics. In general, every time researchers attempt to analyze a text, they explore a single discursive world moving cautiously within norms specific to their



field of study. However, instead of this approach to an autobiographical text, it would generate more efficient results to look upon, for instance in terms of literary art, the potential relation between artistic preferences in a single universe of discourse and the typical function of memory and perception in another (Siebenschuh, 1989). When they write about their lives nearly all autobiographers, instead of written records or research use generally their reconstructive memories as a source for their form, content and reliability, therefore the readers should be alert interpreters keeping in mind the direct involvement of the distortion causes that are the workings and problems of human memory and perception in the process of production. At this point, various possibilities emerge as a consequence of the selective perceptions, mostly individual-based selections.

According to professionals and researchers in the area of cognitive psychology, among the many events people go through, they distinguish and store only a portion, described as bits or fragments-pieces of experiences, hence they remember versions and partial deceptions rooted mainly in their concerns, hopes or desires. Furthermore, before selecting perceptions to be stored in the long-term memory, they are looked over and this process is repeated whenever they are remembered for use, always allowing its possessor to form new outputs for disclosure; in other words thoughts, beliefs, and predispositions affect both the editing that takes place at the moment of observation and the following editing when the memory was built and recollected. A memory expert Elizabeth Loftus states that in the course of memory storage the brain compresses the available information by leaving out the dull fractions, underlining the appealing parts and thus putting them away for later recall. What people do to remember is bringing to mind a handful of details about the event and put those together to draw the whole picture. Meanwhile to provide consistency they intuitively complete the blanks existing between pieces of information with deductions through common sense and the impact of individual or cultural prejudices, hopes, necessities and passions. To have such knowledge about the complex operation of memory changes, without doubt, the researchers' methodology of autobiographical interpretation (Siebenschuh, 1989). A variety of criteria play an essential role in an autobiographer's generic achievement such as the

focus and contents of the text, aesthetic preferences, whether the text is research-oriented or takes the reader's interests into consideration or introduces a wider spectrum of the writer's perspectives, however these hypothetical factors may not just emerge as a result of decision or policy making but also reveal in what ways the author's memory functions or whether its part in the ultimate construction of the autobiographical text is far more important than assumed by the literary critic, that is the writer's act of remembering the past events plays a major part when compared to his/her analytical reflection upon the data within reach or his/her deliberate attempts to achieve specific effects as s/he may have hardly any concrete memories of certain scenes, pieces and images from his life that must be included to compose his/her personal narrative according to predetermined general objectives (Siebenschuh, 1989).

During the remembering process how the autobiographer narrates the events change in an expected and at times powerful way, for instance embellishing sensory details are included in a memory description for something that really took place, or even pseudo-events, far more strange, weird, painful or upsetting than one ever thought was possible, along with partial or entire false memories that are experiences about which an individual can feel certain, present facts and perspectives, and communicate effective beliefs accompanied by emotions, may build up for the reader. In the ideal world, people would have a way of distinguishing true and false memories, however, many minds work in a more web-like manner, seeing various threads and connections; they may imagine and believe in things they have not done or the perception of why things happen, what is happening in the world and how it influences that person--or, rather, how s/he can help influence it, may look more complicated than it actually is (Loftus, 2003). Outside suggestions or influences whether those of individuals or of particular social groups or the whole society depending on their primacy, can render the course of imagination and how a new, probably false memory report is conveyed. Researches indicate that besides memory, other mental processes or activities are also affected in the process of disclosure to effects, i.e. modifying thoughts or memory can bring about significant results for subsequent ideas or behaviors and hence the person unavoidably changes along with

his/her changing memory. As for the development of false memories, the individual is persuaded through working with sham feedback that it is likely for the false event to occur as his/her own personal experience and this is also true for the events that seem unreasonable at first sight; the individual believes that though the event may be factual it is not remembered and what helps at that moment to develop forged memory is the imagination willing to be controlled and inspired by the stories of others (Loftus, 2003). As the time gap between the first instance the subject acquires information and the time when this information is tried to be recalled during the reconstruction process of the past increases, it is inevitable for original memory traces to be changed or certain fragments of information to become less accessible or completely obliterated due to retrieval difficulties, for instance in the case of repressed memories and implicit knowledge the individual instead of recovering and representing an exact copy of the previous experience or the actual and true scene goes for making up speculations or adding simple falsifications that cannot be easily disproved. In other words, as the memory is not necessarily stable and may have been recurrently exposed to change after the initial storage of information, to remember something at different times in different psychophysical circumstances results in the different remembrance of that particular thing; what really happened in the person's past and obtaining a truthful version of an event becomes problematic and hence to what extent s/he has been constrained by real life situations and the issue of competence or forced to release one memory in favor of the other lead to suspense and further inquiry (Loftus & Loftus, 1980).

Briefly it may be concluded that an individual's complete and detailed narration of an event accompanied by feeling and confidence does not necessarily signify that it did actually take place. As regards autobiographies or memoirs in terms of memory twists, writers may be criticized for including unreal happenings or deliberate insertion of particular events, however if falsehoods are not always relegated to the status of lies, life-stories may be valued not as an intentional misleading chronicle but for potential insights into normal memory distortion processes. Autobiography scholars should know that in their personal narratives authors do not always consciously pass on the untruth, sometimes what begins as a

premeditated lie becomes the person's reality, therefore difficulty may arise to tell between the deliberate and the honest lie. Other than their experiences people's memories consist of what they have thought, what they have been told and what they believe. One's memory determines his/her identity, but the reverse is also possible, who s/he is and what s/he has been told to accept as true play an essential role in the reconstruction of his/her memory, so s/he may turn out to be the person of his/her own imagination (Loftus, 2003).

### **1.3.2. Subjectivity and Relationality**

Both the traditional life-writing inscribed by a growing field of authors from diverse socio-cultural spheres for self-representation and the intellectual-ego historical form produced by the new generation of historian-autobiographers to provide wide access to the past and the craft of autobiography, emerged as a result of far-reaching modifications in historical epistemology since the seventies which lay stronger emphasis on subjectivity and individual experiences (Aurell, 2006). Following Philippe Lejeune, Jeremy D. Popkin, the writer of *History, Historians, and Autobiography* in which he resolves the relationship between history and autobiography as a means of rebuilding the past alleges that life-writing gives accurate information not about the author's personal story but about the way s/he chooses to represent the various phases of these past incidents s/he has gone through, illuminating instead of the actual happening time, his/her state of mind as s/he puts together his/her reminiscences (in Aurell, 2006).

Cultural studies scholars along with historians emphasized the relationship between autobiographical texts and the rise of individualism and individuality in the West. Anthony Giddens in his descriptive study of the West's progress, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, points out that autobiography as a means of thinking, feeling or cognition is the basis of self-identity in modern life.

Self-identity is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. This includes

the cognitive component of personhood. To be a 'person' is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others)...The capacity to use 'I' in shifting contexts, characteristic of every known culture, is the most important elemental feature of reflexive concepts of selfhood (Giddens, 1991:53).

The role of autobiography in shaping, constructing and describing the subject of modernity has been underlined time and again (Steedman, 2000). Charles Taylor in his survey of Western philosophy, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, argues that since the end of the fifteenth century the self moves from outside to inside and comes out as a detached unit whose identity takes shape in memory and communicated in autobiography; any life is a result of what has been previously collected and its meaning is discovered by the gradual display of past events. What concerns Taylor is the form of the autobiography; is the self's tale merely the outcome of the events while they mount up or does the previously concealed form of life remain to be articulated? These reflections depict a self that is both recalled and narrated.

The new time sense has also changed our notion of the subject: the disengaged, particular self, whose identity is constituted in memory. Like any other human being at any time, he can only find an identity in self-narration. Life has to be lived as a story. But now it becomes harder to take over the story ready-made from canonical models and archetypes. [He also points out that] The story has to be drawn from the particular events and circumstances of this life; and this in two interwoven senses. First, as a chain of happenings in world time, the life at any moment is the causal consequence of what has transpired earlier. But second, since the life has to be lived has also to be told, its meaning is seen as something that unfolds through the events. These two perspectives are not easy to combine, at least not once they are formulated intellectually and become a problem for philosophy. For the first seems to make the shape of a life simply the result of the happenings as they accumulate; whereas the second seems to see this shape as something already latent, which emerges through what comes to pass (Taylor, 1989:288-289).

The autobiographical self constructed in the different aspects of the writer's life reveals disintegration and uneven existence along with individual subjectivity formed by means of incongruity and discrepancy because the life itself is actually

full of paradoxes and thus to what degree they are hidden between the lines is debatable and it is not probable to take for granted the lucidity of the narrative. Furthermore, authors tend to produce affirmative self-images instead of the reasonable ones which put together both the good and the bad and thus a probable “I” different from the authentic “I” is constituted going beyond the identity of real lived experiences. At this point it would be appropriate to explicate the concept of fragmentation and its relation to the self’s wholeness. Fragmentation makes reference to breaking apart from the self but this self does not have to exist as a whole because according to postmodern critics there is no flawless “I” as such. This inexistence does not imply that a single narrator lacks the capability of communicating through various voices but instead it emphasizes his/her moving position which is set up in central memory events or the current situation s/he writes about and allows him/her to stay between things observing them from an outsider’s spot and to be some character being looked or talked at. Therefore the literary readers in their quest for the narrated “I” are required to go within, across or through the varying personal and public borders formed as a result of two concurrent processes of recalling and retelling in autobiographical writing that lead to transformation in the subject’s position (Lewis, 2000).

Autobiography which recounts the author’s story of past experiences and makes projections into future events, hinges on the sequential arrangement of group of frequently changing, unreliable and biased memories working as a function of individual connections and public commitments: “While it (memory) may be uniquely ours it is also objectified, a matter of public convention and shared rituals. The recovery of the past through personal testimony can have a political dimension depending on what is remembered and what is forgotten. The right to establish validity, authenticity or truth is never the story teller’s alone” (Cosslett, 2000:4-5). In an autobiography a person’s frame narrative mingled with many other short narratives are recited setting up links with the broader social world. The historical and cultural circumstances when one’s life is decided to be shared with the public and how the life story once told will change or influence other peoples’ stories and the existing normative structure of the societies and hence renovate lives and cultures

are subjects explored by many scholars in the field. In other words, how autobiographies, namely private stories making sense of different versions of who we are and public stories in the context of diverse environmental, temporal or communal sites are interrelated and thus have a considerable role in each other's formation in writing, explains the essentiality and power of self-reflexive narratives on social life concerns and patterns of cultural changes. In what ways these stories function also depends much on the reader's intertextual approach which turns the reading process into a dynamic labor to decipher the deliberately built narrative structure working towards various goals like convincing, refusing, leading or even misleading at times and therefore instead of a text based on a specific individual's life, relations evolving around story telling become of vital importance and they help perceiving the detailed mechanisms which align the individual and social by a connection of roles and thus partake in the development of paradoxical selves embodied in autobiographical identity (Scott & Scott, 2000).

The new perception of the self in life-writing have risen interest among researchers such as Estelle Jelinek and Mary G. Mason who were the earliest feminists to probe particularly into women's autobiographical texts. Since 1980 many studies have been carried out about the differing patterns of narration and identity especially to reveal in what ways male and female writers represent the "I"s in their autobiographies (For further information see Jelinek, 1980; Jelinek, 1986; Green & Mason, 1979; Stanley, 1992; Smith & Watson, 1998). It is widely accepted that female writers should determine the ideological stance toward women's role in society as well as their physical existences which have impact on forms of autobiographical expression; they are not just mediators between family members or family and the public, they get involved in a diversity of human practices in society and face cultural, institutional and economic tensions to hold onto their existence and these confrontations are surely to be revealed in their autobiographies (Smith, 1998). Such ideas, many of which are based on the assumption that women's autobiography differs from that of man's as it's not confined to individual subjectivity, being conspicuous for its plural or collective presentation of the "I", provided an incentive for the development of women's life-writing research. According to Friedman, the

self in female autobiography has to be considered as plural to remove any possibility for misinterpretation or marginalization of female and minority writing in canon formation. She asserts that the notion of cohesive self as a separate entity disregards the cultural group characteristics overlooking the gender-based differences in the socialization process. Hence in women's autobiography the author feels obliged to investigate a collective female self seeing that the self of the individual is expected to overlap with that of the group. The construction of communal identity that considers the self "I" and other *we* not as different forms but as one rather than writing a detailed account of a woman's private life tributes to incoherent subjectivity as the seal of female self-narrative (Friedman, 1988).



## PART 2

### WOMEN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

#### 2.1. Writing of the Female Self: Historical Background

Literary and historical studies in the field of autobiography reveal that self-reflexive writing produces subjectivity and does this voluntarily. This impulse coming from within consist the actual part of the self-making practice. In this respect, to ask questions like 'Who tells the story of the self? Who does it most, at one time, in one place? Who uses these stories? How are they used, and to what ends?' may help. When the recent past of feminism is considered one notices feminist scholars who have worked on the long-term European project to form a canon denouncing the supremacy of masculine autobiography (Steedman, 2000). To discern the problem as man's determination of the norms underlined the relation between writing and the reasons why such an approach to self occurs. Smith describes the impediment of producing autobiographical texts as the compulsion to construct a universal subject, a 'hard nut of...normative (masculine) individuality' (1998:3).

Actually majority of readers are anyway likely to suppose that the author is sincerely narrating his/her life-story, so s/he is the person s/he says s/he is. However, the concept of sincerity is often associated with man's world and the woman who is characteristically believed to be lead by her emotions is accused of distorting, exaggerating or completely removing the truth from her self-writing (Anderson, 2000). The term autobiography connotes positivism in the man's context as *fictive*, *crafted* and *aesthetic* but when it comes to woman's self-writing, it bears negative implications, like *spontaneous* and *natural*, which devalue the scripts "women could not transcend, but only record, the concerns of the private self"(Stanton, 1987:4). Many critics have failed to appreciate women's writings due to their prejudices regarding the form and function of women's practice of art in various types of texts; they believe that women writers already include personal

details and concerns about their lives even what they write is not autobiography and their autobiographical writings cannot be compared with those of men in terms of authenticity as only men speak the truth. As a result of these biased opinions and the subjugation of female narratives, women have long been imprisoned in “a post-Woolfian room of their own” (Stanton, 1987:5).

This claim is an obvious indication of the indispensable connection between gender and the genre of autobiography. The subject “I” in the autobiographical narrative reveals universality and also strengthens the critical place of Western-middle class and manliness. As a result of the studies carried out by some premier modern critics of the 1960s and 1970s on a chronological canon of autobiographical texts about the outstanding life-stories of men who played important parts in the course of great historical, cultural and literary events, basic rules were established to demarcate the genre in relation to the *ideals of autonomy, self-realization, authenticity and transcendence* representing the values specific to their own culture (Anderson, 2000). For example, according to Olney the appealing nature of life story resides in its mysteriously molded self-tale and the writer of an autobiography tries to explore the man’s natural urge to achieve complete fulfillment of his unified existence and show his individual character traits or render himself conspicuous moving towards a commonly recognized truth of transcendence over both the social and historical differences. He ventures to partake in the formation of universal mores and desires that the outer world accepts the uniqueness of his reality, identity and experience (Olney, 1980).

This approach to autobiography agrees the ideas and principles of an essentialist or Romantic notion of the self, breed at the end of the eighteenth century but still adopted principally in the middle of the twentieth, which claims the unity of the individual and universal self against the perils and worries of disintegration and chaos. Therefore, accordingly during writing the autobiographer should look back at his/her life from a distance to construct a self laying particular emphasis on unity and identity across time (Olney, 1980). The process of life-writing and man as an individual share the same noble task of fulfilling oneself, a linguistically

inexpressible figure which is considered replaceable by no other. In other words, both strive for reaching an entity above society and beyond understanding (Weintraub, 1978).

However, critical research has changed the course of theoretical development in autobiography resulting in the canon's expansion and the growing influence of women's life-stories. Another assertion related to the formation of self-writing canon was its particular inclusion of elite men's writing and this has led to the study of the working class annals rather than journals of the selected few. Hence more texts about women and ordinary men have been produced and subjects on the periphery have become the source of literary criticism in place of the European ones (Steedman, 2000). When the widespread absence of concern in women's life-stories during the 1960s and 1970s taken into account, it is not astonishing to find out that since the early 1980s many researchers working in the field of Women's Studies have shifted their attention to observing, improving and theorizing lives due to their interest in the eliminated, devoiced and othered selves of women vis-à-vis the very selves of the appropriate and presumably male subjects. What Stanley introduces in this still rapidly growing feminist area is the essence of confessional attitude toward the self where women's sense of self and its interiorities made and remade by using the autobiographical method (Stanley, 2000).

After this general approach to women's life-stories, it would be appropriate to look into some specific examples to understand the recent position of women's writing. Margaret Cavendish, one of the most debatable figures in the history of early-modern women writers is a traditional upper-class wife and the Duchess of Newcastle and she attempts to change the position of women in the intellectual world regarding contradictory topics of liberty, power, responsibility and freedom of selection through means of resistance and achievement associated mainly with the autobiographical acts of publicly and ethically superior men. In an effort to construct a textual self as brave as that of men she wrote *A True Relation of My Birth, Breeding and Life* (1656) while she was exiled in Antwerp with her husband after the English Civil War which ripped apart her secure world in consequence of the

confusions and various events she had to confront (Rose, 2002). Unlike some of her contemporaries she composed her autobiographical memoir to publish and share it with the public and the *True Relation* was issued as an addendum to her collection of tales concentrating on the specifics and main subjects still present about how women discern and frame different versions of female identities in their self-reflexive writings. Despite Cavendish's collective thinking and description of herself in terms of relations with others this progressive step of the author may be exclusively regarded as a transcendence of strictly classified gender and class questions that bind people's existence (Bowerbank, 1999; Rose, 2002). Cavendish's view of textual writings as *paper bodies* which ensures the survival of the self brings up important matters: "What sort of embodiments are texts? What is the relationship between a writer's paper bodies and the actual lived context of the past? How do we-centuries later-go about restoring or recovering the body out of the textual remains? By what criteria should we judge one reconstruction of the past or the body more plausible or authentic than another?"(Bowerbank, 1999:11).

Similar to Cavendish three centuries earlier, in *Showings* another woman author Dame Julian of Norwich also makes efforts to be heard by public. Both writers have felt the need to rationalize their exploration of autobiographical subjects clarifying their reasons of making such an initiation because of the drawbacks and limitations, stemming from the public's ignorance and lack of concern to women's issues along with gender differences and the authority of the men in the field, they know they will surely encounter after the publication of their works. Women of those times were identified with their fathers or husbands as they were expected to show no existence on their own. Therefore though practiced in relation to others the Duchess's attempt to express herself on her own terms may be considered as a revolutionary step into the man's autobiographical world. She says in her life-narrative, "I answer that it is true, that 'tis to no purpose to the readers, but it is to the authoress, because I write it for my sake, not theirs. Neither did I intend this piece for to delight, but to divulge; not to please the fancy, but to tell the truth..." (Spender, 1989:28). She changes the theme of her writing and goes beyond simple gender struggle making a recitation of prior events in relation to present and past

with the aim of coherent self-construction. When firmly considered with regard to the defining basic rules of autobiography Julian's *Revelations* or Cavendish's self-projection *True Relation* may be excluded from the field due to some essential factors such as the lack of sufficient narrative content and self-discovery in Julian's connections with spiritual truths and the briefness and the publication details of Cavendish's life-story, its being printed next to sketches in verse and prose. However, despite the classifications made by traditional scholars the autobiographies of these two women paved the way for later autobiographers in terms of relational patterns and self-determination. There are two other women whose works also stand as early prototypic examples, Margery Kempe who wrote the first full autobiography ever known in English, a medieval mystical work entitled *The Book of Margery Kempe* and Anne Bradstreet whose only five pages long autobiographical practice was written not for individual purposes but for letting her children benefit spiritually from her experiences. These four works may be considered as initial steps in the history of women's autobiography offering a set of rules for the coming generation of authors (Mason, 1980).

The self in women's writings is represented differently from that of men since "the self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some other. This recognition of another consciousness ...this grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other, seems...to enable women to write openly about themselves" and thus narrate the story of the naked self as it is being revealed and coming into reality (Mason, 1980:210). The female self due to its deep nature and truths of women's experiences is not considered as an arena for a combat of conflicting powers which is an indispensable feature of men's writing. For instance, Bradstreet in an attempt to coordinate personal ideas and public duties draws circles of identity around herself, i.e. she defines herself in terms of her family particularly her renowned father and husband through whom she achieves her most unique individuality, the midway circle of the communities of Cambridge and the external circle of secular and religious Massachusetts Bay Colony (Mason, 1980).

In the last decades of the twentieth century many scholars as well as readers who view autobiography as a discovery journey to one's admirable inner and outer self are enthralled by the writing process of women's life-stories that includes a woman's acting out the subject of an autobiographical tale, the issues of female self-revelation and voice and publication matters requiring the approval of various accounts and addressees. In relation to this rising interest in life-narratives some questions are brought up for instance, what aspects of a woman's life is in conflict with the generic practice of autobiography, what lies underneath her story of individual content, who and which institutions of the genre and canon combining assessment and gate keeping determine whose life is worth being presented to all and what are some essential factors in making this decision. As one further explores life-stories, s/he is sure to see its dilemmas resulting from the narrator's role in the autobiographical text production, i.e. diverse accounts may well disclose unlike versions of reality about the same incidents due to the multiple subjectivities involved in writing (Long, 1999).

The concept of intersubjectivity removes the rigid borders between the subject or the disintegrated, uncommon individual whose life is being told, the narrator the other who tells the subject's story mostly in an attempt to meet the reader's expectations and the reader, the intended main audience of the subject. Just as the subject begins the action, its nature which remains unknown until instigated through a specific narrative pattern, gradually unfolds. Both the narrator and reader's perception of the subject could be as unique as the subject herself depending on how they empathize and identify with their source; therefore it is possible that the same life produces distinctly constructed subjects. The novelistic concept narrator whose involvement is crucial for the writing of life history and biography maintains the visibility and centrality of the subject-narrator relationship which plays a determinative role in the continuation, progress and the product of the research. The narrator's function as the referent to a moment in the making of the autobiographical text does not signal any stability or freedom of choice instead it marks a survival parallel with the continuity of subject-narrator relation. The narrator by and large is likely to organize the materials about his past bearing in mind the customary rules of

the field therefore the narrator and the subject differ from each other in their perception of the reader and the narrator through extra-linguistic tools becomes the go-between to familiarize the subject with the genre. The intended reader in especially women's autobiography is nearly always women because the writer aims to reach out to her woman reader with whom she feels strongly connected. Why some women are interested in reading about another fellow's life may be due to her need to understand the concept of womanhood in terms of collective situation and consciousness and to have representative cultural and historical information that cannot be obtained through any other available documents or to concentrate on in what ways the woman as writer challenges to narrate her individual life-story, express the subjectivity of a silenced and voiceless social group of which she also is a member and thus attempts to communicate concretely the relationship between her subjective self, the narrator and others in her text which indicates both the female tradition of autobiography and the linguistic problems and difficulties involved (Long, 1999).

In Western societies one may act as a subject, a reader and a narrator or all at the same time. Everyone has his/her own life-story which s/he may desire it to be known by others through the expression of his/her unique subjectivity. Also nearly each of us prefers to read and witness others' personal history to identify their versions of reality and what they have produced out of their experiences. Autobiographers tell their life-stories to obviate the narrow perception of human experience and make reference to other women's lives emphasizing their common concerns and hardships and thus voice what has long remained vague and buried. However, these tasks they intend to perform bring essential dilemmas. In the process of self-writing one tries to make a life story from a life, so various renovations concerning order, coherency and pattern will be worked out and the realities of this life will not be passed on directly presenting instead of the life as lived, the author's private design of a reasonable narration not specifically linked with provable events. Although first-person accounts are expected to reflect the writer's own construction of truth and experience the traces of third-person representations are always present to orient the course of the writing, i.e. it is unlikely for women writers to act

independently of collective images, stereotypical definitions and cultural instructions imposed by the social norms, principles and restrictions narrowing the battleground of women and drying up their exceptional voices. In other words, like in other literary fields of study, many texts that focus on the life-stories of women of different race, and class backgrounds as their topics have been banned or excluded to give precedence to the men's understanding and traditions and hence mark out the boundaries to frame the description of the female experience in self-narration. However, it is the issue of gender differences which forms and colors the subject's textual narrative and naturally the author's experiential coding reveals the descriptions and the questioning of gender arrangements about the women's cultural, historical and societal position indiscernible in the established autobiographical discourse together with the plurality of women's voices from a wide array of differing conditions and their collective situation inspiring them to write about a representative identity, relationship, group or social category they belong. One of the essential problems encountered in today's self-writing tradition is to have not many women's autobiographies and to have them in stereotyped ways. Only few women are privileged enough to have the spare time, solitude and a room of one's own for writing their life tales and the ones who have these opportunities are expected to abide by the male-dominant rules limiting them to write in a certain way and thus they have to achieve two diverging purposes at the same time, that is their desire to prove themselves and to be placed among the distinguished writers where only men's principles and demands apply (Long, 1999).

## **2.2. Representations of Female Identity in Literary Text**

In autobiography the self who has been previously considered as object becomes the subject and this is one of the main reasons why the genre has become a popular instrument used by women writers to express their ideology, history and identity freely. Bell Hooks explains the value of open self-representation mentioning her initial apprehension and unwillingness of revealing her authentic self and speaking the truths in her writing and how she has overcome this feeling which is a step towards her coming out as an independent thinker and author:



Part of myself was still held captive by domineering forces of history, of a familial life that had charted a map of silence, of right speech. I had not completely let go of the fear of saying the wrong thing, of being punished. Somewhere in deep recesses of my mind, I believed I could avoid both responsibility, and punishment if I did not declare myself a writer...“talking back” became for me a rite of initiation, testing my courage, strengthening my commitment, preparing me for the days ahead...Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is the act of speech, of “talking back”, that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject-the liberated voice (1989:8-9).

In traditional autobiography the ideal self who is recognized as the representative of humanity is the white and heterosexual male bourgeois possessing an independent, consistent and unified nature. This specific representation has led to the elimination or misinterpretation of subjects who are different from the prescribed figure in terms of race, class and gender. However afterwards the self has taken many new forms and made changes in the course of subjective history. Some women autobiographers have formed subjects which refuse to accept the role imposed by the society and thus challenged the cultural systems, normative beliefs and the feminine subjectivity attributed to women and become the symbol of success and heroism, a woman who has power over her own fate. Other writers have questioned the convictions of bourgeois individualism in their autobiographies by means of the self which is characterized as fragmented and lacking coherence and hence develops a process rather than a product. That is to say, the self is not stable and has no boundaries and emerges within multiple identities which dissolve, combine or transform in the context. Another strategy to intrude the imperatives of a male narrative structure is to consider the subject position of a woman in terms of her social, cultural, emotional and political connections to others in the society making the autobiographical a communal platform (Smith, 1993).

Thus it is possible to view autobiographical writing as a kind of remaking oneself from bits and pieces of reminiscences that one thinks worth bringing together. During this remaking process where the narrator depicts his/her trail of life as both a bystander and participant in consequence to the subject's positional shifts, takes on a number of societal and individual roles at the same time switching from excitement to realism and sometimes to quietness that impedes the reader's perception of any emotional content, backdoor aspects of one's life or individual expression. What also lies underneath the subject's continuous inconsistent position is the self's identification and close bonds with the collective whole in terms of gender, social class or race, so through the connecting thread between himself/herself and the others s/he moves from the "I's way of looking at things to that of we and in an attempt to represent the whole of which s/he exists as a part s/he reveals during textual construction the shared thoughts, prospects, disagreements or separations s/he most probably has experienced in his/her life. Especially women writers when articulating segments from their lives invent by means of different narrative strategies universal female identities in diverse surroundings that build up various aspects of generic racial, gender or class-based oppressions and prejudices and thus add to our awareness about women's existence in historical and socio-cultural context. While reading female autobiography one may notice plural selves developing in the narrative and these selves through their particular textual structural designs may be represented in such a way as to clear out for instance the typical patterns of life's troubles and disenchantments or remain mute on some issues and personal details and thus position themselves as detached and objective underlining realities true for almost all women (Lewis, 2000).

In the formation of these selves that speak for and represent women in a variety of ways, the autobiographer working as a self-historian transforms the pieces of the past into an integrated whole by means of memory processes that blend the domains of factual and the fictive:

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).

Various types of autobiographies and novelistic forms have revealed parallel developments in the West as regards their narrative principles and practices, for example the canonical writers of autobiography employ fictional techniques such as dialogue, characterization and plotting to give a full and cohesive account of their life-stories. It is considered as a complicated process to categorize different autobiographical forms and determine the limits separating autobiography from the novel since the work of fiction provides much freedom and flexibility in terms of its unrestricted, incomplete and forward-looking nature ready for the author’s artistic use of imagination to transform the facts and experiences and divulge the realities. The prevailing idea of unsettled self, in conflict with the old essential self and its myth of individuality, also opens the way for the fictive construction of personal life-narratives which analyze the self as subject (Smith, 1990).

The incorporation of the fictional elements to the story of one’s life brings to question the concept of authenticity. To what extent the writer tells his/her reader in the text the truth of what his/her autobiographical subject has actually lived and felt and under which circumstances or impacts e.g. social, political and ideological anxieties, worldly barriers and time-bound nature of history and memory, s/he avoids speaking the whole truth and leaves out or distorts some details. In addition, the determination of truth becomes even more problematic if other factors such as racial, communal, gender and reader perceptions are involved. The notion of autobiographical reality is basically related with the connection between the writer’s text and his/her past experiences. As claimed by some scholars, the woman autobiographer makes reference to her experience outside the text which includes both her actual life-story and the common experience of a group named women who have long been culturally silenced and marginalized in patriarchal social systems. The writer sensitive to the other women’s needs and desires tries to make mutual

identifications through using autobiography as a textual tool and assumes the responsibility of expressing the unsaid truth on behalf of the group to which she belongs. Autobiography serves as a platform to disclose the certain aspects of female nature and consciousness which require a different way of understanding, identifying and of existence in the world whether that existence is in the form of exploitation or authorization in the male-dominated culture and society. In other words, contemporary women writers are expected to take on the task of rendering the healing of their experiences formerly positioned as inferior and unreliable. In an attempt to narrate the truth of her experience and mirror her life completely in her autobiography, the author uncovers her authentic self freed from deceptions or misleadings and conveys what she actually feels and thinks. To what extent the autobiographer tells the truth in writing depends on the various styles and effects employed. The reader is more likely to believe in the truth of a personal-narrative if the author shares with him/her more private, detailed and persuasive facts about his/her past life memories and experiences (Smith, 1990).

Even though the narrator, who by telling the real story of the subjugated women, positions herself as representative she is not considered a reliable source or textual subject one can hold onto because alongside her specific characteristics the entire construction of the true autobiographical self is not possible due to the distinctions between narrator and narrated; between the past “I” and the present “I” who has gone through some ideological and cultural changes within time: “...there can be no simple identification between the autobiographer and that “I” that floats across the page of her text. The autobiographical text is, after all, a self-representational artifact, not the self itself” (Smith, 1990:147). In addition, if only regarded from the viewpoint of sexual difference in general, there is the possibility of missing the socio-cultural, psychological facts about individuality and gender, so the person inhabiting the “I” should be conceived as regards the vast and intricate network of intertextual relationships that embraces truth, discourse and subjectivity identified with women. Truth may be revealed in alternative ways; a writer may either build up experiences in line with the traditionally formed concept of truth or refers to another version of truth considering the probability of the difference

between the individual's life experiences and prescriptive contentions and universalistic values. As women writers are not always likely to incorporate into the conventional cultural models developed by the community, it would be right to say that autobiography is the fictionalization of reality:

...for the narrator's process of reflection, narration and self-integration within language is bound to unveil patterns of self-definition...The self engendered on the page allows a writer to subject a great deal of her ordinary experience to new scrutiny and to show that the polarity fact/fiction does not establish and constitute absolute categories of feeling and perceiving reality. The narrative text epitomizes this duality in its splitting of the subject of discourse into a narrating self and an experiencing self which can never coincide exactly...all the women writers draw on many diverse heritages while remaining unsure about the relative value of their conflicting backgrounds. As they emancipate themselves from the established codes that constrain them, most go through a process of healing and reconciliation which takes them beyond resentment, thus allowing them to build bridges between cultures (Lionnet, 1991:92-96).

The writer in search of the truth may either free or confine herself depending on the varying customs which control the said and more important the unsaid and also her defensive or justificative stance that results from the recurring tension between the private and the public, so "women's *personal* or *intimate* autographs remained partial inscriptions" of their authentic selves (Stanton, 1987:12). A strategic move in autobiography is to exaggerate when telling the truth just as in the case of early life-writings where the appropriate textual subject is described as bourgeois, male and white. If it is assumed by the off center authors, this attempt for total identification with traditional self-representation and its truth value puts the cultural and historical foundations of autobiographical truth at risk because the subject taken as model can be portrayed partially and like in a broken mirror the constructed self will be a blemished reflection. This process results in the transformation of one's own life and the established reality. Another potential pitfall for women autobiographers is using feminine selfhood as a mask; one wears it or takes it off when necessary depending upon her individual writing purposes. If the writer is only concerned with self as woman and focuses on womanly thoughts and feelings then any truth based on sexual difference is likely to slip away from the

text. A further approach to reality in life-narrative is lying for the sake of conformity with the rules that determine the idea of truth because in patriarchal societies the privilege of telling the truth is given to men and the women are always expected to have the inborn tendency to lie and associated with treachery (Smith, 1990). Therefore some women writers choose to act in compliance with the ascribed traditional belief and a fictive self emerges as a result of the considerable divergence of the two main characters, the past “I” and the present “I”, in the narration.

For each of these instances of “I”-lying gestures toward the fictiveness of the “I” that seems to speak in autobiography. Thus they disrupt, consciously or unconsciously, the surface of the unified, authoritative, essential “self”, a fiction of a regime of truth that would specify identity, contain it, capture it, universalize it, essentialize it. As a contestatory gesture, lies provoke an unsettling of boundaries, of locationing and of locales. Thus lies disrupt the superficial placidity of an autobiographical contract that assumes identity between narrator and narratee as one basis of its truth-telling claims, that assumes the comfortable “home”, the secure anchorage in location...Locating itself within each text in the nexus of identity and its politics, “truth” and its telling are constituted anew out of the text of each autobiographer. At the current autobiographical moment “truth-telling” and “lying” lie close to one another, affectionately and contentiously intermingling with and intervening in one another (Smith, 1990:161).

What actually matters is the woman writer’s attempt to represent her self and voice her sisters’ ambitions, dreams and frustrations in autobiography not that she tells anything but the truth. In her *Making Face, Making Soul* post-colonial Chicano feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldua says that

For silence to transform into speech, sounds and words, it must first traverse through our female bodies. For the body to give birth to utterance, the human entity must recognize itself as carnal...When we, the objects, become the subjects, and look at and analyze our own experiences, a danger arises that we may look through the master’s gaze, speak through his tongue, use his methodology... (Anzaldua, 1990:xxii-xxiii).

Apparently what she refers to as silence connotes not merely the absence of expression but various other meanings such as muteness, fear, loss, secrecy and solitude embodied in the relational female consciousness. Thus the collective silence exceeding the boundaries of space and time and making women a part of many worlds conceals voices that attach women to each other in terms of perception, commitment, appreciation, suffering, strength, passion and economic position and when these voices of vision and experience are once noticed the pathway to freedom and recognition opens up. However, one may also wish to consider the critical question of whether women use men's ways or their own ways for transgression. Through their literary works many women writers seek ways to break and uncover this shared silence of women alongside plural identities letting the different parts speak out particularly in their own society; noticing how their states of nature, various contradictory and parallel emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects are disclosed in different narratives these women interact with both their female selves and the others for instance the natural environment or the members of the same/different groups. Taking into account women's mutual identification it would be right to state that "I" and "we" are the most essential words which undergo constant definitional change and renovation in feminist scholars' texts and it is indeed this repeated reconsideration of self, community and identity in the writing of self through which feminism acquires permanent meaningfulness. According to Perreault, the textual performance of an "I" and the borders of "We" are regarded "as elements of inquiry, as territories to be claimed and disclaimed, as constructions or essences" (1995:1-2).

To represent contemporary feminist self-writing in general she uses the term autography which conveys a self that the author names "I", but who is not limited to any single unextended or indivisible entity. Writing "I" within this related frame is regarded as a liberating venture for women inviting the reader to review the patterns of subjectivity, textuality and society. Feminist scholars are excessively concerned with individualism and the realization of social justice and even the current debates about the plural personalities and the deconstruction of the inseparable identity have not weakened the value of the selfhood giving the selves a share in the belief in the

rights of the individual to find a place from which to speak. All feminist writing emphasizing the importance of feminine distinctiveness, moral principles and independence may remerge in the life-narratives of women where they as subjects acquire the chance of self-representation and hence reflect the multiplicity of their voice. In an autobiography rather than the telling of life events, the feminist focuses on how during the act of writing, which is considered as a part of individuality, the author experiences her own self and projects her existence into the text (Perreault, 1995). Because selfhood has nearly always been assessed from the perspective of male dominant culture, the feminist writer's opinion of self emerges as a result of a combination of opposing and changing patterns of personality and her explanation of those patterns will be strongly influential on both the male dominant community and her identity revealing a difference between the accepted models of selfhood and woman's desire to discover a new self. When the woman narrates her life-story she narrates the story of the group to which she belongs as well, so this means a discussion of the "I" requires that of the *we*.

...identity is valued as mobile and transformational, communal as well as private...As women write themselves, categories of difference (inner, outer, body, world, language) do not disappear, but take shape as "I" and in relation to "I". The shifts in relations between personal, body-specific identity and communal or ideological, identity (the I who says we) both maintain ongoingness and require discontinuity. To the extent that "I" and "we" are imbricated in feminist autobiography, tracing the modulations of representation is the crux of feminist thought...This interrelation of self and community is one of the most provocative issues in the writing of feminist subjectivity. Political or ideological consciousness takes into account the intersections of individual experience in its complexities of race, sexuality, class, and ethnicity. The feminist writing of self, then, is part of creating new communities (Perreault, 1995:7).

In this regard, autobiographical research brings together various fields such as literature, history, sociology and cultural studies and found on the border between fact and fiction, the individual and the social, the popular and the academic, the everyday and the literary, it's not always unproblematic to make clear-cut genre distinctions and approach autobiography on its own terms: "In an intellectual



context in which these are seen as irreconcilably distinct autobiography will appear either as a dangerous double agent, moving between these oppositions or as a magical instrument of reconciliation” (Marcus, 1995:14). Similarly, as the main concerns of many Women’s Studies scholars point to the issues of unsettling interdisciplinarity and the conventional border lines, autobiography becomes a converging site for various feminist methods and approaches. Feminism goes beyond the long-established literary descriptions and considers autobiography as a pervasive social and cultural practice functioning in diverse written, spoken and visual genres, i.e. persons use autobiography as an essential tool of confession, allegation and validity because at certain moments in life they are obliged to tell about themselves. It is without question that autobiographical writing as the field which describes the past experience and reveals its utmost value with regard to the discovery of multiple identities precedes all other life-narrative forms, but this does not mean to put aside the different ways of self-representation in texts, images or speeches. Feminism considers this portrayal of the individual with respect to the interpretations of gender roles and relations raising a challenge to the discipline of autobiography but at the same time contributing to the redefinition of fundamental concepts such as subjectivity, knowledge, power, differences and collective identity in an attempt to elicit new perceptions. Feminist scholars state that only few women have written their life-stories to express their own selves both at individual and social levels since the conventional canon allows the survival of the fortunate white male author who matches the position of the model autobiographer tending to be an integrated, transcendent subject and symbol of the era in conflict with the image of a woman writer considered, by and large, as marginalized and cast out (Cosslett, 2000).

The woman writer’s supposedly subjective stance has been perceived as a stake and trouble for the established structure of the genre and hence the idea of objectivity and universality revealing man’s approach to knowledge and truth because the relationality and inconsistency prevalent in women’s writings produce a fictionalized narrative of no coherent self which blends the author’s private story with the lives of other women. These efforts to silence women’s voices or put a distance between women and the public barring the immediate consumption of

women's personal narratives have imposed on many writers particularly being feminist a responsibility for telling the unsaid and concealed sides of female lives and identities which despite their common features show variety and point at different realities according to age, class, race and nation (Cosslett, 2000). Besides this profoundly social urge, women's inner necessities push them to recall and recite their experiences, this means in female autobiographies all things that make one a woman are referred to in terms of factual information about the past events. However while producing autobiographical texts the time-related tricks of the autobiographer's memory in company with his/her level of artistic imagination may change facts into fiction or make up things to fill in the gaps (Aurell, 2006). Anzaldúa, who believes that the writer's personal experiences are influential on the construction of collective identities, comments on the process of writing her autobiographical text *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) and the development of her fictive self as regards this idea of relationality and truth:

As I write I form a textual self, which is different from the "me" that lives out in the world. But the textual self that I form also changes the historical "me". And so I'm kind of forming myself as I go along...In order to do this I have to take myself apart and put myself together...it's very painful, this dismemberment, burial and then having to look for all the hidden parts of you that have been scattered throughout. And when I reconstitute myself, it's a different me that I reconstitute and that's where the transformative aspect comes in...Reality is interdependent-what happens to me doesn't just depend on me forming my own reality but everybody else because I'm in relation to everybody else...Identity is relational, that it exists in relation to some Other...A writer's always in dialogue with another aspect of herself, with members of different communities...What I'm thrilled about is that people have seen themselves reflected in my work enough so that they can then get in dialogue with themselves (2000:8-15).

Autobiographical practice functions as a socio-cultural platform where women can reveal themselves as individual subjects in man dominant societies instead of objects with limited freedom and low status. Being a subject means to lead the way and play the determining role in the autobiographical plot. This conceptualization inspires women to reach a self with a firm and consistent structure

which is regarded as a futile effort by their male contemporaries since the sense of brokenness and dissolution and lack of stability present in the female character originate from the women's relational nature and dependency (Cosslett, 2000). A feminist psychoanalyst Nancy J. Chodorow when touching upon the critical phases of female development and the fundamentals of the female psyche lays emphasis on how an individual determines his/her existence through developing an awareness of a self with respect to others and states that

Women experience a sense of self-in-relation that is in contrast to men's creation of a self that wishes to deny relation and connection...Mothers, by virtue of their gender (whatever the individualized conscious and unconscious fantasy and emotional casting they give to this gender) experience daughters as, in a certain sense, like them, and sons as, in a certain sense, unlike...Chief among the conscious outcomes of these processes are the ways in which many women feel intuitively connected to others, able to empathize and embedded in or dependent upon relationships, on the one side, and on the other side, many men's counterphobically asserted independence and anxiety about intimacy if it signals dependence (1999:viii).

Over time the notion of relationality, the structuring of the inner self via communication with the outer environment, has either become the most important feature of many women's autobiographical texts identifying another female self which has not been given the worth she deserves or a mode of construction or voicing dissent produced by reason of the universal patriarchal creed of femininity as the other that disregards the presentation of the actual feminine nature (Cosslett, 2000). Patricia Waugh views the self-in-relation both as a rationale and result of the subjugation women has long tried to resist and a potential power to end the marginalization and elimination of womanhood, associated with the non-rational, the body and the emotions, that defines the male identity in terms of female otherness:

Much women's writing can, in fact, be seen not as an attempt to define an isolated individual ego but to discover a collective concept of subjectivity which foregrounds the construction of identity in relationship...It is the gradual recognition of the value of construing human identity in terms of relationship and dispersal rather than as a unitary, self-directing isolated ego, which has fundamentally altered the course of modern and

contemporary women's writing concerned to challenge gender stereotypes (1989:10-13).

Another scholar Rita Felski points out the importance of confessional writing, which refers to the embodiment of the most private and intimate details of the author's life, in relation to the conception of communal female identity:

The obligation to honest self-depiction which constitutes part of the autobiographical contract is mitigated by the recognition that it is the representative aspects of the author's experience rather than her unique individuality which are important, allowing for the inclusion of fictive but representative episodes from the lives of women...Confessional writing proceeds from the subjective experience of problems and contradictions as encountered in the realm of everyday life. At the same time, however, feminist confession selects out those aspects of experience which are perceived to possess a representative significance in relation to the audience of women it wishes to reach...The implied reader is the sympathetic female confidante and is often explicitly encoded in the text through appeals, questions and direct address. The importance of the reader's role is directly related to the belief that she will understand and share the author's position... (1998:84-86).

Many researchers approach the idea of self, its formation and self-consciousness in different ways depending on who is to be observed as there is no single self different from all others that entirely lacks the collective spirit of for instance being a woman, a minority group member or a Non-Western. This variety in approach eliminates the possibility of critical prejudice that may result in the misinterpretation and marginalization of women's life-narratives. However, if the individualistic models are applied instead, then the scholar is likely to confront the risk of the ignorance of the culturally imposed group identity for women and minorities and the differences in socialization in the formation of gender-based identities. This equally means when considered from both an ideological and psychological point of view to put aside the historically produced differences between men and women and thus the essentiality of collective and relational identities in the constitution of an individual female self who also belongs to racial, ethnic, sexual and religious minorities (Friedman, 1988).

Furthermore, this emphasis on the existence of the autobiographical subject as an isolated individual have lead to oversights and misperceptions in the processes of canon formation as it neglects the basic elements that should be present in the development of a woman's identity, i.e. women's need to identify themselves with the other women whom they believe they have many in common, their undeniable nature of mutuality and strong affiliation with the community as a whole. Sheila Rowbotham explores how the female consciousness is constituted in relation to the traditional, historical and socio-cultural roots of gender differences asserting that women in contrast to men are unable to experience self as individual beings since instead of a separate identity of their own they possess a common group identity imposed by the prevailing norms of the culture. She uses the metaphor of mirrors to discuss the image of a woman and reveal that feminine individualism is no more than a dream and individuality only serves men who are given the glorious privilege of possessing power.

The vast mass of human beings have always been mainly invisible to themselves while a tiny minority have exhausted themselves in the isolation of observing their own reflections. Every mass of political movement of the oppressed necessarily brings its own vision of itself into sight. At first this consciousness is fragmented and particular. The prevailing social order stands as a great and resplendent hall of mirrors. It owns and occupies the world as it is and the world as it is seen and heard...In order to create an alternative an oppressed group must at once shatter the self-reflecting world which encircles it and, at the same time, project its own image onto history. In order to discover its own identity as distinct from that of the oppressor it has to become visible to itself. (1973:27).

Though seemingly unconstructive as it refuses the inclusion of writers who are not given the opportunity of self-disclosure via individualistic expression and get alienated to their own selves, women's sense of collective identity and thus their act of revelation in relation to others may be a source of strength and conversion. In writing they develop a double consciousness which includes a self in terms of culture and another self different from the established cultural norms and values. Therefore ties between women become stronger and they begin to see themselves as part of a group having the same historical experience.

People... who do not know themselves, who have no culture, experience a kind of paralysis of consciousness. The first step is to connect and learn to trust one another... Connection is, at first, spasmodic and uncoordinated. It takes time to relate new and surprising versions of the world. We need to make a new reality through the action we take and through our organization in combination with one another. But we have to discover our own reality too or we will simply be subsumed. Solidarity has to be a collective consciousness which at once comes through individual self-consciousness and transforms it... But always we were split in two, straddling silence, not sure... We were never all together in one place, we were always in transit, immigrants into alien territory... The manner in which we knew ourselves was at variance with ourselves as an historical being-woman (Rowbotham, 1973:27-31).

This idea of duality may be regarded similarly to W.E.B. Du Bois's identification of blacks with both their African ancestors and the white society in which they live (Friedman, 1988).

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,--an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body... The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,--this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost (1994:4-5).

Women have long been oppressed or silenced under the rule of man and hardly ever invented laws instead they have been forced to obey them, but this historical repression has not ruined their perception of identity inspiring their writing and the constitution of a different self to exceed invisibility and stillness. Using the genre of autobiography and the power and potentialities of language and feeling responsible for others' thoughts and feelings as much as their own selves, they attempt to leave a trace of their unique female existence against the traditional impositions of the male culture and thus define themselves in the framework of interpersonal relationships and society. The newly formed self in their life-narrative is not entirely personal or collective but a combination of the shared and the

exceptional since it aims to ensure the survival and freedom of both the writers and their readers. Therefore what one should expect in women's autobiography is a persona that "does not oppose herself to all others, does not feel herself to exist outside of others, and still less against others, but very much *with* others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community"(Friedman, 1988:56).

### **2.3. Women's Autobiography in American Cultural Mind**

Autobiography as a nonfiction narrative motivated by the incentive of claiming one's identity has been widely exercised by writers, welcomed by public, became an essential field of study for critics and it's for sure that the keen interest in the genre will keep rising. For American writers this appeal of autobiographical writing comes from its spiritual and political power to generate and change both the individual hero and the culture as a whole (Blasing, 1977). The initial examples of autobiography are exploration narratives and travelers' tales about the new land for instance William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* and Winthrop's *journal*. In the eighteenth century before writing novels or poetry some writers wrote remarkable diaries and self-narratives like the *Journal* of Sarah Kemble Knight or Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*.

As a part of America's earliest inheritance and the finest kind of American expression, autobiographical literature includes various texts ranging from captivity narratives, autobiographies of famous Indian chiefs, success stories of businessmen and celebrities, to the tales of leading immigrants and the protest stories of victims. "The American book-be it novel, poem or autobiography-builds an ideal house (like Thoreau's), a house of fiction (like James's) that is an improvement on the shabby, imitative, or mundane houses in which we are born. The autobiography is, or, can be, that second house into which we are reborn, carried by our imaginative power. We make it ourselves, then remake it-make it new" (Sayre, 1980:148).

Both men and women view the autobiographical writing process as a way of rephrasing the perpetual self but for women in particular it also indicates a self in relation to the other. When narrating their lives women aspire to disclose, justify and discover themselves in terms of their actions, thoughts or convictions. They also intend to spread their political, economic and socio-cultural ideas and keep a record of the important historical events. “Autobiography then represents a self-examination that is at the same time private and public, for the interaction of personality and collective life that autobiography embodies is reflected in the author’s personal appropriation of the language of the times” (Blasing, 1977:xv). In the last part of the twentieth century many autobiographies were written as a result of the growing international interest in the field of psychology and unceasing concerns over women’s rights. The autobiographer confirms the reader’s personal experiences and ideas so her text becomes a basis of political feminist power, contributing to the appreciation of the American women’s historical background and psycho-sociological state (Ganim, 1999).

Specific cultural models and practices have been influential in the composition of American Women’s life-writings. Puritan ideas about the self and the Puritan practice of conversion narratives form the basis of American women’s autobiographical texts as the Puritans were excessively immersed in the spiritual self believing that one’s life was a text that should be read in relation to the scriptural metatext and the conversion experience for proofs of God’s connections with the individual. Reading the self requires continuous individual and collective effort because it is hoped that others would benefit from the expression of the self in terms of the established belief patterns and the social context fortifying the ties between the members of the community (Culley, 1992).

The initial well-known example of secular autobiography is Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* (1791). When discussing the genre of autobiography one should start with the pronoun “I” signifying the self that emphasizes the idea of a single point of view and sense of privileged status conveyed by the properties of the English language system, i.e. the first person like its representative pronoun is to be



accepted as unique, fundamental and free. The conceptualizations of autobiography as a literary form and democracy as political are similar in the way they touch upon the matter of the autonomous and modern self of powerful political body as the natural consequence of the late eighteenth century's political disorders and hence accomplishments that followed by such as the America's Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution (Cox, 1971). The individual expression emerged in the master texts that defined and built America underlines the legitimacy of self-referential discourse and one of America's most prominent founding fathers Benjamin Franklin's autobiography stands as a model for it openly points at the relationship between the political and literary independence evolved in his culture. As the notion of autobiography and the American values are interconnected, the issue of mutual compatibility has become a research ground for many scholars, e.g. cultural historian Thomas Doherty asserts that although autobiography is not an absolute product of American ideology, it is conceived to be a culturally authoritative kind of text proposing practical lessons or models because it conforms to the traditional American figure who embodies essential optimism and individualistic spirit (in Couser, 1989). However although in autobiography the writer possesses the authority and responsibility to organize and form the text, the nature and development of the individual prevents us to envision this text production process independently since the self is formed as a result of the web of social relationships that demand the revelation of unlike personality traits; "The self is not an essence, but a socially formed construction-a cultural artifact fashioned collaboratively and publicly out of ready-made materials, like a quilt patched together at a quilting bee" (Couser, 1989:16).

With the emergence of secular autobiography, scriptural models and principles of conversion tend to produce meta-texts that focus on gender differences and hence women start writing not as traveler pilgrims but as women and showing their specific features of femininity and expected to be assessed accordingly. These writers share their prospects and emotions with the intention of reaching their women audience and lending their hands on common private and public problems to make lives easier, so in this respect the act of autobiography keeps its collective position.

In the mid-nineteenth century *The Autobiography of an Actress* by Anna Cora Mowatt, *Memories of a Grandmother By a Lady of Massachusetts* by A. M. Richards and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs are examples of personal narratives in which women with the fear of public criticism write to negotiate with her women reader over mutual issues. Cowatt apologizing at the beginning and end of her autobiography to escape from egotism, transcends personal concerns about her life-story and hopes that her narration is useful to other women. In her introduction she says:

If one struggling sister in the great human family, while listening to the history of my life, gain courage to meet and brave the severest trials; if she learns to look upon them as blessings in disguise: if she be strengthened in the performance of her 'daily duties', however 'hardly paid'; if she be inspired with faith in the power imparted to a strong will, whose end is good, then I am amply rewarded for my labor (2005:3-4).

As for Jacob's *Slave Girl* the connection between the author and the imaginary audience becomes more complicated due to the intense fear of judgment that emerges as a result of the gap between the fugitive slave and the northern white reader. Like Mowatt and Richards, her source of inspiration is not self-centered motives but people around her who supported her to tell the story of her life. She doesn't unveil every single detail about her past experiences instead touches upon matters already mentioned in other women's autobiographies in an attempt to be beneficial to other American women and make changes in their lives:

I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself; on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to me to have been more silent about my own history. Neither do I care to excite sympathy for my own sufferings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse...Only by experience can any one realize how deep, and dark, and foul is that pit of abominations (2006:6).

This idea of telling one's life-story for the sake of other people is the most prevailing practice of autobiography because the intention to be useful to others is ethically superior and a relationship can be formed between the reader and the writer in terms of generalizations made through common knowledge and experiences. The writer's identification with the women in the community does not shroud the pleasures of lenience in egotism, language and narrative making autobiographical acts feasts of memory for both the writer and the reader. In the context of women's traditional life-writing, one characteristic that separates autobiography from fiction is the writer's explicit talk about herself whether that be in the preface, afterward or variety of direct references to the reader within the text. It is in these pages that women question the nature of autobiography, authenticity and notions of the integrated self (Culley, 1992). Women writers are well aware that autobiographical texts are produced from the elements of both fact and fiction and hence the complete self-representation in autobiography is a dream that would never come true. Mary Maclane known for her confessional style of writing says in her memoirs entitled *The Story of Mary Maclane*:

This is not a diary. It's a portrayal. It's my inner life shown in its nakedness. I'm trying utmost to show everything-to reveal every petty vanity and weakness, every phase of feeling, every desire. It is a remarkably hard thing to do, I find, to probe my soul to its depths, to expose its shades and half lights. Not that I am troubled with modesty or shame...but there are elements in one's mental equipment so vague, so opaque, so undefined... there are things upon my own horizon that go beyond me (2008:75).

As for the categorization of contemporary American women's autobiography, women focus more on relationships rooted in the private, the home and inner instead of the outer, reality and action. With the rise of individualism and the society's enhanced awareness of its value, women ceased to be completely attached to their fathers, husbands and sons and turn to themselves and take a look inside. Some autobiographies make a profound analysis of the female self regarding its personal, spiritual and psychological development and maturity as in *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (1935) which concerns her private and emotional life-story within the background of political and social contexts. In general political autobiographies

use a credible and a personal tone at the same time, conveying propaganda, nostalgia or appealing messages as in *With My Mind of Freedom* (1975) written by black activist Angela Davis. In these forms of writing, the reader meets the author's sensitivity to partake in history and eagerness to review the events she's involved instead of looking at them from a distance. Self-narratives may also serve as influential tools to voice minority-oriented issues and views; experience of being both female and a minority group member in white male America, e.g. Maya Angelou's first volume of her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) portrays the strong black women struggling to maintain dignity and self-confidence. Another form of life-writing is career autobiography that introduces a woman's career development path rather than her private life, for instance *The Fabric of My Life* (1946) by feminist Hannah Solomon (Ganim, 1999).

#### **2.4. Women's Autobiography in Turkish Literary Imagination**

In autobiographical writing the author is assumed to have a sense of conscious identity. The narrator recounts his/her past life and early experiences as an individual who has completed his/her personal development and maturation given that the subject has changed since the moment of experience and thus living the experience and projecting it onto paper are two very different phases. The product of autobiography is a self who emerges through fragmented and multiple selves as a whole entity. Autobiography reveals the textual journey of the mind in quest of reality and knowledge and because of its nature it is associated with the man's world. Therefore, the women in an attempt to write their life-narratives step into a world of thought belonging only to men where they have to move within the borders of the male tradition and exceed the social and cultural limitations for legitimizations of their writing and at the same time express their female individuality. Many critics have stated that contrary to men women can only use their bodies not minds as a tool of self-description, so women's approaches should find ways to reconcile the process of writing, the concept of woman and the notion of body as "womanhood is a social phenomenon and is determined by social factors as much as biological. In fact, the human body belongs to both nature and culture and it is impossible to think of one

without the other” (Aksoy, 2006:22). The existence and position of Turkish women in society has always been a controversial subject. It was in the Ottoman Period that the state began to have control over the women’s social status and rights and since then this mechanism has continued to function with occasional changes. From their early childhood on women have been taught how they should act to receive the approval of the public, but they are not always willing to abide by the established norms and values and this need and desire for divergence from the traditional image of woman is expressed in women’s writings especially in autobiography where men appear dominant and manipulative (Aksoy, 2006).

Early Turkish women writers born at the end of the nineteenth century wrote their remarkable life-stories despite the challenging social and cultural conditions of the era and attracted much attention from their readers. After the reforms in 1839, the Ottoman intellectual elite started to view the field of literature as a cultural bridge to become closer to common people and hence as an area of expression to develop new definitions and sensitivity about the conceptualization of terms like nation, freedom and justice in the frame of the changing connections between the Ottoman and Turkish nationalism. Ottoman bureaucratic system also played an important role in the progression and entrenchment of modern thought; clerks who received in-service training from non-Muslim officials mastered especially the French language and got acquainted with new forms of literature such as novel and drama as well as the Western ideas, values and beliefs. More local and public newspapers were published and this led to a considerable increase in the reading audience. However, this social advancement had an unfavorable impact on women as these changes prevented the involvement of women in the activities of the elite circles. Mostly women coming from upper-class families had the opportunity of benefitting from the consequences of the ongoing reforms (Durakbaşı, 2000).

One of these fortunate ladies belonging to the Ottoman elite society is Melek Hanım who had a multi-ethnic background; her mother’s family was Greek and her father’s Armenian. She converted to Islam after her second marriage to a Muslim Turk, Kibrizli Mehmet Paşa. She supported her husband in his political career, but

after she was accused of ordering the murder of a servant they divorced and she was exiled in Konya. Her son from her first marriage helped her escape to Istanbul and from there she fled to Europe with her daughter. Melek Hanum narrates the dramatic story of her life in the first part of her autobiography *Thirty Years in the Harem* giving details about domestic life and slavery as well as fraudulent servants and political rivals and in the second part *Six Years in Europe* she tells about her wearisome life in Europe. These two volumes of autobiography she published for financial reasons resemble the popular melodramatic English fiction of the 1860s.

Melek Hanum is sensationalist and self-serving, plotting her story as melodrama: a feisty but wronged woman who does her best under adverse circumstances. To some extent this was perhaps an accurate reflection of her situation, since her case clearly attracted considerable interest or at least notoriety...She always cites pressing reasons for having to involve herself in pecuniary affairs, but clearly delights in her power and political influence and the money it earned her (Lewis & Micklewright, 2006:110-111).

Leyla (Saz) Hanımefendi, born in Istanbul in 1852, was the daughter of Hekim İsmail Paşa, who served as Governor General of Izmir and later of Crete. At an early age she was taken to Çırağan Palace to become a lady-in-waiting and had privileged education with Sultan Abdülmecid's daughters. Her book of memoirs *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans* which narrates the old customs and traditions of the women's lives and of the palace was first published as a series of interviews in the daily newspaper *Vakit* in the early 1920s and then it was revised and translated into French and English. Her main intention in writing her life-story was not to recount her past experiences but to tell her readers about the institution of the Ottoman Harem on which there were only speculative accounts instead of factual information (Lewis & Micklewright, 2006; Faroqhi, 2000).

Nigar Hanum, the best known poet of the Post-Tanzimat period recites her memoirs in her collection of diaries *The Story of My Life* which was not published until after her death in 1959. For her writing a diary that eases the burden of her disappointing marriage relationship is a means of *self-reflexive confirmation* of her

unhappiness and depression. The delayed disclosure of her earlier experiences indicates the unlikely existence of women and the constrained self-expression in Ottoman society which obscures the female participation in social, economic and political activities. Especially after the Young Turks Revolution of 1908 the subject of women's rights emerged in parallel with the rise of nationalist ideology which reconciled the values of women belonging to different classes and resisted the Western traditions and customs that were in conflict with the fundamentals of Turkish identity (Durakbaşa, 2000).

Halide Edib is among one of the women authors who has supported these initial and promising modernization efforts. The first part of her autobiography *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1926) tells her life-story starting from her childhood years in the Late Ottoman Period until the end of World War I whereas the second part *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928) quite different from the first as regards its content and style is an implicit critique of Kemalist regime of the twenties and a text of self-defense written as a reaction to Atatürk's seminal speech entitled *Nutuk* (1927) portraying Edib's struggle during the War of Independence and the first years of the new Republic. Edib published with some changes the Turkish version of the first volume as *Mor Salkımlı Ev* in 1963. The second volume was also rendered and published as *Türk'ün Ateşle İmtihanı* in 1962 but almost without any criticism about Mustafa Kemal's personal flaws and policy mistakes implied in the original English text (Adak, 2003).

Another feminist writer and activist whose autobiography was published in the 1960s is Sabiha Sertel. Born in Thessaloniki, she was raised in an intellectual and multicultural environment and became one of the most distinguished journalists of the early republican period who focused on critical issues such as the position of women in society, equal rights, education and political representation firmly claiming that feminism should in particular consider the needs of working and poor women (Kerestecioğlu, 2006). As may be expected, to ensure the remembrance of the political battle to which she devoted her whole life, in her self-narration *Roman Gibi* she portrays not a traditional mother or a wife but instead a determined woman

of politics without any emotions. In this respect her work may be considered in the Turkish autobiographical literature as “the text which best emphasized the woman’s intellectual adventure and role in the public sphere” (Aksoy, 2006).

Another woman writer of the same period Halide Nusret Zorlutuna diverges from Sertel regarding the way she takes up the woman question as in her autobiography *Bir Devrin Romani* published in 1973, she is more concerned with the process of self-formation instead of how the self appears in front of public. She intends to share her youthful experiences as a poet, writer and teacher portraying the social and familial restrictions and strong pressure exerted on women. A further distinctive characteristic of her writing is her bold references to men-women relationships based on exchange of ideas and literary friendships and thus through her artistic craft she shows resistance to customs that put distance between individuals of the opposite sex. As a result of the change in the perception of women in society, the authors begin to make more authentic portrayures of the female self in their autobiographies. Cahide Üçok, whose autobiography *Erkekler Dünyasında Bir Kadın Yazar* was published in 2003, wrote under the pseudonym Cahit Uçuk believing that writing is a task generally associated with men so to enter the world of literature a woman may prefer to conceal her identity. In her life-narrative though she speaks openly of the details about her private life she does not transcend the borders of modernist ideology of the early Republic and holds back her womanly traits in order to protect her respectability. İsmet Kür is a prominent journalist and author whose autobiography was published in 1995 at a time when autobiographies attracted more readers and the inviolability of one’s personal life was ignored claiming the unavoidable integrity of the private and the public. In her autobiography *Yarısı Roman* she reveals the inseparableness of a woman’s professional and family life and unlike the previous autobiographers she shares her intimate ideas and emotions about relationships and sexual life with her audience (Aksoy, 2006).



## **PART 3**

### **RELATIONAL ANALYSES OF THE FEMALE SELF**

#### **3.1. Theory and Definition**

The influence of Freud's theory of instinctual drive is particularly important in early psychoanalytic research and practice. As Freud goes deeply into the human experience he forms a binding relation between men's biological needs, his mental activities and behaviors. Especially in his later works when he takes up the problem of ego he does not undervalue in personality development the impact of the environmental conditions and the complexity of mutual interactions, but he gives priority to his studies on the nature and functioning of drives. Today's psychoanalysts owing much to the inspirational drive theory proceed toward the direction of exploring individual's relationships with others, namely the question of object relations. Theorists who consider all aspects of personality and psychopathology as a product of drives and their modifications claim that the function of objects in the system is either to hinder or facilitate the release of drives. However, more radical scholars adopt a conceptual framework essentially different from the drive theory in which certain modes of relatedness with others serve as constitutional elements of mental life and motivational force underlying all human behavior (Greenberg; Mitchell, 1983).

In Freud's view of human nature individuals are "a conglomeration of asocial, physical tensions represented in the mind by urgent sexual and aggressive wishes pushing for expression...live in the clash between these wishes and the secondary, more superficial claims of reality..." (Mitchell, 1988:2). Freud's monadic concept of mind occurs over a range of interior pressures whereas relational models suggest a dyadic and interactive mind in search of communicational experience with other minds both to maintain mutual ties and connections and express the distinct

individuality of oneself. To attain a sense of understanding a person, critical analysis which involves the observation, discovery and renovation of relational patterns is required since “the figure is always in the tapestry and the threads of the tapestry (via identifications and introjections) are always in the figure” (Mitchell, 1988:3). Ronald Fairbairn and Harry Stack Sullivan as the leading representatives of the relational model based on social existence and interdependence point out that Freud’s description of men with mental gist beyond and before social knowledge and his theoretical study of the underpinnings of emotional life by concentrating on the psyche rather than on relationships and their inner illuminations fall short in interpretation because

.the individual mind is a product of as well as an interactive participant in the cultural, linguistic matrix within which it comes into being. Meaning is not provided a priori, but derives from the relational matrix. The relational field is a constitutive of individual experience...Social relations are regarded as themselves biologically rooted, genetically encoded, fundamental motivational processes. Thus sexuality and aggression are understood...as powerful responses, mediated physiologically, generated within a biologically mandated relational field and therefore deriving their meaning from that deeper relational matrix...[Relationships] are experienced through physiological response patterns, constitutional features of temperament, sensitivities, and talents, and worked over, digested, broken down, recombined and designed into the new, unique patterns which comprise the individual life (Mitchell, 1988:18-20).

In his masculine theory of development founded on the experiences of the male child that result in Oedipus complex which lays emphasis on both the gender-based anatomic differences and the arrangement of initial family relationships, Freud “...acknowledged in the strength and persistence of women’s pre-Oedipal attachments to their mothers, a developmental difference...responsible for what he saw as women’s developmental failure...deprived by nature of the impetus for a clear-cut Oedipal resolution...women’s superego-the heir to the Oedipus complex- was compromised” (Gilligan, 1981:6-7).

In the early eighties the psychological or psychoanalytical category of sexual difference revised the definitions of woman which have considerably influenced the approaches to and interpretations of women's life-narratives. Chodorow's studies have brought fresh light to the early stages of childhood development in which the relationship between the mother and the child plays a very important role in the later formation of the individual character as a son or daughter. Thus these new reflections have reoriented the central interdisciplinary research based on debates about women and gender. Instead of attributing specific male and female personality traits to biological reasons, Chodorow relates these differences with the woman's mothering role in the family, which has been considered as one of her few unchanging primary responsibilities despite her increasing participation in the public sphere and workplace. Due to the experiences of the early social environment and conflicting interpersonal dynamics of gender identity formation, the course of psychological development tends to follow diverse patterns in boys and girls. The relationship between the mother and the daughter shows continuity because the mother sees her daughter as her own extension and in turn the daughter identifies her self with her mother and describes her femaleness in her experience of attachment and connection to others. However, boys in contrast with their mothers build up an independent sense of masculine identity having strong ego boundaries that reduce the ability to empathize. Psychoanalytic framing of developmental difference with particular emphasis on relationality, paved the way for the discovery and revaluing of women's experiential narratives (Chodorow, 1999; Gilligan, 1981; Smith & Watson, 1998).

Autobiography may be defined as a self-portrait which refers to the individual's interaction with his/her own self and others. A portrait embraces a moment in time reflecting a particular appearance and reality through the workings and inspirations of the painter's mind. Every artist has an idea of how s/he looks and how s/he wishes to represent himself/herself in his/her self-portrait where s/he poses and paints at the same time. S/he starts with the invisible, stepping forth from the rooms of his/her memory and sight adds volume and tone to his/her already completed image. This new design, just like the author writing about his/her self, does not precisely resemble his/her original model or uncover the whole truth, but

instead it shows a skillful re-invention of one's being. The narrator travels in time and writes as a mature man about what he was once describing the different phases of his identity development and reconstituting an image beyond truth or falsity in a unified life structure. Although self-narrative seems to mirror the past life of a particular individual, the culture-specific social customs and values that produce and shape our perceptions should also be regarded in the autobiographical interpretation. An individual builds his/her identity on the present social models, but makes some changes as s/he moves along his path of facts and events. Autobiography as the descriptive representation of a self offers a distinctive access to various experiences such as the American, the black or the female exploring the conflicts inescapably occur between the individual and his society (Howarth, 1980; Gusdorf, 1980; Olney, 1980; Duchet, 2000).

Autobiographical writing is a kind of remaking process from bits and pieces of memories where the writer becomes a bystander or a participant depending on the subject's positional shifts. The reader follows the various roles assumed by the author with emotions ranging from excitement to curiosity and sometimes to silence that conceals the secret sides of a life or individual depiction of the meanings and essences of the experience. The subject's constantly changing position also underlines the self's connection with others in terms of gender, social class and race and instead of representing his personal ideas, hopes, fears and tensions in his text he tries to see things from a shared perspective. Female writers in particular use different techniques, e.g. develop multiple autobiographical selves in their textual narration to present realities true for almost all women revealing diverse facets of oppression and prejudice and hence raising consciousness about their existence in separate historical and socio-cultural contexts (Lewis, 2000).

In this respect there is a possibility that to serve her literary purpose the writer has added some details artfully embellished or remained silent when required. The incorporation of the fictional elements brings to question the concept and determination of authenticity which refers to what extent the writer tells the truth as regards social, political and ideological anxieties, racial, gender and reader

perceptions, wordly barriers and time-bound nature of history and memory. The autobiographer not only narrates her individual story and conveys what she actually feels and thinks but also speaks on the behalf of other women who have been dominated by patriarchal system. She makes mutual identifications without much difficulty as she knows the female nature and consciousness which require a different way of understanding and existence in the outer world and generates a close replica of the collective self (Smith, 1990).

In addition, the woman herself is the subject who determines the course of events in the plot. This leading role encourages women writers to compose a coherent autobiographical self, but the sense of brokenness and wavering in female character which comes from women's relational nexus and dependency may pose an obstacle to the fulfillment of this ambition (Cosslett, 2000). The development of the individual psyche reveals the gender-based differences; by instinct, women feel attached to others and embedded in social relationships experiencing a sense of *self-in-relation* whereas men reject connection in defining their individuality. The concept of relationality which suggests interaction with the exterior surroundings in the constitution of the inner self has become a critical feature of many women's autobiographical writings because to illuminate the individuation process of women that would otherwise remain disguised or misinterpreted close relational analysis of the subject should be applied. It is not possible for a woman to think of herself as a completely isolated entity since she is reminded at every turn that she belongs to a group called women whose life, boundaries and identity have been decided by the prevailing cultural attitudes, beliefs and values. To put in a nutshell, Simone de Beauvoir's depiction of a woman who is not born but made seems realistic. It is through this collective representation that women build up a double consciousness which signifies two distinct selves described within and out of social prescriptions. They also begin to see their individualness through the eyes of others and fall into the void of alienation that may be overcome by adopting the communal solidarity as a source of strength, hope and change. Hence what women projects onto history is a new image of self that mingles the public and the private. As autobiography is the narrative of coming to power the writer's motivation behind telling her life-story is

an alternate self whose formation transcends the silence and invisibility imposed by established customs. Women have challenged the culturally strained identities and left the sign of their existence in their self-writings. To work out these textual signs reflected in the divided subjective experiences of past female selves and thus produce a united identity, the critic's interpretation should focus on interpersonal relationships and society rather than individual-oriented models (Rowbotham, 1973; Friedman, 1988; Mason, 1980; Chodorow, 1999; Durakbaşı, 2000). In this context, it would be appropriate to consider the socio-cultural conditions of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Empire and America to reveal the construction of the female self in relation to others.

### **3.2. Women in Historical Context**

Following the political, economic, social and philosophical transformations that emerged at the end of the 18th century, the society estranged from tradition and the freedom of the individual and equality gained essential importance. The structural changes in institutions lead to controversies about values, relations and lifestyles in terms of women's status and position in society. Some women who claimed the impossibility of the actual practical application of the new ideologies realized the need for struggle to bring justice and resist the social borders and began the women's movement initially as individuals and then as participants of representative organizations. Women's movement has developed in various ways depending on the specific conditions of each country. The Ottoman Empire also got its share from these promising events. The beginning of the twentieth century marked a new stage in Turkish history and political life as the unity of the country suffered at various fronts from loss of land, hard economic conditions, separatist revolts, foreign intrusion and concerns which triggered the ethnic, racial and religious chaos and weakened the central authority (Çakır, 1994; Anadolu-Okur, 2005).

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 reinstated the constitutional monarchy and following the social and cultural transformations it composed a new structure which produced optimism about prospects for freedom and equality and hence

encouraged women to become visible in public life as professionals, writers and activists. However some liberals had to bear with strong opposition and disapproval from community because through the changes that came rapidly they intended to balance Islamic beliefs and practices and the concept of Western modernization and thus provide the participation of women in public affairs. Most women involved in organizing various associations and agencies and struggled to gain rights came from educated upper-class families and they seek ways to represent from their own perspectives women's issues in general which most likely contributed to the passing of the new legislation. Women's associations, established for a variety of purposes such as the educational and cultural development of women, the assessment of the country's problems and seeking ways to solve them, participation in home defense and supporting the ideologies of any political party, functioned significantly in the transformation of the women's individual struggle for rights into a collective organization that have brought new solutions to women's issues. These associations encouraged women to have better education and be equipped with the demands of the era for stepping into the workplace and they also provided job opportunities to secure women's economic position. During this process although the associations work together with their Western counterparts they try to keep within the bounds of the national traditions and life style. The only feminist association of the period *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* (The Ottoman Association for the Preservation of Women's Rights) which published the journal entitled *The Women's World* acted as the representative of Ottoman-Turkish women, strengthened the collaboration and interaction between women, placed women side by side with men emphasizing the women's obligation to be integrated into social life and labor force and supported the women's movement through awareness about the women's new roles and socio-professional identities outside home and hence strived to be influential in the struggle against the inequalities, law disorder and educational difficulties. These revivals lead to some very important changes in the rambling Ottoman legal system, e.g. despite its limited offer of equality the Family Law of 1917 initiated the modern marital practices and granted some liberties to women (Çakır, 1994; Arat, 1997).

Halide Edib is one of the most prominent writers of the period who, through her articles and novels which evoke awareness and sensitivity about issues concerning the position, existence and education of women in the family and society, committed herself to feminist ideals and activism. In the Turkish women's efforts to provide a self-definition and gain a new identity beyond the limits, she represents woman as a whole focusing on her human nature as well as her individual socio-cultural characteristics and proposes concrete resolutions about women's empowerment and gender equality. The self profile in her autobiography mirrors the overall lives and conditions of the Ottoman women. She portrays herself as a historical figure, flawed at times; although her strong personality has survived dissolutions and rigidities there comes times in her life when she can not help feeling the susceptibility and apprehension specific to women's writing due to being stuck in traditional male supremacy (Enginün, 1989; Durakbaşa, 2000).

The historical period between the two great wars, the Civil War and the World War I is marked by America's rapid transformation from a rural republic to an urban state and the subsequent economic development and prosperity resulting from the exhaustion of the free lands and the vanishing of the frontier, the construction of factories and steel mills, investments in manufacturing a variety of products with the use of new technological innovations, the expansion of the railway transportation network, fast growing cities and vast agricultural assets. This country-wide transition brought along some problems such as the absolute control of the industry by business companies, poor working conditions and low wages and the incapacity of the cities to meet the demands of the rising population. In the 1830s and 1840s the restructuring of the society, substantial progress in science and technology, the broadening and deepening of political democracy and the development of new economic institutions and reforms that emerged as a result of the industrial revolution had a considerable impact on women's lives and perceptions leading them to take part in the first collective upheaval rarely seen in the nation's history and protest the traditional roles for women (Chafe, 1978).



This turbulent period has inevitably produced changes in the American society; the insufficient functioning of the present structures called forth alternatives to cover the needs of the individuals with new values and social ideals. From the very beginning some middle-class women played an essential role in the activities organized for contributing to the education system, developing new public services and rooting out slavery. By tradition, women were expected to preserve the moral and spiritual values in society. Although marriage provided the only avenue of womanly existence it was by marital life that the women's mental power, freedom and confidence were underrated. In 1848 women who claimed the same educational and political opportunities as men to end gender discrimination in all fields gathered in New York to issue a radical plea. Even if the number of open participants was small and the movement produced only limited support because of the audience's unfamiliarity with the thoughts and tactics presented, feminists' insistent campaign in Congress and public assemblies through their speeches and literature laid the foundation for further collective protest and the social changes that follow. The strengthening of industrial capitalism and the absolute segregation of women in various contexts in the 19th century gave rise to a corporative response grander than the previous one. Capitalism drew a sharp line between men's and women's activities; men became actively involved in the business world as elite bureaucrats, managers and entrepreneurs whereas women spent less time outside the home to fulfill the traditional tasks of homemaking and childbearing. However the prosperous economic conditions offered higher education opportunities and choices for women producing a generation of new women who resisted the conservative and oppressive dominance of male-oriented culture and fought for rights and freedoms. During the 19th century steps in the field of women's education were backed by prolific institutions. The establishment of the female seminaries which taught academic subjects and domestic arts was based on training mothers as skilled homemakers and spiritual protectors so that they raised liberal citizens of the future. Middle-class women who had the privilege to attend colleges and experience the thrill of intellectual discovery in an environment of equality showed reluctance to act upon the restricted feminine roles. They endeavored to realize their aspirations leading the way in different business and vocational subjects, creating jobs and career paths and

thus launching the schedule of social reform in the early 20th century. Other women who had gradually become aware of their female selves as individual beings and valued their position in the family and society ventured to take part in the cultural activities, health projects and educational services carried out by women's clubs and associations. These steps initiated the second phase of the women's rights movement triggered by gaining the right to vote which was perceived as a means to enhance the well-being of the society and equalize the status of sexes under the law, but the enactment of woman suffrage failed to change the principal structure of women's and men's lives particularly in terms of employment and the description of women's space. Although the white woman of the upper class lived a life of high standards and had far better access to education and the chance for self development and individual growth they were mostly trapped in the conventional idea of women occupying a caring, needy, male-oriented and submissive position (Chafe, 1978).

Born into a rich, upper-class family in New York Wharton was influenced by strict codes of behavior and refined social structure. Both as member and observer of the fashionable New York society she developed an exquisite literary and cultural awareness to represent an enthralling piece of the gilded American life and experience in her stories and ironic novels. It has not been by chance that she has taken her place among the major writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American literature; using her exceptional skills and imagination both in writing and reality she challenged the social norms and prejudices that had restricted women's involvement in the public sphere and impeded personal autonomy causing a frustrating conflict between the individual and the society and thus her life stands as a model of the difficulties that a woman of her era and place obliged to struggle with in her quest for identity (Joslin, 1991; Benstock, 1994).

### **3.3. Women's Self Portrayal in Literature**

#### **3.3.1. *Memoirs of Halide Edib***

##### **3.3.1.1. Halide Edib Adıvar in Literary Perception**

Halide Edib was born in Istanbul in 1882. She was a distinguished writer and novelist a politician, an educator and an activist of women's rights and nationalism. She was brought up in a wealthy Ottoman family and her father Edib Bey served in the household of Sultan Abdülhamit II being a well-known social progressive and upper level bureaucrat of modern and liberal thoughts who very much appreciated the English education system and wanted Halide to be educated according to its principles. The privileged position of her father paved the way for her access into politics, social welfare work and public education and thus her critical involvement in women's issues of the present day (Lewis & Micklewright, 2006). Her early childhood and formative years coincides with a critical period in Turkey's history; the five hundred year old Islamic Ottoman Empire was about to disintegrate, the public was going through a chaotic transition period and thus various social and political changes were at the door.

At the age of four Halide lost her mother Fatma Bedirfem Hanım from tuberculosis and eventually her father could not refrain from the benefits of the old customs and traditions of the patriarchal society allowing men to have more than one wife and remarried twice despite his enlightened mentality, so she had to live in between two crowded houses, one being her father's European style house in an Armenian and Greek neighborhood and the other her grandmother's typical Muslim Turkish home which was like a small portion of the Ottoman Empire and served as a shelter for wives who fell into disfavor. Due to her British and Islamic education Edib from her childhood onwards has attempted to compare and reconcile the traditional and spiritual world of the East with the Western culture, ideas and values (Enginün, 1989). Although her grandmother's wisteria covered house represented peace, happiness and comfort for her she as a child witnessed two very important

events, i.e. the depressing impacts of the Empire's unavoidable collapse on the family members and household servants of different races and the deep emotional suffering and pain of the abandoned wives and children who had to live with the reality of their polygamous marriage and these juvenile memories explain why all through her life she severely has opposed the practice of polygamy and become a prominent defender of women's rights in Turkey (Enginün, 1978; Enginün 1989). Halide was the first Muslim-Turkish woman who had the opportunity to attend and graduate from the American College for Girls which was a school originally founded by American missionaries. During her college days she also received private tutoring in Islamic sciences and languages, literature, mathematics and music from the renowned teachers of that day. Halide's multicultural environment and intellectual training help her observe a lifestyle that is neither an imitation of the Ottoman nor the European culture and hence she developed a strong sensitivity for national consciousness also reflected in her literary work (Uluköse, 2006). After graduating in 1901, she married Salih Zeki, a very prominent mathematician and philosopher twenty years her senior, to whom she was deeply attached and they had two sons but despite her efforts to support her husband in his writing and scholarly studies and subsequent changes she made in her life to become a traditional woman and a caring wife and mother, her expectations of a happy marriage ended in disappointment and she suffered from a series of nervous breakdowns and had to live through serious family problems (Edib, 2005). The Second Constitution following the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908 carried out for the restoration of the constitution of 1876, by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) which brought together many eminent reformers and intellectuals in various Young Turk organizations, marked the beginning of a new and lively period in the history of the Ottoman State as regards social, political and artistic changes and opportunities. Similarly, this era is a turning point in Edib's life since it marks the end of her spiritual imprisonment and obedience and her initiation into social life as activist, journalist and public speaker. She right away took part in the revolutionist activities next to her father and her husband and began writing as a literary columnist about the condition and liberation of women and nationalism in the Young Turk daily paper *Tanin* signing her name Halide Salih. She also published various sensational articles in other important

journals such as *Vakit/Time*, *Akşam/The Evening*, *Demet/Bouquet* and *Musavver Muhit/The Illustrated Milieu* (Durakbaşa, 2006; Enginün, 1978). It was through the letter *The Future of the Turkish Women* she wrote to the newspaper *Nation* that she met the innovative educationist Isabel Fry with whom she had a firm and enduring friendship and got the chance to exchange thoughts on democracy and feminism with the eminent British writers and scholars. Back to Istanbul from her compulsory trip to Alexandria during the counter-revolutionary reprisal and then her subsequent visit to London she wrote her novel *Seviyye Talib* which was considered as her first serious novel after *Heyula* (1909) and *Raik'in Annesi/Raik's Mother* (1909). This novel draws attention to the unease resulting from the changes in the role of women which began to occur after the Second Constitution/II.Meşrutiyet and attempts to reconcile the cultural worlds of East and West through its female protagonist. Similar to *Seviyye Talib* in her novel *Handan* (1912) Edib portrays her central character as a refined and cultivated woman of very strong passions who resists the established norms of social life. Although in the narrative the heroines Seviyye and Handan appear to reveal their feminine identity and remain decent at the same time they are punished at the end of the novels because of the author's subjugation to the patriarchal values system and its expectations and hence the internalization of the male literary tradition (Enginün, 1989; Aksoy, 1997; Durakbaşa, 2006).

Another novel, the utopia *Yeni Turan/New Turan* written during Edib's stay in London differs from her previous novels since although the visible plot is the sacrifice of an intellectual woman for the society's well-being, the novel predominantly engages with the general social and political issues of the Turkish society rather than individual problems, overtly describing her Turanist ideology inspired by Ziya Gökalp's views which blended Islam and Turkish ethnicity with European modernization. According to her utopia Turkey should be a liberal and democratic country that is able to offer women political suffrage and prospects of employment in various fields of work. *Yeni Turan* was translated into German in 1916 and unsurprisingly its great nation-wide popularity continued in the international stage as well (Enginün, 1978; Adak, 2005). *Son Eseri/Her Last Work* published in serials in the Unionist paper *Tanin* looks into the failure of a marital

relationship based merely on mutual attraction and desire and makes a deep psychological analysis of the characters involved. The women in the novel just like in her previous novels represent the ideal Turkish woman of strong personality and modern ideas. In her first novels except *Yeni Turan* Edib does not touch upon matters of women's education and contribution to social life, landmarks in political and military history of the Ottoman Empire or her nationalist thoughts instead she engages themes of love, marriage and betrayal.

These novels, written at a time when the author was passing through a hard period in her private life because of her husband's illicit affairs, his insistent wish to marry a second wife, and the difficult decision of divorce, display autobiographical characteristics as the women characters such as the betrayed wives Refika and Handan or the leading activist Kaya remind Edib herself. Besides, these works that may be referred as autobiographical novels reflect a twentieth century female writer's endeavor to define her self both in terms of womanhood and authorship allowing the reader evaluate the question of true feminine self-representation in writing (Adak, 2004). In her *Mev'ut Hüküm/The Decree* (1917) Edib covers a multitude of interrelated subjects such as the lives in slums and rich neighborhoods of Istanbul, social class distinctions, declining moral values, rising conflict between generations and unsatisfactory marriage relationships where women suffer a myriad of physical and emotional damages. Also in this novel she uses her experiences of the Balkan War activities of *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti/ Society for the Elevation of Women* and mirrors her appreciative impressions about the strength and power of endurance and the public spirit that binds people as one. Later on in 1930, having witnessed the West's indifference and apathy towards the massacres of the Balkan War Edib wrote *Turkey Faces West* in America unveiling the biased and inhumane attitudes of the seemingly civilized cultures (Uluköse, 2006; Enginün, 1989).

In 1916 Edib went to Syria to continue her educational activities. In place of the French schools which spread French imperialism she established new schools with the help of the local governments and the army. She also founded a teacher training college based in Beirut that united some schools in Arab provinces.

Meanwhile in 1917 she married her second husband Adnan Adıvar, then a professor at the Medical College and a prominent member of the CUP. After World War I when the Allied forces took control of the Ottoman Empire Edib kept on working for nationalist groups in Istanbul and she became renowned as a speaker for her public speeches full of hope and inspiration especially her most admired address in Sultan Ahmet Meeting (1919) against the occupation of Izmir by Greece has been a symbol of the struggle for freedom. She was among the intellectual members of the *Wilson Prensipleri Cemiyeti/Society for Wilsonian Principles* and acted as a mediator between the nationalists and the American government believing that strong alliance with America is the only solution to avoid more territorial loss, to protect Turkey from the impact and competitions of Europe and to avert the threats of the minorities who receive support from the Allied powers. In 1920 Edib and her husband secretly escaped to Anatolia and joined the Nationalist Forces led by Mustafa Kemal. During the Turkish War of Independence she founded *Anadolu Ajansı/The Anatolian News Agency* to introduce the nation's struggle and she served variously as journalist, writer, interpreter and organizer of nursing at the parliamentary headquarters and was promoted to the rank of sergeant major. Edib's national romances *Ateşten Gömlek/The Shirt of Flame* (1922) and *Vurun Kahpeye/Thrash the Whore* (1923) narrate the fight against enemy forces, especially the Greeks and the Islamic fundamentalists in Anatolia (Enginün, 1989; Adak, 2005).

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic Halide Edib and her husband fled to London then to Paris in 1925 and returned to Turkey after Mustafa Kemal's death. Although it hasn't been openly mentioned in any part of Edib's works, the reason for this quasi/self-imposed exile was presumably the political disagreements with the Kemalist groups and the subsequent closing of the opposition party which adopted liberal democratic views. It was during her exile that she published her two-volume autobiography in English; the first part *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1926) narrates the story of an individual who becomes a public character and provides a psychoanalytically changing history of her various selves whereas the second part *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928) serves as a response to the Kemalist version of national emancipation and accusations made in *Nutuk*. Both volumes were translated into

Turkish in 1960s with certain changes and omissions. Edib was invited as a guest lecturer to America and India where she impressed people with her presentation of historical and ideological analysis of the late Ottoman and the newly established Republic portraying a modern image of women in her country. When she was abroad she also wrote novels which gained wide acclaim, for example the Turkish translation/adaptation of *The Clown and His Daughter* entitled *Sinekli Bakkal/The Fly-Plagued Grocer* (1936) won the Republican People's Party Novel Award. This novel depicts the values of the vanishing past such as religion, folk art and classical music in relation to the effects of extreme Westernization experienced in the formative years of the Republic. On her return to Turkey Edib was appointed chair of English Language and Literature at Istanbul University and served for four years as an independent member of parliament for Izmir. She translated some of Shakespeare's famous plays such as *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *As You Like It* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* into Turkish. During the World War II she wrote about war's destructive impact on people's lives and society and inevitable costs of totalitarian regimes that ignored and restricted the individual in any way, as in her absurdist play *Maskeli Ruhlar/Masks or Souls?*(1938) which displayed her doubt about the Kemalist revolution. Halide Edib died in Istanbul in 1964 leaving a powerful trace on the Turkish political history and literature (For further information on Halide Edib Adivar's works see Yücebaş, 1964; Enginün, 1978; Enginün, 1989; Adak, 2005; Uluköse, 2006).

### **3.3.1.2. Unfolding of the Textual Self**

Prominent Turkish women writers born at the end of the nineteenth century amidst the traditional constraints and diverse pressures imposed by the society on women have used the Western literary genre of autobiography to disclose their female identity and widen the boundaries of their space. Although the condition of women improved after the establishment of the Second Constitution (II.Meşrutiyet) the practices in the literary field such as the writing of a life-narrative was still perceived as a task to be accomplished solely by male writers and the Ottoman women writers who tried their hand at this particular literature was upper-class and



elite women having the opportunity to incorporate reforms into their daily lives (Durakbaşa, 2000). Generally speaking, the early Turkish women autobiographers stuck in the slow lane of the conservative society assembled the details concerning the home life, customs, and daily vocations and the Ottoman Harem which has been a tremendous source of interest and inspiration for Westerners.

The true female self-representation in these writings may be deemed as questionable since the writers have mostly abstained from sharing their individual innermost thoughts and reactions and hence being unable to introduce the female self as subject in their life-story they could not make a space for unique female expression that was stripped of the male supremacy and power. Nigar Hanum in her collection of diaries reflects on her true womanly feelings and experiences, but though this seems a courageous step forward to support the existence of women in public life and writing, upon her wish it was long after her death that just a part of her memoirs was published (Durakbaşa, 2000). Furthermore she considers her autobiographical act as a pathway to confirmation of her turmoil and frustration in her marriage presumably thinking a woman has to be content with her family life and relationships no matter how incapable the husband is. Halide Edib's life-story stands out from others in the sense that it tells the social, political, cultural and psychological aspects of a woman writer's journey and brings to light a critical phase of the Turkish history from a female perspective. Other women autobiographers following Edib came from middle upper-class families who through gaining more independent status and position in society and literature depicted female selves closer to reality and criticized gender inequality and oppression but except İsmet Kür they moved within the borders of female specific traits and were most careful not to offend public morals (Aksoy, 2006).

In her two-volume autobiography written directly in the most finished English, Halide Edib does not only narrate the story of her life as an intellectual author and politician but she also writes about some major political and socio-cultural events in the Turkish history, therefore it may be stated that her self-writing merges the epic of a nation brought through losses and sufferings of war

with the epic of an exceptional woman's life which has already left its ineffaceable mark on the pages of history. After the delivery of *Nutuk*, the sacred text of the republic, some of Mustafa Kemal's political rivals including Edib wrote letters and autobiographies as a response to his version of the recent historical period, but these works were not widely circulated in Turkey and not received favorably as the press of the opposition party was silenced and people only found *Nutuk* worthy of credibility. When Edib's autobiography was first published it was welcomed by the British audience as a historical document arising sympathy for the Turkish ordeal. Writing in English helped Edib discover types of identification in contrast with the prevailing notion of collective self which represented the republican period, however in her self-portraiture of a modern Eastern woman she attempted to find the midway between her distinctive individualism and the Kemalist ideology. Edib using the genre of autobiography intended to narrate her side of the story of freedom for the Turkish reader but her memoirs denied reception in Turkey until years later when her position and role in Turkish history and literature was reevaluated objectively removing much of the previously stated controversies (Adak, 2003; Lewis, 2004).

Edib's being abroad in exile has an essential influence on writing her memoirs. This life in exile, being an individual with no land and thus getting alienated to her own self have triggered her writing and she overcomes this wearisome situation by her efforts to strengthen her authorship and intellectual production, so her act of writing becomes her means of liberation and escaping captivity. Edib narrates her life-story in English, but she never cites her self-imposed exile years in England which indicates her deliberate intention of putting a distance between herself and the reality and between her real self at the moment of writing and her past self and how she tries to remove the physical, social and psychological distances within. Her memoirs show that she does not accept to be exiled from her country and her undeniable contributions make her both a part and witness of the Turkish National Struggle and as a crafted writer she fulfills her mission to introduce the new Turkish Republic to the Western world. In the first part of her autobiography *Memoirs of Halide Edib* she delves into the roots of her personal identity and then describes how her public identity is shaped and entrenched during the foundation of

the new country. She places herself in the center of her life-narrative as a historical figure who has been involved in the political and military movement that initiated the process of gaining freedom and constituting modern Turkey. However between the lines one feels alongside this life of success, her secret insecurity which is more commonly observed in women's writings probably as a result of the psychological pressure and discomfort. In her childhood reminiscences she vividly portrays the cracks in her existence through her father's polygamous marriages, the idea of belonging nowhere, her search for happiness and need for dependency. As she grows up to overcome her loneliness and misery she developed an attachment to her own people and humanity (Durakbaşı, 2000).

#### **3.3.1.2.1 Reconciliations with Life: Early Years**

This part will focus on how Halide Edib in her *Memoirs* constructs her past self with its distinctive shades and passions in the present by means of relating herself to others especially women. Halide Edib structures her life-story chronologically; in the first part of her *Memoirs* starting from her early childhood days she narrates within the framework of her life the historical period until the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and in the second part she makes references to the events that happened until the end of the World War I. Tension between the contrasting customs and values of East and West provides the context for Halide's early development even if in the later years she manages to rationalize the perspectives of these two different worlds. Throughout the narration the reader is presented with colorful portraits of individuals-one of her maternal grandmother from whom she learned the principles and practice of the Muslim religion and various aspects of daily life in Ottoman society, one of her father Edib Bey who provided advanced education and opportunities to familiarize her with Western culture and one of household servants of diverse ethnic backgrounds representing the multiple influential layers of the Ottoman mosaic. Thus Edib through these meticulous descriptions of real life persons and their lives, attempts to relate her self to others revealing the gradual formation of her own character and individual notion

of truth. Her early inclination and experience has prepared her to perceive life as a continuously changing path.

Her childhood days were filled with painful and perplexing memories that played an important role in the formation of her unique identity. When writing her self-narrative Edib journeys back and forth across her consciousness to select which recollections are to be shared with the reader. As expected, there is a vast difference between her initial unconscious self living the event and her adult self writing about the same event which attempts to construct a unified identity out of the subjective experiences of her fragmented selves. However, the process of remembering and narrating what has been remembered is difficult as revealed especially through the narrative techniques she employs in the recitation of her childhood, e.g. until she becomes conscious enough to understand her surroundings and the events happening in her life she assumes the role of a spectator and refers to her autobiographical self as *she* to mark the distance between past and present because the memories slip away with each passing day, i.e. within time the frame of reference in which experiences are initially placed lose its actual meaning. This difficulty in narrative production arises from cognitive problems rather than emotional ones. In her autobiography Edib closely conforms to the conventional Western rules introspectively analyzing her inner world to narrate her gradual process of psychological and social maturation from a child desperately in need of affection and dependency into a leading intellectual woman and reveals how she has healed her psychic wounds and emotional sensitivities (Durakbaşa, 2000; Michielsens, 2000; Adak, 2003). The narrative begins in a child's dream land as flashes of broken memory and moves towards real life situations that bind her to the fate of the society. The early loss of her mother and the resulting feeling of pain and unknown emptiness underlie her life-long search for love and her efforts of identification with others:

An intense uneasiness and an obscure feeling of undefined fear. The woman whom she calls "mother" is lying in semi-darkness beside her, in a large bed; clad in her white gown...The mother is a thing of mystery and uneasiness to the little girl. She is afraid of her, she is drawn to her, and yet that thing called affection has not taken shape in her heart; there is only a painful sense of dependence on this mother who is quietly fading out

from the background of her life...The light is once more turned down and now there is no mother. The little girl stupidly wanders about, understands nothing, knows nothing, feels lonely and abandoned. Every evening the father sits by a small round table. One single candle flickers, and his tears fall on the candle-tray, while the servants walk about on tiptoe and pull the little girl away by the hand (Edib, 2005:4-6).

After her mother's passing away Halide's life completely falls apart as she is not psychologically equipped to comprehend the meaning of infinite nothingness and overcome the grief and sorrow of losing a beloved one. She instinctively tries to fill the void of her mother's place in her soul and becomes more attached to her father who is mostly away on duty in the palace.

She, the little girl, was left to herself...There was complete silence. The father was no longer shedding tears by the flicker of a single candle. Her loneliness seemed suddenly to have taken the form of a tangible hardness in her throat. The woman with the long coiling plaits and wonderful eyes was no more. What was this silence about? Why had she no one to cuddle close to and go to sleep with? There was no answer to her unspoken questions. Still only that dead silence. The next moment she stood in the middle of the room and spoke her mind out: "I want my father!"...Gradually the little voice rose and rose in hoarse and piercing howls of pain which she herself internally noted as strange. On and on it went, rising and howling till the Greek neighbors came in one by one to help the old lady housekeeper to calm and soothe her...(Edib, 2005:11-12).

Her loving grandmother who raised her with the traditional Ottoman and Islamic values tries her best to compensate for the absence of her mother. Halide gains confidence from her presence and use her as a source of relieve when she is worried or sad. In her eyes her grandmother's wisteria-covered house and its Eastern influence has represented peace, happiness and social enrichment where she is molded with a variety of ethnicities and cultures besides the vivid war stories of her grandfather and the folksongs of her nanny that later inspire her famous fictional works and East-West conflict. Kyria Ellenie, the head of kindergarten to which the kids of aristocratic Christian families go, shows much care and affection to Halide

changing her into a little girl full of life, hope and happiness. In her *Memoirs* she describes her attachment to this Greek lady as

...her intensest, sincerest and perhaps longest love affair... There was a new life in her. She was no longer morbid and quiet. For the first time she made joyous movements, played happily with gestures which were not merely physical demonstrations but something more subjective and conscious. There was a wonderful security, a nameless delight in the old woman's presence. The little girl spoke, sang and recited, happy to be able to give herself in humble gratitude for the other woman's warm heart (Edib, 2005:26).

Polygamous unions were mostly common among the rural population or the Istanbul Muslim elite. Although the prominent men, high ranking government officials, philosophers and scientists of that day were considered as the leaders of modernization, like Edib Bey, most of these men in order not to lose their superior status in the family were open to polygamous relationships and lifestyle (Durakbaşa, 2000; Lewis, 2004). Edib Bey's decision to remarry and the subsequent transition to polygamy, which comes as a contradiction of little Halide's earlier notions and Westernized upbringing, profoundly affect her life and arouse feelings of annoyance and worry among the family members and the household servants. Years later, she is involved in a similar tragedy which ends with divorce when her first husband insists on marrying his latest concubine. Having experienced polygamy and its painful consequences for everyone living in the house Edib has always resisted the existence of this institution; as an unwilling participant in this cultural system she claims that the traditional practice of polygamy is not concerned simply with the relationship between the couples but it also includes others in the Ottoman harem and this stranded situation deepens the hurt for those who already grieve. It also appears that actually polygamy is not much welcomed and sometimes cynically criticized. Edib Bey knows he contradicts his beliefs and as a result of strong social disapproval and psychological pressure confines himself to his room and becomes withdrawn from the family. Underneath her story of individual content Edib relates herself to other women of her class in her narration of the female experience where she gives representative cultural information about marriage and family roles, common

concerns, hardships and frustrations of women and thus the truth about their lives to voice the various aspects of their inferior, othered selves and open up the pathway to freedom and recognition.

...The nature and consequences of the suffering of a wife who in the same house shares a husband lawfully with a second and equal partner, differs both in kind and in degree from that of the woman who shares him with a temporary mistress. In the former case, it must also be borne in mind, the suffering extends to two very often considerable groups of people-children, servants, and relations-two whole groups whose interests are from the very nature of the case more or less antagonistic, and who are living in a destructive atmosphere of mutual distrust and a struggle for supremacy.

On my own childhood, polygamy and its results produced a very ugly and distressing impression. The constant tension in our home made every simple family ceremony seem like a physical pain, and the consciousness of it hardly ever left me.

And father too was suffering in more than one way. As a man of liberal and modern ideas, his marriage was unfavorably regarded by his friends, especially by Hakky Bey, to whose opinion he attached the greatest importance...He suffered again from the consciousness of having deceived Abla. He had married her when she was a mere girl and it looked as if he had taken advantage of her youth and inexperience...Among the household too he felt that he had fallen in general esteem, and cast about for some justification of his conduct which would reinstate him. "It was for Halide that I married her", he used to say. "If Teize had married another man Halide would have died"...

The wives never quarreled, and they were always externally polite, but one felt a deep and mutual hatred accumulating in their hearts, to which they gave vent only when each was alone with father. He wore the look of a man who was getting more than his punishment now. Finally he took to having a separate room, where he usually sat alone. But he could not escape the gathering storm in his new life (Edib, 2005:144-147).

### 3.3.1.2.2. Conflicts and Compromises: Years of Maturity

It is worth of notice that in her narration some segments of her life are not presented in depth especially in the Turkish version of her autobiography *Mor Salkımlı Ev*, for instance though her relationship with her first husband Salih Zeki is central to her private life details about her marriage and divorce are omitted except for a casual reference here and there. This conscious concealment may result from her wish and effort to cover up her deeper confrontation with herself and her traumatic experience that takes years to overcome. On the public side, nondisclosure of such personal facts may also be an implication of the author's hesitation and unwillingness to remove and transcend the barrier between women and society in matters of marital relationships as writing about the unspeakable and forbidden is likely to be received with disfavor and opposition.

...patriarchal ideologies define women's existence in terms of concepts like intimacy, silence, naturalness and secrecy confining it into a space beyond or actually before language to fictionalize it as the opposite of the public. This fiction is one of the most important basis of control exercised over the voices, identities and bodies of women because it indicates that each time women make their existence visible and heard in the public sphere they will be acting against their nature, improperly attract attention, tempt people to talk about them and be disgraced as they display the naivety that should be concealed and protected (Irzik & Parla, 2004:7).

In other words, the long-existing traditions and shared values affect the level of textual distance and the authentic practice of female self-representation. As in a patriarchal culture the relations between men and women have been determined by the pressure towards women and the character and the attitudes of women reflect the choices of the family and the society, the author's act of writing remains limited to a world of masculine patterns. Women can be writers but they should as responsible mothers and wives preserve the sacred privacy of their lives (Aksoy, 2006). This obedient approach familiarizes the reader with the writer and her life giving way to the reader's contribution in restoration of the events and share in the illumination of reality whether that be male or female. This is essential in the sense that Edib



through her narrative aims to provide a liberating life model for other women and this aim could only be realized if her women readers identify themselves with her and feel she is one of them in their group. It is traditionally known that autobiographical writing has been associated with the men's world as their lives and process of maturation are considered worthy to share publicly and be remembered at all times, therefore Edib using a moderate language and conforming to the dominant rules and norms strongly connects with her audience, reminds her womanly compassion, sensitivity and strength at moments in the text and tells her story of a brilliant mind and lifelong pursuits of peace and justice. In an autobiography the reader knows that the narrator is also the protagonist, so by and large most writers like Edib do not thoroughly unveil their own selves in their life-narratives and use fictional forms and characters to convey their actual ideas, feelings and experiences (Adak, 2004).

In the English version she is freer to speak her mind as via the language barrier she puts between her and the Turkish audience she breaks loose from some of the constraints imposed on women and openly tells how she feels about what she has been through. She writes her autobiography in the early years of the republic when the new governing system has been settled recently and the individuals have not fully internalized the values of the system. Besides, the identity of the Turkish woman is at the verge of change in the reformation process. The diverse effects of this rapid, groundbreaking political and social change are reflected in Edib's reminiscences. Edib tries not to reveal the secret sides of her private life to the reader putting aside the womanly sensitivities and emotions and remain in her people's memories as a public identity, however because the lived and shared moments belong to the recent past and the feelings still hurt, her heartfelt lines express her deep love, respect and strong attachment to her husband. Although Edib views their marriage as a love match and enjoys being a mother and living a happy traditional life considering Salih Zeki's position as friend of her father and her lower status as a subservient dominated wife it would not be wrong to point out that Edib's relation with her husband is not actually based on equal terms.

He opened entirely a new life for me. It was a positive world, a world where no half lights and shades were allowed...I had belonged to a world of mystical and spiritual absorption. This new phase was therefore of great educative value to me and acted as a counterpoise to my natural bent. He had an absolute mastery over the abstruse subjects he treated, and he illuminated them with a sharp and blinding clarity when he explained them to the pupils who gathered round him in the manner of disciples. This blinding clarity and simplicity are usually characteristic of the real mastery of a subject, but such a treatment was so different from my own somewhat dreamy mental temperament that I fell completely under its sway. Though it gave my mind a new direction and helped it in its development, it also blurred for me for a time the value of spiritual things and I became in a mental sense enslaved to another mind. I always indeed retained the humble attitude of a child and a student toward him, and his evident interest in me induced me to make an extra effort to appreciate scientific values...We had a delightful apartment with a lovely view in Sultan Tepé. We furnished and prepared it together. No little Circassian slave bought from the *slave-market* at the lowest price could have entered upon our common life in such an obedient spirit as I did.

My life was confined within the walls of my apartment. I led the life of an old-fashioned Turkish woman. For the first years I even ceased to see father's old friends whom I had known as a child. I belonged to the new house and its master, and gave the best I had, to create a happy home and to help him in his great work (Edib, 2005:204-207).

As all through her life she has been a part of the upper class and lived according to the high elite standards offered, an unavoidable distance emerges between her self and the society. However her love and sympathy for mankind, the need to make up for gaps created by personal tragedies and crises and her sense of responsibility to contribute to social betterment and change motivate her to close the remoteness and understand the lives of public women in terms of self-expression and definition, different aspects of female identity and attitudes to the established norms of the male-dominated culture. Major social and cultural reforms in the Second Constitutional Era (II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi) provide Edib's initiation into social life as activist, journalist and public speaker. She begins writing in various journals as a literary columnist about the current situation of women in the Ottoman State and the question of female liberation. Her articles bring her closer to other women from

different classes who let her know the difficulties they encounter in their familial and social relations and builds stronger connections with her people.

Sometimes my correspondents asked social questions, sometimes political ones, but each took care to send me a long exposition of his own views. Some of the letters were about family problems and secrets; no priest could have received fuller and more candid confessions than I did during those months...Besides these letters I received visits from a great many women belonging to different classes who came to me with their personal troubles and asked advice. It was through these visits that I first became aware of the tragic problems of the old social order. I am indeed grateful to those humble women who brought to me their difficulties in their relations to their families and to society. I got much valuable life material from their stories. The surface of the political revolution was of passing interest, but the undercurrents of life, which started in the social depths of Turkey, drew me irresistibly into its whirlpool (Edib, 2005:270-271).

Edib establishes one of the first women's clubs in Istanbul, *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti/Society for the Development of Women* which has organized activities similar to those of *Türk Kadınları Muhibbi Cemiyeti/ Women's Society for Turcophiles* in England to ensure, within the boundaries of traditions, the cultural and intellectual development of women and help prepare them to work. Women's journals offer individual opportunities for self-representation whereas clubs are organized unions to actively resolve problems concerning women's rights and issues (Çakır, 1994). This episode of details about the club reveals how she develops her inner self through contact with her environment; her efforts to empathize and meet the women's needs strengthen her affiliation with the society moving her towards the collective end of the scale.

Edib's quiet and secluded life is interrupted by Salih Zeki's involvement in an extramarital affair and still in love with her husband she goes through a hard time in her marriage. She leaves home with her sons hoping that this is simply another whim of his and everything will settle down within a while, but unexpectedly at her return she found Salih Zeki married. Despite her disappointment Edib neither reproaches him nor shows reaction to his act of adultery presenting herself as a noble woman of

values. She decides to leave her marriage of nine years knowing the pains and troubles of polygamous life from her childhood experiences. However to divorce she has to persuade her husband as it would not be possible without his consent. It was until the introduction of *Hukuk-u Aile Kararnamesi*/ the Decree on Family Law in 1917, which imposed state supervision of marriage, that the Ottoman women gained some legal rights and were protected against polygamy and divorce, for instance women were granted the right to claim divorce and a man was allowed to take a second wife only if he got the approval of the first one (Ortaylı, 1985; Ahmad, 1993). After her divorce she suffers severe physical and emotional pain and it takes quite a while for her to face separation, wrap her wounds and hold on to life again despite social prejudices and pressures. Following the crisis in her private life the reader watches her sharp fall and then rise from her ashes through her strong personality and focus on new set goals and public investments.

In 1910 I was having serious domestic trouble. I felt that I was obliged to make a great change in my life, a change which I could not easily force myself to face. Salih Zeki Bey's relation with and attachment to a teacher looked serious enough to make it seem conceivable that he contemplated marriage. A believer in monogamy, in the inviolability of name and home, I felt it my duty to be my duty to retire from what I had believed would be my home to the end of my life. But knowing Salih Zeki Bey's passing caprices of the heart and temperament I wanted to be absolutely sure, before breaking up my home, of the stability of his latest attachment...

At my return Salih Zeki Bey told me that he had married the lady, but to my great surprise he added that polygamy was necessary in some cases, and he asked me to continue as his first wife. There was a long and painful struggle between us, but at last he consented to a divorce, and I left what for nine years had been my home.

I allowed myself no sentimental self-analysis or morbid philosophizing at this time, such as I had occasionally indulged in the other serious illnesses I had gone through. I meant to conquer all physical ills and I meant to make a home equal to the one they had had to leave and to surround them with a happy and normal atmosphere...

As I write these lines I feel as if I were writing of the life a young woman who has passed away. I see her lying on a simple bed of high pillows; I see her struggling to write her daily articles or short stories; and I hear her cough continually...she is left alone in the twilight, with the utter mysterious loveliness and strange longings of the evening. She looks at pain with a quizzical smile, while she listens to the voices of the evening in the streets (Edib, 2005:307-310).

### **3.3.2. *A Backward Glance***

#### **3.3.2.1. Edith Wharton in Literary Perception**

Edith Wharton, one of the major figures in American literary history was born in New York in 1862 as the third child of George Frederic Jones and Lucretia Rhinelander Jones, a respectable aristocratic family of Dutch and English descent. As a child belonging to the American elite she experienced the world of appearances where truth proves to be just a grand societal illusion. Edith was expected to know the pattern of social conduct, customs and practices and perceive herself in relation to her society and culture. Even though she later resisted the accepted female codes of behavior she does not reject the central role of the social environment in self-formation. Because of the prevailing economic depression that followed the Civil War, Edith spent most of her childhood in Europe living a life of hotels and seeing only some friendly Americans. Her family moved to Rome in 1867 and they travelled in Spain and then decided to settle in Paris in 1868. After living in Paris for two years they went to Germany and Florence. They returned to the United States in 1872 and lived in New York spending the summers in Newport, Rhode Island. Edith's travels and early impression of Europe had a lifelong effect on her writing and provided her with the subject material of her main works however what actually inspired her was her direct and complete image of the upper-class New York society in her childhood days (Auchincloss, 1966; Joslin, 1991). However despite their inestimable value, as a child to merge these cultures made her unhappy especially when she returned home from Europe she felt this more than ever:

The artist's vision, nurtured on the designs of Europe, struggled to readjust to her native landscape. Especially the initial scenes at the docks, "unsavory" and "shameless", built a barrier between the nascent writer and the brownstones of Old New York...to be forced back to New York into a maze of obligations that not even her parents desired left her depressed (Joslin & Price, 1996:3-4).

In fact, all her life from time to time Edith fell into depression for long periods. Specifically during her adolescence and young adulthood her mother's persistence on wearing a public mask to disguise the truth, the repressive attitudes of her husband and the restraints of the New York society aroused in her feelings of imprisonment and loss of control resulting in deep and severe depression. She tried to find a solution to her psychological trouble and realized that what she really needed was not to put aside her intellectual and artistic tendencies and accept the traditional role of a noble lady, but to spend her time and effort on writing (Joslin & Price, 1996). Edith's particular sensibility and talent made her different from the women of her class and generation. Although New York ladies took private tutoring and became fluent in many languages they drew upon these privileges more in tea parties and had little or no taste for reading unlike Edith who spent her leisure time in her father's library of classical works. In her society the act of writing is regarded "as something between a black art and a form of manual labor" (Wharton, 1934:69).

Even though the art of literature was highly appreciated, New York's upper class and economic elite offered little intellectual or aesthetic nourishment considering the author as a potential threat to their life secrets and thus only few men and women exercised authorship and revealed their talent and craft because of the worry of being mocked at. Wharton was a very prolific writer, she wrote novels, poetry, short stories and nonfiction presenting fascinating insights into the American experience. All through her childhood years she prepared for her career taking extreme delight in making up stories when she was alone. As she grew older she began writing her stories regardless of her mother's initial discouragements. Her first long narrative of social observation entitled *Fast and Loose*, a novella resembling much of her later work as regards its tone and style, was published under the

pseudonym David Olivieri in 1877. Her collection of poems *Verses* was published privately by her mother in 1878. Henry Longfellow supported her literary activities and helped her publish a few poems in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1880. This was really an inspirational and motivating step for such a young lady who was about to become an author. Her father died of stroke in 1882 and she inherited a considerable amount of trust fund. In 1883 she met the love of all her life Walter Berry, a young man of aristocratic heritage who had attempted to understand human foibles and failings looking at people from far away. For Edith their meeting was a spiritual union of like-minded people as Berry had been her inexhaustible source of muse and her fine imaginative powers would have been wasted without his psychological presence and intellectual support. Edith had a shy character and she tried to conceal herself behind the glaze of formality but soon after her marriage to Edward Wharton, a wealthy Bostonian of no intellectual pretensions, she managed to socialize with the people in her community and adapted herself to the customs of social life. Although the couple agreed on matters of finances, politics and family relationships and they travelled together to many places in Europe following their common passion they still encountered some marital problems arising from the discrepancy between their intellectual levels. Edward thought that his wife's tastes for literature and travel were atypical of her class, e.g. contrary to his ideas for Edith trips meant not only entertainment but also opportunity to accumulate impressions for later use in novels (Auchincloss, 1966; Joslin, 1991; Benstock, 1994; Joslin & Price, 1996).

Unhappy and lonely in her marriage, she formed a world of imagination and gradually began writing. Her first published short story in *Scribner's* was *Mrs. Manstey's View* (1891) which explored the feelings of sorrow, solitude, and otherness revealed in the confined lives of people who existed on the border of poverty. Her travels in Italy and her devoted study of the history of architecture, design and house decoration gave Edith the opportunity to open new worlds and widen her prospects. Even an overall look into her perfect taste in decoration and furniture displayed in acres of beautifully tended gardens and the shining, flawlessly appointed interiors of the Mount which represented her compromise between the private and the public will indeed prove enough for Edith's talent as "not only the

pioneer but the poet of interior decoration” (Auchincloss, 1966:6). Using her experiences in interior and exterior home decorating she prepared her first non-fiction book about European architecture and household design based on simplicity, brightness, privacy and independence, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), collaborating with the most popular architect of the day, Ogden Codman. Then came her earliest collection of short stories, *The Greater Inclination* (1899) which looked into various aspects of relationships and communication. Some critics appreciated her literary accomplishment and the originality of her fiction for its insightful social analysis, smooth style and exceptional artistic vision while others criticized her for imitating the works of Henry James. Although John D. Barry in his “New York Letter” placed her among one of the most promising short fiction authors he insistently pointed out that Wharton “...not only shows that she has been influenced by his method of developing a motive, but by his style as well. Some of his worst faults of style she produces with skill that after a time becomes very amusing, notably his trick of repeating words...and his habit of spoiling the formation of his sentences by inserting parenthetical clauses” (1992:13). In spite of their unique literary skills and talent there are still many critics who make the similar remarks about the two prominent writers. However Wharton, even if James was one of her dearest friends, was not happy to be named as his heiress and felt rather discouraged about this claim (Bell, 1995).

In 1902 Wharton moved into the Mount which symbolized a place of seclusion for *making up* her stories, a divine retreat for the invention of her art. During her productive Lenox years she wrote many best-seller books and moving away from the aristocratic New York society and its intolerant limitations she attached herself to the international circle of leading intellectual thinkers and writers. Inspired by her travel impressions and study of history and art, she did three projects on European society and landscape which allowed her to keep close ties with her adoptive home, i.e. her Italian historical novel of two volumes, *The Valley of Decision* (1902), her aesthetic analysis of the origins and influence of Renaissance house and garden architecture, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* (1904), and a cultural travel diary, *Italian Backgrounds* (1905) (Joslin, 1991; Joslin & Price, 1996).



Her novel *The House of Mirth* (1905), one of the first novels of manners in American literature which focused on the conflict between strict public expectation and individual desire, was a severe criticism of the self-centered, irresponsible and corrupt upper class. Another novel *The Fruit of the Tree* appeared in 1907 which looked into important issues such as labor and industrial condition, the woman question and the morals of mercy killing. Meanwhile her relationship with her husband was getting worse because of his steady depression. In 1908 her four-year illicit love affair with Morton Fullerton began uncovering her womanly nature and passion that had been suppressed earlier in her life. As revealed in the writing of her later fiction she not only matured psychologically but also artistically through this awakening. Set in rural New England, her novel of a destined extramarital liaison *Ethan Frome* (1911) included to some extent autobiographical elements as in the midst of disenchantment with her lover and the mental sufferings of her husband Edith may closely be identified with the main character. In 1913 she finally ended her uneven marriage of many years and also completed her novel of ambition and moral fraud *The Custom of the Country* which described a new type of American in a greedy attempt to gain riches and power at any cost (Benstock, 1994).

During the First World War, she actively took part in charity activities; she organized a workshop for seamstresses, directed hostels to shelter the homeless victims and founded schools for Flemish refugee children. Her series of vivid frontline reports were later collected in *Fighting France, from Dunkerque to Belfort*. When the United States entered the war in 1917 she began to write articles later published in *French Ways and Their Meaning* to introduce the French culture to Americans and highlight the differences between the two societies with particular criticism on American attitudes towards women's roles and rights. In her two war novels about traditional manly courage in battle *The Marne* (1918) and *A Son at the Front* (1923) she expressed her disapproval of American culture through comparing the lighthearted Americans to valiant Europeans. Her masterpiece *The Age of Innocence* (1920) which won the Pulitzer Prize was a novel touching upon

those familiar Jamesian antonyms, innocence and experience, America and Europe. But Wharton is not really interested in the

abstract moral comparisons that had preoccupied James; her American “innocence” of Old New York is quite ironically regarded, her “Europeanized” woman of experience is more vulnerable, ultimately; it is New York society itself, the organism of the tribe, that is her chief actor. Above all, the novel’s objective narrative eschews immersion into that internal world which preoccupied James (Bell, 1995:6).

In her later works such as *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922), *Old New York* (1924), *The Writing of Fiction* (1925), *Twilight Sleep* (1927), and *The Children* (1928), Wharton rather than revealing the true nature of various aspects of social life, portrayed in depth the psychology of the individual who had been struggling to find a secure and stable ground amid the moving culture of the uneasy twenties. In addition to these novels, she also published many short story collections and an autobiography *A Backward Glance* (1934). In her late middle age she left New York and except her coming back in 1923 to receive an honorary degree from Yale University she lived in France as an expatriate author until her death in 1937 as there “she could be an intellectual, literary woman and still belong to and be respected by a community she admired” (Joslin, 1991:23).

### **3.3.2.2. Textual Self and Artistic Experience**

Autobiographical writing includes the remaking of a self but for a woman writer this process represents the constitution of an individual female self in relation to others. In her narration through merging of private and public the autobiographer intends to reveal and rationalize her self to transcend the male-designed tradition. As the reader’s experiences and thoughts are similar to those of the writer the autobiographical text becomes a powerful source of feminism that brings to light the past and psycho-sociological position of women. Early autobiographies of American women have been influenced by Puritan beliefs which likened life to a text and demanded its interpretation with respect to the scriptural meta-text and the conversion experience. These self-works aim to benefit the community and strengthen the social relationships. With the emergence of secular autobiography, women writers tend to focus on gender differences, women’s experiences and their ways of thinking. They consider autobiography writing as a means of close empathy

with particularly the female reader, so they adopt a collective position and touch on common issues and problems (Blasing, 1977; Culley, 1992).

In the nineteenth century self-narratives the tendency to keep the private concerns and details in the background and underline matters which would make changes in the life of an American woman was still dominant. Anyway, the authors believed that to descend into the deepest depths of the soul and autobiographically represent the self in all its possibilities was beyond their craft. However, in the next era the rise of individualism has encouraged women to take a closer look at their inner life and analyze the psychological and spiritual development and maturity of the female self. Women have also written life-stories to partake in historical events, to convey minority perspectives or to introduce a women's career path (Ganim, 1999). In her picturesque autobiography *A Backward Glance* Edith Wharton narrates the story of how a woman of her period and class becomes a writer; rather than details and incidents of her private life she prefers to include recollections which both give clues about her personality traits and help her move productively forward in her writing career. However, similar to other women's self-narratives often one feels between the lines the uncertain and insecure attitude and the apprehension to prove that she deserves to be taken as a model. As Jelinek (1980) points out male autobiographies differ significantly from those of women in terms of form and content because they present a unique and independent self in contrast with the women's collective relational self. A man may exist on his own but a woman exists only as a part of a relationship so she relates her self to other people and builds much of her tale on the lives of others. In other words, her ultimate self is composed of separate and fragmented pieces produced as a result of the relationships surrounding her. In addition to her prodigious inborn gifts, rational optimism and persistent passion Wharton's interaction with her family, the American upper-class, the European culture and society, many male intellectuals and lifelong friends has a considerable share in molding her into the woman she has become. In her preface where she touches on her initial motive and journey of self-discovery and empowerment she tells her concise philosophy of life and ways of interpreting the world, situations and people; despite misfortunes and setbacks she remains purposeful and vital, filled with hope and promise, which lies in the moral and

spiritual heritage of her forebears. Besides she warns her reader and critic against groundless prejudice emphasizing that the kind of autobiography he explores goes beyond the revelation of surface facts about its owner.

In spite of illness, in spite of the arch-enemy sorrow, one can remain alive long past the usual date of disintegration if one is unafraid of change, insatiable in intellectual curiosity, interested in big things, and happy in small ways. In the course of sorting out and setting down my memories I have learnt that these advantages are usually independent of one's merits, and that I probably owe my happy old age to the ancestor who accidentally endowed me with these qualities...And what gave the book this air of truthfulness? Simply the fact that the memorialist "spared no one", set down in detail every defect and absurdity in others, and every resentment in the writer...Judged by that standard mine, I fear, will find few readers...It will be seen, then, that telling my story I have had to make the best of unsensational material; and if what I have to tell interests my readers, that merit at least will be my own (Wharton, 1987:ix-x).

She blends different narrative forms to serve her ultimate purpose, to describe the evolution of her distinctive talent, imagination and artistic sense and how she has strived to be accepted in what is essentially the man's world of literature. The visible aloofness and lack of feminine sentimentality underlies her efforts to produce in her text an intellectual subject whose nature is enriched through multiple selves that grow together. She borrows the title of her autobiography from a prose piece written by Walt Whitman to imply a connection to the past and a move with or toward life (Goodman, 1999). In the early chapters of her memories she portrays her New York family and the social milieu to which she belongs. She looks back at her colonial ancestors who were mostly affluent and refined people adorned with different virtues and merits. Their interesting stories and admirable attributes of mind and soul have provided background material for her distinguished literary works. Unfortunately she does not know much about the women in her family apart from few private stories and small details because their simple lives have not been considered as worthy of recording as heroic men of the era. Apparently from the beginning Edith's self-formation and development depends mostly on her relation to men.

...gentlewomen were “a toast” and little else. Nothing could be truer. Child-bearing was their task, fine needlework their creation, being respected their privilege. Only in aristocratic society, and in the most sophisticated capitals of Europe, had they added to this repertory a good many private distractions...it happens that I know less than nothing of the particular virtues, gifts and modest accomplishments of the young women with pearls in their looped hair or cambric ruffs around their slim necks, who prepared the way to my generation (Wharton, 1987:14-15).

As a child Edith is brought up by her parents according to high standards of manners, taste and social intercourse. In those post-Civil War years long-established merchant families and members of the powerful leisure class formed the core of New York society. Her initial reminiscences of the fashionable city refer to its dull spirit and ugly and ordinary architecture as well as traditionally closed lifestyles, varied interests and entertainments of the privileged persons. She has an inborn enthusiasm for travelling and exploration and luckily life has served her the right opportunity. She has lived several years abroad first with her family and then with her husband and in her multicultural self-narrative she presents a vivid portraiture of social, intellectual and artistic marvels of European civilization before the war. Throughout her autobiography Wharton reveals, despite familial and social disapproval, her constant efforts and desire to stand firmly amongst the circle of literary men and earn an exceptional position as a woman writer and art laborer. She also mentions her profound and enduring friendships whose support has encouraged her on the way. She reserves an interesting chapter for Henry James who has been her intimate friend and mentor describing the master’s wisdom, admirable talent and delicate sense of humor. She does not say much about her marriage and portrays herself as a woman mostly happy with her husband though all has not been so well and their relationship ends in divorce. She keeps her personal life private, but opens her secret garden, the route to the tactful processes of her craft and experience. Around 1920 her chronicle unexpectedly finishes with her recollections of the grim and dark war years, struggle to survive in the newly formed world and feelings of painful loss and separation.

### 3.3.2.2.1. Initial Encounters with Life: Childhood and Youth

Her initial memory is of a little girl who walks up the old Fifth Avenue with her graceful and strong father. She describes her relationship with him as one of close mutual attachment and always remembers “the look in his dear blue eyes, which had followed her so tenderly for nineteen years” until his death (Wharton, 1987:88). She knows she looks charming with her new and pretty bonnet and is happy to have his warm company on this special occasion. She feels stirrings in her soul with the awakening of her consciousness and begins an excursion into the feminine nature. The lovely child takes her first steps into the outside world of unknown reality believing she is secure and confident in the love and support of her father. In Wharton’s time it is likely that later in her life this affectionate and prudent father figure will be replaced by another man, a husband or a lover who is capable of sustaining her happiness and dignity. This scene may look traditional but what follows after is quite extraordinary as the narrative tells a story remarkably different from that of other women (Joslin, 1991). Another incident that makes this morning unforgettable is the glowing moment of childhood innocence and perception the writer captures so lovingly at Cousin Henry’s first kiss on her cheek.

She had been put into her warmest coat, and into a new and very pretty bonnet, which she had surveyed in the glass with considerable satisfaction...One of them (her hands) lay in the large safe hollow of her father’s bare hand; her tall handsome father so warm-blooded that in the coldest weather he always went out without gloves, and whose head, with its ruddy complexion and intensely blue eyes, was so far aloft that when she walked beside him she was too near to see his face. It was always an event in the little girl’s life to take a walk with her father, and more particularly so today, because she had on her new winter bonnet, which was so beautiful (and so becoming) that for the first time she woke to the importance of dress, and of herself as a subject for adornment-so that I may date from that hour the birth of the conscious and feminine me in the little girl’s vague soul...she peered with interest at the little boy through the white woolen mist over her face. The little boy, who was very round and rosy, looked back with equal interest; and suddenly he put out a chubby hand, lifted the little girl’s veil and

boldly planted a kiss on her cheek. It was the first time-and the little girl found it very pleasant (Wharton, 1987:1-3).

Born into an aristocratic family Edith has to act upon an elaborate pattern of social customs and practices. Within time she becomes more aware that the formation of individual identity depends on the environment and society in which the person is raised. However she also knows that her own world is pretentious rarely reflecting the truth of what is felt and thought. As she matures she comes to understand and appreciate the nature of her social class which, despite its fallacies and misconceptions, provides her a valuable background for her fictional works. In her young days although she tries to fit into the portrait of her social group and at the same time carry out her self-quest as a woman writer she is disturbed to observe the lives of other women being restricted by cultural norms and values; she resists the description of the elite woman's role in domestic life as an ornamental object to beautify and adorn the house representing her husband's prosperity and eminence because this 'requires that she erase any trace of the productive labor that makes her existence possible' and hence she "appears along with her home as a completely finished product, with no seams exposed" (Kaplan, 1992:69).

In her autobiography as in her realistic novels of manners she makes a meticulous description of the New York elite during the '70s and '80s and revealed its distinctive features and aspects representing a particular fragment of American socio-cultural history; the scenes of those days rise up vividly before the reader thanks to her remarkable power of observation and skillful and diligent use of the language, a fortunate inheritance received from her maternal British forebears. Edith's unique talent and strength come from within; her mother is a typical representative of her class who thinks a person should not waste time on artistic activities instead learns how to behave properly in the relations of social life and pursue aims acceptable to everyone. Contrary to her mother's down-to-earth tastes and lack of intellectual curiosity, her fanciful father is deeply moved by the sensation of poetical rhythms, but his environment offers no opportunity to further develop this literary interest which gradually fades away for some unknown reason.

The new Tennysonian rhythms also moved my father greatly;  
and I imagine there was a time when his rather rudimentary love

of verse might have been developed had he had any one with whom to share it. But my mother's matter-of-factness must have shriveled up any such buds of fancy...and I have wondered since what stifled cravings had once germinated in him and what manner of man he was really meant to be. That he was a lonely one, haunted by something always unexpressed and unattained; I am sure (Wharton, 1987:39).

In her early childhood days she begins to take initial steps into her writing career. Turning away from the noise and turmoil of the outer life she becomes quiet, retreats into her own world of signs and wonders and makes up stories. As born a writer of genius and spirit she is more concerned in digging up her secret garden of imagination rather than spending her time with friends of the same age.

The imagining of tales (about grown-up people, "real people", I called them-children always seemed to me incompletely realized) had gone on in me since my first conscious moments; I can not remember the time when I did not want to "make up" stories...At any moment the impulse might seize me; and then, if the book was in reach, I had only to walk the floor, turning the pages as I walked, to be swept off full sail on the sea of dreams. The fact that I could not read added to the completeness of the illusion, for from those mysterious blank pages I could evoke whatever my fancy chose...There was something ritualistic in the performance. The call came regularly and imperiously; and though, when it caught me at inconvenient moments, I would struggle against it conscientiously-for I was beginning to be a very conscientious little girl-the struggle was always a losing one. I had to obey the furious Muse...(Wharton, 1987:33-35).

However in those years the profession of arts and letters is overlooked, often criticized and even mocked by American society deprived of intellectual and aesthetic culture. Although her parents and their group still considers authorship "as something between a black art and a form of manual labor" and "stood in nervous dread of those who produced it (literature)" and hence feel quite awkward about meeting an author or engaging in literary activity, she believes this may be attributed to their timidity and indolence not to any sense of sheer aristocratic arrogance (Wharton, 1987:68-69). Edith might have chosen the easier way and submit to the social image of the woman and would not move out of her fascinated circle because of the dull restraints of old-fashioned rule and impediments to women's productivity



in the public sphere but instead she chases her dreams of becoming a prolific writer of original quality. She explains the dominant role of the society in shaping the ambitions and ideals of an individual.

In what aspect could a society of irresponsible pleasure-seekers be said to have, on the “old woe of the world”, any deeper bearing than the people composing such a society could guess? The answer was that a frivolous society can acquire dramatic significance only through what its frivolity destroys. Its tragic implication lies in its power of debasing people and ideals (Wharton, 1987:207).

Wharton remembers her juvenile effort of writing her first novel and showing the opening lines to her mother; she receives a sharp reply which shows the mother’s disapproval of her writing habit and the truthful tone of her narrative as she thinks it is not acceptable to practice this craft and unpleasant realities of one’s private life should remain concealed.

“Oh, How do you do, Mrs. Brown?” said Mrs. Thompkins. “If only I had known you were going to call I should have tidied up the room. “Timorously I submitted this to my mother, and never shall I forget the sudden drop of my creative frenzy when she returned it with the icy comment: “Drawing rooms are always tidy.”(Wharton, 1987:73)

Her daughter’s interest in writing stories embarrasses her as much as the display of mess because both acts imply venturing beyond the established codes of social decency and morality. Against the discouragement of affiliation with the literary world and the desire to leave some facts and emotions unexpressed so as not to lose respect, Wharton argues for a new definition of authorship which regards the task of writing with profound esteem and she resists the consideration of “the lady of leisure as a finished product, as a self-enclosed yet self-effacing sign in a tidy drawing room. As a writer she subverts this role by producing signs for a market outside the home. Writing becomes a strategy for untidying her mother’s oppressively neat drawing room” (Kaplan, 1992:69)

### 3.3.2.2.2. Mastering in Career: Self as an Art Laborer

At age seventeen Edith makes her debut into New York society because her family is worried about her zeal for intellectual pursuits and especially the mother thinks it is about time she follows the society's firm route and marries and performs the traditional tasks of a woman. She offers the reader a faint picture of the entertaining evening where she trembles with shyness beside her mother. After these first moments her anxiety vanishes and through her ability to socialize and be productive she makes intimate connections with many renowned artists and writers who sincerely contribute to her flourishing and fulfillment as a woman writer. When Edith recalls her experience and impressions as a young debutante she also briefly describes the world of upper-class social life.

To me the evening was a long cold agony of shyness...cowered beside my mother in speechless misery, unable even to exchange a word with the friendly young men...This shyness, though it long troubled me in general company, soon vanished when I was with my friends...Our society was, in short, a little "set" with its private catch-words, observances and amusements, and its indifference to anything outside of its charmed circle; no really entertaining social group has ever been anything else...all were young in spirit, mostly good looking, and full of gaiety and humor. The talk was never intellectual and seldom brilliant, but it was always easy and sometimes witty, and a charming informality had replaced the ceremonious dullness of my parents' day. I doubt if New York society was ever simpler, gayer, or more pleasantly sophisticated, than it was then (Wharton, 1987:78-79).

In her fragmentary memoir *Life and I* written in the early 1920s, Edith gives a detailed account of how she feels on the eve of the wedding to Edward, but in her actual autobiography this intimate scene from her private life is missing because she wishes to lay aside the nature and attributes of the feminine soul and be remembered as a woman who has devoted whole her life to her profession. The young bride does not feel ready for marriage and several days earlier she mentions her fears and hesitations to her mother, but Lucretia as a product of the current cultural system

wants “to keep the young woman in a state of false modesty and innocence” (Benstock, 1994:58), hence she turns the opportunity for closeness into a painful encounter, instead of comforting her daughter and responding to her needs dismisses the question in a few mean words.

A few days before my marriage, I was seized with the dread of the whole dark misery that I summoned up courage to appeal to my mother, begged her, with a heart beating to suffocation, to tell me “what being married was like.” Her handsome face at once took on the look of the icy disapproval which I most dreaded. “I never heard such a ridiculous question!” she said impatiently; and I felt at once how vulgar she thought me (in Goodman, 1990:183).

Wharton expects to find in her marriage the deep feeling of fatherly love and protection. She presents a brief view of the first years of her new life. Even though her husband resembles her father in many ways, handsome, modest and compassionate as he was, she has gone through a hard time of intellectual and psychological adjustment eased by the splendid exhilaration of regular trips to Europe which takes away the monotony and unhappiness of her emotional world. By the time she began writing her story she was already popular so she knew that her readers have been eager to discover her innermost aspects and the relation of her life to her novels but she prefers to share only short pieces of her secret material and underlines her transformation from a respectful daughter and shy young matron into an influential woman of letters and her relentless struggle against the restrictions placed on women (Benstock, 1994). Her husband Teddy only offers her wealthy social conditions not the intellectual motivation and skills she craves and needs for self-realization. He is unable to appreciate her writing and art which in time becomes the unique purpose of her life and way of existence. *Mrs. Manstey's View* and *The Fulness of Life* are her first two stories published in Scribner's Magazine but it is with the work entitled *The Greater Inclination* that she celebrates herself as a writer.

Both attracted attention, and gave me the pleasant flutter incidental to first seeing one's self in print; but they brought me no nearer to other workers in the same field. I continued to live my old life, for my husband as fond of society as ever, I knew of no other existence, except in our annual escapes to Italy. I had as

yet no real personality of my own, and was not to acquire one till my first volume of short stories published... (Wharton, 1987:112).

It seems that the Whartons have been doing quite well in daily life but actually they have problems which are serious enough to trigger Edith's suffering from a psychological illness commonly seen among the well-educated women of the American leisure class; she feels distressed being confined to the walls of the house and pretending as if she is an innocent and subservient angel because she needs to use what she has acquired and experienced (Joslin, 1991). After nearly twenty-five years of difficult marriage and the alienation and conflict it generates she begins a passionate love affair with a frivolous journalist, Morton Fullerton. It is him that strips of the aloofness and strict conservatism awakening her to feelings she never knew she possessed. She is much affected by his "empathic soulfulness", "open expressions of desire" and "absolute freedom" and believes that "in him she has met the missing half of herself" (Cahir, 1999:10).

One may want to see the relationship of the heroine to this male character in the autobiography as he plays an important role in the restoration of her feminine self-image and sense of desirability. However like her weary divorce she does not go into what has passed between her and Fullerton not even mentioning a word about her fragility and deep disillusionment after the affair is over. In her *Fullness of the House* Wharton resembles the inner world of a woman to a house especially referring to one particular locked room of the mind and soul. Her autobiography illuminates a part of this room where she hides the secrets of her art and the rich sources of her brilliance but the secrets of the heart are left to be unfolded in her *Love Diary*.

I have sometimes thought a woman's nature is like a great house full of rooms: there is the hall, through which everyone passes in going in and out; the drawing room, where one receives formal visits; the sitting room, where the members of the family come and go as they list; but beyond that, far beyond, are other rooms, the handles of whose doors are never turned; no one knows the way to them, no one whither they lead; and in the innermost room, the holy of the holies, the soul sits alone and waits for a footstep that never comes (1968:13-14).

At the beginning of her professional career Edith has only little self-confidence and needs much encouragement: “*I had written short stories that were thought worthy of preservation! Was it the same insignificant I that I had always known? ...I opened the first notices of the book with trembling hands and a suffocated heart. What I had done was actually thought important enough to be not only printed but reviewed!*” (Wharton, 1987:113) In her reminiscences she reserves a considerable part for her lifelong friends to express her gratitude and reveal their labor and share in the birth of her writing. Walter Berry’s support and belief in her gifts and his well-rounded treatment of literature have given her strength when she falls into despair.

...he followed each of my literary steps with the same patient interest, and I doubt if a beginner in art ever had a sterner yet more stimulating guide...I suppose there is one friend in the life of each of us who seems not a separate person, however dear and beloved, but an expansion, an interpretation, of one’s self, the very meaning of one’s soul. Such a friend I found in Walter Berry, and though the chances of life then separated us, and later his successful career...for long years put frequent intervals between our meetings, yet whenever we meet the same deep understanding drew us together. That understanding lasted as long as my friend lived; and no words can say, because such things are unsayable, how the influence of his thought, his character, his deepest personality, were interwoven with mine (Wharton, 1987:112-116).

When she moves to Paris she becomes a member of the intellectual elite and has the chance to meet many writers in “an atmosphere of the rarest understanding, the richest and most varied mental companionship” (Wharton, 1987:169). Her friendship with Henry James has been the most fruitful one, though it has often met with severe criticism as to the master’s influence on her art and style. She seems to be moved by the whimsical mood and quaint sensitivity of the artist even if it is at times hard to cope up with him. Her narrative offers a natural portrait of James which both mirrors the less known sides of his character and his merits such as the “silver-footed ironies, veiling jokes and tiptoe malices” in his conversation (Wharton, 1987:178). It is worthy of notice that her autobiography is based on her

friendships with men except for few trivial references to fellow women. This may be the result of her mother's sharp disapproval of her steps into the literary scene and also her remoteness and reluctance to build a warm mother-daughter relationship. Besides, the intellectual community of the time includes mostly men. Edith ends her autobiographical journey with faith and hope she rests on "a thousand little daily wonders to marvel at and rejoice in, and those magical moments when the mere discovery that 'the woodspurge has a cup of three' brings not despair but delight" (Wharton, 1987:379).

## CONCLUSION

The study is focused on the formation of the female autobiographical self through relational analysis. Halide Edib Adivar's *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1926) and Edith Wharton's *A Backward Glance* (1934) were explored to reveal the developmental process of the textual subject. Specific individual, familial, socio-cultural and psychological factors in the relationships were examined to emphasize their impact on the ultimate self. Based from the results of the analysis Halide Edib describes a woman's journey of self-discovery in all its aspects whether they be strengths or weaknesses whereas Edith Wharton projects in particular the career path of a woman writer drawing more closely on masculinist standards of autobiography. Besides their autobiographical acts, each in her own way, have represented the women's sense of power and autonomy and release from oppression of patriarchy. Edib's life-narrative contributes in the sense that it reflects the gradual social change and construction of new gender roles and relations in the late Ottoman society which paves the way for Turkish modernity but the main contribution of Wharton's text is to value women, in contrast to the prescriptive norms and images, by what they accomplish in professional life. In other words, in her encounter with the outer world Edib narrates her own inner conflicts and confusion as well as those of other women who being aware of their subordinate position try hard to express their individual and group identities within the family at home and in public sphere, however although Wharton depicts the social manners and customs of her class and how society perceives women actually she mirrors a privileged intellectual woman's efforts and insistence to be accepted as a literary artist. Both writers' struggle to overcome the restrictive structure of the society gives them strength and entrenches their independence.

When the critical phases of female psychological development are considered it is found that a woman's existence and individuality depend on her relation to others. This means to form her inner self she needs to interact with her surroundings. A woman belongs to a social group that has specific cultural values and beliefs and

she is expected to act and organize her life within these predetermined borders. Therefore feeling connected to the world she can only conceive herself as part of a relationship not as a separate entity. By being represented in a group she forms a self image which merges the public and the private. In her autobiography she portrays this hybrid image and positions herself as a subject who determines the course of narrative. Her text becomes a platform where she leaves her trace of existence and exceeds the silent and invisible identity traditionally defined by male dominant society. Due to the nature and characteristics of women in general and of twentieth century women on the verge of gaining power and freedom in particular it is required to use a relational analysis model to explain the individualization process in her autobiography. Autobiographical writing involves the practice of bringing together the pieces of the past self in the present. To make a relational study of women's life-writings first, the identity is retrospectively analyzed and broken into parts within the context of familial and social relationships and then these fragmented parts are arranged into a new whole and hence self-discovery emerges from the reconsideration of past experiences and their meaning (Rowbotham, 1973; Mason, 1980; Friedman, 1988; Chodorow, 1999; Durakbaşı, 2000).

Remarkable parallels and similarities exist between the lives, personalities and intellectual achievements of Halide Edib Adivar and Edith Wharton which make them worthy of coupling. Both come from wealthy and socially prominent families and have received elite education being exposed to different languages and cultures. Father or male influence at home is essentially important in the shaping of female identity as they feel emotionally closer to their fathers rather than their mothers. Their fortunate access to the primary texts of Western thought provides them the occasion to take part in the international community of renowned literary artists and intellectuals. In addition to the likeness of their initial writing experiences, fragile inner worlds and turbulent private lives their efforts mainly converge around questions of existence and independence. Edib's narrative work conforms to the traditional autobiographical genre and examines closely the developmental process of maturation of the individual. She discovers the deepest roots of her identity within the structure of upper-class Ottoman life. With the untimely death of her mother she



suffers her greatest loss at a very early age. Deprivation of motherly affection and tenderness produces an emotional gap. Her first steps in life are uneasy and she becomes more and more withdrawn suffering from psychological distress. As she grows older she recovers from this poignant feeling of despair and loneliness by identifying first with the Ottoman mansion and the elite circle and then with the public as a whole. She finds a sense of relief in understanding the nature of their problems, wishes and needs and helping those who have been oppressed individually and collectively by the strictures of male-stream thought. Her close relationship with the public and her belief that she could change minds and events encourage her at tough times and give her strength to hold on to life despite all the misfortunes that has befallen her.

In her reminiscences she describes the two different households where she is raised and how she survives between the worlds they represent. Her misery springs from the pervasive feeling of not belonging anywhere and of being spiritually dislocated. Tension between the conflicting traditions and values of East and West forms the background for her early development. Her maternal grandmother teaches her Islamic principles and practical rules of daily life in Ottoman society while her father provides British education. Vivid portraits of household servants which symbolize the diverse ethnic layers constituting the mosaic-like structure of the Empire, add to the multicultural relations she builds up in her autobiography. These relations shape her character and perception of social reality confirming ‘the hybrid nature of Turkish culture which resists unconditional adoption of Western models’ (Başçı, 2003:145). To overcome the grief and sorrow of losing her beloved mother and fill the tremendous void she has left behind in her heart she is drawn closer to her father who suffers in silence and solitude. She feels reassured and comforted by her grandmother’s warmth and intimacy. Her wisteria-covered house and its Eastern influence as inspirational representative of peace and cultural heritage have a special place in her memory. Her life comes to a turning point with Edib Bey’s decision to remarry and the subsequent transition to polygamous life. In the late Ottoman period the practice of polygamy was regarded among the rural population and the Istanbul Muslim elite as a sign of man’s superiority and prestige in the family (Lewis, 2004).

However having witnessed her father's Western modernity and tender side of his nature in his deep attachment to his late wife her inner world is shaken by confusion and doubt. She considers the institution of polygamy in all its social and moral aspects from a much broader perspective emphasizing its unpleasant and painful effects not only on the couple involved but on the family members and servants as well. She also reflects the public's actual perception which makes a critical allusion about this long-accepted custom. Behind the narration of her personal experience she identifies herself with the other upper-class Ottoman women of her day who feel aggrieved by the same degradation. In her own female version of truth she reveals the worries, disappointments and expectations shared by all women to generate changes in gender roles and relationships in the family and society. She seems to have no difficulty in closing the psychological distance between her and the public because of her modest upbringing and strong concern for social justice and reform.

Her intention to provide a liberating life model for other women could only be realized if her readers feel she identifies with them. Traditionally autobiographical writing has been an exclusively male experience as men's life-stories are considered worthy to be shared and remembered. Edib's use of moderate language in the generally accepted frame of norms connects her to the audience and allows revealing her feminine compassion, understanding and power in certain instances in her life-narrative. Her autobiography dates back to the early years of the republic when the system and its values are still new for people. The impact of going through such a revolutionary socio-political change is reflected in her reminiscences; instead of drawing attention to the secrecies of her private world she tries to remain in memories as a leading public or historical figure that has devoted her whole life to her country, though one feels the vulnerability and diffidence craftily concealed between the lines. However, because the lived moments belong to the recent past she could not put aside her heartfelt sensitivities in writing and expresses her emotional pain and disappointment during and after her divorce. Through her strong personality and focus on new directions and public goals she overcomes this familial crisis. The reforms of the Second Constitutional Era provide her initiation into social sphere. In her autobiography she narrates her experiences as both columnist and activist who

looks into matters concerning women's status, well-being and freedom and hence builds stronger connections with the society. Her inclusion of such important events disproves the belief that Turkish women were 'granted some rights by the Republican regime without struggling for them' and lays emphasis on Ottoman women's considerable contribution and efforts to resolve problems about oppression and inequalities in marriage and family, cultural and intellectual development, job opportunities and prospects and active participation in public affairs (Arat, 1998:10).

In her picturesque autobiography *A Backward Glance* Edith Wharton narrates the story of how a woman of her period and class becomes a writer. She prefers not to share the private details of her life with her reader instead she includes recollections that prepare her for her career as a writer. In her preface where she describes her source of inspiration to make a journey of self-discovery and empowerment she emphasizes that her autobiography goes beyond reminiscence or remembered experiences and facts. She intends to reveal the development of her artistic sense and imagination that makes her different from the women of her class and generation and her strong strivings to be accepted in the male dominant literary world. The visible aloofness and lack of feminine sentimentality gives way to the construction of an autobiographical subject of intellectual nature. In addition to her exceptional talent and passion for writing her relationships with her parents and the aristocratic class to which they belong, the European culture and society and many intellectuals and authors also have molded her into the prolific woman she has become. In the early chapters of her memories she portrays her New York family and the elite of the '70s and '80s representing a particular fragment of American socio-cultural history and also looks back at her wealthy and refined colonial ancestors whose admirable stories have provided rich background material for her fiction. Unfortunately she does not know much about the women in her family because their lives and deeds have not been heroic like those of men. It appears that from the beginning Edith's self-formation depends mostly on her relation to men. Edith's mother is a typical representative of her class with no intellectual curiosity but her father has a taste for art and some kind of ability to understand it. Edith identifies herself more with her father because of his tender personality and the

feeling of confidence he arises in her. This close father-daughter relation helps her to build firm friendships with renowned men of literature. In those years although her parents and their group appreciate the art of prose, like the other classes of American society which are deprived of intellectual and artistic culture they often criticize and even mock writers. Despite her mother's repressive attitudes and dull limitations of old-fashioned rule that hinders the productivity and participation of women in public space, she does not accept the traditional role of a beautiful leisure class lady who represents her husband's prosperity and reputation and chases her dreams of becoming a writer of original quality. She is not only worried about herself but also feels rather disturbed to observe other women being restricted by cultural norms and values, so in her autobiography through her struggle to gain a literary position she presents herself to her reader like a muse to an artist at the moment of inspiration.

Although she predicts her audience's eagerness to discover the innermost aspects of her life, in her text she only shares short pieces of her secret material; intimate details such as her fears and anxiety as a young bride, unhappy years of her marriage and her illicit passionate affair with Morton Fullerton are not revealed. Her husband Teddy only offers her wealth and good fortune not the intellectual support she needs. He is unable to appreciate her writing and art which in time becomes the unique purpose of her life and way of existence and this leads to alienation and conflict between the couple. Her lover Fullerton strips of her aloofness and strict conservatism awakening her to a life of new unknown feelings and hopes and plays an important role in the restoration of her feminine self-image and sense of desirability (Cahir, 1999). However like her difficult marriage and weary divorce she does not tell what has passed between her and Fullerton-not even her fragility and deep disappointment after they break up. Her autobiography illuminates the secrets of her art and the rich sources of her brilliance but the secrets of the heart are left concealed because she wishes to lay aside the nature and attributes of the feminine soul and underline her transformation from a respectful daughter and shy young matron into an influential woman of letters. At the beginning of her professional career Edith has only little self-confidence and needs much encouragement. In her reminiscences to express her gratitude she reserves a considerable part for her

lifelong friends who sincerely contribute to her flourishing and fulfillment. It is worthy of notice that she organizes her life around her close relationships with men and only few references are made to her fellow women. This may be the result of her mother's sharp disapproval of her initial steps in writing and her inability to understand and be sensitive to her daughter's wishes and needs. For Edith, Walter Berry has been her source of inspiration and strength and her fine imaginative powers would have been wasted without his support and constructive literary criticism. Her chapter on James offers a natural portrait of the master describing his talent, wisdom and sense of humor accompanied by his whimsical mood and quaint sensitivity. This chapter reveals the influence of James on Wharton's life and the development of her career and emphasizes the uniqueness of her art and style.

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