

The Clipped Life of the Wife in Edith Wharton'S Short Story Entitled "A Journey"

Ratna Asmarani

Faculty of Humanities - Diponegoro University

ratna_asmarani@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the life of the young wife that is clipped by many "othering" factors that prevent her from becoming a Self. The analysis is focused on the "othering" factors and the impacts on the young wife and on her relationship with her sick husband. The analysis is done through the perspective of existentialism combining the existentialism of Sartre and Beauvoir. Since the focus is on the female character, the particular perspective used is on the existential feminism focusing on the "woman-being-for-others" mode of being. The methods of research are the combination of library research method with its close-reading technique, the qualitative method, and the contextual method of literary analysis. The result shows that it is difficult for a wife to be a Self when she has to face many "othering" factors such as the husband's illness, the doctors' suggestion to move to a temperate climate State, the new environment, and the death of the husband while they are still on the train. These "othering" factors do not only clip the wife's socialization, love and relationship with her husband, and anticipation to return home, but also clip the wife's life so that she will never have a chance to be a Self forever.

Keywords: existentialism, "othering" factors, contextual method of literary analysis

INTRODUCTION

"A Journey" is a short story written by a prolific American female writer, Edith Wharton (1862-1937). It is about a young wife who takes her sick husband home to die after a futile effort of following doctors' suggestion to stay in a hot climate area for several months. On the train journey back home, the wife has flashes of thoughts and emotions concerning her husband's bad health and its impacts on her previous plans and hopes. The young wife tries to conceal the death of the husband on the train due to her fear of causing more troubles until she experiences an unexpected accident causing her own death on the train next to her death husband's body.

Based on the brief summary of the short story, this paper will deal with the clipped life of the wife from the existentialism perspective. This focus has never been dealt before as shown in the following previous study. Neilson in "Edith Wharton, A Journey" relates the short story with the author's

life (2010). Whitehead in "Make It Short: Edith Wharton's Modernist Practices in Her Short Stories" talks about "Wharton's Narrative Gaps, Ellipses and Absences" (2012). Tanguay in "'A Journey' by Edith Wharton" talks about "Female Roles in Relationships" and also relates the short story with the author's life (2012). Pete in "'A Journey' Literally and Figuratively" talks on the wife's mourning which is carefully hidden (2013). Chelseaicard in "The Dark Days" (2013) relates the short story with the social condition of that time. Preston in "A Journey" focuses on the plot and character (2014). Dermot in "A Journey by Edith Wharton" talks about the theme of "change, acceptance, gender roles, loyalty, independence, conflict and social opinion" (2018).

To support the discussion focusing on the wife's clipped life from the perspective of existentialism, several concepts are used in this paper. The first is the concept of existentialism. Here it is particularly about Sartre's existentialism,

which is from male perspective of Sartre is defined in a simple way as “a concern with the living person and his concrete emotions of anguish, despair, nausea, and the like” (Sartre, 1978: xvi). Another concept from Sartre borrowed for the discussion is his concept on the modes of being which consists of three modes; namely, Being-in-itself (*etre-en-soi*), Being-for-itself (*etre-pour-soi*), and Being-for-others (*etre-pour-autrui*)

According to Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), the first mode of being, Being-in-itself (*etre-en-soi*) is “Non-conscious Being” (Sartre, 1978: 629). Being-in-itself is an existence without consciousness or in other words it is not an existence of the humans. The second mode of being or Being-for-itself (*etre-pour-soi*) is “The nihilation of Being-in-itself; consciousness conceived as a lack of Being, a desire for Being, a relation to Being” (Sartre, 1978: 629). Being-for-itself is the existence of the humans or the existence of the conscious being. The third mode of being, namely Being-for-others (*etre-pour-autrui*) is “my Self exists outside as an object for others. The For-others involves a perpetual conflict as each For-itself seeks to recover its own Being by directly or indirectly making an object out of the other” (Sartre, 1978: 629). Being-for-others is the social existence of beings in which the Self meets the others. There is always a conflict because each existence wants to be the Self or the powerful center contesting with the other Self.

Sartre’s existentialism with the modes of being has the male perspective. This male perspective is brought into female sphere by Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) “her philosophy is focused in the existentialism of Sartre ... she states in general how certain existentialist concepts ... apply to woman’s situation” (Beauvoir, 1956: 8). Known as an existential feminist, de Beauvoir states that “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the Other” (Beauvoir, 1956: 16). De Beauvoir places the woman in the Other position in the Self-Other relationship. Thus in Beauvoir’s opinion, the

woman or the Other is always in conflicting situation with the Self in her subordinate position.

Viewing the woman as the Other, de Beauvoir has a specific view on marriage: “for the vast majority of unmarried workers entertain the hope - often enough illusive - that marriage will release them from work in which they have no real interest and which they regard as a temporary burden” (Beauvoir, 1956: 10). She views that for most women, marriage is supposed to be an ideal escape from a burdening life as female workers. However, de Beauvoir states that it is an illusive hope. On the other side, de Beauvoir views that “Marriage, whatever its form- monogamy, polygamy, or polyandry- was only a secular accident, creating no mystical tie. It involved no servitude for the wife, for she was still integrated with her clan” (Beauvoir, 1956: 92). She states that although the wife is dependent on the husband, for social status and economy, she may not totally under the power of the husband since she still has a tight connection with her own big family where she comes from. Thus marriage is not a total bonding for the wife, at least psychologically and/or emotionally.

Referring to Sartre’s modes of being and reversing de Beauvoir’s positioning of woman as the Other, the existential feminist perspective used in this study will focus on the woman. Positioning the woman as the center of attention, then Sartre’s Being-for-itself is formulized as “Woman-being-for-herself” in which the woman has her own consciousness. Meanwhile Sartre’s Being-for-others is analogous to “Woman-being-for-others” in the existential feminist perspective focusing woman as the Self or center of attention in conflict with others. Others here can be in the form of males in whatever relation and profession, other females, or other forms of existence that must be faced by the woman as the Self, such as disease, moving out, new surroundings, etc.

Supported with the new formula of modes of being which focuses on the woman as the Self, the analysis on the clipped life of the wife in the short story entitled “A Journey” by Edith Wharton is done. The discussion will focus on the “Othering” aspects, the aspects that aim to block

the female to become a Self, a free individual that can develop and actualize herself, that must be faced by the wife and its impacts on her relationship with her husband and on herself.

METHODOLOGY

The data collection to support the discussion is done through library research method while the data analysis is done through close-reading method. The general analysis is done through qualitative method while the contextual method of analysis is focused on the literary analysis combining intrinsic and extrinsic prose elements (Behrendt, 2018). The intrinsic elements focusses on the character, setting, and conflict while the extrinsic elements are based on Sartre's modes of being and de Beauvoir's opinion on marriages for women.

Since the focus of analysis is a woman and the writer is also a woman, the perspective taken is a feminist criticism: "Feminist criticism reads writing and examines its ideology and culture with a woman-centred perspective. Criticism is feminist if it critiques existing disciplines, traditional paradigms about women, nature or social roles, or documents such as work by others, from the point of view of women" (Humm, 1995: 51). The particular feminist perspective applied in the discussion is the existential feminism perspective. This particular perspective is based on the modification of Sartre's modes of being from the perspective of the female since the focus of the discussion is on the modes of being of the female character, while de Beauvoir's concept of Other is modified to refer to the parties which are against the female character's effort to construct her modes of being.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The discussion concerning the wife who has no given name, especially about her clipped life, will be divided into two phases: the phase of moving to Colorado and the phase of returning to New York. The two phases finally lead to the tragically clipped life of the wife.

Before the marriage, the young woman is like being entrapped in a boring life. She is a school teacher who does not seem to have a bright future: "When they married, she had such arrears of living to make up: her days had been as bare as the white-washed schoolroom where she forced innutritious facts upon reluctant children" (Wharton, 2001: 65). Her life is not joyful at all. She does not enjoy her job as a teacher too much and the children are also unwilling to pay attention to her teaching. She also thinks that she does not do useful job as a teacher. Thus it can be said that she does a boring job to earn a living to support her life. In other words her work has no promise to open an exciting life for her, something that she longs so much.

She hopes so much from her marriage. She expects her marriage leads her to a wider, joyful, exciting, and fulfilling life: "His coming had broken in on the slumber of circumstance, widening the present till it became the encloser of remotest chances. But imperceptibly the horizon narrowed" (Wharton, 2001: 65). She is like a sleeping beauty waiting for a prince to awaken her and guide her into a kingdom of joy. However, the moment of freeing happiness is too short. A haunting darkness is creeping slowly but surely.

Phase 1: Moving to Colorado

They start their marriage optimistically. They enjoy life to the fullest feeling that the future is theirs to live in as they want: "A year ago their pulses had beat to one robust measure; both had the same prodigal confidence in an exhaustless future" (Wharton, 2001:65). The wife's flash of memory shows their readiness to face the happy future.

"Othering" Agents

The expected bright future does not come. Some "othering" agents are ready to destroy their hope and their future. The first "othering" agent is in the form of a disease suffered by the husband. The sudden disease that has no name at first is not considered as a serious one; thus it does not need too serious treatment: "At first the doctors had

said that six weeks of mild air would set him right; but when he came back this assurance was explained as having of course included a winter in a dry climate" (Wharton, 2001: 66). However, the treatment in the form of staying for several weeks in a place with temperate weather has no significant effect. Thus the doctors suggest that he should avoid winter by staying in a dry-climate area. It can be concluded that he is vulnerable to cold weather.

The next "othering" agent is in the form of the doctors. They have a big role to the life of the newly-wed couple. The doctors' suggestion makes the new couple move from New York to Colorado to avoid the harsh winter: "They gave up their pretty house, storing the wedding presents and new furniture, and went to Colorado" (Wharton, 2001: 66). The couple leaves comfortable situation at home to move to a new place where they know nobody as suggested by the doctors for the sake of curing the husband's disease.

The third "othering" agent is the new city, Colorado, and the new neighbors. Although it is only described briefly, it can be seen obviously that the wife feels alienated in the new place. She is a stranger there and she cannot fit in: "She had hated it there from the first. Nobody knew her or cared about her" (Wharton, 2001:66). The wife feels like being uprooted without her consent to drift in an unfamiliar place. She is alone and lonely with her sick husband. She is now in the position of the "other", the displaced person.

Clipped Socialization of the Wife

The agents of "othering" are able to change the life of the young wife. The first effect is on the new social life that she has just entered. It is too short for her to enjoy it: "there was no one to wonder at the good match she had made, or to envy her the new dresses and the visiting-cards which were still a surprise to her" (Wharton, 2001: 66). Deep down her heart she feels reluctant to leave her new social life. She is so proud with her marriage and her ideal husband. She still wants to savor her great achievement. She herself sometimes does not believe in her own luck. Thus, it indicates that her marriage takes her to a higher

social status that she has dreamed so far. Now, all the newly-got social life has to be left due to the husband's disease and the doctors' suggestion.

Even sadder is that she cannot have normal social life in the new place. Her life now is only around the sick husband consisting of taking care of him and giving medicine regularly. For her it is as tedious as her former job as a teacher: "The routine of the sick-room bewildered her; this punctual administering of medicine seemed as idle as some uncomprehended religious mummery" (Wharton, 2001: 66). She feels that she is just doing an unending circular activity leading to unclear result. This event also indicates that the wife cannot actualize herself as a potential person. She is bound to her sick husband. She has no life of her own, let alone fill it with things that she wants to do.

When the doctors finally let them returning home, not because the husband has been recuperating but because the doctors see that there is nothing else that they can do to ease the husband's disease, she secretly feels so happy: "How she had rejoiced when the doctors at last gave their consent to his going home! She knew, of course, what the decision meant; they both knew. It meant that he was to die" (Wharton, 2001: 66-67). Although the journey home means preparing the death of her husband, she feels relieved because at least she will return to the familiar surrounding with familiar people. She will not be lonely and alone with her sick husband anymore: "she had perhaps been too long alone with him, and that she would feel differently when they were at home again, surrounded by her robust and buoyant family" (Wharton, 2001: 66). The presence of her family will become a great support for her emotionally and psychologically. Her relief to return home is implied in the following quotation: "she hung out of the window waving unregretful farewells to the acquaintances she had really never liked till then" (Wharton, 2001: 67). She does not feel sad at all to leave the new friends. She is eager to go home.

Clipped Love and Relationship of the Wife to the Husband

Besides clipping the new social circle of the young wife, the agents of "othering" especially in the form of the no-name disease also clips the love and relationship of the wife to the husband. The disease changes the husband. Previously the husband is the healthy, leader type person but now he becomes a weak, dependent person. The role has changed in which the wife must become the guard and the keeper:

The man she had married had been strong, active, gently masterful: the male whose pleasure it is to clear a way through the material obstructions of life; but now it was she who was the protector, he who must be shielded from importunities and given his drops or his beef-juice though the skies were falling (Wharton, 2001: 66).

The young wife is not ready and happy with the new role. She marries because she wants to be protected not vice versa.

The gap in their physical relationship is getting wider. The husband is becoming weaker and weaker while the wife is healthy and energetic. She still longs for adventures which cannot be fulfilled by her sickly husband: "Now their energies no longer kept step: hers still bounded ahead of life, preëmpting unclaimed regions of hope and activity, while his lagged behind, vainly struggling to overtake her" (Wharton, 2001: 66). Unconsciously they are drifted apart. Their interests are no longer the same. The young wife has to curb her desire to have an active and fulfilling life, as can be seen in the following quotation: "When she still found his old self in his eyes as they groped for each other through the dense medium of his weakness. But these moments had grown rare" (Wharton, 2001: 66). Their sexual activities also become rarer and rarer and less qualified. The husband's disease is successful in "othering" the young wife's desires and wants.

The illness also makes the wife and husband like strangers. The gap between them is getting wider and wider. They are close physically but far apart emotionally:

... this increasing childish petulance seemed to give expression to their imperceptible

estrangement. Like two faces looking at one another through a sheet of glass they were close together, almost touching, but they could not hear or feel each other: the conductivity between them was broken (Wharton, 2001: 66).

The sick husband becomes more difficult to appease while the young wife is getting more depressed. Both are being "othered" by the long-lasting illness. Their perseverance to face the illness hand in hand is weakened with the passing of time. Their emotional bond is at the vulnerable point. Nobody can be blamed, each faces his/her "othering" phantom.

The young wife senses this widening gap of separation. She is not close to her husband anymore. There is a kind of unconscious reluctance: "Her hand avoided his damp soft skin, which had lost the familiar roughness of health: she caught herself furtively watching him as she might have watched a strange animal. It frightened her to feel that this was the man she loved" (Wharton, 2001: 66). They are like strangers in a different side of the abyss. She is eyeing her husband curiously. The young wife is shocked with this condition because it makes her question her feeling to her husband.

Sensing the emotional separation, her reaction is typical, she feels guilty and blames herself: "She, at least, had this sense of separation ... Doubtless the fault was hers. She was too impenetrably healthy to be touched by the irrelevancies of disease" (Wharton, 2001: 66). She blames herself for being healthy unlike her husband. It is ironical because she is very healthy while her husband is so sick. Thus in her position of being "othered" by the husband's disease the young wife is "othering" herself further. In her cornered position she feels that "Life had a grudge against her: she was never to be allowed to spread her wings" (Wharton, 2001: 66). It is her fate to be the "other". She cannot avoid what is constructed for her. She cannot live her life to the fullest. That kind of life is not for her. Her life is not hers to construct and fulfilled.

Phase 2: Returning to New York

The doctors' permission to return home open a new possibility for the wife if not for the husband since it means that there is no more alternative to cure the disease. In other words, they are going home in order to bury the dying husband soon. The trip from Colorado to New York take around three days by train. This time the young wife is happily anticipating to meet her family and the familiar surrounding that they have left before.

Clipped Anticipation of the Wife

However, this return trip is not easy because the husband's illness is getting worse and worse. Again the "othering" agent in the form of serious illness has a big role in the journey home. As stated by the wife, they can pass the first day of the return trip well enough: "The first twenty-four hours had passed off well. He revived a little and it amused him to look out of the window and to observe the humours of the car" (Wharton, 2001: 67). The wife can relax a bit while nurturing her hope of returning home safely. She is too tired to face another problem in the train journey.

Again, her wife's simple hope is not met fully. The second day on the train does not run as well as the first day. The husband's condition is getting worse: "The second day he began to grow weary ... That night he slept badly and the next morning his temperature frightened her" (Wharton, 2001: 67). The young wife's distress is accumulated with the passage of time. This condition is worsened by the disturbing attention from the other passengers and the train porter. Their intention is good, actually, but the haunting attention burdened the wife because she loses her privacy and has to answer their silent questions concerning her husband's condition: "She felt the others observing him too, and hovered restlessly between him and the line of interrogative eyes" (Wharton, 2001: 67). Actually, their constant curiosity serves as an "othering" agent not only to the wife but also to the sick husband. Unconsciously it clips the freedom of the wife to be herself and to relax a bit during the distressful journey.

Before the wife goes to her own berth to rest, she accompanies her husband in his berth while preparing him to sleep: "The hours dragged on in a dreary inoccupation. Towards dusk she sat down beside him and he laid his hand on hers. The touch startled her" (Wharton, 2001: 67). The young wife who is so stressful and preoccupied with her own thought almost does not realize her husband's presence. She is too tense to get home and to meet her family. Deep down in her heart she wants to share her burden with the people that she knows well.

The cheerful thought of meeting the members of her family "This time to-morrow—" (Wharton, 2001: 67) makes her go to bed feeling rather relieved: "she tried to cheer herself with the thought that in less than twenty-four hours they would be in New York. Her people would all be at the station to meet her—she pictured their round unanxious faces pressing through the crowd" (Wharton, 2001: 68). Tomorrow evening she will be with the familiar faces who will help her taking care of the dying husband. She will not be alone again. Can her simple hope be fulfilled?

The weary young wife sleeps a long but troubled sleep. She wakes up in the morning, feeling fresh and happy:

It was always a struggle for her not to be cheerful in the morning. Her cheeks burned deliciously under the coarse towel and the wet hair about her temples broke into strong upward tendrils. Every inch of her was full of life and elasticity. And in ten hours they would be at home!" (Wharton, 2001: 67).

The quotation indicates that the young wife is basically a healthy, cheerful, energetic person. It is so sad that such a person has to curb her bouncing energy for a long time. At this moment, every nerve in the young wife's body is anticipating for a brighter moment after the long gloomy period in an unfamiliar place that they have just left.

The optimistic anticipation of the wife is drastically clipped by the startling fact. It is startling but not unpredicted. It is the death of the husband on the train that is so startling:

She leaned over him and drew up the shade. As she did so she touched one of his hands. It felt cold . . . She bent closer, laying her hand on his arm and calling him by name. He did not move . . . His head fell back; his face looked small and smooth; he gazed at her with steady eyes” (Wharton, 2001: 69).

When she optimistically wakes her husband in the morning, she finds out that he has already died during the night. This fact is not anticipated by the young wife.

The Fear of Facing the Worst Fact Alone

The young wife is shocked by the fact that now she is alone, among strangers on the train, with the dead body of her husband. She is panicked when she remembers her unforgettable experience seeing the incident of the death on the train:

In a terrifying flash of remembrance there arose before her a scene she had once witnessed in travelling, when a husband and wife, whose child had died in the train, had been thrust out at some chance station . . . she had never forgotten the dazed look with which they followed the receding train” (Wharton, 2001: 69).

That incident traumatizes her and she does not want to experience the same shocking fate. The fear almost makes her paralyzed. However she has to find a way to save her from the same disaster: “At all costs she must conceal the fact that he was dead” (Wharton, 2001: 70). This is her solution to overcome her fear of being stranded with the dead husband’s body in an unfamiliar railway station.

She tries to prolong the other passengers and the porter from knowing the death of her husband till the train is on the way to the last station. If known before the train enters the last station, she will not face any problem. However the effort to conceal the fact that her husband has already died is not easy for her who has been gripped by fear. The young wife closes the curtains tightly in order to hide the dead body of her husband: “She noticed that they still parted

slightly with the motion of the car, and finding a pin in her dress she fastened them together” (Wharton, 2001: 70). For a moment the situation is safe for her. The biggest thread comes from the porter whose job is to tidy up the berth in the morning including opening the curtains closing the berth. The young wife can postpone the porter from opening the curtains by saying that he has not woken up yet (Wharton, 2001: 70), but the excuse will not last long. After a moment he returns and: “At length he said: “Ain’t he going to get up? You know we’re ordered to make up the berths as early as we can”” (Wharton, 2001: 70). He has to do his job as instructed because if not he will get certain sanction.

Another way taken by the young wife to buy time is by asking the porter to get the husband’s morning milk and she herself will take it to her sick husband. To give the impression that her husband has drunk the milk “She decided to drink the milk” (Wharton, 2001: 70). This trick only lasts for a while because:

... after a while the porter came back to get it.

“When’ll I fold up his bed?” he asked.

“Oh, not now—not yet; he’s ill—he’s very ill. Can’t you let him stay as he is? The doctor wants him to lie down as much as possible.”

He scratched his head. “Well, if he’s really sick—”

He took the empty glass and walked away, explaining to the passengers that the party behind the curtains was too sick to get up just yet (Wharton, 2001: 70).

The young wife has to use another strategy to hide the real condition of her husband. She begs for the porter’s tolerance by stating that her sick husband needs a lot of rest according to the doctor’s suggestion. However, this strategy draws much attention to herself again and to the tightly closed curtains. The previous passengers and the new ones are curious and some offer helps to take care of her husband. She firmly declines the offers which make the passengers becomes more curious. Thus, whatever the young wife’s effort to hide the death of her husband, she always becomes the

object of attention. The young wife has no freedom of her own.

The Inner Turmoil Triggered by Excessive Fear

The fear of being known that she has hidden the fact that her husband has died some time before makes the young wife more and more panicked. She fully realizes that she has to act convincingly to avoid suspicion when the train comes to the last destination in New York and the death of her husband is publicly known: "I must pretend I don't know. I must pretend I don't know. When they open the curtains I must go up to him quite naturally—and then I must scream" (Wharton, 2001: 73). However, fear and guilt are still haunting her. Now she is the prey of her own fear and guilt. The clashing of fear and guilt exhausts her and she is on the brink of hallucination: "she gazed fixedly at the curtains ... through it she saw her husband's face—his dead face ... close in front of her, small and smooth, was her husband's face ... and suddenly she felt the touch of his smooth skin" (Wharton, 2001: 74). She is haunted by the death face of her husband. She cannot avoid seeing his husband's death face wherever she looks.

The young wife, after eating a bit of biscuit and a sip of her husband's brandy finally can sleep. However it is a troubled sleep filled with frightening dream which look like a real one:

She was dead in her turn, and lay beside him with smooth upstaring face. How quiet it was!—and yet she heard feet coming, the feet of the men who were to carry them away . . . She could feel too—she felt a sudden prolonged vibration, a series of hard shocks, and then another plunge into darkness: the darkness of death this time (Wharton, 2001: 75).

In her dream the young wife sees that she is dead and the efforts to bring her alive are futile. It turns out that this strange dream is a kind of premonition to the young, healthy wife's fate.

Waking up in a confusing mind due to the troubled sleep, the young wife is further bewilders

by the fact that the train is approaching the last station:

the train passed into the Harlem tunnel. The journey was over; in a few minutes she would see her family pushing their joyous way through the throng at the station. Her heart dilated. The worst terror was past . . ." (Wharton, 2001: 75).

For a moment a hope is budding in the young wife's mind. She is so relieved that her burden will be over soon. She will be with her family. She will be safe to start a new step in her life.

This relieving thought is cut by the porter's question that brings her back to the fact that she is still hiding the husband's death: "'We'd better get him up now, hadn't we?'" asked the porter, touching her arm. He had her husband's hat in his hand and was meditatively revolving it under his brush" (Wharton, 2001: 75). The porter, in doing his job, clips the young wife's happy thought. The young wife, abruptly drawn into the personally frightening reality, is so distracted. Moreover, the porter is holding the dead husband's hat. Seeing the hat, the young wife gets so panicked. The young wife who is standing at that time suddenly loses her balance because of the sudden dark situation. It is not clear whether the dark situation is caused by the train's entering a tunnel or by the sudden fainting of the wife due to her panic. Whatever the cause, the effect of the wife's losing her balance is so tragically fatal: "She looked at the hat and tried to speak; but suddenly the car grew dark. She flung up her arms, struggling to catch at something, and fell face downward, striking her head against the dead man's berth" (Wharton, 2001: 75). This accident clips the young wife's life. She loses her life a moment before she get off the train to meet her family. There is no more chance for her to have a new start as aptly represented by the following quotation: "Life had a grudge against her: she was never to be allowed to spread her wings" (Wharton, 2001: 66). From the start the energetic and healthy young wife is fated to have a clipped life. Everything is against her effort to have a life that lets her to actualize herself.

CONCLUSION

Being a Self is not an easy matter, particularly for a wife as portrayed in Edith Wharton's short story entitled "A Journey". There are too many obstacles that must be faced all alone. The husband's illness, the doctors' suggestion to move to a temperate-climate area, the new surrounding are some that must be handled by the wife alone leaving no chance for her to be herself. There is a hope for the wife to be herself when they are allowed to return home by the doctors who have given up. However this hope is clipped by the death of the husband on the train before arriving home. Trying to buy time by hiding the death of the husband, the fear of being known creates a paralyzing inner conflict leading to the clipped life of the young wife due to losing her balance inside the still running train. Thus, to be a Self and to be herself is not possible for the young wife since she has to face "the others" who have a big power to clip every chance for her to be a Self and herself.

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