Economic Independence and Female Autonomy in Selected Short Stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

الاستقلال الاقتصادي وهوية المرأة في قصص مختارة للكاتبة شارلوت بيركنز جيلمان

L'indépendance économique et l'autonomie des femmes dans les récits de Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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Introduction

Nothing seems more ordinary today than the American woman having her place beside man as an equal. In the past, however, she worked hard to gain respect in term of legal, political, educational and social rights. Particularly, the period (18701930-) was an important one in the emancipation process of the American woman. In fact, seeking personal fulfillment and freedom from old-fashioned goals and owing to economic and political changes were some of women' preoccupations. Declaring that her mission was "to find out what ailed society, and how most easily and naturally to improve it" (Davis and Knight 49), Gilman writes about the necessity for women to be economically independent. She mentions that humans are the only species whose females have to depend on the males for survival; this dependence requires women to pay off their debt through domestic services, or "sex-functions" (Gilman 182).

Notably, Gilman's works has received great critical attention since the rise of the Feminist Movement in the 1970s in the U.S.A. An important study about her short stories is Denise D. Knight's, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Study of the Short Fiction* (1997), in which the author contributes a much-needed overview and assessment of Gilman's short fiction. Arguing that Gilman's short fiction "re-create the world according to her vision of the ideal", Knight offers important insights for students and scholars alike, by surveying Gilman's body of stories, and investigating the early autobiographical *Forerunner* and other stories to define the writer's ideology about social reform. Another significant study about Gilman's fiction is conducted by Val Gough, a lecturer in English at the University of Liverpool. His collection of essays, published in 1998 entitled

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A Very Different Story: Studies on the Fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, discusses the complexity of Gilman's utopian vision. In this study, Gilman's novels are the subject of most of the essays and other essays explore utopian ideas in Gilman's short stories. In 2009, Judith A. Allen, a professor of gender studies and history, provides the first comprehensive assessment of Gilman's complicated feminism in her book *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, Progressivism*. Her assessment is based on the economic arguments of Gilman on women emancipation. Allen explores the writer's theories of sexuality and evolutionary analyses of andocentric—or male-dominated—culture. This study provides the fullest account available of Gilman's consequential life and profoundly influential work; however, Allen was much more interested in Gilman's nonfictional works.

Gilman's lengthy nonfictional argument on the economic emancipation of women is introduced by her in her fiction. Women's emancipation and the reform of the institution of marriage, Gilman believes, would not be possible without women's economic independence. Economic dependence, Gilman argues, leads women to being denied the activities, which have developed intelligence in man, and the education of the will which only comes through freedom and power. She further contends that such state of arrested development of women, both intellectually and emotionally, were damaging to men, women, and society as a whole. She hopes her work will help to remove the economic element of marriage by allowing women to become financially self-sufficient and, thus, the marital relationship would be based on respect, love and true partnership, as we will discuss in this paper.

In this paper, we will focus on Gilman's short fiction, which shows the importance and the effects of women economic independence on women's lives. The three stories under study attest that useful employment is always good for women and marriage as well. In "According to Solomon", useful employment improves the marital relationship and the wife's health. In "Deserted", the economic independence protects a woman and her children from a drunken husband and in "Making a Change", work saves the protagonist from mental breakdown and suicide.

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Notion of the "New Woman"

In the turn of the twentieth century, often referred to as the Progressive Era (18901920-), a new concept, "new woman", came to define women. This new concept changed the image of the stereotypical fragile woman of the Victorian

Era. Progressive women did most things that nineteenth-century women were barred from doing, and while reduced domestic obligations gave them more free time, greater education gave them higher aspirations. Appeals to religion and tradition lost their effectiveness in this atmosphere. Seeking personal fulfillment and freedom from old-fashioned goals, owing to economic and political changes (King 79), were some of women's preoccupations. The number of women who worked outside home in the 1920s rose almost 50 percent throughout the decade. While women still constituted a small number of the professional population, they were slowly increasing their participation in more significant occupations, including law, social work, engineering, and medicine. According to historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, the New Woman not only eschewed marriage, "she fought for professional visibility, espoused innovative, often radical, economic and social reforms, and wielded real political power" (Bomarito 123). Many hoped to merge marriage with a career, as did one in five professional women in 1920, one in four in 1930, and more thereafter. The changes, which have taken place during this period in the activities and position of women have been so remarkable that it is frequently called the "woman's century." It was a time when women no longer accepted without questioning what tradition, custom, and public opinion might dictate.

However, the choices available to women tended to be limited, both in pay and in potential for advancement, especially for middle class women. The range of professional options open to educated women at the end of the nineteenth century never matched those available to men, nor did their pay. By 1900, more than eighty-five thousand women were enrolled in colleges, making up 37 percent of all students. Yet, only a minority used their higher education to pursue a career as an attractive alternative to marriage. Teaching and librarianship continued to draw large numbers of women, as did newer professions, such as nursing, social work, and home economics (Matthews 199). Journalism provided greater professional opportunities for women in this period. Mainly to please women readers, editors willingly hired at least one female reporter to cover "women's news." In the early twentieth century, many papers also hired women as "sob sisters," who wrote sentimental feature stories oriented toward women readers. In the 1910s, however, and thereafter, a few women became "front page girls" or women newspapermen," with jobs comparable to those of the best male reporters (Hewitt 243). It was in the field of education, however, that women gained the greatest access to professional careers.

During her lifetime, Gilman, a world-famous writer, lecturer, and reformer whose work was influential and widely celebrated, has been called the "leading

intellectual in the women's movement in the United States during the first two decades of the twentieth century". She was born Charlotte Anna Perkins on July 3, 1860, in Hartford, Connecticut, to Mary Perkins and Frederic Beecher Perkins. Gilman's father was, like so many Beechers, a lover of books, an editor, librarian, and short-story writer, but uncomfortable with family life. He abandoned his family soon after Charlotte's birth, returning only for occasional visits, provided only small financial support on an irregular basis until 1873, when Charlotte's mother filed for divorce (Davis and Knight 97). Gilman and her mother experienced chronic poverty depending upon the kindness of relatives. Mary Perkins, continually plagued by debt, moved her family 19 times in 18 years. Observing her mother's misery, who was forced into roles of unusual self-reliance, and never liking the autonomy that was thrust upon her, the girl Charlotte never forgot the lesson: married or not, every woman needed the ability to earn a good living to insure her survival and sanity, not to mention her self-development. This would become her doctrine, the entering wedge of what became a broadly feminist critique of the sexist ideas that lay behind the dangerous belief that a woman should be dependent on her husband (116).

Gilman's formal education was not exceptional; she was for the most part self-educated. However, her rootless and impoverished childhood in Rhode Island, coupled with her mother's emotional detachment, produced an intellectual and objective adult determined to be self-supporting. Gilman supported herself by lecturing, teaching, editing, running a boarding house, and writing (Benbow-Pfalzgraf 173). From 1888, when she left Walter Stetson, to her death in 1935, Gilman published eight novels, 171 short stories, 473 poems, and 1,472 nonfiction pieces, nine of which are books. Her writing turned on a few dominant themes: the transformations of marriage, the family and the home, and even these issues returned insistently to her central argument, "the economic independence and specialization of women as essential to the improvement of marriage, motherhood, domestic industry, and racial improvement" (Gilman, *Women* 33).

She was also a self-taught economic theorist with a good command of the basic ideas of capitalism and a general understanding of Marxist principles (37). In 1898, she published *Women and Economics*, a book which serves as a solid explanation for the marriage market and for the value of women's work in the 1890s. Gilman illustrates how humans "are the only animal species in which the female depends upon the male for food" (39), and suggests that the economic dependence of women on men is an "unnatural" condition because it does not fulfill the needs of women or society (39). To explore these issues, we will make

use of Social Feminists' ideas, mainly from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), and Gilman's nonfiction masterpiece *Women and Economics* (1898). According to Social Feminism, the patriarchal society exploits women not only through literature but also socially and economically (Bressler 179). Feminist critics argue that capitalism and patriarchy work hand in hand to ensure that women remain subordinate to men, especially through marriage. As most women could not support themselves financially, they had to marry a man, often any man, in order to survive, thus 'throwing off the natural process of sexual selection by introducing money into the equation' (Gianquitto 154). Therefore, in her stories, Gilman claims that unless and until the economic independence of women is achieved, the marital institution cannot be reformed.

2. Economic Independence and its Positive Outcomes on Women in "According To Solomon" (1909)

It was apparent that middle- and upper-class women were encouraged not to use, but to deny, their talents and capabilities. Bourgeois wives were "cooped up in [their] fortresses [...] like fairy tale princesses", as Susan Gubar puts it (Gilbert and Gubar 142). They were not allowed to do any kind of higher profession, not even the domestic service expected of the women of poorer families. Women were expected to remain submissive to their fathers and husbands, and their occupational choices were extremely limited. Middle and upper-class women generally remained at home, caring for their children and running the household (Bomarito 501).

This situation served middle class men's interests in controlling their wives and keeping them at home and at the mercy of their husbands' income. As seen in the story "According to Solomon", a proud and conservative man like Solomon would never allow his wife to work, because this would undermine his status as an economic provider. When he first came to know that his wife earn money, he was very astonished and injured : 'Earned it ! My wife, earning money !' (Gilman, *Complete* 784). The wife's role in such economic unit is that of non-productive consumer : "to consume food, to consume clothes, to consume houses and furniture and decorations and ornaments and amusements […] always to take and never to think of giving anything in return except their womanhood" (111).

As long as women are economically dependent and consumers, they will be easy to be manipulated, and therefore they will not even think about a possible

domestic revolution and will remain bound to their passive existence. Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* points out that patriarchal values prevent women's entry into economic activity by keeping themtrapped in the rituals of class (De Beauvoir 463). She claims that men make women limited in every role they can play in society, and are thus forced to adopt certain traits and cope with lives that make them even more inferior in society (471).

What Gilman finds unjust is that because women obtain their money from men, the leisure class got more money and the working women got the least money. The woman's "economic profit" can come only through the man she snares in marriage or outside of the marriage bed (prostitution). Gilman called attention to the fact that "women whose economic goods are the greatest, are often neither house-workers nor mothers, but simply the women who hold the most power over the men who have the most money" (Gilman, *Human* 76).

the cultural nineteenth century traditions make the institution of marriage centered around a passive female who depended, for her survival, upon her mate who regarded his mate as something he has paid for. When Mrs. Bankside asks her husband why he spends a lot of money on her, he simply answers : "That's a wise investment, as well as a deserved reward" (Gilman, *Complete* 780). The use of the words 'investment' and 'reward' evokes the sex-economic relation that Gilman often criticizes in her works. In *Women and Economics*, Gilman claims that men produce and distribute wealth, and women earn their share of it as wives, which assumes that the husband is in the position of an employer and the wife as an employee (Gilman, *Women* 10). The comfort, the luxury and the necessities of life itself, which the woman receives, are obtained through the husband. As a result, "women are viewed as chattel, not valuable members of society" (16). For Gilman, it was absurd to pretend that marriage under these conditions could ever be viewed as anything but an economic arrangement that extended the subordination of women.

Gilman had always focused on the importance of useful employment even for the leisure class women. Economic independence gives women the pleasure to spend their own money as they please, without begging or justifying their spending. When Mrs. Bankside sells her handmade towels, she 'hid and saved this precious money — the first she had ever earned' (Gilman, *Complete* 782). The money that she saved from her work was not little, and she 'handed out to her astonished relatives such an assortment of desirable articles that they found no words to express their gratitude' (783). Besides, the absence of serious and interesting mental exercise for "females of the middle, and higher ranks", could be fatal however. In the second half of the nineteenth century the vague

syndrome gripping middle- and upper-class women had become so widespread as to represent not so much a disease in the medical sense. A few of the moral managers did recognize that the intellectual and vocational limitations of the female role, especially in the middle class, were as maddening as its biological characteristics, as we will see in the coming stories. Only with useful employment, can women improve their mental and physical health, and give meaning to their lives. We have seen how Mrs. Bankside feels great pleasure when she learns how to make towels. Her 'Hands that had been rather empty were now smoothly full' (782). The feeling of producing something makes Mrs. Banksides happier and more fulfilled : 'As the days shortened and darkened she sparkled more and more ; with little snatches of song now and then ; gay ineffectual strumming on the big piano ; sudden affectionate darts at him, with quaintly distributed caresses'. Even her health improves, and 'any hint of occasional querulousness disappeared entirely' (783).

As a social reformer, Gilman suggests that the relation between spouses would be better if men help women to achieve their autonomy. Though Solomon has deep-rooted patriarchal ideas, he was open-minded, an attitude that helps to undermine patriarchy and reform the institution of marriage. His first reaction when he knows that his wife is working was displeasure. He, possessing this Victorian attitude toward women's work and earning money, never imagines his wife as independent ; this would threaten his authority as a superior and a provider : 'He swallowed hard as he looked at her ; and his voice was a little strained' (783). Yet, when he sees how his wife becomes happier for her usefulness, he eventually accepts the situation : 'He got used to it after a while, and then he became proud of it'. He was even ready to face anyone who asks him why he allows his wife to work : 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates' (783). In many ways, with the satisfaction of women reflects happiness in marital relationship . Solomon, without knowing the reason, remarks his wife's happiness and becomes happy too : 'her husband was moved to fresh admiration of her sunny temper' (783).

3. The Importance of Economic Independence for Women Alone in "Deserted" (1893)

The economic independence of women is essential and critical in many other instances. It does not only provide women with the pleasure to own and spend money, but it also protects them and their children in case of drunken husband, as in "Deserted". Gilman makes it clear at the beginning of the

story, how it was unjust that women work harder than men do, yet they are not rewarded for house labor. Mrs. Ellphalet Johnson was a hardworking woman — even her next-door neighbors admitted that' (834). She finishes everything before her husband breakfast, while he prefers keeping the store, 'because he could sit down more" (835).

In *Women and Economics*, Gilman argues that men are able to dominate women because they control the means of production and the distribution of economic power, which is the source of political power, social status, and control of family life (Gilman, *Women* 16). This economic dependence, Gilman maintains, proved to be damaging to men, women, and society as a whole (17), as seen with Mrs Ellphalet's case. As a consequence, critical family events – such as lone parenthood, divorce or separation (particularly in the presence of children) – are stronger predictors of poverty transitions for women than for men because of the female economic dependence on a male breadwinner combined with caring responsibilities at home (McLanahan 74). In her essay "*The Education and Employment of Women*" (1868), Josephine Butler claims that education had great benefits not only for gender relations and society as a whole, but for those who are forced to stand alone. She states :

> They argue in favour of all which is likely to make women better mothers, or better companions for men, but they seem incapable of judging of a woman as a human being by herself, and superstitiously afraid of anything which might strengthen her to stand alone, prepared, single-handed, to serve her God and her country. When it is urged upon them that the women who do and must stand alone are counted by millions, they are perplexed, but only fall back on expressions of a fear lest a masculine race of women should be produced, if we admit any theories respecting them apart from conjugal and maternal relationships (Bomarito 317).

Therefore, not until Mrs. Ellphalet starts reading some books of the lawyer renting their room that she becomes aware of her legally strong position, as the owner of all the property of her husband. The lawyer, 'moved by a strong sense of human kindness to this struggling woman and seeing the responsibilities of life with wider reach' (Gilman, *Complete* 835), helped her to understand her position, and 'urged upon her a new view of her duties to her children and the world' (836). Gilman maintains that women's intellectual powers should not be directed solely toward the home. Striving to establish women's role as an equal economic factor within society, she wanted women to be prepared for careers

within the more diverse, traditionally male-dominated spheres of business, law, and medicine (Gilman, *Human* 73).

By the same token, as a way of resistance, and breaking away from andocentric thinking, Gilman ironically describes Ellphalet as 'deserted', a term usually used to describe an abandoned wife. Waking up very late and calling vainly, 'with quite advanced profanity, for his faithful wife, he found her not in attendance' (Gilman, *Complete* 835), Ellphalet was still expecting that his wife is there waiting for him. Yet, as we introduced before, Gilman's female characters are not always stereotypical, as they seem at first, and like Kate Chopin's characters, they often choose the path of independence when they face hard choices. Mrs. Johnson finally, decides to 'desert' her husband, sell the store and 'go[...] into business independently, and should do well by the children' (835). Gilman inverts women and men's roles, since women's subornation comes from economic dependence to the man, and since the wife was doing all the work of her husband. By doing this, she insists that women could be free if they are economically independent, and this can reform the institution of marriage, since the wife promises to welcome her husband back if he stops drinking and work again. Fortunately, for both, this decision makes the husband a new man : Then the deserted husband took up the burden of life. It made a new man of him (836).

4. The Trap of Domesticity for Women in "Making a Change" (1911)

In "*Making a Change*", the story begins with a baby crying, a husband asking to make him silent, and a depressed wife who is near to breakdown or madness. Julia Gordon, an artist who abandons her career for the sake of marriage and motherhood, the woman who had been the greatest musician on earth — is now looking at her husband, "dumbly, while wild visions of separation, of secret flight — even of self-destruction — swung dizzily across her mental vision" (771). Julia was nearer the verge of complete disaster than the family assumed. With a mind too exhausted to serve her properly, she was "motionless ; her chin in her hands, her big eyes staring at nothing, trying to formulate in her weary mind some reliable reason why she should not do what she was thinking of doing" (771).

Julia Gordins, the protagonist of "*Making a Change*", becomes mentally exhausted and disappointed because she was entrapped in matrimony that kills women's ambition. When the husband asks Julia to stop the child crying : 'Is there no way to stop that child crying ?" (887), and the use of the pronoun "that" here, refers to the distance between the father and the son, and that it is not

his business or role to care for the baby. Frank Gordins, the only son of a very capable and idolatrously affectionate mother, believes that it is a woman's duty to know how to raise a child. The answer of the wife "so definitely and politely that the words seemed cut off by machinery" (888), reveals how much she is distressed and feeling entrapped. We, then, come to learn that her "nerves were at the breaking point", which does not only come from her lack of sleeping, but her inner conflict that she could not fulfill her duty as a perfect wife, and this is shown when she resists letting her mother-in-law taking care of the baby.

The problem with Julia is that she finds no way out from her imprisonment. What remains open to the woman who has reached the end of her resistance but suicide ? With 'her chin in her hands, her big eyes staring at nothing, trying to formulate in her weary mind some reliable reason why she should not do what she was thinking of doing. But her mind was too exhausted to serve her properly'(888). While reduced domestic obligations gave middle class women more free time, greater education gave them higher aspirations. By 1900, more than half million young women had high school degrees. Exclusion from good jobs and public life made it difficult to fill these women's longings. Women had fewer children, more education, and a greater capacity to buy commodities that were formerly fabricated at home (Matthews 191). No longer could the moral prescriptions and the standards of living defined by the ideals of true womanhood keep women at home. De Beauvoir explains that :

> At twenty or thereabouts mistress of a home, bound permanently to a man, a child in her arms, she stands with her life virtually finished forever. Real activities, real work, are the privilege of the man : she has mere things to occupy her which are sometimes exhausting but never fully satisfying. Her renunciation and devotion have been lauded, but it often seems to her bootless indeed to busy herself 'with the care of two persons for life'. Just as the young girl dreams of what her future will lie, so she evokes what might have been her past ; she pictures her lost opportunities and invents retrospective romances' (De Beauvoir 552).

In the same way, in her book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan maintains that "the fundamental grievance" of middle-class American women was their entrapment within private, domestic life and their inability to pursue careers (Friedan 56). Therefore, she attempts to change the false image of the *Feminine Mystique* which disillusioned many educated women with the "dominant image of the happy housewife and mother." She argues that the housewife role was something from which women needed to be liberated. Women's lives were

shaped by traditional family responsibilities. These tasks also shape women's work patterns, the type of occupation they work in, their earnings and their social security benefits (57). Firstly, 'moral obligations' create a time conflict between paid and unpaid work, care tasks and employment : such inequalities in the distribution of unpaid work remain even when the man is unemployed. Secondly, women's responsibilities for reproductive labor limit the range of paid economic activities they can undertake. Women often take a poorly paid side job in order to meet family needs (Graham 63) or find employment, which fits in with their domestic chores. Women are also less mobile than men because of their reproductive and caring labor activities and because of social norms that restrict their roles in public.

As a solution, Gilman proposed two main objectives in her new social and economic arrangement. First, she wanted "home cares and industries" to follow the "other necessary labors of modern life" and "become elevated and organized." Women needed to adopt "the quality of coordination, - the facility in union" in order to gain economic efficiency. This would allow women to be freed from the burdens of having to remain in the home to work and enable them to contribute their talents to society at large. Second, she sought to change the entire focus of the Victorian woman ; she wanted her to learn "to make and save rather than to spend and destroy" (Allen 79). In essence, Gilman wished that women would begin to think of themselves as contributors to the economic well-being of society rather than as resource users for the pleasure of one household.

When Julia Gordins finally could work outside, everybody becomes happy, the mother-in-law becomes a different woman herself ; "now that she has her heart and hands full of babies", a kind of fulfilment for her as well. Apparently, it was totally wrong to keep two women, one suffering from too much domesticity, and the old suffering from too little, and both are denied doing what they most know and like. The child as well 'outgrew his crying spells', because he has now better care ; "Albert does enjoy it so ! And you've enjoyed it", 'And dear — my own love — I don't mind it now at all ! I love my home, I love my work, I love my mother, I love you. And as to children — I wish I had six ! (Gilman, *Complete* 887) .

Achieving economic independence also helps Julia and her mother-in-law to re-establish their household. They earn about a hundred dollars a week, with which they hire expert housekeeper and cook, and achieve their autonomy as well. In the end, Gilman argues, the economically independent mother, "widened and freed, strengthened and developed, by her social service, will do

better service as a mother than it has been possible for her before" (Gilman, *Women* 135). It would mean also a larger domestic partnership for the married couple, with women freed to achieve autonomy that will make them more interesting, more desirable, and more affectionate to their spouses. When Frank at first knows about the new change, he feels hurt, but his mother states : 'You can't feel very badly about a thing that makes us all happy, can you ?' (887). In fact, before knowing these plans, he starts enjoying his life, that even he said to a bachelor friend 'You fellows don't know what you're missing !'. With the new changes, Frank Gordins is pleased, to have his wife's health improved rapidly and steadily, 'the delicate pink come back to her cheeks, the soft light to her eyes' ; and when she made music for him in the evening, 'he felt as if his days of courtship had come again'(889). He is pleased also that his mother seems to have taken 'a new lease of life' ; she is so cheerful and brisk, so full of little jokes and stories, as he had known her in his boyhood ; and above all she is so free and affectionate with Julia, that he is more than pleased. And so, Gilman concludes, when "the mother of the race is free, we shall have a better world" (Gilman, *Women* 93).

Conclusion

Through these stories, Gilman exposes the reader to controversial ideas, by changing the social consciousness, and by educating the public to accept a new conception of womanhood. She hopes that she could help create a more balanced society composed of intellectually, economically, socially, and politically autonomous women as well as men. In fact, Gilman's aim was sought to create "The New Woman", by changing the entire focus of the Victorian woman ; and to teach women how to learn "to make and save rather than to spend and destroy." In stories like "According To Solomon", Gilman wishes that women would begin to think of themselves as contributors to the economic well-being of society rather than as resource users for the pleasure of one household.

In "Deserted", Gilman criticizes the limited education of women and its impact on their lives, especially in the case when women are obliged to stand alone against a drunken husband. In her magazine *The Forerunner*, Gilman aimed to change the idea that women must be passive and their only role is household duties. In teaching women to dedicate their lives to the common rather than the familial good, education liberated women from the reliance on their husbands, and helped them to recognize their connection, commitment, and contribution to the larger world. The emphasis on social responsibility enabled women to participate in "human work" and to become active members

of the economy. Thus, education for social responsibility encouraged women to establish financial independence and become a "mother – with the great heart that enfolded the children of the Race" (Gilman, *Human* 99).

In "*Making a Change*" the structure of the family, with the heavy load of children and household, causes women to stay economically dependent on men, and all colleges and universities officially discouraged women students from considering careers other than motherhood or teaching even before marriage. Gilman suggests, therefore, that the liberation of women, of children, and of men, for that matter required getting women out of the house, both practically and ideologically. Work is as McAlister states "the normal life of every human being ; work, which is joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite" (McAlister).

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Abstract

This paper proposes to explore the importance of economic independence on women's emancipation, within and outside the institution of marriage in selected short stories of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *Deserted (1893), According To Solomon (1909) and Making A Change (1911)*. Operating from the belief that the root of gender inequality is economic, Gilman believes that once women were financially self-sufficient, the marital relationship would be based on respect, love and true partnership.

Keywords

Feminism, Marriage, domesticity, patriarchy, gender, emancipation

الملخص

يناقش هذا المقال أهمية الاستقلال المادي في تحرير المرأة داخل وخارج مؤسسة الزواج، في قصص قصيرة مختارة من أعمال الكاتبة "شارلوت بيركنز غيلمان". انطلاقًا من الاعتقاد بأن أصل عدم المساواة

بين الجنسين مصدره مادي، ترى غيلمان أنه بمجرد حصول المرأة على الاكتفاء الذاتي من الناحية المادية، ستستند العلاقة الزوجية إلى الاحترام والحب والشراكة الحقيقية.

مفتاحية

النسوية، البطريركية، التحرر، الخضوع، الزواج.

Résumé

Cet article met en exergue l'importance de l'émancipation des femmes, intra ou extra-mariage, selon certains récits de Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Partant de la conviction que l'inégalité des sexes est d'origine économique, Gilman estimant, ainsi, qu'une relation conjugale fondée sur le respect, l'amour et un véritable partenariat corrèlle généralement avec une autosuffisance féminine.

Mots-clé

féminisme, mariage, indépendance, patriarcat, domesticité