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# THE PPE REVIEW

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# EDITORS' NOTE

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Philosophy, Politics and Economics! PPE was first established in Oxford as a major to focus on the fascinating and intellectual fruitful intersection between three key academic disciplines almost a hundred years ago. Since then many PPE programs and majors have been established throughout the Western world. Through these programs, hundreds of students have been able to explore multiple academic disciplines without the often restrictive boundaries of administrative obstacles. With such freedom, scholars have been able to make many unique contributions to multiple fields thereby improving the quality of discourse in many academic settings.

Philosophy, Politics and Economics aims to bring this wonderful field to the entire world, especially to high school students around the world. This issue highlights work from three US-based student and two from Korean students. Four are from high school students, while one features work from students who have already matriculated to college. We received 57 submissions for our first issue, but selected the five that best exemplified the combination of the three disciplines. Thank you to all scholars who submitted; we hope to read your future work and congratulations to our first class of PPE scholars!

- *Philosophy, Politics and Economics Editors*

# CONTENTS

## **Strategic Divergence: Explaining the Current State of U.S.-Israeli Relations**

*Lee Smolding*

William B. Travis High School (Austin, TX)

Pages 07-17

## **Trade Relations Between U.S. and China**

*Alice K. Goulding*

Loyola High School (Los Angeles, CA)

Pages 19-30

## **Philosophy of Gender**

*Gravis Smith Westering*

Mira Mesa High School (San Diego, CA)

Pages 31-40

## **Nuclear Catastrophe in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: The End or a New Beginning**

*Justin Shin, Daniel Kim, MyungJin Shin, Allyson Kim, Jimin Kim*

World Culture Organization International

Pages 41-57

## **Finding the Self: Tragic Self-Discovery in Kate Chopin's Fiction**

*Chaeyoung Lee*

Chungang University High School (Seoul, South Korea)

Pages 59-73



# Strategic Divergence: Explaining the Current State of U.S.-Israeli Relations

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## **A Question of Interests**

American support for Israel has long been portrayed in terms of a mutually beneficial strategic and political partnership, an alliance between two democracies sharing an important cultural, religious, and juridical heritage. The current rancor between President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu, however, speaks to deeper political and strategic differences between the two countries. In order to comprehend the true causes of the conflict, it is necessary to consider Netanyahu's position on the Israeli political landscape, the place of Israel in U.S. foreign policy, and the differing political and strategic imperatives the two leaders and their countries are confronting. The current state of relations between the U.S. and Israel is the product of a growing conflict between their strategic and political interests, a conflict that has long been obscured thanks to the efforts of the most successful foreign lobby in Washington.

## ***Obama vs. Netanyahu: The Current State of U.S.-Israel Relations***

At present, relations between the U.S. and Israel are at a low point in the wake of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to the U.S. Congress on March 3, 2015. Netanyahu denounced the Obama administration's diplomatic efforts to reach a nuclear accord between the U.S. and the Islamic Republic of Iran (Bryant, 2015). In addition to the speech, Netanyahu further

strained relations with the United States with his comments about Arab-Israeli voters before Israel's March 17 election, and his comments that he would never allow a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict (Falbaum, 2015; Satloff, 2015). Netanyahu's rhetoric has drawn the Obama administration's ire, and the administration has indicated that the United States is prepared to re-evaluate its position on a number of issues pertaining to Israel (Dale, 2015).

The roots of this spat between longtime allies go a great deal deeper than the past few news cycles. The issue of Palestine is case in point: support for a two-state solution to the conflict remains strong in Washington, where a letter signed by 79 Democrat lawmakers asked President Obama to continue to advocate for a two-state solution to the conflict (RT, 2015; Bremmer, 2015). Addressing J Street, a left-leaning Jewish American lobby group, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough argued that Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory in the West Bank, which has been going on for nearly five decades, needed to end. While the Republican Party has generally been on better terms with Israel than the Obama administration of late, the official platform of the Republican Party endorses a two-state solution. President George W. Bush distinguished himself in 2008 by becoming the very first American president to make the case for an independent Palestinian state (Bremmer, 2015; RT, 2015).

In Israel, on the other hand, the idea of a two-state solution is considerably knottier. For Israelis, the idea of a two-state solution raises the thorny prospect of trying to create a geopolitically viable country connecting the Gaza Strip and the West Bank both (Bremmer, 2015). There is also the matter of the Israeli settlements. A two-state solution would require forcing thousands of Israeli settlers from disputed lands, something no Israeli leader wants to be responsible for (Bremmer, 2015). Indeed, taking such a stance would be tantamount to political suicide for an Israeli prime minister or other lawmaker, or would at least incur a terrible backlash, for reasons that will be discussed further below.

Iran is another sticking-point. For the Obama administration, a nuclear accord with Iran is a welcome prospect. Both the U.S. and the Islamic Republic have a common enemy in the ultra-violent Islamist militant group ISIS, but the opportunity the Obama administration sees for a rapprochement between Washington and Tehran goes deeper. For the Obama administration, the fact that Iran holds elections that are actually contested, unlike most other countries in the

region, is a potential harbinger of change (Bremmer, 2015). The administration also finds it significant that the majority of the country is too young to remember the Islamic Revolution of 1978-1979, which swept the shah from power and led to the birth of the Islamic Republic (Bremmer, 2015).

Israel, and Netanyahu in particular, finds Iran a much more daunting rival (Bremmer, 2015). Netanyahu made much of the dire prospects of a nuclear-armed Iran, vividly evoking a story from the biblical Book of Esther concerning Haman, a satrap of the Achaemenid Persian Empire who tried to exterminate the Jews. “Today the Jewish people face another attempt by yet another Persian potentate to destroy us,” Netanyahu said in his address before the U.S. Congress (Washington Post, 2015). Netanyahu’s focus on Iran, however, is best appreciated in light of the March 17 elections, and the place of Likud in the political landscape of the State of Israel.

### *The Israeli Political Landscape*

Israel’s political landscape is famously fragmented and fractious, characterized by a multitude of parties that variously compete and ally with each other. Since 1949, Israel’s very first election, no single party has achieved a majority position within the Knesset, Israel’s parliament, which has 120 seats (Beauchamp, 2015). Israeli voters cast their votes for parties, rather than individual candidates, and they are able to cast votes for more than one party. Seats in the Knesset are allocated according to proportional representation: any party winning two percent of the vote or more is allocated seats in proportion to the percentage of the vote it gained (Matthews, 2013; Kaplan & Friedman, 2009; A. L. G., 2015).

In practice, this electoral system has encouraged the further fragmentation of the Israeli political landscape, and created an outsize role for smaller parties. Smaller Israeli parties and special political interest groups, such as the ultra-Orthodox, have the potential to destabilize ruling coalitions and topple governments, and they are very willing to threaten to do so if their demands are not met. In fact, this very issue is at the heart of Israel’s inability to find the political will to embrace a two-state solution for the conflict with Palestine. The far right segment of the Israeli political spectrum is vigilant against policies and laws it considers to be anti-settler, and any Israeli lawmaker who incurs the wrath of this particular lobby can expect to face a considerable backlash (Freedman, 2010; A. L. G., 2015).

It is on this backdrop that the snap elections of March 17 occurred. In those elections Netanyahu's Likud triumphed over the Zionist Union in a surprise victory, given that previous polls had indicated a lead for the challenging coalition (Satloff, 2015). Famous as the party of Menachem Begin, Likud is a highly influential right-wing party, and the historic rival of the Labor Party, which once played the leading role in Israeli politics. Netanyahu himself emphasized the importance of Israel's security, always a pressing political issue, in the election. Netanyahu's campaign rhetoric emphasized his opposition to Iran, and went to some lengths to portray the center-left Zionist Union as appeasers. In one of a number of controversial ads aired by Likud before the election, Islamic State fighters were shown entering Israel after a leftward turn in the country's politics. Of course, Netanyahu's speech before the U.S. Congress echoed this same theme of Israel's security, and portrayed Iran as an imminent threat (BBC, 2015; Beauchamp, 2015; Tharoor, 2015).

The Zionist Union is a coalition made up of two parties, the Labor Party, now led by Isaac Herzog, and Hatnua, led by Tzipi Livni. The Labor Party was originally the leading force behind the creation of the State of Israel, but it has declined considerably since its historic 1977 defeat by Begin's Likud (Beauchamp, 2015; A. L. G., 2015). Pre-election polls favored the Zionist Union because of the other major political issue at play besides security: the rising costs of living in the State of Israel. From 2008-2014, housing prices rose 55% in Israel, and a report released by Israel's comptroller late last February found that the response of Netanyahu's government had been inadequate and generally ineffectual. This and other increases in costs of living benefited the Zionist Union as the challenger, because this trend has been occurring under Netanyahu's tenure (Beauchamp, 2015; A. L. G., 2015).

The key disadvantage facing the Zionist Union in the last election was the public perception that the Israeli left is weak on security. As seen, Netanyahu successfully appealed to voters' desire for security, particularly vis-à-vis Iran. This goes a long way toward contextualizing Netanyahu's strident opposition to President Obama's now-successful efforts to secure a nuclear accord with the Islamic Republic of Iran (Charbonneau & Nebehay, 2015). Israel's strategic considerations, then, are central to the current discord with the United States. The differences between the political imperatives and incentives facing the U.S. and Israel and their respective leaders are the fundamental cause of the current

tensions. That this should be so is surprising, however, given the long-standing place of Israel in U.S. Politics.

### *The Place of Israel in U.S. Foreign Policy*

It is a recurrent feature of American political culture that any candidate for the presidency, and for that matter a great many other candidates for high office, will invariably express their support for the State of Israel. No other foreign nation commands such reflexive deference and support from American presidential candidates, elected presidents, and other holders of high office (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). Of course, this support goes well beyond rhetoric. Since the events of the Yom Kippur War or October War in 1973, the United States has consistently supplied an unprecedented level of aid to Israel, far in excess of what has been offered to any other state (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

Israel enjoys a great many other perks, too: Washington has provided it with special aid earmarked to help it develop weapons systems of no interest to the Pentagon, such as the Lavi aircraft. The United States favors Israel in the sharing of intelligence, granting it secrets denied to any other NATO partner. In the diplomatic arena, the United States has backed Israel without fail in the United Nations, vetoing 33 United Nations Security Council resolutions critical of Israel since 1982. And of course, the United States has given Israel a great deal of latitude in dealing with the Palestinian territories (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006).

The traditional explanation given for this special relationship centers on the putative benefits the United States gains by supporting Israel. Israel, it is said, is the U.S.'s only democratic ally in a geopolitically volatile region, a region that is of course crucial for U.S. access to oil. As such, Israel is a vital strategic asset. This is of course the exact argument made by many U.S. Politicians, and by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the most influential foreign lobby in Washington (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). On closer inspection, however, this explanation falls completely to pieces.

The idea of Israel as a key strategic asset for the United States in the Middle East dates back to the Cold War, and Israel's stunning 1967 and 1973 victories over Soviet-backed Egypt and Syria. However, even in that period U.S. support for Israel helped to exacerbate and deepen the long-running conflict between Israel and the Arab states, a legacy that is more relevant than ever in contemporary times

(Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). In some cases Israel's actions, fully supported by the United States, have made the region decidedly less stable. A case in point is Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, which brought about the formation of Hezbollah to oppose Israel (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

Ever since 9/11, the idea of Israel as a key strategic asset for the United States has been packaged in terms of a shared commitment to democracy and a shared experience of being targeted by terrorists, supposedly because they are free nations. The problems with this rationale are considerable. For one thing, terrorism describes a range of tactics used in asymmetrical warfare against a militarily stronger foe, not an ideology. Zionists employed terrorism before the creation of the State of Israel, as in the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946, and the United States has supported such terrorists as the Contras in Nicaragua and the UNITA guerrillas in Angola (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). Ironically, U.S. support for Israel has if anything encouraged terrorist attacks on Americans, but—compounding the irony—there is no convincing evidence linking Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda with the various Palestinian militant groups. Indeed, both the Palestinian militant groups and Hezbollah were created to deal with Israel, and both their stated grievances and their targets are entirely in keeping with this (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

If U.S. support for Israel cannot be adequately explained in terms of Israel's putative value as a strategic asset and counter-terrorism partner, it can be explained fulsomely in terms of the broad base of support Israel enjoys in the American population, and the existence of a highly successful Israel lobby. A large cross-section of the American population has long had favorable, supportive views of Israel: 56% of Americans in 1967, after the Six-Day War, and 58% in 2007, according to Gallup (Bard, 2009). To be sure, support has ebbed and flowed, and Gallup indicates that the American public has averaged below 50% support for Israel over the past 40 years. However, support for the Palestinians over the same period has averaged 12%, a telling asymmetry (Bard, 2009).

In addition to the broad support Israel enjoys in the American population, Mearsheimer & Walt (2006, 2007) argue that U.S. support for Israel is comprehensible only in terms of the activities of the so-called "Israel lobby." Rather than a single group, movement, or cabal, the lobby is at most a loose confederation of different advocacy groups, movements, and schools of thought, united only in

their desire to support Israel and advance its relationship with the United States. There are three main interest groups or movements within the lobby, and their reasons for supporting Israel differ: pro-Israel American Jews, the Christian Right, and neo-conservatives (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007; Savigny & Marsden, 2011).

Pro-Israel American Jews are the core of the movement, but the qualifier “pro-Israel” is necessary to distinguish them from the many American Jews for whom Israel is a minor issue or non-issue (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). This part of the lobby generally consists of Zionist hardliners, represented most prominently by AIPAC. It is important to note, however, that most American Jews are much more willing to make concessions on the issue of Palestine. The second part of the lobby consists of Christian Zionists, most prominently represented by Pastor John Hagee’s Christians United for Israel (CUFI). Christian Zionists support Israel on moral and religious grounds, generally believing that Israel’s establishment in 1948 was the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Finally, the third strand in the lobby consists of the neo-conservatives, who support the State of Israel on ideological grounds, because it is a democracy and a long-standing American ally (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007; Savigny & Marsden, 2011).

The pro-Israel lobby works closely with Israel, and has extensive influence with the U.S. Congress and the presidency. AIPAC in particular goes to great lengths to cultivate support with U.S. lawmakers, securing campaign contributions for politicians deemed sufficiently pro-Israel from a variety of pro-Israel political action committees. Candidates who incur AIPAC’s ire can expect to be the target of letter-writing campaigns, and for those same fund-raising networks to be mobilized in service of their opponents (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). AIPAC now exercises an unchallenged hold over the U.S. Congress, where real debate about U.S. policy toward Israel does not occur. And thanks to AIPAC’s command of powerful fund-raising networks, the organization also has significant influence over the presidency (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

If U.S. support for Israel is to be explained in terms of the success of mostly ideologically-motivated lobbying and its effects on the American government, then the possibility exists that contra the received wisdom, unqualified support for Israel might not be in the best interests of the United States. Indeed, as seen,

American support for Israel has complicated and impeded America's dealings with other Middle Eastern nations, particularly the Arab nations neighboring Israel. There is thus a conflict between the political incentives created by the Israel lobby, and the United States' own strategic imperatives in the Middle East.

### *The U.S. and Israel: Strategic and Political Differences*

On the surface, there is an apparent paradox concerning Netanyahu's opposition to Obama's nuclear accord with Iran: the deal will actually curb Iran's nuclear program for at least a decade, and calls for Iran to shut down over two-thirds of its centrifuges, equipment which could in principle be used to make a nuclear warhead (Charbonneau & Nebehay, 2015). Why, then, has Netanyahu so stridently opposed it? The answer is to be found in the concessions the United States and other Western powers are offering Iran, concessions Israel finds unacceptable. While Washington and Tehran remain very much at odds in many respects, the U.S. and its allies are offering an end to the economic sanctions they have imposed on the Islamic Republic (Charbonneau & Nebehay, 2015).

President Obama has been clear that the deal with Iran is based on "unprecedented verification" rather than trust, but it is a marked improvement in relations between the U.S. and Iran, a trend Israel finds ominous. Iran and Israel are traditional enemies, and the U.S. is Israel's traditional backer. For Israel, the Obama administration is not stabilizing the Middle East; rather, the American president is granting their arch-nemesis Iran important diplomatic and economic concessions. If the agreement leaves Iran farther from being able to build a nuclear warhead, it also leaves it less diplomatically isolated and in a much stronger position economically, and that is a prospect that Netanyahu's government finds unacceptable (Charbonneau & Nebehay, 2015; Rhodan, 2015).

In the last election, Netanyahu was at a disadvantage with respect to the economy, but his party more than compensated for this on the issue of security. From the standpoint of selectorate theory, security or defense is a public good (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2003; Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2011). In a democracy such as Israel, a leader who fails to deliver adequate public goods will be removed. To be sure, this would apply to any leader of Israel, and in some form it applies to the United States and every other democracy as well. However, Israel's security environment is a high-threat one, and as seen, Netanyahu successfully

staked his party's chances on his own security credentials.

Following selectorate theory, Netanyahu's opposition to Iran, and to President Obama's nuclear accord with Iran, is entirely comprehensible (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2003; Bueno de Mesquita & Smith, 2011). Netanyahu gives every indication of being ideologically committed in his opposition to the accord, but his position is also entirely in keeping with the political incentives and imperatives he faces. Because his party was weak on the economy but traditionally stronger on security, Netanyahu had to emphasize security. Iran is the most obvious target, given its status as Israel's arch-nemesis (Charbonneau & Nebel, 2015; Rhodan, 2015).

President Obama faces a very different set of political imperatives and incentives. Obama is facing a particularly volatile strategic landscape in the Middle East, particularly with the Syrian conflict and the rise of the Islamic State. In the wake of the protracted American campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American people are war-weary, and another invasion of the Middle East would be politically unviable (Bremmer, 2015). The president's willingness to countermand the Israel lobby also speaks to a more fundamental sea change underway in American politics: the power of the Israel lobby has begun to wane. Leading American Jews are beginning to take a more critical stance of Israel, particularly with regard to its policies against the Palestinians. Former staffers from J Street have even joined the pro-peace campaign If Not Now, which is critical of Israel's position in the conflict with Palestine. At the same time, Arab-Americans and American Muslims have begun to exert more of an impact in politics and on the media. Political progressives are also becoming more willing to oppose the Israel lobby, AIPAC in particular (Jilani, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

The current state of American and Israeli relations thus reflects the mounting conflict between uncritical U.S. support for Israel and the U.S.'s own best strategic and political interests. The Israel lobby has long been very effective in creating incentives for American lawmakers to support Israel unquestioningly, even when such support has jeopardized the best interests of the United States—and sometimes of Israel itself. Now, however, a volatile Middle East, a war-weary American public, and the growing influence of voices within the U.S. critical of

Israel, the United States is beginning to revisit its special relationship with Israel. As the nuclear accord with Iran demonstrates, the strategic interests of the United States and Israel are increasingly at cross-purposes. The age of reflexive American support for Israel is beginning to wane, as the Obama administration confronts strategic imperatives increasingly at odds with those of AIPAC and the State of Israel. A rift has formed, and it is likely to keep growing.

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# Trade Relations Between U.S. and China

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## **Trade Relations Between U.S. and China**

Over the past three decades, the economic ties between China and the U.S. expanded substantially. The total trade value between these countries rose from \$2 billion in 1979 to \$592 billion in 2014. According to the U.S., China is its biggest source of imports, the second-largest trade partner, and the third-largest export market. Market for the U.S. firms is provided by China, through direct and indirect exports of the U.S. to China and the investment firms of the U.S. trading in China. These countries have stayed globally competitive since many of the U.S. firms share in the Chinese market (Morrison, 2015). For example, general motors Company from the U.S. has invested heavily in China and sells more cars in China compared to the sales made in the U.S. Therefore, the trade relations between these two countries have paved way for benefits though with some few challenges which will be analyzed in this paper.

The trade associations between the U.S. and China have been helpful to both countries. The most recent developments for the two countries affirm this. Various developments have taken place since the beginning of 2015. On March 2015, the president of the U.S. proposed an anti-terror law to the Chinese that required the high technology companies to hand over encryption keys for surveillance access. The continued trade relations have depicted that low-cost goods are imported by the U.S. from China. This situation greatly benefits the consumers from the U.S.

In addition, China the U.S. is China's destination for the final assembly of its products. In the United States, the Chinese-made inputs for production have lowered the general costs of U.S. various products. As a result of this, China has become the largest foreign holder of the treasury securities with an estimated figure of \$1.24 trillion of the U.S. since December 2014. The interest rates of the U.S. government debt have remained low due to China's purchases (Rauch & Trindade, 2002).

### *Trade Development Between U.S. and China*

The trade between the U.S. and China rose significantly following the establishment of diplomatic ties between them in 1979 (Robin & Reidenbach, 1989). During this period, a bilateral trade agreement was signed by both countries. Ever since this period, China has become the fastest-growing export market for the U.S. As for China, the U.S market is important and its significance is expected to rise in the coming years. The Chinese marketplace is also essential to the U.S, a condition that has led to the growth of China's private consumption and living standards. While the two countries engage in the trade, real and huge benefits have been experienced by the U.S. China also enjoys some significant benefits from the trade as well. U.S investors account for over \$62.2 billion in China while more than 58,000 projects are also held by the Americans in China. These relations have produced great developments for China. In 2008, China had \$8 billion profits which it gained from the trade relation (Morrison & Labonte, 2008).

### *U.S.-China Trade Deficit*

Among the factors affecting these trade relations is the trade deficit between the U.S and China. It rose from \$10 billion in 1990 to \$342 billion in 2012. The trade deficit between the U.S and China has risen for the past several years. The deficit is significantly larger than any other trading groups and partners of America. Various analysts have described the trade deficit is as a result of imbalances that damage the economy of the U.S. The trade relationship is also said to be unfair. Others argue that the trade deficit reflects the global supply chains. In these chains, China is the final point of the export-oriented assembly. The U.S trade deficit in China would be reduced with the establishment of bilateral trade measurements

in accordance with the value added which occurs in each country before exports.

In 2014, the U.S merchandise exports to China were \$124.0 billion compared with the lower levels of those in 2013. The significant rise made China the third-largest merchandise export of the U.S after Mexico and Canada. The total U.S exports that went to China rose to 9.1% in 2014 from 2.1% in 2000. The merchandise U.S exports to China that caught the top five positions were motor vehicles, aircraft and parts, oilseeds and grains, semiconductors, waste and scrap, among electronic components. The U.S exports to China increased by 295%, which was the fastest growth rate to have been witnessed among its top 10 export markets. On the other hand, China became the second-largest agricultural market of the U.S in 2014. In this, the exports of the U.S have found a stable market in the export services of China (Morrison, 2015). In 2014, these exports totaled to \$41.5 billion, making China a stable market for the services from the U.S.

With the existence of the trade deficit between these two countries, many trade analysts have continued to argue that China could prove to be a more significant market for the U.S in the near future. Being one of the world's fastest growing economies, China's growth rate is likely to increase if the economic reforms will be provided. China aims at upgrading its industries, modernizing its infrastructure, and improving the living standards of its rural areas; hence generating substantial demand for the foreign services and goods. The purchasing power of the Chinese citizens has been improved substantially. This aspect has been evident in the urban areas, especially along the east coast of China. China has become a potentially huge market due to its large foreign exchange reserves and its population of 1.37 billion.

A report by the McKinsey & company indicated that China is likely to have 630 million middle class households by 2022. The private consumption of China is much lower than that of the U.S, even though the rate of consumption is rising rapidly. From 2002 to 2013, the annual average rate of consumption was 10.3% while the U.S had 2.5%. Efforts of the Chinese government to increase domestic spending have been initiated in order to reduce the trade deficit between the two countries. This will also lessen China's dependence on the exports of other countries. It will also enable it to become its own contributor of economic growth. Large-scale spending levels of the government of China can be reduced by its attempts of developing and modernizing its key industries, boosting the social safety net, reducing pollution,

modernizing and expanding its infrastructure, and raising incomes in the rural areas of the country. This means that the current trade deficit is likely to end if China makes the above corrections on the highlighted areas (Morrison, 2015).

### *China's and U.S Contribution in Trade*

China is the world's largest mobile network and can use this opportunity to become one of the fastest growing markets in the world. The country has 1.29 billion mobile phone subscribers who are likely to predict increased revenues in the coming years. This is in attempts to stabilize the company's products. The American Boeing company, also operating in China, is likely to extent its boundaries to commercial airlines outside the U.S the more. Before 2008, the U.S was the largest Internet user. After 2008, China replaced the U.S as the world's largest Internet user. Towards the end of 2013, China had an estimate of 618 million users compared with the 262 million users in the U.S during that time. Even though these figures depict China's potential in enhancing its economy, the U.S has a population percentage of 82 Internet users while China has 45%.

Some of the American states have signed contracts with Chinese firms in order to have their products manufactured in China but shipped to the U.S. In this, the value-added that occurs is relatively small compared with the final cost of the product. Therefore, these U.S firms benefit a lot from the trade. A research study by the University of California investigated the production of Apple 30 Gigabyte video iPod. This invention was prepared in China by a Taiwanese company with some parts that were produced in Asia. The study depicted that the Chinese workers who assembled the products would receive only \$4 or 2.8% while the rest would go to the U.S firms. The study also indicated that Apple earned not less than \$80 on each product, a condition that makes it the largest beneficiary of the trade relations between the two countries. Through the sale of these products, Apple has become profitable and competitive through innovation in the engineering and development of iPod. This has enabled the Apple Company to source its largest portion of production on the countries with low costs of production such as China. This iPod example means that the global supply changes have made it difficult to interpret the trade data of the U.S. The data analyzes the source of the products but does not underline the beneficiaries of the trade.

The U.S has investment ties with China. There is a growing large role held through investment in the commercial ties between these countries. China has invested greatly in the U.S securities, non-bond investments, and foreign direct investment (FDI). China's investment in the U.S comprises of a significant share of China's investment. China also holds a significant share of the U.S securities. The bulk of U.S investment in China is constituted by FDI. The U.S investments cover securities that are held by other countries. The Treasury Department defines the U.S treasury holdings as securities that are held in foreign countries by foreign residents. The foreign bodies include institutions and banks except the cases where the owners have direct investment relationships with the U.S. The U.S statutes define FDI as the control or ownership, indirectly or directly, by a foreign resident of 10% that is incorporated into an equivalent interest of a U.S branch or enterprise. FDI data is reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) to flow to and from the United States. In this, a number of the Chinese investments are not reflected in the BEA data; hence fail to meet the U.S definition of FDI.

### *Trade Operations Between Both Countries*

The trade relations of the U.S and China are reflected by the U.S private and public securities which are held by China (Hufbauer, Wong & Sheth, 2006). These include; U.S government agency, treasury securities, and equities such as stocks. Majority of the U.S securities are held by China and largely attribute to the policy of exchange rates. The markets of these exchange rates limit the U.S currency appreciation. The Chinese exporters who are often paid in U.S dollars are required by their government to turn their dollars into the Chinese currency. It is due to this condition that the Chinese government has accumulated lots of dollars. The Chinese do not hold on to the U.S dollars since they do not have significant benefits; hence the government has chosen to invest the dollars into the treasury securities of the U.S. As a result of these relations, China's investment in the private and public U.S securities has increased to trillion amounts since 2013.

Various trade analysts have depicted that China has held large holdings in the U.S debt securities. This issue gives the Chinese government leverage over the foreign policy of the U.S which involves the trade policy (Mann, 1999). The large share of the U.S debt securities which are held by China could be sold by the

Chinese government, which is termed as a threat. This could result from a policy dispute; hence damaging the economy of the U.S. Additionally, the U.S debts held by China gives it a little practical leverage against the U.S. Both the Chinese and U.S economies would be killed by China's attempt to sell the debt securities of the U.S that it holds. The economic dependency and the growing stability of the U.S would also be destroyed if the debt securities are sold (Saaty & Cho, 2001).

China is the main controller of the U.S treasury securities. Its holdings are equal to 6.8% of the total U.S public debt since 2014. Therefore, a move by the Chinese government to sell the U.S debt securities would depreciate the global currencies of the U.S dollar (Guo, 2004). This would also value the remaining holdings of the dollar assets of the U.S. Analysts have also held that China continues to peg the RMB to the American dollar. Through this, China will have little choice apart from purchasing the U.S dollar assets in efforts to uphold it.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) continues to stream between China and the U.S. The level of FDI that flows between them is relatively small compared with the volume of trade between them. Trade analysts contend that the commercial ties of these countries could be increased with an expansion in the bilateral FDI flow. The main U.S federal agency that controls and collects FDI data flows to and from the U.S is the BEA. A historical- cost basis is used to show the stock of the U.S FDI that is held in China. The 2013 results depicted that the historical-cost analysis was \$61.5. The annual FDI flow between the two countries has changed significantly on an annual basis. In 2008, China realized a peak of \$16billion in FDI. In other times, the FDI flows have a negative value indicating the presence of fund outflow by investors from the U.S in China to the U.S (Cline & Kim, 2010).

In 2013, the annual FDI flows in China rose to \$2.4 billion from \$500 million in 2009. The majority-owned affiliates of the U.S employed 1.6 million workers in China as estimated by BEA. About 699,000 workers were in the manufacturing industries in 2012. On a historical-cost analysis, the Chinese FDI stock in the U.S was \$8.1 billion throughout 2013 according to BEA. However, analysts have depicted that the data from BEA does not capture the entire investments on China's FDI in the U.S. The data from BEA is different from that of the Rhodium Group which is a private advisory and consultancy Research Company showing that the annual Chinese FDI flows in 2008 rose from \$1.7 billion to \$14 billion in 2013 (Morrison, 2015)

Apart from the differences in the research by diverse research bodies, the official FDI data of China is divergent from that of the United States (Branstetter & Foley, 2010). This is due to the difference in the large methodologies that are used. The Chinese cumulative data of U.S FDI was \$73.5 billion in 2013 while the flow of FDI between the two countries was \$3.4 billion in the same year. After much consideration of the above report, it was noted that the U.S FDI flows were lower compared with the U.S FDI flows (Morrison, 2015).

### *Trade Challenges*

Due to the rise in disputes on cyber security, the Chinese government is afraid that this could be a major problem threatening to be a huge hindrance in the bilateral relationship between them and the United States. It is due to this issue that the Chinese government is concerned with measuring the U.S government's level of commitment to it. Significant pressure that will enable them destroy the long national struggle will not be offered as this will accord them technology access as used by the western countries.

Cyberspace has been formed by their economic espionage and has thereafter become a segment of the usual business act that led to the protection of intellectual property as a result of the loops that developed into deeper problems. China's pervasive nature is reflected in its efforts to offer to take years of continuous effort in order to guarantee that the entire subject is well managed. However, an immediate solution is not possible. In order to avoid further destruction, there has to be proof of the progress in order to build the existing relation between the two countries, thereby reducing the international affairs' source of trouble (Sachs et al., 1994).

Cyber security has potential harm to the U.S and China as well. There has been a lot of exaggeration in a variety of discussions that relate to cyber security. However, its source usually leads to uncertainty in the intent of exact capabilities, assessment, and effect. Pointless policy recommendations are brought about by such uncertainty. Stealing intellectual property is the worry expressed by China, where their vulnerability to the theft is increased by the weak nature of the American defenses. China has an upper hand in terms of economic espionage activities. A clear cut benefit is not one of the effects to China. It is difficult to

conclude whether they are affected by the assessment of this theft (Du & Tao, 2008).

Intangibles that are a formation of the mentality are ruled by the term “intellectual property”. The protection and security to trademarks is offered by intellectual property rights. It also recognizes and differentiates the origin of the goods. Domain labels, trade secrets, and designs, as well as brand names are usually in line with the protection of the trademarks. The authors of original pieces such as literary, musicals, or other performances and works are provided with protection for copyrights in the meantime. The initiators and inventors who discover and formulate non-obvious and new inventions are accorded statutory rights that are in form of patents. According to Liu, Burrige and Sinclair (2002), exclusive rights to use, manufacture and to develop the inventions are protected by the patents.

Intellectual property rights such as trademarks were used by China during the course of the trade relations. This is because China has benefited from the reputation that had been established by the United States, regardless of the manner in which it has tried to locate its offices in the urban locations that are close to the U.S Company’s headquarters. Therefore, China has benefited from the U.S since the time the community popularized itself with FDI investments which took a period of six months. It was after this period that China enjoyed access to sales, networks and databases on top of the marketing expertise which led to low-cost and quick renovation. The intellectual property rights that were in the form of trademarks ought to remain to the U.S since China is working under the brand names of the U.S (Ma, Van Assche & Hong, 2009).

Research indicates that China is the second world’s leading manufacturer of automotive products. Nevertheless, the system is bound by distribution challenges since the automotive parts require ships for transportation. Even under the best of circumstances, this art of transporting heavy materials is challenging. Tsunamis external shocks have led to difficulties in the distribution segment. Many of the producers are affected by fear of supplying their materials to the global network. In addition, the container ships, which transport the materials, are likely to take 30 or more days before reaching their destination. This means that the automakers will face problems in the course of the month when they run out of the parts (Liu, Wang & Wei, 2001).

Of much concern are the U.S manufacturers. The dominant operations of these engineers have enabled the producers to benefit from their strategies. The lean operations or the Just-In- Time (JIT) inventory control are the major approaches that have helped to shed light on the inherent risks. This is because fewer inventories are needed when the JIT systems are functioning well. In addition, increasing inventory is wasteful (Gadbaw, 1988). Alternatively, significant economies of scale can result from the reduction of the number of suppliers in each country.

The dealer is very essential in the supply chain of U.S and China. The dealer should be able to produce the materials being sold. Otherwise, the system would breakdown in case of an emergency. For example, if fire breaks out in a large scale supplier of valves, there will be a quick shut down of valves in the entire world. This also means that cars and other automotive will not be produced for some time. In order to evade these challenges, the dealers and suppliers from both the U.S and China should rethink risk mitigation strategies in their trade relations. This will enable them to deal with disruptions of their supply chains that are large scale.

Every product is aimed at reaching the hands of the consumer as noted in the above-mentioned context. The trade relations of China and U.S ensure that their products are beneficial after reaching the markets of the world. Since no other countries engage in this trade, their products aim at marking the end of the chain. When the customer takes part in the supply chain, the process is known as customer integration. An effective flow of supplies is achieved when collaboration and interaction is ensured by both the organization and its customers. The customer requirements and needs ought to get quick responses from the organization through an understanding of the culture, market, organization and the nature of the products that are required by the consumers. In short, the above knowledge of the trade relations illustrates the entire chain of trade, in that, every component has some tasks which are necessary for the chain to be effective. Beginning with the raw material manufacturer, it is notable that every activity must commence with the raw materials that help to form the desired parts. The spare parts are then formed after which they are supplied to the dealer and the final consumer (Luo, 2000).

## Conclusion

Definitely, the trade relations between China and the U.S have resulted in a number of benefits. The U.S has embraced Chinese companies that are a major boost to its economy. For example, Wal-Mart, a company in the U.S, is the largest producer of retail goods, all of which trade from different countries, China being one of them. In this case, the companies meet the market test by producing essential and a wide range of consumer goods at very cheap prices. The lower prices have increased the standards of living for many American people (Bown & McCulloch, 2005).

The Chinese companies in the U.S also employ thousands of Americans, providing opportunities to the U.S citizens. Productivity in retail trade has been increased by these countries. Workers sell more goods to consumers as time goes by. For example, the labor productivity rose for close to 8% between 1987 and 2004 in the U.S. This productivity advancement makes retail trade extraordinary unusual. Chinese companies create consumer surplus. This indicates that individuals can get quality products for less money. Some products have flexible prices. There is a chance of getting a product at \$1 dollar less than it was during the previous shopping.

The trade relations between the U.S and China favor the poor people. Products that are produced as a result of the trade links are taxed less. Therefore, the poor people can afford a good number of the country's' products. Many jobs are created through these trade relations. Compared with the past decade, there are more Chinese people working in the U.S today and the vice versa. Therefore, the trade relation has led to the current American and Chinese success. This has been attained throughout the formation of jobs and the provision of low priced-products. Being a great innovator, China is one of the reasons for the growth of the U.S economy today (Bin, 2006).

The two countries have always sought for balanced trade. In this, the exports from the U.S to China should be vigorously expanded. Sustained development could only result in balanced U.S.-China trade. A win-win situation, as well as mutual benefits could also result from the trade links seen between these two countries. These goals could be achieved as a result of exports restrictions by China to the U.S. Exports to China from the U.S should be encouraged to reduce the imbalances. The U.S should also implement new strategies in efforts

to boost exports. In doing so, the U.S will be scraping the cold war mentality and expand the competitiveness of the Chinese products (Friedberg, 2005).

The trade relations between the U.S and China are likely to go into depths. Trade and economic issues should not be politicized in order to oppose trade protectionism and play the full economic and strategic dialogue on trade and commerce. Trade and economic interests should also be expanded in order to recognize the market-economy status of the two countries. Interests in trade and economic cooperation should also be converged. Investment and trade facilitation needs to be enhanced in order to boost the policies of trade between the two countries. The multilateral and bilateral trading systems need to be pushed in order to promote a substantive growth.

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# Philosophy of Gender

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## Abstract

In the recent past years, the underrepresentation of women in academic philosophy and in daily life and almost around the whole world has been expressed as a great concern. If we are to focus our attention on this troubling phenomenon, we will come to know that there are a lot of factors (which vary from region to region and people to people) that have a notable contribution to the gender disparity. A full explanation of this troubling phenomenon is likely to be quite complex since there are, almost certainly, many factors that contribute to the gender disparity. Our most basic goals in this paper are to discuss feminism, and to compare the facts stated by the feminist theorists and the biological determinists and to reach a result on the basis of these arguments.

*Key words:* Feminist theorists, biological determinism, Sex/Gender distinction.

Feminism can be understood as a movement that is meant to bring an end to women's oppression in any aspect of human life. Now most basic question that should arise in one's mind is to understand the term woman. One of many possible ways to understand "woman" in this claim is to take it as a sex term. "Woman" picks out human females and being a human female depends on various biological and anatomical features for instance 'genitalia'. But there are many cases in which many feminists have understood "woman" differently and not solely as a sex term, but considering the gender term that is dependent upon social and cultural factors such as social position. In so doing, they distinguished sex (being female or male) from gender (being a woman or a man), although most ordinary language users appear to treat the two interchangeably.

### *The Gender Distinction*

The term 'gender' is neither easy nor straightforward to characterize and it can mean different things to different feminist theorists. In order to understand the terminology of 'gender', following two most basic and important points can be discussed.

### *Biological Determination*

Talking about the ordinary people, according to which it seems the words gender and sex are coextensive: that women are female human and men are male human. Unlike this opinion of most of the people, history tells that many of the feminist theorists disagree to this and they highly endorse the gender/sex distinction. According to the opinion of those theorists, the term 'sex' denotes males and females of the homo sapiens on the basis of the biological features for instance chromosomes, hormones, sex organs and other physical features, however, the term 'gender' denotes men and women on the basis of their social features such as behavior towards different stimulus, position in society, social role or even identity. The basic motivation of the feminists to make this distinction was to make them able to counter biological determinism or to show the view: biology is destiny.

The most important and typical example that can be discussed here is that of Geddes and Thompson whose research work in the 1880's discussed that traits such as social, behavior and psychology are caused and controlled by the metabolic

rate of the body. Women being anabolic are supposed to conserve energy due to which they are passive, sluggish, stable and uninterested in politics and social matters. Contrary to this, men being katabolic are more eager, energetic, passionate and hence more interested in socialism and politics. These biological facts of metabolic rates not only stated and explained the behavior differences between men and women but also justified that what social and political behavior is suitable and for whom. Now this study results in withholding women in exercising their social and political rights which is highly inappropriate. In order to counter this kind of biological determinism, feminist theorists argue that differences based on behavior and psychology are caused due to social reasons, instead of biological. For example, Simone de Beauvoir has claimed that one is not born woman, but rather becomes a woman and gender social discrimination leads to moral and intellectual effects in women which then seem to be natural. So, the most common observed traits that are associated with men and women are learned or culturally acquired instead of being caused by anatomy or chromosomes.

Although this type of biological determinism presented by Geddes and Thompson is not very common nowadays, but still this idea of behavioral and psychological differences between men and women has not totally disappeared. For example, in the 1970s it was argued that women should not be airline pilots due to the fact that they are hormonally unstable once a month, hence, not performing their duties as well as men. More recently, a research shows that the differences in male and female brains have been explained on the basis of the anatomy of corpus callosum (a bundle of nerves that connects the right and left cerebral hemispheres which is thought to be responsible for various psychological and behavioral differences). This study claims that the corpus callosum is thicker in case of women due to which women's ability to perform some specialized visual-spatial skills, like reading maps gets impaired.

### *Terminology of Gender*

For the purpose of distinguishing biological differences from social or psychological ones and in order to discuss the latter, feminists appropriated the term 'gender', especially when we talk about the psychologists that write on transsexuality, who are first to employ the term gender in this sense. Until the 1960s, the term 'gender' was used solely to refer to masculine and feminine

words, for example *le* and *la* in French. However, there has been introduced a new situation according to which some people felt that they were trapped inside the wrong bodies. In 1968, psychologist Robert Stoller began using the term 'sex' to pick out biological traits and 'gender' to pick out the amount of femininity and masculinity a person exhibited. Although (by and large) a person's sex and gender complemented each other, separating out these terms seemed to make theoretical sense allowing Stoller to explain the phenomenon of transsexuality: transsexuals' sex and gender simply don't match.

Most of the feminist theorists found this difference fact useful and appreciated it. The major reason for that is that this definition by Stoller enabled them to argue that most of the differences between man and women are caused socially and therefore can be changed. For instance, Gayle Rubin used the phrase 'sex/gender system' in order to describe "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention" and the further employed this system to articulate that "part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of women" describing gender as the "socially imposed division of the sexes". According to his thoughts, even the biological differences are fixed, gender differences resulted from social interventions that dictate a society that men and women should behave. Now as gender is declared as social, it is considered to be alterable by the help of social and political reforms and thus bring an end to the era of women subordination. Thus the most basic aim of feminism is the creation of such a society which is genderless (though not sexless) and in which the sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does and with whom one makes love.

## **Problems faced in Sex/Gender distinction**

### *Is Gender Uniform?*

When women are considered as a group, it is assumed that this group as a whole share some characteristics features, experience, common condition or criterion and on the basis of these possessions their group is defined, as opposed to, let's say, men. So every individual in the group of women is different from men in the above stated respects. According to the thinking of MacKinnon the method of sexually objectifying ways is the common condition that defines women's gender and what women as women share. All women differ from all men in this respect.

Further, pointing out females who are not sexually objectified does not provide a counterexample to MacKinnon's view. Being sexually objectified is constitutive of being a woman; a female who escapes sexual objectification, then, would not count as a woman.

*Is Sex classification solely a matter of biology?*

Most of the people, which also includes many feminists accept that the sex ascriptions are totally a matter of biology and does not include any social or cultural dimension. It is quite easy to understand that there are only two sexes and classifying biological sex is totally unproblematic. On the other hand there exist a group of people who believes that sex classifications are not unproblematic and declaring this matter solely related to biology is not right. For the purpose of explaining and making more sense of this, it is helpful to distinguish object- and idea-construction: certain kind of objects can be constructed by the social forces (such as sexed bodies or gendered individuals) and similarly certain kinds of ideas can also be constructed (such as sex or gender concepts). First, take the object-construction of sexed bodies. Secondary sex characteristics, or the physiological and biological features commonly associated with males and females, are affected by social practices. For example, in some societies, smaller size of women can directly show that they are fed less due to their low social status. Biological factors cannot be solely considered for uniformity in muscle shape, size and strength within sex categories, so it can be considered that it depends heavily on exercise opportunities: if males and females were allowed the same exercise opportunities and equal encouragement to exercise, it is thought that bodily dimorphism would diminish. A number of medical phenomena involving bones (like osteoporosis) have social causes directly related to expectations about gender, women's diet and their exercise opportunities. In the light of these examples it can be suggested that physiological features which are thought to be sex-specific traits and not affected by social and cultural factors are, after all, to some extent products of social conditioning. Social conditioning, then, shapes our biology.

Second, taking the idea-construction of sex concepts it can be said that sex is the product of social forces in the sense that what we are counting as sex is shaped by social meaning. Scientifically speaking, those with XX-chromosomes, large egg cells that are produced by ovaries (female genitalia) have a relatively higher

proportion of female hormones and other secondary sex traits such as small body, less body hair etc. counting it as a biological female. On the other hand those with XY-chromosomes, small sperm cells produced by testes (male genitalia) have a relatively higher proportion of male hormones and other secondary sex characteristics such as a relatively large body size and significant amount of hair on the body counting it as male. But this understanding on the basis of science and research is fairly recent. If we have a look on the view of the Ancient Greeks we come to know that, until the end of 18th century they did not consider male and female to be from distinct sex categories and with specific characteristics, instead, they used 'one-sex model' to make an understanding of this concept. According to this model males and females were considered the members of the same sex category. Female genitals were considered to be same as men with a difference that they were simply directed inside the body. So basically according to them there was no difference between the ovaries and the testes. It was not until the late 1700s that scientists began to drift away from the 'one-sex model' towards the 'two-sex model' and started thinking of female and male anatomies as radically different.

### *Is there a distinction between Sex and Gender?*

Along with the arguments against identity politics and for gender performativity, Butler is of the opinion that it is totally unintelligible to hold the distinction between the biological sex and social gender because according to her both are socially constructed. She states that:

*If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. (Butler 1999, 10–11)*

(It is quite notable that Butler is not alone in this claim that there are no tenable distinctions between nature/culture, biology/construction and sex/gender and Antony 1998; Gatens 1996; Grosz 1994; Prokhovnik 1999 can also be regarded in this matter). In the passage cited above Butler makes two different and important claims: according to first one, sex is totally a social construction, and that sex itself is gender. In order to unpack her view, consider the two claims

in turn. First, the idea that sex is a social construct, for Butler, boils down to the view that our sexed bodies are also per formative. Prima facie, this implausibly implies that female and male bodies do not have independent existence and that if gendering activities ceased, so would physical bodies. This is not Butler's claim; rather, her position is that bodies viewed as the material foundations on which gender is constructed, are themselves constructed as if they provide such material foundations.

So according to Butler, there is no existence of sexed bodies outside social meanings. According to her there is nothing like emptied sexed bodies on which the gender is constructed and sex categories are not picked out on the basis of objective features of the world. Instead, our sexed bodies are themselves discursively constructed: they are the way they are, at least to a substantial extent, because of what is attributed to sexed bodies and how they are classified. Butler states that sex assignment (calling someone female or male) is normative, for example, when the doctor calls a newly born infant a girl or a boy, she/he makes a normative claim and not a descriptive one. In reality, the doctor performs an illocutionary speech act and the doctor's utterance makes infants into boys or girls. People then engage themselves in activities which narrates as if sexes naturally come in two and that being female or male is an objective feature of the world, rather than being a consequence of certain constitutive acts. This is what Butler is trying to state that there is no existence of physical bodies out the social and cultural means and that the sex is the social construction resulting into gender.

### *Is the Sex/Gender distinction useful?*

In accordance with the opinion of some feminists this sex/gender distinction is not useful at all. The basic reason for this opinion is because this type of thinking undercuts the basic feminist aims: the distinction is taken to reflect and replicate androcentric oppositions between (for instance) mind/body, culture/nature and reason/emotion that have been used to justify women's oppression. Due to these types of oppositions, one part becomes superior to the other and the devalued portion is usually women. In order to understand this consider the example of human subjectivity and agency which are identified with the mind but most of the times, as women are usually identified with their bodies, they are devalued as human subjects and agents. This opposition between mind and body further

leads to some other differences such as reason/emotion, culture/nature, rational/irrational, where one side of each distinction is devalued (one's bodily features are usually valued less than one's mind, rationality is usually valued more than irrationality) and women are associated with the devalued terms: they are thought to be closer to bodily features and nature than men, to be irrational, emotional and so on. The example of which can be seen in job interviews. When men are being interviewed, they are considered as gender-neutral persons and they are not asked something in which the basic intention is to seek information whether they are planning to take some time off for family or home but on the other hand women are usually asked about such queries. This opposition between mind and body, is then, considered to be mapped onto the opposition between men and women.

This dualism in mind and body is also said to map on sex and gender distinction. The main idea is that gender maps on the mind and sex on the body. Although not used by those endorsing this view, the basic idea can also be summed by the slogan "Gender is between the ears, sex is between the legs": the implication is that, while sex is immutable, gender is something individuals have control over – it is something we can alter and change through individual choices. However, since women are said to be more closely associated with biological features and men are treated as gender-neutral persons, the implication is that "man equals gender, which is associated with mind and choice, freedom from body, autonomy, and with the public real; while woman equals sex, associated with the body, reproduction, 'natural' rhythms and the private realm".

### *Women as a group*

Many critiques of the sex/gender distinction have called into question the viability of the category women. Feminism is the movement to end the oppression women as a group face. But according to the above given arguments which reflect that gender construction is not uniform then how can the category of women be understood? And then it becomes quite evident that the sharp distinction between biological sex and social gender is false or (at least) not useful, and that various features associated with women play a role in what it is to be a woman, none of which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient (like a variety of social roles, positions, behaviors, traits, bodily features and experiences)? It is also

necessary that the feminists must be able to address cultural and social differences in gender construction if feminism is to be a genuinely inclusive movement and be careful not to posit commonalities that mask important ways in which women qua women differ. On the basis of these concerns (among many others) generate a situation where the feminist theorists directly aim to speak and make political demands in the name of women, hence at the same time rejecting the idea of women as a group i.e. unified category of women.

## **Conclusion**

The above given work first looked and analyzed the arguments of feminist theorists in comparison to the biological determinism and the claim that gender is socially constructed. In the next part it looked into the work of critiques of feminism and of prevalent understandings of gender and sex, and the distinction itself. In response to all of the above stated concerns, the last portion that how the unified women's category is usually articulated for political purposes of feminists. It also gives us the idea that how the name of women rights is being used to gain power in the name of equality and social justice. This work has also included an illustration of two basic things. First, that gender — or what it is to be a woman or a man — is still very much a live issue. Second, that it is not entirely cleared by the feminists that gender is about social factors and that it is (in some sense) distinct from biological sex. This work tries out its best to make evident that what is true and useful and clarifies the correct definition of gender and there are contemporary feminists who still find that there is a value of the original 1960s sex/gender distinction.

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# Nuclear Catastrophe in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: The End or a New Beginning

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## Introduction

Nuclear disasters, political crises, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) are three phrases that are not only inextricably linked but also a looming symbol of a threat to international security. DPRK holds the distinction of being one of the most militarized states in the world, with unparalleled capabilities to produce weapons of mass destruction. In fact, for DPRK's leader Kim Jong Il, acquisition of nuclear power is the preferred route to establishing DPRK as a respectable and feared global power.

DPRK's position on acquisition of nuclear power and weapons was clarified by a 2005 report released by the KCNA, which quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying, "We have manufactured nuclear weapons for self-defense... we are compelled to suspend our participation in the six-party talks for an indefinite period" (Chinoy 242). The announcement naturally provoked anger and confusion from different parts of the world. Nonetheless, DPRK's stance on the issue was not surprising as the republic had always desired to be a nuclear power, despite global turmoil, controversies, the decades immediately following the Korean War, and even the difficult years of the USSR's dissolution, much to the dismay of both its neighboring regions and other nations.

One of the clear failings of DPRK's stance is its willingness to acquire nuclear power even at the cost of negligible improvements in national wealth and

well-being. For generations, the regime, which was founded by Kim Il-Sung (known as the “Great Father”), transferred to his son Kim Jong-Il (referred to as the “Dear Leader”), and is soon to be handed over to the third generation of the Kim family—Kim Jong-Un—has favored the pursuit of nuclear advancement. In a bid to justify its position, the regime resorts to constant and intense propaganda, much of which borders on racism and contains strong Anti-American and Anti-Japanese sentiments. The DPRK regime also falsifies information about its relationship with the Republic of Korea, projecting ROK as aggressive, harsh, uncooperative, and unreasonable, while using extreme military action to eliminate any dissidents, traitors, or spies.

(<http://brokentelegraph.com/2010/06/26/north-korean-oppression/>)

Another factor that may have contributed to DPRK’s aggressive nuclear strategy is its uncomfortable geographical proximity to some of the world’s fastest growing economies, i.e., the ROK, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and Japan as well as its vulnerable financial and political situation. PRC has an especially tight control over DPRK’s treasury, as it fulfills ninety percent of the DPRK’s energy demands. DPRK is, thus, torn between the interests of three largely different world-class economies.

Today, DPRK is touted to be one of the most dangerous and fanatically unbalanced nations in the world, with an extremely active nuclear power plant capable of developing uranium-based weapons of mass destruction. However, DPRK’s engagement in nuclear activities has not remained unchallenged. Kim and his nation have been often been subjected to fierce anti-DPRK sentiments from the international community. DPRK, on its part, has had several close counters with war and war-like situations, including its blatant destruction of the ROK battleship, which resulted in the death of 46 crew members, the testing of long-range ballistic missiles that strayed into neighboring territory, and, of course, civil and political discussions. Although DPRK has acknowledged its involvement in nuclear activities, it is alarming to note that the nation has repeatedly evaded an inspection of the safety and precaution standards in its main nuclear power and weapons plant, Yongbyon, by an external international atomic body or committee such as the WHO or the IAEA (U.S. Dept. of State).

These evasion tactics fuel the suspicion that DPRK is attempting to conceal facts from the world, possibly related to the production of nuclear weapons and the violation of international safety laws. It is likely that DPRK is withholding information about the type and number of nuclear weapons being produced to

prevent intelligence threats and unnecessary international tension. Given DPRK's non-compliance with internationally recognized policies, it is reasonable to assume that its nuclear activity is potentially threatening.

Although the likelihood of a nuclear meltdown in DPRK is low, it is not improbable or impossible. This report speculates the long- and short-term effects of such an occurrence. How would a nuclear accident impact DPRK? Aside from the genetic deformities that are bound to plague several generations of living species, DPRK will certainly experience a major economic decline in the aftermath. However, unlike in most countries, an economic decline in this case may be a blessing in disguise.

An economic slump will force the markets and finances of DPRK to rely heavily on those of democratic, capitalistic, and wealthy nations. Nations such as the ROK, PRC, the U.S, and Japan will rush to provide DPRK with pharmaceutical and food supplies, not only for humanitarian reasons but also out of their desire to positively influence DPRK, given its unique position in the global community (PRC Focus).

Dependence on global powers for basic necessities such as food and medicine will naturally force DPRK to reconsider its future as a relatively reclusive independent nation. While it is difficult to predict DPRK's future course of action given the numerous available options, one can argue that the profits earned from international trade are sure to tempt DPRK to either temporarily or permanently liberalize the economy.

The rest of the paper presents evidence and reasons for the arguments outlined above. Although a nuclear disaster will undoubtedly damage DPRK's health, morale, and economy in the short term, it may also lay the foundation and pave the way for successful democratic relationships with free-trade countries in the long term. The rest of the paper discusses how a nuclear disaster can transform a communist dictatorship into a democratic capitalistic economy. The following section discusses the likely effects of nuclear radiation on medicine and agriculture in DPRK. This is followed by a section that examines the impact of such an event on DPRK's ties with China and other neighboring countries. The fourth section highlights the different factors that will motivate countries to extend aid to DPRK. The fifth section addresses strengths of certain arguments counter to the view presented in this paper. The last section concludes the paper. By

speculating on the probable outcomes of a nuclear disaster in DPRK, this report intends to shed light on the grim realities of the nuclear and political situation in the country and make an appeal for intervention from the international community.

### **Effects of a Nuclear Disaster on Medicine and Agriculture**

A country's survival depends on its resources. DPRK currently lacks adequate resources, especially comfortable living conditions for its citizens. Given this fact, a nuclear disaster would severely affect DPRK's already frail sustainability and economy, ruining Kim Jong Il's goal of becoming a respected and feared nation through nuclear development and military expansion. Thus, failure to exercise caution in nuclear activity can be fatal to the country's already weak economy. With a major portion of the country's resources and finance being diverted to military sustenance, a nuclear crisis would not only further damage the citizens' livelihoods but also weaken the country's main motivation for advancement—the military. Eventually, DPRK will have to suffer medical and biological consequences similar to those seen in Chernobyl.

A review of nuclear disasters that have occurred in the past can help in accurately predicting the possible outcomes of such an event in DRPK. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster, perhaps the most catastrophic nuclear disasters in the history of mankind, occurred in 1986 in the region now known as Ukraine. A disaster of that magnitude in DPRK would be more devastating, given the prevailing conditions of the nation.

The heavy medical expenditure that follows a nuclear disaster would, first and foremost, cripple DPRK's economy. Diseases, injuries, and the rising death toll will be an additional burden on DPRK's already unstable financial conditions. The medical resources needed to hospitalize and care for the victims of the disaster would necessitate diversion of the state funds from national advancement projects to medication and aid. Such a diversion will halt the advancement of DPRK's military power. The long-term medical problems resulting from a nuclear disaster, such as leukemia, breast, lung, and stomach cancer, birth defects, and miscarriages will probably continue to impede DPRK's nuclear growth for several years. Women who were victims of the Chernobyl disaster were reluctant to or even completely refused to become pregnant because of abundant birth defects. Some pregnant women also opted for abortion to prevent their offspring from developing such genetic defects. The compromised immunity of the victims led to a disease known as Chernobyl AIDS, which was incurable (Mara 77). A large number of

people living near the nuclear plant suffered short-term ailments such as muscle and joint pain, respiratory problems including the shortness of breath, metallic taste in the mouth, blurred vision, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. In the aftermath of the disaster in 1987, death rates increased by 400 percent, cancer-related mortality increased by 300 percent, and deaths caused by breast cancer, general disease, and pneumonia rose by 26 percent, 500 percent, and 220 percent, respectively (Nelson 119).

Thyroid cancer and tumor is one of the most debilitating fallouts of the Chernobyl disaster. In 1986, before the incident, only two cases of thyroid cancer had been reported in the world. However, according to reports from the World Health Organization, nearly 50,000 people developed thyroid-related defects after the nuclear disaster. In fact, this figure captures only the incidents reported in Ukraine, but not in countries such as Russia and Belarus that were undoubtedly affected. Nuclear outbreaks, such as one in Chernobyl, are known to emit Iodine 131, which has a malignant effect on the thyroid gland. This gland secretes certain proteins, which aid other hormonal reactions and plays a role in the utilization of energy (Mara 75).

In the event of a nuclear disaster in DPRK, Kim Jong Il may not be willing to divert funds toward the medical needs of its citizens, especially at the risk of depriving the military of its necessary resources. In any case, a nuclear disaster of any magnitude in DPRK is bound to affect its military personnel. Thus, regardless of whether Kim Jong Il chooses to divert attention or aid, the nuclear and defense advancement programs will face financial constraints because of a nuclear crisis, which will force DPRK to seek and accept aid from external sources. Such a situation will be detrimental to the very goal of the defense-building efforts: to establish a strong, independent, and globally respected DPRK.

The above discussion confirms that a nuclear disaster in DPRK will lead to large-scale expenditure on medical technology, medicine, and hospitalization, irrespective of whether it benefits the country's military personnel or its citizens. It will plunge the nation into financial debt, further compounding the problem of trade deficits.

Refusal to curtail or exercise caution in nuclear development could also threaten the nation's agricultural resources. Forty percent of the nation's land is devoted to agriculture, and it accounts for an estimated 20% of DPRK's GDP.

A nuclear outbreak would jeopardize one-fifth of the nation's sustenance (U.S. Dept.). As seen in the Chernobyl incident, nuclear radiation introduces morphological changes in the vegetation. These include phyllotaxis, or disturbances in the branching and leafing patterns, thickening or thinning of leaves, premature fall of flowers, asymmetry, curvatures, and, most significantly, tumors. Even after five years of the Chernobyl incident, 80% of the corn sowthistle in the region had tumors in the main or adjacent vegetative shoots. Exposure to nuclear radiation also leads to chromosomal aberrations and mutations in crops and plants as well as a detrimental increase in their immunity. For example, contaminated wheat crops, during the fall, have 50% lower resistance against mildew than unharmed wheat. The activity of proteinase inhibitors, which form stable complexes within the plant, was 30%–35% lower in affected wheat and grains. With increased radioactive particles, such as Cesium 137, in the soil, agricultural produce was irreconcilably harmed (Burlakova 243).

Compared to Ukraine's total arable land area of 233,090 square miles, DPRK has a meager 46,541 square miles. Thus, it is safe to conclude that a nuclear disaster will have a greater impact on DPRK than in a larger country. (World Atlas, National Geo.). Nearly a decade after the Chernobyl incident, the Ukrainian government declared that five percent of all land was unsuitable for human habitation. This is staggering 13,500 square miles, which is approximately a third of DPRK's total land area.

In Chernobyl, exports of agricultural and livestock products to other countries were halted for several years. Dairy products, such as butter, chocolate, ice cream, and milk, too, were banned because the milk from cows that consumed contaminated food was also contaminated (Mara 78). A similar ban on exports from DPRK will severely deplete the country's income source, forcing it to seek and accept external aid.

Cultivation in the Chernobyl region was prohibited for nearly two decades after the disaster. However, in 2004, under the presidency of Alexander Lukashenka, lands were once again declared safe for growing crops. This led to widespread controversy, with scientists refuting Lukashenka's claims. New techniques had to be adopted to somewhat minimize the absorption of radioactive particles by the crops (Nelson 179). This negated Lukashenka's claim of the lands being safe for cultivation and even the residents attested to the contamination of local foods. The percentages of illnesses continue to remain as high as they were decades ago.

With 25 percent of Belorussian land deemed to be contaminated even during Lukashenka's rule, agriculture is, to this day, affected by the nuclear disaster.

Marine life and ecosystems will also suffer the adverse impacts of the nuclear disaster. Radioactive particles that directly contaminate the water will chemically react with water and its mineral and organic contents. Rivers tend to have the lowest concentration of radioactive particles, while closed water reservoirs, especially lakes, contain considerably high contamination levels. Radioactive elements including Strontium-90 and Cesium-137 have been detected in fishes, freshwater mollusks, and aquatic plants. Other organisms that feed on such aquatic life also fall prey to the radiation (Burlakova 293).

A nuclear disaster can, essentially, cause irreversible damage to all forms of biological life—crops, livestock, marine life, and the environment at large. To date, Ukraine continues to struggle with the after-effects of the Chernobyl catastrophe. Genetic mutations in certain livestock, crops, and marine life have not only depleted resources but also permanently altered biological life and food chains.

A nuclear disaster in DPRK will wipe out the already constrained resources of the country, making it dependent on external aid for survival and severely limiting its advancements as a global power. The adverse consequences in the fields of medicine and agriculture, as discussed in the above paragraphs, will severely cripple DPRK and its attempts to establish itself as a significant global power. A nuclear disaster will, without a doubt, debilitate all biological life forms in the region, which in turn will affect the nation's resources and economy.

## **Effects of a Nuclear Disaster on DPRK's Ties With PRC and Other Nations**

PRC and DPRK have strong ties, with the former fulfilling 90 percent of DPRK's energy demands and annually donating a million ton of food as aid (Korea Times). PRC not only offers economical aid but also political support. In fact, PRC has been protecting DPRK from the other democratic nations and justifying much of DPRK's controversial actions. For instance, after the attack on the ROK battleship, the Cheonan, in 2010, PRC sided with DPRK and protected it from further ROK backlash (BBC News).

PRC is set to emerge as the new world power and is fully aware of its potential. With its economy growing at a rate of 9.5% per year for the last 20 years, PRC can overtake the US economy, which is growing at a sluggish rate of 1.8%, within decades (Economic Times). With a population of 1.3 billion and the third largest landmass of 10 million square miles, PRC is the world's fourth largest trading nation. Its GDP accounts for 13% of the world's total output, and it is one of the largest emerging global markets, climbing from 32th position in the world rankings to the 10th in just 9 years (Economist). The recent drop in the ratings of the American currency released by Standard & Poor (S&P) (an AA+ rating) is expected to prompt many countries to exchange their US currency for a more stable AAA rated currency. In fact, in September 2010, even before the decline in ratings, the UN proposed the Yuan as the new world currency instead of the dollar (The New American). With increased involvement in global trade, PRC now enjoys the distinction of being the largest trading partner of Africa, Middle East, and Asia.

John Chamers, the head of independent rating agency S & P, explained that, "Once a company loses their AAA rating, it usually doesn't bounce back" (CNN). This unexpected decline in ratings could signify the deterioration of U.S.'s financial stability and possibly the end of its reign as a super power. Mahbubani, a Chinese official, stated that this decline has "definitely undermined U.S. credibility" and that "it is very dangerous for the world" (Huffington Post). Moreover, PRC is one of the few nations in the world that have a positive debt. The US owes 1.2 trillion dollars to PRC, offering the country at a natural advantage (National Public Radio). Recently the PRC even berated the US for its "debt addiction" and demanded that the US tighten its fiscal policies after the S&P's decision to downgrade the US credit rating. A report from Xinhua news agency stated, "the US government has to come to terms with the painful fact that the days of borrowing their way out of their own mess are finally over." PRC currently wants to ensure the safety of its dollar assets. While the economy of the US and the rest of nations is weakening, that of PRC is only growing in strength. In a few years, PRC will be the most capable country to provide financial aid, investment, and credit to foreign countries. The ability to provide credit is typically followed by the power to exert political influence. For example, during the mid-1900s, the United States acquired global power by offering credit to newly developing capitalistic nations in Europe via the Marshall plan. Likewise, PRC will rise in power and impose its political opinion upon countries in debt.

However, to secure its position as a world power, PRC may be forced to withdraw its support of DPRK's radical and dangerous missions. The Council on Foreign Relations, Scot Snyder and See-won Byun, of the Asia Foundation accurately summarized the nuclear tests recently conducted by DPRK as a "demonstration of the tension between PRC's emerging role as a global player with increasing international responsibilities and prestige and a commitment to DPRK as an ally with whom PRC shares longstanding historical and ideological ties." Recognizing its role as a responsible global leader, in 2006, abiding by the UN Security Council Resolution 1718, PRC agreed to impose sanctions on Pyongyang after DPRK's testing of nuclear weapons. Again in May 2009, PRC agreed to imposing stricter sanctions on Pyongyang after DPRK's second nuclear test (UN). Thus, disregarding its traditionally strong ties with DPRK, PRC has dropped its diplomatic approach in favor of a more strategically sound punitive approach. PRC is now more willing to criticize DPRK's actions instead of protecting or overlooking them. New leaders in PRC are no longer interested in maintaining friendly or cordial relations with the "Dear leader" of DPRK. In fact, Chinese officials are starting to view him as nothing short of an embarrassment, as they have begun to recognize the prospective drawbacks of supporting DPRK.

Under these circumstances if DPRK were to suffer a nuclear disaster, although PRC would extend its help, the adequacy of the aid is uncertain. DPRK will thus be forced to accept aid from other neighboring nations as well. Close involvement with its neighboring capitalistic nations could perhaps help DPRK realize the benefits of switching to a capitalistic economy. Moreover, nations providing aid to DPRK will be in a better position to negotiate economic and/or political terms in exchange for aid. The dire situation resulting from the nuclear disaster will leave DPRK with no choice but to concede to their demands.

Another factor that strengthens the speculation that DRPK will embrace capitalism is its recent willingness to engage negotiations. After a constructive bilateral meeting with the US on nuclear proliferation in August 2011, DPRK agreed to resume the six party talks without any preconditions. DPRK has also agreed to let U.N. inspectors verify its uranium enrichment program, one of the most controversial nuclear programs in the world (Council on Foreign Relations). This indicates a significant improvement in its international relations, unlike in the past when DPRK declared that it would

“never again take part in such six party talks” or “be bound by any agreement reached at the talks” (The National Committee on DPRK). At the time, DPRK also expelled nuclear inspectors from the country and announced its intention to resume its nuclear weapon program. The recent relaxation in its approach is perhaps an indicative of its intention to arrive at peaceful terms through negotiation.

Several attempts have been made in the past to peacefully negotiate with DPRK, including the North Joint Communiqué in 1972, the Korean National Community Unification Formula in 1989, and the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula 1992 (East Asian Review). However, one of the most significant efforts in this regard was the implementation of the sunshine policy in 1998 by Kim Dae Jung. The sunshine policy allowed ROK to actively cooperate with DPRK without any armed provocations. ROK enforced this policy in the hope of establishing an inter-Korean alliance that will gradually promote the peaceful unification of the two Koreas, with the two countries understanding and respecting each other while promoting mutual benefits. In return for financial aid from ROK, DPRK had to invest honest efforts in reforming its ways (BBC News). ROK had invested around 2 billion dollars by the end of the program in 2008 through different methods such as investing in fertilizers during the 1999 food shortage, donating up to 218,000 tons of corn and flour in 2000, and shouldering a burden of 3.22 billion dollars to improve DPRK’s light water nuclear reactors (East Asian Review). Unfortunately, DPRK did not honor its end of the deal, and the sunshine policy was repealed, with many believing it to be a failure (International Business Times). However, contrary to popular opinion, the sunshine policy actually succeeded in improving trade relations between DPRK and ROK. In accordance with the policy terms, the ROK government relaxed regulations and simplified procedures for economic transactions with private enterprises in DPRK. It also created conditions conducive for economic exchange and cooperation between the two nations. During the initial phase of the sunshine policy, many ROK companies started investing in DPRK, forging a bond between the two countries (East Asian Review).

While a nuclear disaster will cripple DPRK economically, it will also force DPRK to review and reform its economic and political strategies in the interest of survival. The pressure to secure aid from neighboring countries, including PRC, will drive DPRK toward creating a stronger economy. Although PRC currently has a communist government, its economy is capitalistic. Experts predict that in

40 years, PRC will emerge as a democratic nation and abandon its communist principles (Foreign Policy). This will deprive DPRK of a key factor that was common between the two countries. Thus, the need to align with its longstanding ally, PRC, coupled with pressure to secure a steady stream of aid to support its nation-building efforts in the wake of a nuclear disaster will eventually propel DPRK in the direction of democracy and liberalization of trade. While a nuclear disaster is one of the worst tragedies that can befall a nation, in the case of DPRK, ironically, such a setback may actually be its first step in the right direction.

### **Factors That Will Secure Financial Aid During a Nuclear Catastrophe**

In the face of a nuclear catastrophe, DPRK may not be able to exclusively rely on aid from strongest ally—the PRC—because of the escalating tensions between the two nations. However, despite DPRK's aggressive stance and its poor diplomatic ties, the international community will extend its support to this country for a number of reasons. This section explores some of the key ones among them.

Altruism and empathy from nations that have experienced the horrors of nuclear catastrophes is naturally one of the foremost reasons for extending aid. Worldwide organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP that are committed to helping nations in need will also offer support. In fact, these organizations continue to extend technological and economical aid to countries and regions that were affected by the Chernobyl disaster (Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum). Countries such as Switzerland, Canada, and Germany who have actively contributed to alleviating the effects of the Chernobyl disaster can also be expected to lend support to DPRK in the event of a nuclear disaster (Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum). While foreign intervention will prevent the fragile DPRK economy from crumbling, the country will need additional forms of support to ensure its long-term survival.

Neighboring countries, for instance, can play an important role in ensuring the survival of DPRK. In 1986, the country that was worst hit by the Chernobyl disaster was, surprisingly, not Ukraine but Belarus, located north of Ukraine (Foroughi). Later, radioactive particles spread further westward and northward, affecting other countries such as Sweden, Scandinavia, and Poland (Ukrainian National Chernobyl Museum).

However, the Soviet government's attempts at concealing the details of the incident prevented the neighboring nations from actively and effectively responding to the crisis. In fact, even the victims of Chernobyl and Pripjat were not informed of the potential hazards of nuclear radiation (Volkov). However, today, if a nuclear accident were to occur in the DPRK, it would be impossible to conceal this information from neighboring nations such as Japan, ROK, and PRC given the technological advancements in information dissemination, including advanced satellite imaging system (Gilman). Moreover, the measures taken by the neighboring countries to counter the radiation effects will ensure the safety of their people as well as the citizens of DPRK, to some extent.

Neighboring countries will also invest efforts in preserving shared natural resources. For instance, ROK, Japan, PRC, and DPRK are equally dependent on a critical natural resource—the sea. A nuclear disaster in DPRK will cause permanent damages to the marine ecology and adversely affect the other countries. Efforts taken by the neighboring nations to protect the marine life will also benefit DRPK.

The recent explosion of the nuclear reactor in Fukushima, Japan, led to an immediate decline in Japanese exports. The sharp fall in the demand for Japanese products significantly damaged the economy (The Economist). Tourism in Japan also suffered a setback because of the rising fears of radiation (Financial Culture). A nuclear disaster in DPRK would have similar effects on the east Asian economy. Thus, despite its hostile past, Japan would be obliged to help DPRK.

For similar reasons PRC will also have extend its help to DPRK, despite the growing tensions between the two countries. Like Japan, PRC depends on the natural marine resources. As it shares a border with DPRK, PRC is more likely to suffer the repercussions of a nuclear disaster. From a political viewpoint, PRC might want DPRK to act as a buffer between itself and the United States, which can be another reason for extending support to DPRK.

Of all the neighboring nations, ROK will be the most supportive, although for reasons that are vastly different from those of Japan and PRC. ROK also shares a border with DPRK, and to safeguard the welfare of its citizens, it will also undertake efforts that will benefit the DPRK. However, another factor that will spur ROK into action is the likelihood of a reunification of the two nations. An economic slump in DPRK may completely thwart ROK's hopes of gaining access to valuable resources within DPRK borders (Peimani). Before the Second World War, ROK and DPRK were a unified nation known Dangun (Soh, Leitich). The

heightened chances of reunification, brought on by the threat of nuclear devastation, may enhance cooperation between DPRK and ROK and, in turn, the latter may safeguard DPRK's valuable resources from being obliterated.

The unification would grant ROK access to another precious resource: the cheap labor force in DPRK. High labor wages in ROK have led most manufacturing firms in the country to set up factories in places such as PRC and Vietnam (Peimani). By tapping into the cheap labor available in DPRK, ROK will be able to substantially boost its industrial exports and circulate money within its own country. The mineral reserves of DPRK represent yet another valuable resource. Despite being one of the major manufacturing countries, ROK lack mineral resources (Peimani). In fact, minerals accounted for 50.5% of the total imports of ROK in 1999 (Peimani). Access to new mineral resources, as a result of the unification, would greatly strengthen the economy of ROK, leading to a drastic reduction in imports and an increase in exports.

### **Counterargument**

It has been widely speculated that in the wake of a nuclear disaster, DPRK—infamous for its reclusiveness and extreme self-pride—will be forced to forge relations with foreign countries to secure aid. The willingness to engage with other countries can actually result in positive consequences for the economy of DPRK. However, experts argue that most countries will be unwilling to lend a helping hand given that the benefits of such an exercise would be marginal.

DPRK is known to house one of the most active and potentially dangerous nuclear power plants in the world. There is no doubt that an explosion will lead to complete annihilation of the land, its people, and its economic and political structures. The destruction that will result from the release of radioactive substances into the air and soil is unimaginable. It is plausible that no country will extend help to a nation that expresses blatant disregard for nature and life.

However, as discussed earlier, the effects of a nuclear disaster are rarely localized. Efforts undertaken by border countries to mitigate the effects of radiation will benefit DPRK, even if the countries are not in favor of offering aid. In fact, DPRK's technologically advanced neighbors—Japan, PRC, and ROK—are likely to divert substantial resources to clear the region of nuclear wastes and radioactivity. Although acting in their own interests, they will inadvertently help

DPRK. Further, strategic allies of ROK, which is bound to be adversely affected by a nuclear disaster in DPRK, may be compelled to assist DPRK in the course of extending aid to ROK. Thus, it is unlikely that DPRK will be boycotted by the entire international community.

PRC represents another roadblock that could impede DPRK's economic revival after a nuclear disaster. PRC and DPRK have shared cordial relations. PRC has been DPRK's main trading partner and its primary source of fuel, food, arms, and other vital resources. This almost parasitic affiliation began during the Korean War in 1950 when PRC lent political and economic support to Kim Jong-Il and Kim-Il Sung (Council on Foreign Relations). However, the relationship between these two countries has not always smooth. PRC has, in the past, threatened to withdraw its support to indicate its displeasure with many of the actions and decisions of DPRK. The two nuclear tests in Pyongyang in October of 2006 and May 2009 led PRC to take a firm stand on DPRK (Council on Foreign Relations). Given the escalating tensions, a nuclear explosion in DPRK may serve as the final blow on the relationship. In other words, PRC may choose to not support DPRK in the face of a nuclear catastrophe.

However, such a move by PRC is unlikely given that DPRK plays the vital role of a buffer between the United States and itself. PRC relies on DPRK to protect it against any further encroachment by the US (Council on Foreign Relations). For instance, despite the large-scale chaos resulting from the Chernobyl disaster, the Soviet Union invested money, time, and energy in restoring the Chernobyl area because it was worried that Chernobyl, in its weakened state, would become vulnerable to the capitalistic practices of the United States. The Soviet Union did not want political interference from United States in Eastern Europe, especially in an area was a key strategic zone (World Nuclear Association). Similarly, after a nuclear explosion in DPRK, PRC will lose no time in providing aid and resources, because it may not want to relinquish its hold over such a strategically located nation.

Finally, experts argue that foreign nations would be unwilling to forge alliances with DPRK because the country is unreliable and symbolizes negativity. They believe that a nuclear explosion would elicit volatile and distasteful behavior from DPRK, which act as a deterrent to the growth and development of another country. While countries may initially hesitate to form a relationship with a disaster-struck DPRK, they may change their stance once they learn of its strategic location and natural resources. Their need for power will fuel their interest in

DPRK. A calamity tends to unite nations. Thus in the event of nuclear tragedy, even a reclusive and guarded country such as DPRK will have no choice but to open itself up to new opportunities, and other countries will have no choice but to abide.

## **Conclusion**

Logically, one could argue that in the event of a nuclear disaster in DPRK, PRC will single-handedly aid DPRK, monopolize its economy, and acquire complete control over the relationship between the two nations, and thus emerge as the world's largest global power. Even if the relationship between the PRC and the DPRK relaxes long enough for democratic and capitalist nations, such as the United States or the Republic of Korea, to intervene in the process of rebuilding the economy, the geographic proximity of DPRK to PRC would make it uneconomical for the US to its import goods all the way into the country.

However, before predicting such a bleak outcome, one must also remember the United States and the ROK's desperate need for fiscal reconciliation with DPRK. The international community has held the six party talks, instituted a ridiculously expensive and Nobel Peace Prize selection policy, and offered billions of dollars to fulfill the pharmaceutical and food needs of DPRK. The looming threat of a nuclear disaster is likely to prompt DPRK into formulating policies that favor increased trade between the DPRK and other wealthy countries outside east Asia, because most East Asian economies will be as severely affected. Thus, DPRK will come to depend heavily on European countries and the U.S for aid.

This reliance would then improve the relationship between DPRK and the United States, as economic reliance typically results in future economic alliance. This relationship can pave the way for DPRK's transformation into a nonaggressive, cooperative member of global politics, on the strength of its liberalized trade relations with other nations and the re-establishment of the Kim regime.

Currently, the only factor contributing to DPRK's state of complete economic stagnation is its ideal of *juchae*, or political self-sufficiency or self-reliance. A nuclear meltdown, however tragic, seems to be the only incident grave enough to spur Pyongyang into action toward economic improvement, without the involvement of nuclear power, reclusiveness or arrogant independence. Although the relations between DPRK and the rest of the world are unsteady at

best, in times of a nuclear disaster, such matters are hardly of any concern. This is evidenced in the foreign support extended to Chernobyl and Fukushima victims, both in the form of pharmaceutical and food supplies.

DPRK has the potential to become an economically and politically strong nation after a nuclear disaster. With DPRK's inclusion in the world economy, a number of pressures will be eased off the world's shoulders, especially concerns related to nuclearization, securing basic human rights, and a decrease in military size from the army's current strength 1.19 million personnel.

Despite popular opinion, the DPRK is not entirely an incorrigibly secluded state. There is no doubt that DPRK has the capability to build from its rubble; however, first there must be rubble.

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# Finding the Self: Tragic Self-Discovery in Kate Chopin's Fiction

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A common theme in Kate Chopin's works, from short stories like "The Story of An Hour" to her famous novel *The Awakening*, is women discovering themselves for the first time. Chopin's heroines, such as Mrs. Louise Mallard and Mrs. Edna Pontellier, find their own senses of self through processes of awakening, often through an epiphany-like realization. They find, for the first time in their lives, what it is to belong to themselves rather than being subordinate to the wills of their husbands. In every case, the realization is a heady one, and Chopin's heroines eagerly anticipate, or grasp at, the chance for freedom. Chopin's heroines also tend to meet with tragic ends, typically after receiving disappointments that indicate they cannot truly be free from the hegemony of the patriarchal systems in which they live. For characters like Louise Mallard and Edna Pontellier, awakening to a taste of freedom is a profoundly life-changing experience, and even their deaths can be seen as a kind of triumphal escape from the confines of the patriarchal hegemony in which they live.

In "The Story of An Hour", a woman responds to news of the death of her husband at first with grief, but then with relief and elation, anticipating a lifetime of freedom. The woman is Louise Mallard, and the news that her husband has died is surprisingly good for her. She is introduced in the story as being frail, and her sister Josephine tells her of her husband's death only very gingerly, and in a very halting, cautious manner. However, it soon becomes apparent that her putative

frailty may have more to do with her circumstances than any deficiency in her constitution: after weeping “with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms”, she goes to her room and simply watches the world go by. It is in the course of this state of mind that she has a kind of epiphany: she is free (Chopin, 1997; Papke, 2007; Mayer, 2010).

While she is staring out through the window, Louise feels the approach of a nameless something: “There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully” (Chopin, 1997). At first she fights the feeling of the “thing” that is trying to “possess” her. It is only after she abandons herself to it that she knows the feeling of freedom. In essence, Louise has been reborn: she is discovering a kind of second self, a new self unbounded by her marriage and the expectations of the culture in which she lives (Papke, 2007; Toth, 1999).

Louise’s awakening is a true discovery of self. Indeed, it is very clear that during the course of her marriage, she has been effectively dominated by her husband. She looks forward to the years that are come precisely because “There would be no powerful will bending hers” (Chopin, 1997; Stein, 2005). While Louise realizes she had loved her husband, she also realizes that her love for him was quite conditional, and depended on the circumstances. The overall picture could not be any clearer: hers was a troubled marriage, but she bore up and suffered in silence, submitting to the will of her husband in keeping with his expectations and the standards of the society around them (Chopin, 1997; Jamil, 2009; Mayer, 2010).

The fact that Louise has lived for so many years in a kind of emotionally stunted condition, her desires and feelings suppressed and smothered, goes a long way toward explaining her putative heart condition (Jamil, 2009; Toth, 1999). In the world of her time, the late 19th century, women were not supposed to be self-assertive, and she has lived her life in accordance with that expectation. Indeed, it would appear that Louise’s “condition” is not so much a physical ailment as it is the manifestation of emotional and psychological distress. She has been without a voice for so long, without a means to express herself and seek to fulfill her own desires and aspirations, that it has affected essentially every aspect of her personality (Jamil, 2009; Black, 2007).

Another aspect of Louise’s heart condition is the weakness and dependence it seems to reinforce in her. This is quite evident in the way that Louise’s sister Josephine handles the news of Louise’s husband’s death: Josephine is walking on eggshells as she delivers the news, obviously fearing that she will give Louise a shock that will be

unhealthy for her (Chopin, 1997). Thus, Louise's "heart trouble" reinforces her place in a patriarchal social order. It is a seemingly physical manifestation of her mental and emotional condition as a woman living in a deeply male-dominated society.

Louise's awakening is led by the emotions, not by reason, but it changes how she perceives herself and her world. Chopin depicts Louise's perception as influenced by her emotional state: the approaching sense of freedom is heralded by sounds, scents, and color (Jamil, 2009; Maguire, 2002; Stein, 2005). Her epiphany is sudden, spontaneous, and it transforms her way of looking at the world in a heartbeat. She is finally able to feel a sense of harmony between her body and her soul, and her heart trouble seems to be gone: "Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body" (quoted in Jamil, 2009). In her single hour of freedom, Louise becomes a brand new person, awakened to a new sense of freedom and selfhood.

The story has roots in Kate Chopin's own family background. Her father, Thomas O'Flaherty, married her mother, Eliza Faris, when he was thirty-nine and she was barely sixteen (Toth, 1999). Thomas O'Flaherty was an Irish immigrant from Galway who had made his fortune in Saint Louis. When his first wife died in 1844, he promptly remarried, to Eliza, in July of that year. By all surviving accounts, Thomas O'Flaherty was a stern, humorless man, and Eliza Faris O'Flaherty was still a sheltered adolescent with little education when they married. Thomas was presumably the one who sent their daughter Kate away to boarding school with the Sacred Heart nuns in September of 1855, when Kate was only five years old (Toth, 1999). But on November 1, 1855, Thomas O'Flaherty was one of those honored to ride the first train across the new Gasconade Bridge. The bridge collapsed, cutting short the festivities and Thomas O'Flaherty's life (Toth, 1999).

The death of Thomas O'Flaherty left his wife Eliza a well-to-do widow at the age of twenty-seven. For the first time in her life, Eliza was effectively free. As a wife, she had not had control of her property or her children. Now, as a widow, she had both. Her very first act was to bring her daughter home (Toth, 1999). The entire thing made a tremendous impression on Kate, one that would haunt her for the rest of her life. Indeed, it was this event that inspired "The Story of an Hour", although Kate wrote that story almost forty years after her father's death (Toth, 1999). The parallels are obvious: a young wife is widowed in a train accident, and

realizes she has a new chance to live her own life.

As in many of her other stories, Kate Chopin used the names of those who had inspired her. Her mother Eliza's first language was French (Thomas also spoke it), and in that language Eliza is pronounced "Eleeza", which sounds rather like "Louise", the story's heroine (Toth, 1999). Eliza also had a sister named Josephine, Kate's aunt; thus, in the story, Louise has a sister named Josephine. Louise's last name is Mallard; one of the men who died in the crash of the Gasconade Bridge was named Bullard.

Chopin did not identify as a feminist, or even a suffragist. However, she was firmly committed to personal freedom, and this commitment is a common theme in much of her work (Gentry, 2006). What has endeared Chopin to so many feminists over the course of recent decades is her commitment to personal freedom, which she primarily explored through women characters. In fact, many of the themes found in "The Story of an Hour" can also be found, in one form or another, in Chopin's other works.

A particularly good example of the theme of a woman finding personal liberation after languishing under the constraints of an oppressive patriarchal society is found in Chopin's 1899 novel *The Awakening*, which tells the story of Edna Pontellier. The critics were not kind to Chopin's novel upon its release, and small wonder: Edna is a married woman who engages in dalliances with other men, shirks her responsibilities as a mother, and finally drowns herself in the Gulf of Mexico (Toth, 1999). At the time, it was completely scandalous. Writing for *Literature*, one critic echoed the common sentiment of the time as follows: "the waters of the gulf close appropriately over one who has drifted from all right moorings, and has not the grace to repent" (Toth, 1999).

Time has been kind to *The Awakening*. Modern audiences are more receptive to the novel, more willing to appreciate its subtle complexities and nuances. At the beginning of the novel, Edna is a woman of twenty-eight, married to a forty-year-old businessman in New Orleans, with whom she has two young sons. Significantly, Chopin had all six of her children by the time she was twenty-eight (Toth, 1999). Edna is content to a point: her husband is a good provider, and she and her family have a good standard of living. However, she is not really happy, because she is not truly fulfilled. Despite the fact that she has a comfortable life, she has not sufficiently realized her own potential. Like other women of that place and time, she lacks the freedom to be who she wants to be, and is expected

to conform to the strictures of rigid societal norms imposed on her as a woman (Toth, 1999).

At the opening of the novel Edna's plight is symbolized by the image of a caged parrot. The parrot lives in a cage hung outside the door, and can speak words in French, English, and Spanish. However, the parrot also speaks words that are incomprehensible, except perhaps to the mockingbird outside, "whistling his fluty notes out upon the breeze with maddening persistence" (quoted in Clark, 2008). This image of the beautiful caged bird harks back to Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 feminist manifesto, the first of its kind, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. For Wollstonecraft, the plight of women in a male-dominated society was like that of caged birds: "they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch" (quoted in Clark, 2008).

In essence, this is Edna's plight: like the parrot, she is caged. While she is well-provided for in terms of material comforts, and is content to a point, something is missing from her life. Like the caged parrot, she is inactive both in body and mind during her time living as a housewife. While she is content to a point at the beginning of the novel, fairly early on Chopin reveals that she feels deeply oppressed by her husband. The parrot's inability to communicate with the mockingbird also finds a parallel in Edna's difficulties communicating with the other women around her. Edna herself is from Kentucky, but she has married into French Creole society in Louisiana. She finds the women around her difficult to communicate with because of the "fluty notes" they whistle, as well as their preoccupation with their charms, and their inability or unwillingness to relate to her (Clark, 2008). She is the parrot, then, and they are the mockingbirds: she is isolated, inactive, and cannot communicate with others around her.

The novel takes its title from a series of awakenings Edna experiences one summer, while vacationing at the Grand Isle resort in the Gulf of Mexico. In essence, Edna discovers herself and her body, and learns that she can be her own person. She takes the first steps, literally, by taking up the habit of walking, which helps her start to distance herself from her surroundings (Clark, 2008). The first awakening comes when she strikes up a friendship with a young man named Robert Lebrun, son of the resort owner. Robert teaches Edna how to swim, and she experiences feelings of power and sensuality as she learns to gain control in the water. As Chopin recounts: "The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (quoted in Clark, 2008). The swimming and her time with Robert help Edna to recover a sense of her own will: for the first time

in her life, she feels truly free to chart her own course. Her life does not belong to someone else anymore; it belongs to her for the very first time (Seyersted 136).

Around the same time, Edna also strikes up a friendship with Adele Ratignolle, who is content in the traditional role of a wife and mother. Adele becomes a kind of mentor and confidante to Edna, drawing her out and helping her to realize new things about herself (Toth, 1999). What develops between Edna and Adele is an intimate friendship, one that has sometimes been mistaken by modern readers as same-sex attraction. This friendship in turn allows Edna to express herself and her ideas for the first time in her life. She comes to realize why she married her husband, Léonce Pontellier, in the first place: she married him in order to annoy her Kentucky Presbyterian family, because he was a Louisiana Catholic, and to put paid to her own youthful infatuations, which she dismissed as unrealistic. Now, in Adele's company, she is able to realize that for too long she has silenced herself, and she does not have to do so any longer (Rowe, 1992; Thornton, 1980; Toth, 1999).

As a result of this awakening, Edna begins an illusionary romantic entanglement with Robert. She is encouraged in this by the rather strange and somewhat eccentric Mademoiselle Reisz, who also helps her to develop and indulge her taste for music (Ringe, 1972; Toth, 1999). Edna's romance with Robert is an illusion because Robert is hiding his true sexual orientation. As Toth, (1999) observes, there are a number of indicators that Robert is gay, although the vocabulary for this was very different in Chopin's day. Robert has a habit of attaching himself to a different unattainable, usually married, woman every year, and "the husbands regard him as a safe puppy dog" (Toth, 1999). With Robert, Edna has a taste of infatuation, even if it is illusionary in nature. It is, in some sense, a promising new chapter for her.

While Chopin herself did not identify as a feminist, in many ways the spirit of *The Awakening*, like "The Story of an Hour" and many of Chopin's other works, is deeply feminist (Showalter, 2007). In fact, Edna's awakening is described in terms that are evocative of the feminism of Chopin's own time: "Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her" (quoted in Gray, 2004, pp., 2004). She begins to understand her unenviable place in what is undeniably a deeply patriarchal society, and the more she understands it, the more she is determined to fight against it, reject it, and refashion and remake it into something new (Gray, 2004; Showalter, 2007).

In the process of her awakening, Edna is able to recognize the roles assigned to women by society for what they are: ideological constructs, the products of a hegemonic system (Gray, 2004; Showalter, 2007). Following Althusser, hegemony perpetuates itself by means of “interpellation”, a process whereby people recognize and adopt the ideology and its practices as their own. The first step in this process is known as “hailing”, and consists of a call to engage in the practice or belief of some kind of ideology. Hailing may be the prerogative of an individual or an institution, but it always consists of a call to action of some kind, an effort to recruit someone to think, say, or act in a particular manner. If an individual not only recognizes the hailing attempt but also acknowledges it and performs as requested, they have become the subject of the ideology responsible for the hail. As such, they are interpellated (Cho, 2012; Gray, 2004; Mou, 2011). An ideology that is successful in establishing hegemony does so by recruiting people with a compelling promise of great rewards if they perform as instructed. More specifically, hegemonic ideologies promise that everything will be, in some sense, as it “should be”: by following the prescriptions of the ideology, the subjects will be able to achieve a kind of “right order” (Gray, 2004).

By awakening, Edna is able to recognize this and begin to reject it. In fact, by recognizing it she becomes quite unsuited for the traditional roles her society has allotted her, namely the roles of wife and mother. This allows her to experiment with other roles, roles in which she is free to truly be herself (Barker, 1992; Gray, 2004). Along the way, she receives support and mentorship from two very different women: Adele Ratignolle, who embodies the “mother-woman” role, and Mademoiselle Reisz, who embodies the alternative role of the “artist-woman” (Davis, 1992; Gray, 2004; Thornton, 1980).

Edna’s confidante and mentor Adele is introduced as a “mother-woman”, and as such is something Edna is not: a woman who abides by the conventions of society and is happy with them. For some commentators, Adele is a cautionary tale of a sort: she has submerged her identity in her marriage and her motherhood, and willingly participates in her own commodification and subjugation (Gray, 2004). This line of argumentation suggests that everything about Adele is tailored to her role as “mother-woman”, at the expense of any individuality of her own: everything from her physical appearance, and her emphasis on keeping herself attractive for her husband, to her attentiveness to him and her delight in being a

mother. She is self-effacing, passive, chaste, and pure, and she does not question any of it—indeed, she even relishes it (Gray, 2004).

However, the argument has also been made that there is a narrative tell that not all is as it seems here: the narrator describes Adele with such effusive and fulsome praise that it is clear, according to this line of argumentation, that there is a certain ironic stance intended (Streater, 2007; Mou, 2011). Following this line of thinking, Adele is a very powerful character, one who draws her power from mastering herself and her world rather than allowing the constraints of the society in which she lives to encumber her. A case in point is the scene in which she feigns weakness in order to get Robert to escort her back home (Streater, 2007). She uses the chance to warn him off from Edna: “She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously” (quoted in Toth, 1999). She even seems to have a touch of the *femme fatale* about her (Streater, 2007). The argument, then, is that rather than weakness and capitulation to patriarchy, Adele is adroitly utilizing it to her advantage. She is far more complex than she has sometimes been given credit for, and in this complexity lies a kind of quiet revolution, an alternative to merely submitting to the roles society allocates her (Streater, 2007).

The position of Mademoiselle Reisz, Edna’s other mentor, is altogether different. Mademoiselle Reisz is a solitary artist, a pianist, and has achieved some renown as such. She has a very strong sense of self, wedded to her identity as an artist, and she plays by no one’s rules but her own (Gray, 2004). This has prompted the argument that Mademoiselle Reisz is able to do as she does, evading the traditional roles of wife and mother prescribed for women in the patriarchal system of the society of the time, only because she has positioned herself outside of the traditional definitions and conceptions of femininity (Gray, 2004). She is described as homely in appearance, and caring little for it. She is also a “disagreeable little woman” (quoted in Gray, 2004). In short, the argument is that Reisz is perceived as neither feminine nor sexual, and as such she is free to do as she does because she poses no threat to established conventions of social order (Gray, 2004). She is, however, undeniably a very strong person. When Edna takes up painting again and fancies herself an artist, Reisz cautions her that “to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul, ...the soul that dares and defies” (quoted in Seyersted, 1980).

After Robert suddenly leaves for Mexico, Edna returns home, but she has become a very different person. She begins to pull away from her marriage and her social obligations in favor of pursuits that make her happy and help her to

discover herself (Toth, 1999). Hitherto she has held weekly meetings in which she furthered her husband's business interests. Now, instead of receiving callers, she goes for long walks. She refuses to indulge her husband's complaining with any sympathy. Defying her husband, Edna she stops being intimate with him. She also begins to express her own opinions, another important breakthrough. When her sister is married, she denounces weddings. She even returns to sketching and painting, which she had abandoned earlier in life (Boren, 1992; Ewell, 1992; Seyersted, 1980; Toth, 1999).

In essence, Edna achieves what Louise achieved: a sense of personal liberation and freedom. Like Louise in "The Story of an Hour", Edna has an awakening and becomes a profoundly different person because she is finally able to be her own person. Of course, unlike Louise, Edna actually has the experience of living on her own and enjoying it for an extended period of time. She becomes successful enough as a painter to make some income, and together with some race track winnings and inheritance from her mother, she sets herself up in a small house of her own (Joslin, 1992; Toth, 1999).

In keeping with her journey of self-discovery and exploration, Edna takes up with a lover, Alcée Arobin. While the relationship is not an emotionally fulfilling one for Edna—Arobin in fact means little to her—she becomes accustomed to him (Toth, 1999). When Arobin kisses her, however, she experiences a new awakening: "It was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming torch that kindled desire" (Toth, 1999). While Edna enjoys Arobin, at least up to a point, she does not belong to him, and that is an important distinction for her: "but whatever came, she had resolved never again to belong to another than herself" (quoted in Seyersted, 1980). Although she responds to Arobin kissing her with passion, it is not love; she realizes she loves Robert.

Of course, Robert finally returns from Mexico, but his return only presages the novel's bittersweet ending. He admits that he loves Edna, but also says he knows her husband will never allow them to be together (Toth, 1999). By this time, of course, Edna is well and truly past that. She has carved out an alternative niche for herself as a free-woman, not bound to any man and entirely free to, as she tells Robert, "give myself where I choose" (quoted in Toth, 1999). While Robert may in fact love Edna, the way that she grabs hold of him leaves no doubt, by the conventions of the time, regarding what she wants of him. Not long afterwards,

Robert leaves again, this time leaving a note telling Edna “Good-by, because I love you” (Toth, 1999). Edna stays awake all night, beset with feelings of hopelessness, and then returns to Grand Isle. There she swims out into the Gulf, and keeps swimming until her strength is gone (Toth, 1999).

Central to the question of how, exactly, one should interpret Edna’s death is the question of how to interpret her awakening. On the one hand, a more naïve reading of the novel would have Edna dying of unrequited love: she loved Robert but she could not have him; therefore, she killed herself. For some critics, the novel is centered on Edna’s awakening to her own sexual nature. However, there are a number of problems with this from a thematic and character arc standpoint. Simply put, if this were really what happened to Edna, it would countermand everything else in the novel (Bai, 2014; Gentry, 2006).

A good starting point for this argument is the beginning of the novel itself. For the first three chapters of the novel, the narrator’s focus is on Mr. Pontellier. Edna is referred to only as “Mrs. Pontellier” until chapter VI, when the reader finally learns her first name. Her appearance is described for the first time in chapter III. The significance of this is fairly obvious if one understands that the central theme of the novel is Edna’s awakening to a sense of herself: the first three chapters of the novel focus on Mr. Pontellier because he has the very sense of agency of which she has been deprived. What Chopin is doing in these early chapters is to introduce the reader to Edna and her world in a way that demonstrates the effects of the deeply sexist ideology which pervades it. Edna is presented from without, presented only as Mrs. Pontellier, because this is how she is viewed in society (Gentry, 2006).

Indeed, what makes Edna’s story so remarkable is precisely that she starts her story arc at such a low point. Her whole existence is girded about with restraints, namely the demands her husband, and by extension society, places on her (Jacobs, 1992). Edna is a deeply constrained character at the beginning of the novel, and it is only gradually that she begins to truly move as a character with agency in her own right. This is important, because it establishes that Edna’s journey is not a journey to sex but rather a journey to agency, to self-awareness (Jacobs, 1992). Granted, her sexuality is a very important part of this rousing to self-awareness, but it is only a part of the story. The overarching story is about Edna finding herself, learning to be who she really is. Thus, she cannot have killed have ended her life simply because she was not able to have Robert. Chopin does not permit this reading of the story: she goes to great lengths to establish that Edna has

become a strong, capable person, and she does not need a man to complete her or save her from herself.

Chapter VI is the pivotal chapter in this regard, because it is in this chapter that the reader first learns Edna's name and gains insight into her thoughts (Gentry, 2006). This is also the chapter in which the sea is introduced as a key unifying image. From there on out, the sea and the Gulf Coast become ongoing presences in the novel (Gentry, 2006). Edna tries all summer to learn how to swim, and the whole while she feels a sense of dread unless someone else is nearby and can reach out a hand.

There is a suggestive parallel with Louise's situation: Edna feels a sense of fear in the water for quite some time, even as Louise resists the feeling that comes over her at first. For both heroines there is a kind of passage through fear, a trial that requires them to undergo a certain sense of dread before they can master themselves and reorder their worlds. As with Louise, Edna has a sudden awakening, and embraces what she has been resisting. After spending an extended period of time afraid of swimming out of the reach of anyone else, Edna finds herself able to wade into the Gulf on her own (Gray, 2004). In a particularly stirring passage, Chopin describes how "a feeling of exultation overtakes her, as if some power of significant import had been given to her soul" (Gray, 2004).

What makes all of this so remarkable is, again, how very powerless Edna is at the beginning of the novel. Her overall arc is tragic, yes, but she starts from a position not of power or success, like so many tragic heroes, but rather from a position of almost total powerlessness (Jacobs, 1992). She is not Oedipus or Lear, who begin their character arcs in their respective tragedies in positions of power, only learning the limits of their power to their eventual sorrow and undoing. Instead, she has to begin by first learning the urge to rule her own life. As she acts on this urge, exploring herself and her world, she gradually learns the limits of her power, and therein lies the tragedy (Jacobs, 1992). Because she is a woman, Edna's efforts to discover herself and become her own person are antagonistic to the patriarchal social system in which she lives. She cannot break free without incurring terrible consequences.

Another clue supporting this thesis comes in the form of a sentence in chapter VI that is repeated at the very end, in chapter XXXIX: "The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (quoted in Gentry,

2006). It has already been established that although a part of her longs for Robert, she also recognizes that even the thought of him would leave her in time. Thus, she cannot be doing what she is doing because she is lovesick and longs for Robert.

Viewed in this way, Edna's journey is a journey of tragic self-awareness. Still another clue comes from the imagery of the bird with the broken wing: "A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water" (Chopin, 2015). The bird, of course, is a symbol of Edna herself, in keeping with the bird imagery in the novel. Edna's problem is that she cannot have the life she wants, and this desire goes well beyond her desire for Robert. Although she has been wounded by the society that cannot accept her, she still has one recourse left to her. Her death is in some sense an escape, as Louise's was: she is removing herself from a patriarchal society that will not allow her to live the life she wants and to be her own person (Camfield, 1995; Wheeler, 2007). In another sense, though, there is something of a bittersweet triumph in her actions. She is exercising her agency to end her life, and she is ending her life in the embrace of the ocean where she first experienced feelings of power and sensuality. Edna is not defeated; she is not committing suicide because she is resigned to her fate. Rather, it is a kind of homecoming and apotheosis in one: the ocean is enfolding and embracing her, the source of her power welcoming her back.

Another, somewhat different example of a woman finding herself through an awakening comes from one of Chopin's more obscure heroines, Mildred Orme from Chopin's story "A Shameful Affair". The story opens with Mildred on a farm, to which she has escaped from the demands of city life. There she falls for Fred Evelyn, a handsome young farmhand, and they kiss, something she later feels shame about. Mildred, not unlike Louise and Edna, is socially conservative and sexually repressed. Like Louise and Edna, Mildred too must undergo an awakening, although hers is a somewhat different character and story arc. Mildred's arc centers on her discovery of her sexuality, and the conflict between her sexual desires and her own rather prudish tendencies (Simpson, 1986).

From the beginning, Mildred is drawn to Fred and goes to some lengths to get his attention, even though she is not honest with herself that this is what she wants (Simpson, 1986). Although she tries to tell herself that he is clumsy, and that farmhands are "not so very nice to look at", she asks him to drive her to church,

and then goes down to the river where she knows he will be when he refuses her request (quoted in Simpson, 1986). There is an irony here in that Mildred actually left the city for the farm so as to gain some respite from men, and her own sexual desires. Her idea was that the farm would be a good environment in which to be contemplative (Simpson, 1986).

As Simpson, 1986, pp. explains, Chopin relies on fertile nature imagery to amplify the conflict between Mildred's own innate desires and her over-exaggerated sense of propriety. While she tries to isolate herself at the farmhouse, reading Browning and Ibsen, once Mildred becomes interested in Fred she must leave this small island of social conventions and enter the world of the outdoors. To reach the river, Mildred travels down a footpath through the wheat, described as yellow and above her waist, an obvious fertility motif (Simpson, 1986). This continues as Mildred reaches the river: she remains very still and holds tight to the book she brought with her as she watches Fred fish. The book thus functions as a form of social and sexual restraint. When she puts it down and takes up the fishing pole, she gives in to her own sexual instincts—and of course, there is arguably something quite phallic about the fishing pole as a symbol. This in turn indicates that she is a quite willing participant in the kiss (Simpson, 1986).

“A Shameful Affair” tells of a somewhat different kind of awakening than either “The Story of an Hour” or *The Awakening*, but the parallels are undeniable. Like Chopin's other heroines, Mildred has become interpellated by the norms of a hegemonic patriarchal ideology. Unlike Louise and Edna, Mildred does not come to terms with her awakening—or rather, the impulse toward her awakening (Simpson, 1986). The conflict remains, and the story closes with the clear implication that Mildred will remain troubled and conflicted until she comes to terms with who she is and with her desires.

Chopin's heroines, such as Louise Mallard in “The Story of an Hour” and Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*, face conflicts between the suffocating demands of the societies in which they live, and their own desires. They are tragic heroines because it is impossible for them to reconcile their own newly awakened selves with the demands of the hegemonic patriarchal ideology for their interpellation. Freedom has its price, and therein lies the tragedy: becoming free in a society that insists on one's confinement or interpellation within a hegemonic ideology is to invite a lack of acceptance and the frustration of one's aims. Small wonder, then,

that some—such as Mildred, perhaps—refuse it.

For Chopin, the nature of true freedom is selfhood, being able to claim one's self for one's self, rather than being the de facto property of another person, a slave to a socially-mandated role. This is what her heroines strive for, and they obtain it. However, for both Louise and Edna, maintaining freedom ultimately means dying. But rather than death being a punishment visited upon them, or a sorrowful end, for both Louise and Edna it is a kind of triumphal martyrdom. Both Edna and Louise died being true to themselves; indeed, for the sake of being true to themselves. They were martyrs to their ideals, and in their deaths they gained a kind of apotheosis.

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