



Universidad de Valladolid

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
DEPARTAMENTO de FILOLOGÍA INGLESA
Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

The New Woman in Kate Chopin's Short Fiction

Marta de Cima Juárez

Tutor: Marta María Gutiérrez Rodríguez

2014/15

ABSTRACT

The aim of this work is to analyze the transition from the True American Woman present in the 19th century towards the birth of the New Woman. It was through a historical background combined with the importance of literature that the establishment of that new ideal of woman was created. Kate Chopin was one of the first American authors to show the reality of women in their traditional spheres but moving to the rise of a new female identity. By means of her short fiction, Kate Chopin developed the New Woman ideal, which was embodied by the fictional characters she used in her short stories.

American Woman/ New Woman/Female identity/ Kate Chopin/ Female roles/ Short stories

El objetivo de este trabajo es hacer un análisis sobre la evolución de la mujer tradicional americana del siglo XIX hacia el nacimiento de la Nueva Mujer. A través de un contexto histórico y de la importancia de la literatura la creación del nuevo ideal de mujer acabaría por crearse. Kate Chopin fue una de las primeras escritoras americanas en mostrar la realidad de las mujeres en los ambientes más tradicionales, aunque evolucionando hacia la llegada de una nueva identidad femenina. A través de sus historias cortas, Kate Chopin desarrolló el modelo de la Nueva Mujer, encarnado por los personajes de ficción utilizados en sus historias.

Mujer Americana/ Nueva Mujer/ Identidad femenina/ Kate Chopin/ Personajes femeninos/ Historias cortas

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	1
1. THE NEW WOMAN	3
1.1 Origin of the Concept: From True Woman to New Woman	3
1.2 The New Woman in Fiction	5
2. KATE CHOPIN: HER LIFE AND WORK	9
2.1. A Brief Biography	9
2.2. Her Writing Career	10
2.3 Main Influences	11
2.4. Criticism and Reception	13
3. THE NEW WOMAN IN KATE CHOPIN'S SHORT FICTION	15
3.1. A New Woman Writing about New Women: Main Themes and Motifs	16
3.2. "A Respectable Woman"	19
3.3. "The Story of an Hour"	22
3.4. "Her Letters"	25
3.5. "The Storm"	29
4. CONCLUSIONS	33
5. WORKS CITED	35

INTRODUCTION

This essay will focus on the depiction of some of Kate Chopin's short fiction heroines set in America at the end of the 19th century who moved from their roles of traditional women towards the creation of their New Woman behaviors. In order to make the analysis, I will examine the role of four different women within four different short stories written by Kate Chopin: "A Respectable Woman"; "The Story of an Hour"; "Her Letters"; and "The Storm". These women belonged to different social classes, but they all were settled in the American South, where the whole of Kate Chopin's works were based on. The analysis deals with the relevance of the themes provided by Kate Chopin and the behavior adopted by the female roles in her short fiction. In order to talk about the antecedents of the New Woman, I am going to make a review on the historical context and the traditional aspects that influenced the support of the True Woman encouraged by men and changed afterwards by the recognition of the New Woman. The Question of women had led not only women but also men to challenge the typical figure of women in society in favor of a new ideal woman able to constitute the female identity that corresponded to that role. When the idea of the New Woman was at last created and formalized, women started to vindicate new positions and abilities never performed before since men had not allowed them to act following their own dispositions. Female figures started to be recognized in cultural and literary aspects that distinguished them from the male ones. That is why I will as well remark the literary tradition they began thus challenging their previous positions and defending the rights they had by means of feminist movements and other demands both in Europe and in America. The role of the New Woman in fiction will be also introduced, including the importance of the sentimental novel in America, in addition to the vindication essays written by women that shaped the first beginnings of the female writing until they established their own New Woman fiction.

Precisely, the part of the work devoted to Kate Chopin's life and work will discuss her importance as a Southern American writer, who introduced new themes that stood for the actions taken by women even when the times were still very traditional. The importance of the French literature as well as the local color fiction in her work

appear in this work as two important influences in the author's productions. In order to analyze the New Woman themes and motifs used in Chopin's short fiction, I will make reference to the feminist perspective of the author as well as her own ideas of the New Woman in America, widely spread at the end of the nineteenth century. Obviously, the reactions and criticism related to Kate Chopin's works, both in general terms and specifically in the selected short stories have also a part in this work.

My analysis and the theoretical background are closely attached to some of the subjects I have had during the degree, such as “Literatura en Lengua Inglesa II” (2012-2013), “Literatura en Lengua Inglesa IV” (2013-2014), and “La Mujer en la Cultura Anglo-Norteamericana” (2014-2015), so I have considered some notions and notes taken at class in order to do the whole research.

1. THE NEW WOMAN

In this part of the work I will present the first glimpses of change and progress in the role of women within a historical context which still was very traditional. The environment in America conditioned the circumstances of women, highly influenced by a patriarchal society; women were supposed to be the True Women who took care of their families and homes. Even though women have initiated their headway to self-esteem and independence, there was still much to be done. The New Woman question was finally achieved, but doubtlessly, women had to go through a great deal of obstacles until they arrived to their final goal.

1.1. Origin of the Concept: From True Woman to New Woman

Since the times of colonization, women assumed their roles as home producers taking part consequentially of the economic support, but being likewise a powerful part of the family; they were valuable in terms of accomplishing their duties. That did not mean that they were treated as equals in relation to men. Their endeavors were restricted to domestic labors and run errands in local markets, but yet they comprised an important pillar for society (even when men did not appreciate that (Matthews 1987: 4).

Between 1830 and 1850 these women started to be reckoned with certain hierarchical power - of course beneath men - thus establishing a kind of moral influence. Homes were the center of morality, and domestic life became revalued, being this role entirely performed by women. Wives were seen as precious housekeeping souls, even the notion of the “Republican Motherhood” launched them to be more prized because they defended the American values as a united country against foreign forces (Matthews 1987: 6 - 9). All in all, the power associated at this time to women was related to their influence in moral behavioral models.

By 1850, female family heads were subject to the so-called *Cult of Domesticity*, a doctrine promoted by males to underline the female values within the spheres of domestic life. Precisely, those requirements were generally women’s only goals to

achieve in life: “that is fulfillment for women in marriage and motherhood” (Baym 1978: 26). These values focused on white females supposed to be the “True Women” who filled their homes with love, happiness and care, with religion and homework by their sides. At the same time, these women were allowed to fulfill their moral power over the members of the house: “Women in their houses were the locus of moral authority in society” and even possessed some sort of freedom they had not had before (Matthews 1987: 6).

During the American Civil War, started in 1861, women had also an important role far from the household activities usually performed, in favor of new occupations. It was in 1861 when women were organized to perform a more active role throughout the wartime to be nurses and assist men in the War. Despite the rejection women sometimes suffered, their roles were revalued during the antebellum period and after the War (Clinton 1992: 98,99).

At the end of the nineteenth century, women and other weak and oppressed social groups in America led a Revolution which promoted the change of their current situations. These groups, eventually larger, realized that their situations should be renewed, that they could do more for themselves, and that was why abolitionists stroke up making noise against slavery and racism (Thompson 2012: 328). Therefore, the abolitionist movements as well as the feminist actions have appeared as the main causes that led women to react and be interested in the Woman Question (Shapiro 1987: 5). This concept was referred to the need to redefine the role of women according to different aspects such as domesticity, sex or suffrage, encouraged at the end of the nineteenth century in Western countries like North America and England.

Up to that moment, the domestic sphere had been the most important issue for women, but the True Woman of the previous years gradually became the New Woman of the end of the 19th century. It was Sarah Grand, who, in her work *The New Aspect of the Woman Question*, proposed the term “New Woman”: “to denote the woman who has finally solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman’s-sphere“ (Nelson 2000: ix). This New Woman vindicated the non-

division of spheres between men and women and the equal distribution of rights. Educational opportunities or being economically self-sufficient were some of the demands of this new model of modern women (Nelson 2000: ix -x).

The idea of the New Woman arose in 1894 when the women of a new era claimed their genuine rights under the precepts of their own homes and families, thus reestablishing their own capacities and wishes to, at least, control their inherent lives. This concept was not only applied to the upcoming Women fiction but to other aspects of life such as female education, dressing or courtship and marriage aspects. In narrative terms, both men writers and woman novelists started writing about new topics related to this new conception of women (Nelson 2000: 140). Originally, Henry James, together with Sarah Grand mentioned above, was considered one of the precursors of this expression (New Woman). In the late nineteenth century, and after having attended and witnessed different protests and efforts carried by women, he described the model of American and European women that corresponded to the increasing amount of educated, autonomous, and liberal women (Rowe and Haralson 2012: 60).

Women began to improve their situations both within their families and within the societal sphere thanks to the public and private revolutions they carried out; even some remarkable female figures of culture were able to publish important literary works that launched the role of women to a superior position. Even though women were moving forward towards better circumstances in their lives, they were not still very much appraised by the male world.

1.2. The New Woman in Fiction

In this section, I will deal with the progress of Women's fiction in America going through the causes that led women to create their own fiction under the idea of the New Woman. The influence of the British sentimental novel, its impact in the novel in America and the causes which provoked its development and subsequent growth in the same country will be as well shown in the lines below. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that sentimental fiction was developed differently on both sides of the

Atlantic. I will also discuss the role of women as new writers of fiction and other essays devoted to defend the feminine contributions to society and literature.

The sentimental novel had been identified since its beginnings as the kind of fiction mastered essentially by “a woman, not grand lady, but some girl, passionate and pure, and known only by her first name: Clarissa, Pamela, Charlotte, Emma, Julie” (Fiedler 1960: 4) but written by male authors such as Samuel Richardson or Henry Fielding, in the 18th century. The sentimental or domestic novel has referred to a traditional view of women as negatively dramatic and delicate beings (Thompson 2012: 157). That was a disruptive image of women given by men: “The term *sentimental* is often a term of judgment rather than of description and the judgment it conveys is of course adverse” (Baym 1978: 24). Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) were two of the first novels written in the old continent accounting the lives of two young girls who had to keep their virtues while their moralities suffered different trials and risks.

When the sentimental novel was almost over in Europe, its own trace was reviving in America (Fiedler 1960: 53, 54). However, that revival was not so close to the original sentimental novel; the traditional American behavior still remained but the Victorianism influenced it as well, so the typical Victorian themes of that period abounded (social realism, women within domesticity, etc.). The difference was that in America women did also write this kind of fiction: “They are written by women, are addressed to women, and tell one particular story about women” (Baym 1978: 22).

Themes such as “the status of women, social reform and religion” remained (Thompson 2012: 158), but the specific circumstances of the country in terms of society, religion and other issues conditioned those themes and adapted them within the American life. Writers such as Susan Warner with *The Wide, Wide World* (1850) adjusted their novels because “the American novelist was deprived of the privilege of defining his own middle-class values against a surviving tradition of gallantry”. So, in order to satisfy the “genteel, sentimental, quasi-literate, female audience” authors had to write their stories according to the American tradition, but taking into account the previous British tradition of courtship and sentimentalism (Fiedler 1960: 47, 67).

Religion and patriarchy had an important influence in the *Cult of Domesticity* lifestyle since it defended the authority of men and the relegation of women: “The father’s authority within the family reflected patriarchal patterns of authority in other aspects of American culture” (Matthews 1987:4). American writers launched the prototype of a virtuous, praying and naive young girl who had the duty of discerning between the moral and the immoral choice, coping with feelings (love, above all), and Christian belief at once (Fiedler 1960: 10). Indeed, there were several types of heroine who lived different circumstances (they were orphans, mistreated by their families, harassed by their masters, etc.) and had to choose between overcoming the trials or finally committing suicide (Baym 1978: 35).

The first American domestic novels, as it was the case of William Hill Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) had described women performing conventional occupations, but suddenly those female characters reacted and struggled against their common roles. Eventually, the themes taken from Victorianism regarded the independence and liberty of the heroines in several ways with important works like *Maggie: A girl of the streets* (1893), *Sister Carrie* (1900) or *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). There must be a distinction among the different heroines “looking for independence”: some of them performed the traditional occupations; others were prostitutes or mistresses, or as in Henry James’ *Portrait of a Lady*, that the female role was strictly opposed to marriage (Thompson 2012: 158).

Harriet Martineau was one of the first critics to condemn the marginal position women were relegated to in America in terms of philosophy, science or literature. Along with Antoinette Brown Blackwell, she supported the “opportunity in the job market”. Other writers, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony defended the suffrage and their feminist theories (Shapiro 1987: 6-9). It was also Sarah Grand who, among others, dared to say aloud what she and other women thought, what they considered the characteristics of that New Woman, each one in their own way. Literature was established as a mean to demand what they considered fundamental equality between sexes, even under a feminist perspective, sometimes (Nelson 2000: 120). Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her work *Women and Economics* (1898) upheld the

need of females to have a dignified job, and therefore, to be regularly paid(Shapiro 1987: 12).

Obviously, the birth of the imminent feminist narrative set the new model of female patterns in literature and publications within societies of Europe and North America. However, real publications were not so achieved and the arduous endeavor of publishing was in some cases impossible or the only alternative was writing under a male pseudonym (Fiedler 1960: 55). The emergence of the Suffrage debate initiated another reason for the defense of a New Woman's fiction. Female writers such as Sarah Grand or Ella Hepworth Dixon were important figures in the fiction of the age (Baym 1978: 23).

The new female writers of this period embodied the features of the new female writer claiming what belonged to them but as well this practice implied the inclusion of women into the labor market. The strongest vindication included the equal paid for writing (Baym 1978: 11). The economic support they received by writing set them free at the same time they obtained money. Women developed their abilities in a more intellectual level, being teachers for example, and their novels became more popular as instruments of information and connection among themselves. So, rather than artistic prestige, they pursued social criticism while they earned money and made their livings (Baym 1978: 30-32).

In America, most of these new writers were women in striving to show themselves as something that went beyond the mere act of being housewives, and that was precisely why New Woman fiction broke with the former literary tradition. Their intentions also regarded social commitment about issues concerning society, economy and sex inequalities. At the end of the 19th century and onwards, the heroine was different from the obedient previous one; this heroine rose up patriarchal conventions and restrictions to her own persona as wife, mother and all that being a woman takes. It was not unusual therefore that at this time women wrote straightly addressing to other women in order to make reference to different matters related to them.(Baym 1978: 22-23).

2. KATE CHOPIN: HER LIFE AND WORK

2.1. A Brief Biography

Kate Chopin (born Katherine O’Flaherty) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1850 in the bosom of a wealthy family that followed the traditional conventions of the time. Her parents, Thomas O’Flaherty, an Irish immigrant, and Eliza Faris, a French creole, provided her with strict and common education in a Catholic Boarding School - The Sacred Heart Academy - which prepared her for the social expectations that included marriage and children. She attended this institution after having lost her brothers and sister abruptly. From her very youth, she stood out as a well-educated woman who knew how to behave herself in society and equally shone because of the vivid skills and intelligence she possessed.

Two months after she arrived to the Sacred Heart Academy, her father died, and from this moment on, she experienced a life surrounded by the female figures of her family:

Kate O’Flaherty’s intellectual mentors were women. After her father’s early death, she was tutored at home for two years by her great-grandmother, Victoire Charleville, who emphasized French and music and tales of rebellious St. Louis women (Toth 2008: 13,15).

The unexpected death of her father left her mother free, in a way, something that was evident to Kate, and apparently reflected in “The Story of an Hour”(Stein 2005 : 2). Besides, Kate’s parents, as well as some of her ancestors, came from different European countries or emigrated from other American states, what enabled her to know many cultures (Toth 2008: 13). That was precisely why some of her best-known future works were so influenced with respect to the usage of dialects or aspects from cultures and existent mix of races different from the American one (Castillo 2008:60).

At the age of twenty she married Oscar Chopin, an entrepreneur who belonged to the French creole community. During their honeymoon, they enjoyed travelling all over Europe, allowing Kate to discover new lifestyles that went beyond the American ones. The couple had six children during the next years they lived in New Orleans and

Louisiana (Toth 2008: 14). The social status her marriage provided her permitted her and her family to enjoy long periods of holidays, and to spend a life in quiet loneliness; she did not need any friends to enjoy walking or writing. The only companionship she enjoyed of was her mother: “Her mother as a confidante and supporter until she was thirty-five. That gave her an uncommon sense of security about her own point of view” (Toth 2008: 17).

Once her husband passed away, she had to manage some of his plantations and face a debt of 12,000 dollars, but with no success at all. Then, she moved, accompanied by her children, to St. Louis, where some years later her career as a writer would begin. As a widow, Kate devoted part of her time to reading and writing primarily short fiction as a way to escape from her personal sufferings, what would allow her years later to publish her works. These included short stories, translations and articles. She died in 1906, just when her successful career was recently started (Toth 2008:14).

2.2. Her Writing Career

Kate Chopin’s career as a writer started with the contribution of some successful short stories, tales for children and articles published to regional periodicals and important magazines such as *Youth’s Companion*, *Vogue* or *Atlantic Monthly*. Her first publication, *Wiser than A God*, set the next thirty years of her literary production (Toth 2008:14, 15). After becoming a widow, the financial support for her family came mostly from the earnings she obtained from these literary contributions. Her new role as a maternal supporter was not so common at the time, but the huge debt her husband had left with his death as well as the lack of any incomes forced Chopin to be the principal endorsement of her large family (Toth 2008: 14).

One of the collections of short stories she published, *Bayou Folk*, (1894), was written under a great deal of the French influence in St. Louis, and according to critics, described characters that were not so common to the American prototypes (Beer 2008:1). Both *Bayou Folk* (1894) and the other collection of short fiction, *A Night in Acadie* (1897), were written under the influence of local color fiction. Two of the main

stories were “At the Cadian Ball” and “A Respectable Woman”. Kate wrote only two novels; the recognized work *The Awakening* (1899) and *At Fault* (1890) (Toth 2008: 14).

2.3. Main Influences

In this part of the work, I will analyze the influences of French literature writers as well as the ideas taken from the feminist movements given in France in Chopin’s work. I will also take into account the relevance that local color fiction and regionalism had in the author’s productions.

One of the main influences was the French realism since it was highly attached to the popular American realism Kate Chopin used to write about. Facts and ordinary activities took part in this literary trend that used to portray the trustworthy reality by using common characters and daily-life accounts. The realist literary tradition found in Europe used to show the very facts of society; writers such as Émile Zola and Gustave Flaubert revealed in detail the very reality. Following this realism, only a few works at that time dared to depict a woman who went beyond conventions and tried to secure herself her own happiness.

Traditionally, the figure of Madame Bovary has been associated to Edna Pontellier’s, the main character in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, as two symbols of rebelliousness and uncommon conducts for the time. Both written at the end of the nineteenth century, these two famous novels hang on to the model of that woman married in an extremely conventional style, craving true love and finally finding it an extramarital affair.

Another influence from French literature was Guy de Maupassant; it was remarkable the powerful spell he casted over Chopin’s narrative novelties. Her admiration became “a profound influence on her work- and certainly that influence show in Chopin’s deft and striking economy of word and event and in her aversion to overt moralizing” (Stein 2005: 4). The admiration Kate felt for Maupassant positively

influenced most of her works based on new themes related to women: “Chopin’s literary innovation is rarely discussed without her indebtedness to Maupassant being involved” (Nolan 2008: 121).

It has been always said that Kate Chopin was one of the first American writers to talk about feminism in her works, but obviously, she had taken references about this issue before; more specifically, it was French feminist theory that predetermined her plots, characters and ideas. The ideas of Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, also biased Chopin’s feminism (Stein 2005: 2). Chopin was conceivably close to the notion of feminists to believe that homes were patriarchal and meant the women imprisonment, and that was why she depicted those thoughts in narrative-shape (Worton 2008: 107).

Both the American realist literary tradition and the naturalist one had great influence on Kate Chopin’s literature. The social context and the surroundings determined, in some way, the mood of the female characters. It was the society that delimited women but it was also the importance of feelings that constituted their way to act and react in life. The realist spheres involved in these short stories were conditioned by the traditions and the means to live in areas less advanced than others in the United States, especially in the Northern parts of the country.

Kate Chopin has been considered a writer from the American literary Regionalism for centuries. The position of new characters from rural areas, the dialects these people speak combined with customs, traditions and situations of daily life appeared as a new literary trend that some writers as Kate Chopin would follow from 1865 to 1895 ¹ (Nolan 2008: 120).

¹ The majority of these ideas about color fiction and regionalism come from notes of previous courses provided by Professor Santiago Rodríguez-Strachan (Literatura en Lengua Inglesa II) and Professor Jose Manuel Barrio Marco (Literatura en Lengua Inglesa IV).

Even in the short stories the female characters behaved by the standards of the society, following the traditions, all of them constructed under the southern way of living. The late Civil War and the realism depicted from these parts of the North American country originated a new kind of literature which would be able to represent most of the American stereotypes and define the American pride by means of short stories or even sketches. Some of these short stories must be studied in detail in order to detect precisely those new and innovative techniques in literature that were useful to portray those feelings within the atmosphere of local color fiction (Nolan 2008: 119).

2.4. Criticism and Reception

Looking at the transgression that Chopin's works accounted for at her own times, criticism has not been unexpected, especially when it comes to the innovations introduced on the female ambiance. Not only *The Awakening* but also some short stories such as "The Storm" dealt with controversial themes indirectly outlined by Chopin, although the real intentions of the author did not appoint to create any polemics. The point was that talking about themes such as sex desire, or adultery so liberally caused the audience to be disturbed and, in a way, feel embarrassed. The emergence of such thorny issues within the traditional southern societies of America was not the common tendency at all. Even the most liberal periodicals and publishing did not step on Chopin's support, though ultimately most of her stories were published in some of the influential magazines at the time (Toth 2008: 15).

All over 50 years, Chopin's work has been forgotten, even more out of Louisiana or America, but the efforts of different scholars and students have allowed these writings to be updated and reappraised nowadays. One of Chopin's biographers, Emily Toth and her *Unveiling Kate Chopin* has brought about the figure of the writer, uncovering both the known and the uncharted aspects of her life (Toth 2008: 14). Although Chopin's works were rediscovered in 1970, ten years before there was still some kind of control when publishing explicit stories as "The Storm" was. Still, her works have been now fairly identified with literary trends like Transcendentalism and

New Woman fiction, as taking for granted that Chopin's narrative is actually literature (Nolan 2008: 119).

3. THE NEW WOMAN IN KATE CHOPIN'S SHORT FICTION

It is important to bear in mind the rising of the New Woman role and all the ideas taken and developed by Kate Chopin from that tendency. Moreover, the involvement of the author as a feminist writer also influenced her whole work. In this part of the essay I will make reference to the impact of the New Woman's characteristics in Chopin's works as well as her feminist influence showing the feminine role as the main protagonists in short fiction.

As we have seen in the first part of the work, the New woman was willing to explore brand-new experiences; to have freedom and new possibilities. They developed their artistic creativity, supported their families economically and introduced themselves in ambiances usually dominated by men. In some cases, they brought forward the idea of leaving the roles of mothers and wives for a period of time to take them back afterwards. Breaking the rules does not necessarily mean going against every pillar or convention of society but defending the autonomy of the female self.

It should be stressed that Kate Chopin was considered one of the pioneers of the Feminist literary movement first-developed during the 19th century and spread the upcoming century. The influence of the French feminism has been significant for her work; the innovative achievements attained by the first feminist-wave supporters in France made her to take figures such as Simone de Beauvoir as one of her references when writing her prose (Worton 2008: 105). It was her own style what launched her to one of the best literary traditions of the modern times not only in the southern part of the Unites States but at a global level.

Readers should know that Chopin's heroines did not just declare their intentions and tried to get what they truly wanted, they also acquired the role of pioneer women in search for new rights, to be released from their traditional standards with the purpose of other mothers, sisters and wives to follow their same steps. Those little but important victories achieved by Chopin's heroines made the difference and encouraged other women to do the same for themselves (Worton 2008: 108,109). These heroines took

resolution rather than feelings; the perception of the typical emotional roles associated to women changed towards a revolutionary figure capable of thinking about new ways of living. Their intentions regarded the improvement of social rights and further laws in order to encourage women to strongly oppose against what they consider barriers, in favor of performing new roles.

Chopin's characters not only reacted in social terms, but also in their private lives; they started to explore their human impulses and the sexuality that sometimes led them to adultery. In this new period, women wanted to control their own bodies, satisfy the inner desires that have not been previously satisfied, so that the chance of having affairs was contemplated even forced when females were in disposition of experimentation. Hence, they cheated on their husbands and commit adultery as a demonstration of powerful figures commanding sexual activities (Heilmann 2008: 89). The female role could develop certain fondness, even love towards her husband, but that did not mean that sexual desire took place at the same level.

Of course, rebellious personalities opposed to societal rules and conventions caused mental crisis in these heroines. Just when they were thinking on their new potentials and choices, something harrowing occurred; a personal tragedy (some of these women committed suicide or suddenly died). It resulted remarkable at a time the hesitancy they went through when these women were trying to change their conditions and initiate their new lives.

3.1. A New Woman Writing about New Women: Main Themes and Motifs

One of the most important themes was the eagerness for independence which was always inhibited by males (Heilmann 2008:93). The majority of Chopin's heroines expressed their inner intentions to be free (detached from a man) even when they were married, engaged, or at least bounded to a masculine role. It was also remarkable the authenticity showed when these women cherished a life in which they were not subjected to a superior figure or beneath, such as a father or a husband, while at the same time the female role was also attached to their children.

Motherhood also arose in relation to the independence and autonomy they looked forward; although they love their children deeply, the feeling of the imposed duty of taking care of them results a torture for some of these women (Nolan 2008: 129). When reading other short stories by Kate Chopin, it is possible as well to see the figure of the caring mother, but at a time showed her intentions to discover the outward world and be an adventurous female character.

Women went through an "awakening" when they unveiled the chance to break the rules and conventions imposed by the societies of the time and not follow the standards. Women noticed they were oppressed by the patriarchal conventions and the materialism of the time (Worton 2008: 108). This idea came together with those societal norms; that was why they uncontrollably reacted and were reborn towards the possibility of a new pattern of social rules and freedoms for female audiences.

Moreover, she depicted the reborn female identity that made women wonder who they really were; what they expected and how their lives actually were. Women were in the process of finding out their real identities even though they found obstacles along the road. These women also considered their right to fall in love with someone they truly loved or experienced extramarital love affairs in order to satisfy their inner desires and passions.

The theme of class, race and society turned to be important in the atmospheres in which the short stories were developed; the Darwinian ideas based on how the surrounding influenced humans inspired some of these narrations (Jorlin 2008:73). Furthermore, diversity of races such as European peoples or creoles shared a common space with pure-blooded Americans. The importance of classes was still outstanding at the time in the southern societies of America. It was social status what determined in a way the conditions these women have to face and how they trespass them, encountering difficulties to perform what they really want.

True love was not actually depending on women; female positions did not use to have their own free will on whom to love or how to express their sexual feelings.

Apparently, the protagonists seem to love their husbands, but some also feel some sort of release or liberation when men are not close, for business reasons or any other thing. Some of Chopin's women dared to "explore women's sexual desire" (Beer 2008: 10). Sometimes the background was not known and it is possible to think of these women married by force either for economic and position reasons or other circumstances encroaching their freedom to choose a potential husband.

Death seemed more tragic than normal; some of Chopin's characters found death at the end of the story, something that in some cases was expected by readers (Koloski 2008: 168). Death was a controversial but important topic for the writer since it broke the plot into pieces; the reader was aware of how death "plays" with the main roles in a narration falling all apart. It seemed also particular the fact that in some occasions, the death of the heroine did not mean tragedy but full freedom; it represented how women overcome any obstacles, dismissing compromise, opposing to society.

Taking into account the New Woman and their themes development in Kate Chopin's works, in the next part, I will discuss four of Chopin's most famous short stories, each one related to the previous themes already developed. I will as well make an analysis of these narrations taking into account the factors that led Kate to write about female roles and the importance of her own omniscient third-person narrator that enabled her to display her own ideals on the New Woman.

3.2. “A Respectable Woman”

This story is set in a sugar plantation in Louisiana, where Mrs. Baroda, a lady from a high class position lives with her husband Gaston. Mr. Baroda is expecting his old friend Gouvernail to go to visit them and have a period of resting in the married couple’s house. When Mrs. Baroda learns Gaston’s friend is actually coming to her house, she is not much glad to have this visitor; she has heard about his reputation and background and she does not want him near. Mrs. Baroda depicts his physical appearance in her mind as if he were tall and slim, but when she finally meets him, the real image of the young man does not fit hers. What is more, she does not find any of that wit and smartness her husband has characterized his friend with.

Mrs. Baroda still refuses to tolerate the man, even though she feels that eventually she is attracted by him, a simple but educated and gallant man. Meanwhile, Mr. Baroda does not understand why his wife is so stubborn, why she is “taking poor Gouvernail seriously and making a commotion over him.” (Chopin 2014a: 210). When the night comes, Mrs. Baroda resolves to sit in a bench in the porch, as a relax moment to think about the whole thing and the man in particular. Suddenly, Gouvernail appears on scene and sits just next to her as if he wanted to share some confidences, or just words. Mrs. Baroda tries not to listen to him, but she cannot, she is now trapped in his nets, and it is inevitable to appreciate his words as long as they are going out of his mouth. The woman reacts and, as they are getting closer, she decides to go and leave him behind, in order to not commit any mistake. At the end, she seems happy with the idea of having Gouvernail back sooner or later.

This narration, written in 1894, is clearly focused on the role of the unnamed Mrs. Baroda, doubtlessly, still a traditional woman who acts in accordance with that behavior she is expected to perform. She is a respectable woman confronting her own feelings, even controlling them in an attempt to handle the situation as a woman from her class would do. At the end of the story she claims that she has “overcome everything” (Chopin 2014a: 213), what leads readers to think that she has controlled her conceivable passion for Gouvernail. However, no one knows if they would have had an

affair later, as Mrs. Baroda says: “This time I shall be very nice to him” (Chopin 2014a: 213), or if her feelings are already gone and simply transformed in a new friendship. Besides, we are not able to know if Chopin’s intention dealt with showing the feelings of a woman that were beyond the sexual passion and moved to real love; Mrs. Baroda could have admired other aspects rather than the mere sexuality.

When reading, it results very attractive how she tries to stop herself when she is feeling tempted, in face of the danger that being involved in an affair would entail. From the very first moment she meets Gouvernail, she is already pleased by him, although she pretends not to, and she even acts as an arrogant person. Mrs. Baroda is somehow trying to convince herself of not being appealed by her husband’s friend; she depicts his image in her mind, disregarding him in order to avoid any charming aspect he could have.

The idea of committing adultery comes to her mind but it is immediately dismissed. Maybe because she is very accommodated in her marriage, she enjoys her bourgeois life and she loves her husband enough not to cheat on him. Another reason is precisely that she says she is a respectable woman, a woman expected to behave herself as society determines. She can be seen as a woman who dares to trespass the boundaries of a set society, but as well as someone who just respects herself just by refusing to love another man different from her husband. Mrs. Baroda commits some sort of mental adultery that is not physically accomplished as in other stories such as “The Storm”, the last story analyzed in the essay. The adultery is not committed but it is considered, so this is something that in a way shapes her female identity as a New Woman as well.

Declining the affair may mean actually a decision taken from a victorious and triumphant female position in which the man moves quietly with the intention of seducing the woman, who is not finally gained. This is probably an attitude of a New Woman who does not want to be a mere affair controlled and disposed by a man. Mrs. Baroda appreciates freedom and she would feel constrained if she would accept Gouvernail’s wishes and her own ones. It is true that she decides to stay by her husband’s side, and that is not precisely to have a complete independence, but she

understands she possess her own will to make decisions and choose by herself. What is clear is that readers can choose different interpretations and construe their own images of Mrs. Baroda.

Perhaps, those feelings Mrs. Baroda is feeling for Gouvernail have been never felt by a woman like her, in a steady, standardized position. Her intimate relation with his husband seems like a friendship rather than a passionate, romantic love relation. Mrs. Baroda is some sort of groundbreaking female trapped in the social expectations of her time trying to find adventure. Although she does not finally cheat on her husband, she has thought about the idea of having sex with his husband's friend, under the same roof she shares with her husband, and that is what distinguishes her from other women living under the traditional expectations.

On the other hand, Mrs. Baroda has intended to move from that standardized woman to a New Woman and even if she has not succumbed to Gouvernail, she feels good because she has been able to decide what is the better option for her, thus creating her own female identity. Mrs. Baroda reacts under social conventions and she does not behave as she would like to. Yet, she knows that her female identity allows her to respond following her instincts and wishes. Nobody knows what she would have done in a future; possibly, she would have reunited Gouvernail and they could have had their own passionate relationship, or even their own love story. She is still a True Woman struggling with her inner New Woman.

3.3. “The Story of an Hour”

This short story written in 1894 tells the story of Louise Mallard, a woman “afflicted with a heart trouble” who discovers her husband is dead by the news told by her sister. The news come from the town, where people have heard about the death of Mr. Mallard, Brently, in a railroad accident. Louise, desolate and sorrowful, locks herself up in her bedroom, where she realizes she is not as sad as she is supposed to be. At the beginning, she feels surprised and paralyzed, but as she stays in her solitude she knows that her husband’s death is not as terrible as she could think. Now her chance to enjoy life starts; she is untied from marriage, and she can be free being a widow, or at least that is what she thinks. After a period of inner debate (exactly one hour) and a blast of joy and happiness, her sister, worried, calls her to go downstairs. As soon as they are descending the stairs, they see Mr. Mallard entering the house. They all seem astonished, especially Louise, who died after all the events occurred.

In this peculiar story, the image of a woman thirsty for freedom is perceived by the reader. Louise believes she is going to suffer her husband’s death, as every woman in those circumstances, but she does not feel that way. Maybe, when she cries in her sister’s arms, she acts as if she was required to weep in such a situation, or even, she could have felt that real sorrow when she learnt her husband had passed away. In any of those cases, Louise does know that she is actually free and she shouts and repeats that word many times, as if trying to tell the whole world about her new situation. She can at last have her own independence, taking into consideration that she is still a young woman with plenty of lifetime to devote to herself.

She is happy, and nature looks like her feelings; the sky, the birds show their best face as if there would exist some kind of symbiosis between the woman and the natural elements. However, Louise wonders if finally her moment of release from marriage has come, she has needed and wanted it for a long time and she is not sure if it is real. Yes, she is excited, the opportunity to be a New Woman is given to her; she is not attached to any men any longer. The marital relation Louise has with her husband before he died is unknown, but she is depicted as the typical woman from a high

position who performs her common activities as the lady of the house. That meant being at her husband's disposal to attend parties within their social circle and some other obligations. Louise feels tired of all those societal conventionalisms, and with the unexpected death she is now unleashed to convey her sentiments and intentions. She lives "a struggle against the conceived limitations of conventional marriage" (Thompson 2012: 158).

The theme of death is important in Chopin's narrations, but it is even more remarkable in this short story. The event of death triggers the whole plot: first with "Mr. Mallard's death", and afterwards, the sudden death of the main female character. For Louise the only way to escape from the grip of marriage, as it is seen in the story, is on his husband's death. Of course, readers can think she does not kill him or intends his death, but thanks to that accident, Mrs. Mallard is free and ready to start a new life on her own. The negative part for Louise is that all those new projects she had imagined are vanished when her own death arrives. Nobody expects her death at the end of the story; in fact, it is a failure both for the protagonist and for the reader since that independence sought by the woman is not finally reached. At least the earthly freedom, because Louise's death could also be seen as a release, why not, as the cherished wish to be independent.

It is impossible to know the real causes of her death since she had a heart disease, but the impact that encountering her non-dead husband involves is a reliable reason for her to die. Not only because of her health problems, but more the fact that with her husband dead she would have a real and active life that she will never have in a worldly life. Her heart is broken and not by love reasons: rather by the impossibility of a planned life is what maybe provokes her a heart attack. Love could have had a special significance in Louise's marriage; every person who reads this story can think she did not feel love for her husband, though.

At the end of the story it is stated that her last hour of life has been filled with the hope and happiness she feels when she learns the news. She is prepared to welcome her new life promising herself that no living person would private her from that right:

"there was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory" (Chopin 1991a: 79). Unfortunately, it is death that takes all those wishes and destroys them when she suddenly dies. In the short period of an hour the events are completely twisted; she goes through the bitterness of having a deceased husband, to an enormous gladness which finally ends in a horrible feeling. Louise knows that her brand-new life will never be fully exploited.

In this case the characteristics of the New Woman are almost achieved since Louise was eager to enjoy her renewed life without a doubt, but death deprives her of all those chances her husband's death provided her. She is still a New Woman for being courageous to face her new life, to look ahead and build by herself what she always dreamt of. The narration does not allow her to have her new life begun, but provides her the feeling of a liberation she has been always wanting even during a little period of time.

3.4. “Her Letters”

Published in 1894, “Her Letters” narrates the story of a woman, whose name is unknown, who decides to dust off a bundle of letters she received from a past love she had. Indeed, this man from her past seems to have been an important love for the woman, but still it is an extramarital relation she maintained some years ago. The woman, unaware of when her death will take her, decides to leave the letters to her husband (unnamed as well) in the hope that he will destroy them before opening them. When the husband knows her wife’s intentions, he starts to be completely obsessed with that secret her wife has left, a secret that he will never know unless he opens the letters. Hopelessly stunned by the content of the letters, he resolves to throw them to the river, and at the end, he kills himself by drowning in that same river that contains all the secrets.

First of all, the love relationship this woman was involved in some years ago is clearly the starting point in the story. She felt such strong feelings for a man different from her husband, that still in the present she complains that love is over. It was not just an affair but a romance that would have continued if the woman would have decided to continue it. In this aspect, the woman recognized she was cheating on her husband and resolves to stop her prohibited relation. However, it is unknown if she left her love because of social reasons or just because she was compelled to respect her husband and the marriage they both contracted one day.

The female character is a New Woman able to escape from her house to reunite with her love, commit adultery, and maybe know at last what real love is but all the time she decides by herself. Objectively, the causes that lead the woman to end her extramarital relationship are unknown; she could decide not to hurt her husband, in the case he would ever know about the issue, or if there were any other reasons. What is really outstanding is that her actual husband does not seem to be the love of her life, even though they have an accommodated and pleasant marriage. For the woman they are just friends who take care of each other; she cares about him and, probably, that is

why she decides to finish her relation with the other man. The woman abandons her own happiness in order to satisfy her husband.

In the case of the husband, he does love her or at least he resembles a man deeply in love of her wife. However, readers should bear in mind that his behavior after knowing about the letters changes towards jealousy, unhealthy jealousy that conducts him to be obsessed by his wife's past. He devotes a great deal of his daily life asking his relatives and his wife's about any information that will help him to find out the truth. Perhaps she felt controlled by her husband in a marriage that looks like a marriage of convenience and decided to escape from nonexistent love and marital restraint. In this aspect the social class takes also a part since the woman may have felt oppressed both by her husband and the standards of the time.

The woman is a possession for the man, and the social expectations allow the husband to dictate the woman's behavior and to be subjected to the male figures. The man proves the conduct of a jealous man who apparently controls her wife's life, but he realizes his wife has betrayed him and that is an offense to him. So, it is permissible to think that the woman cherishes her own independence while she is alive; the independence she already had when she lived her love story with another man who was not her husband.

Adultery has its importance in the narration, not only because a married woman dares to have the extramarital affair, but also because it is the motif that induces the role and the importance of the letters. It is precisely the secret the letters hide in their content that provokes the woman to make a decision and that afterwards will influence the husband's attitude. The guilt of this sin the woman has committed is carried by the man; the woman lets her letters trying to hide her secret, but the husband knows there is a secret and he wants to know it, obviously. The man starts wondering if the mistake or sin his wife has left is actually adultery. He cannot tolerate her wife had a secret life, hence, the husband seems to pursue vengeance against his wife although she is already dead. This mental revenge he wants to accomplish is what eventually demolishes him; the blend of jealousy, anger and pain lead him to end his life by his own means.

It is curious how simple letters can command the characters' lives; they unlock the insanity of a man who will never be the same person and, at the same time, then keep a woman's passions alive. The mere memories of the woman's past love relive her and she does not want to get away from the memories that made her happy in the past. This way, she maybe feels a relief if she believes that soon she is going to die, to the extent that she even kisses the letters. When she is about putting them into the fire, she realizes that she is throwing part of her happy time, and she refuses to do so. Those letters expressed her feelings for the mysterious man and remind her what she had as if they were a torturing her: "He had sent her letters all back to her one day when, sick with dread of possibilities, she had asked to have them returned" (Chopin 1991b: 95). The narration does not account the causes of her disease, but it is understandable to take her sadness into consideration as the main cause of her sufferings and posterior death.

Death is another important issue in this story; the woman knows her death is coming, so she resolves to leave the letters to her husband, but when she is already dead, the husband drives himself crazy. Again, Chopin introduces this theme as a turning point that interferes in the events given in the plot. As in the previously analyzed "The Story of an Hour", the female character dies because of an illness, as in other stories written by her, where these deaths withhold women from accomplishing their goals in life as renewed women looking for new situations in which they take the entire control. This issue is also important for the husband; in this case instead of being the female character who commits suicide it is the man who determines to put an end to his life. The only release for his anxiety and anguish is by killing himself; to him, that is the only way to reencounter his wife and so, know the truth written in the letters.

Readers must remember the husband keeps the promise and he does not read the letters even when he desperately needs to open them. The death of his wife triggers his progression from a good man to a frivolous, mad man who finally encounters death; death provokes death. The role of the unnamed woman discloses her influence over her husband and her disposition to disobey the social conventions and act as she wants. This is the New Woman that is not conditioned by marriage to commit adultery, to love freely even when she takes part of a traditional environment; she wants freedom and

independence and goes to find it by her own. She knows that she is going to die but if she would have not died this woman could have faced her reality in another way; that is, leaving her actual husband and going to embrace her real love. At least, this is what the narration allows us to think, and the letters make her to discover her true identity. By having the letters and entrusting them to her husband, she is enabled to take the control, even to control her husband's life, for the first time in her life.

3.5. “The Storm”

“The Storm” was written in 1898, being the sequel of a previous short story called “At the Cadian Ball”. Although this story enjoyed its own success, it was not until 1969 when it was recognized since when Kate Chopin wrote it the problems for its publication did not allow her to be acknowledged. Even when Paul Seyester, a Norwegian student in the United States rediscovered Chopin’s work, he was pushed not to publish stories like “The Storm” because of its scandalous theme (Beer 2008: 15).

The story revolves around a young woman called Calixta who apparently lives happily accompanied by her husband Bobinôt and her little child Bibi. The narration starts with the importance given to the storm coming. That is, Calixta is alone at home while doing some household work. She is wondering where her husband and child are, and if they will be alright. They are supposed to be at the store running some errands, but Calixta thinks if maybe the storm has reached them. As the storm is fast approaching, Calixta resolves to close the windows and take the clothes back. When the woman is already in the porch, she notices that a man on a horse is near to her house staring at her, looking for a refuge from raining. It happens that the mysterious man turns to be Alcée Labalière, a man who Calixta loved in the past. Calixta finally invites him home. The two of them see each other after a long time, they seem to recover the passions and curiosities they reciprocally feel. Calixta tries to disguise her feelings and the situation, but at the same times she shows her worry for her husband and son. Alcée is determined to comfort her, and one way or another, their passion comes back from the past. The feelings of the past seem to re-awake when she is embraced by the man, who is still totally hypnotized by Calixta, “she had lost nothing of her vivacity” and their passion leads them to make love while the outside storm is dying down. When everything is over, they both come back to their lives, keeping the happy memory as if nothing would have happened.

Unquestionably, the roles of the “storms” in the story are crucial, the physical storm and the metaphorical one. It is not just the raining, (of course Calixta is concerned by the farewell of her family), but it is even more important the storm that is brought by

the reunion between Alcée and Calixta: “Alcée got up and joined her at the window, looking over her shoulder [...] Alcèe's arms encircled her, and for an instant he drew her close and spasmodically to him” (Chopin 2014b: 249). In a way, Calixta has an internal storm that is suffocated by Alcée, while outside, there is a real storm. The naturalist element unlocks the innate instincts of human beings and makes them available for the lovers; the sexual desire they have since youth is finally released. So, Alcèe and Calixta take part in the bond existing between the natural world and humans.

The theme of sex is really important here, as well as it is the adultery they both commit. The two main characters are married and appear to be gladly married, but that does not mean they do not need to close past issues. The narration presents a sensual sexuality able to absolve them from the sin of an extramarital relationship. The connection between the two of them does not result weird for the readers, somehow, and it is outwardly justified for the author. Indeed, when the meeting takes place, some kind of reinforcement occurs in the two marriages; the act of adultery can be seen as a benefit for the two marriages. Calixta and Alcée realize they have achieved their pending issue but they also know they are happy with their families and that will remain as always. In this story as well as in “Her Letters”, the adultery is committed not only considered as occurs in “A Respectable Woman”, for example.

Calixta behaves as an adventurous, imprudent woman who, just for a short period of time, dares to have an affair in her house even when she is conscious that her husband and her son can get home anytime. That is a modern attitude connected to the New Woman; she does not wonder if what she does is correct or not, she lets herself go, no matter what the consequences can be. She appears to be worried only when the storm outdoors is coming, but once Alcée is with her, she does not care anymore about any other concerns.

At first sight, readers can see she is the common wife of the time; she is in charge of the house and her family and there are barely distractions for her. Even there are some symbolic elements such as white pieces of cloth in the narration that depict the virginity and purity typical of the previous and influential True Woman. She is still in a

very traditional sphere of the American South; from the very beginning, she is seen picking and arranging the clothes, sewing, etc.

Here is where realism takes also an important part in the narration because all these characteristics regard the actual situation in Louisiana where Catholic morality was very present and women were expected to behave in accordance with a social and religious model. Apparently, Calixta is a caring mother and a good wife who would not want to move away from her family; she feels adoration for her child, and Bobinôt seems to be a good husband for her. However, she is determined to hide the secret that having an affair entails.

However, the period of time Calixta remains alone is what makes her to use and taste her freedom; the freedom of a New Woman trying to go beyond the mere housework and life in family. She seems to leave her daily and simple life for a moment to experience something new, something even she would have never imagined, so Calixta wants to taste freedom. Calixta needs someone who makes her react, and that “someone” is Alcée: “He looked down into her eyes and there was nothing for him to do but to gather her lips in a kiss” (Chopin 2014b: 250). When they are together, there are no social conventions or expectations on her role as a mother and a wife, and she does not care about any of those requirements either. No one is pushing her to Alcée’s arms but she does not stop herself from surrendering to her fugitive lover.

At the end, she does not seem to feel guilty about what she has just done, on the contrary, she embraces her family as if nothing would have happened. Alcée behaves the same way and he sends a letter to Clarisse, his wife, as declaring that everything remains, so that everybody notices things stay the same. The two families have their happy endings, even when Alcée and Calixta have trespassed the social boundaries that separate both families to attain a wish they both had been looking forward for a very long period of time.

The role performed by Calixta brings the idea of a New Woman who wants freedom even for a little while, a woman who has the courage to have the affair she did not have years ago, and thus to commit adultery. Calixta feels sexual pleasure but also the personal pleasure of breaking the rules and do whatever she wants regardless of the consequences. She is not going to leave her family, but she has noticed she is braver than she ever thought.

Ultimately the four main characters of these short stories shape their own identity as women from a new era; courageous women daring to do unimaginable things never thought of before. These women go through a complete process of becoming the model of New Woman while facing their marriages, the societal conventions and their own inner desires in order to leave all in favor of the construction of their new identities; the identities that always existed but were never displayed in the years before. Kate Chopin develops these true identities by touching specific matters such as death, adultery and the desire for freedom and independence that defined her own style in literature, even when these were controversial and transgressor themes by the time she wrote her short stories.

4. CONCLUSIONS

What I consider to be the final conclusions is that throughout history women have not only considered their situations within the domestic sphere but have also faced those imposed roles as a revolution for their own, led by themselves. The True Woman was not their most suitable brand, and they knew the need to change their circumstances in support of a new model of woman able to be a mother and a wife, but also to develop their own artistic skills and other abilities women as men have. Thus, freedom and independence were some of the most relevant aspects they should look for, in order to establish the New Woman that would be developed afterwards. Precisely that New Woman model was promoted by women of course, but also by men who believed there existed a necessary change in the situation of women. Of course, by means of literature, women have developed those ideas of freedom, independence and self-esteem against the ideals of their relegation and submission defended by the True Woman model, which is important to consider, was not only supported by men; some women at the time did encourage their traditional positions in the domestic sphere. Anyway, the objectives proposed by women were accomplished even though they went through a very tough process of revolution and change.

In Kate Chopin's short fiction we have seen that women revealed against their husbands, claiming not to be their properties anymore; they were in search of their own self-determination to control their bodies halfway the traditional moral and sexual rules and the innovative ones proposed by, above all, feminist writers. These fictional characters took new paths in their ordinary lives; they chose the freedom to consider adultery or to reject love and other enforced obligations, always by deciding themselves as women with a real female identity. They all embodied the new characteristics of the New woman as independent souls able to manage their lives while looking for their own interests and desires. Some of them wished to accomplish their goals; others changed radically their lives; even, there were some of these women who stayed by the side of their families, but as well indicating they had their own willingness and determination to decide what kind of life was better for them. The writer demonstrated her immersion in the New Woman model not only by her writing but also in her own life. Her writings

conveyed the roles of women who went beyond the mere domestic and traditional female obligations as proof for real women to achieve the purposes; fictional women encouraged real women to be women following a new ideal of woman.

5. WORKS CITED

Barrio Marco, José Manuel. *Literatura en Lengua Inglesa IV*. Apuntes de clase. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid. Academic Year 2013-14.

Baym, Nina. *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-70*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 1978. Print.

Beer, Janet. *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. Print.

Castillo, Susan. "Race and ethnicity in Kate Chopin's fiction". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 59-72. Print.

Chopin, Kate. "A Respectable Woman". *The Awakening and Selected Short Stories of Kate Chopin*. Ed. Simon and Schuster. New York: Enriched Classics. 2014a. 208-214. Print.

------. "Her Letters". *A Vocation and a Voice: Stories*. Ed. Emily Toth. Louisiana: Penguin. 1991a. 94-105. Print.

------. "The Storm". *The Awakening and Selected Short Stories of Kate Chopin*. Ed. Simon and Schuster. New York: Enriched Classics. 2014b. 249-257. Print

------. "The Story of an Hour". *A Vocation and a Voice: Stories*. Ed. Emily Toth. Louisiana: Penguin. 1991b. 76-80. Print.

Clinton, Catherine. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1992. Print.

Fiedler, Leslie A. *Love and Death in the American Novel*. Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press. Criterion Books. 1960. Print.

Heilmann, Ann. "The Awakening and the New Woman fiction". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 87-104. Print.

Jorlin, Katherine. "Kate Chopin on fashion in a Darwinian world". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 73-86. Print.

Koloski, Bernard. "The Awakening: the first 100 years". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 161-173. Print.

Matthews, Glenna. *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1987. Print

Nelson, Carolyn C. *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles and Drama of the 1890's*. New York: Broadview Press. 2000. Print.

Nolan, Elizabeth. "The Awakening as literary innovation: Chopin, Maupassant, and the evolution of genre". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 118-131. Print.

Patterson, Martha H. *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman 1895-1915*. Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press. 2005. Print.

Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, Santiago. *Literatura en Lengua Inglesa II*. Apuntes de clase. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid. Academic Year 2012-13.

Rowe, John C., and Eric Haralson. *A Historical Guide to Henry James*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2012. Print.

Stein F, Allen. *Women and Autonomy in Kate Chopin's Short Fiction*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing. 2005. Print.

Shapiro, Ann R. *Unlikely heroines. Nineteenth-century American Women Writers and the Woman Question*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1987. Print.

Toth, Emily. "What we do and don't know about Kate Chopin's life". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 13-26. Print.

Thompson, Gary R. *Reading the American Novel 1865-1914*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. 2012. Print.

Worton, Michael. "Reading Kate Chopin through contemporary French feminist theory". *The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin*. Ed. Janet Beer. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. 2008. 105-117. Print.