

Heidi's Feminist Journey: Identity and Self-Discovery in Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*

Narmeen Rashid Darwesh, Shokhan Rasool Ahmed

Department of English, College of Languages, University of Sulaimani, Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region - F. R. Iraq

Abstract— This paper is an extract from an MA thesis, which is entitled “‘Still We Rise’: A Feminist Study of Female Character's Quest for Identity in Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*, *The Sisters Rosensweig*, and *Isn't It Romantic*”. It examines *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988) from a feminist perspective, depending on Simone De Beauvoir's notions in her foundational work *The Second Sex* (1949). This study shows the impact of the second wave of feminism on the changing roles of women in the nineteen-sixties. This study answers the questions: What challenges are set before Heidi's way that prevents her from ascertaining her independence? How does Heidi violate the old notion of femininity? This paper explores the protagonist Heidi Holland's journey of self-discovery and her pursuit of subjectivity, arguing that she faces numerous professional and personal challenges in a male-dominated society as she strives to assert her identity and prove her selfhood. The analysis concludes with Heidi's resistance to patriarchal cultural norms, which obstruct her life path and hinder her quest for independence.

Index Terms— Feminism, Identity, *The Heidi Chronicles*, Simone De Beauvoir, Individuality.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the appearance of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, American theatre has undergone tremendous transformations during the post-war years. These changes coincided with the rise of new social issues, such as race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity (Murphy, 2006; Shannon 2018). These issues have come when groups of women, LGBTQs, blacks, Asians, Jews, and other minorities began to require for equal political rights. However, the occurrence of these new demands led to the construction of alternative theatres that challenged the traditional thought regarding the social order (Abbotson, 2018). Focusing on feminist theatre, this theatre has emerged due to women's need for a medium that could articulate their stories, concerns, problems, and ambitions along with transferring their voice to the public notice. Brown (1999) affirms that: In the twentieth century, drama that is feminist in intention has exhibited a commitment to telling the stories of silenced and marginalized

women, celebrating women's community and sense of connection through group protagonists, and expressing the moral concerns and societal criticisms that arise from women's experience. (p. 155)

Through theatre, feminist dramatists sought to present women's struggles so that they could make changes in their personal roles and enhance numerous social improvements for them. Being hierarchal in nature, many women playwrights have rejected the traditional themes and processes of writing plays. Since, they believed that the medium is dominated by men whose writers and directors were attracted to male themes, specifically, the ones that undermined the female image and the stereotypical roles which limited her freedom.

As a feminist playwright, Wendy Wasserstein has been concerned with presenting woman's problems in a way that have not been performed previously in mainstream theatre. Through her plays, Wasserstein gives voice to a generation who are caught between two differing discourses, namely the gender conservatism of the 1950s and women's liberation of the 1960s (Czekay, 2011). These sets of values are represented through Heidi's choices, conflicts, and experiences in *The Heidi Chronicles* and her struggle to harmonize between choosing a career over personal happiness. The play tends to reform the male establishment that has denied women from acquiring their political rights. Rejecting the conventional norms and transcending social expectations, Heidi affirms the autonomy that society tries to restrain through certain rules.

As a methodology, this study employs a feminist approach to analyze the literary text, as the events of the play mirror the period when the second wave of feminism emerged, influencing women's life choices and identities. Therefore, Simone de Beauvoir's concepts are used to guide the analysis of the play.

II. PLOT SYNOPSIS

The Heidi Chronicles is one of the best of Wendy Wasserstein's oeuvre feminist plays. This play, which came to light in 1988, is considered a landmark in delineating the emergence and the decline of the Feminist Movement. Since its premiere, *The Heidi Chronicles* has received much critical

attention from female critics because of its strong feminist themes and its wide success in mainstream theatre. Therefore, in 1989, it won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the Tony Award for Best Play, the Susan Blackburn Award for Women Playwrights, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best New Play, the Hull-Warriner Award, the Drama Desk Award, and the Outer Critics Circle Award for best play. However, this play, which relies on the second wave of the feminist movement as the background for its events, is a keen depiction of the changing roles of women in American society during the second half of the twentieth century. Hence, it follows the protagonist, Heidi Holland, a life that spans over two decades, and her journey for self-discovery in the turbulent times of the 1960s. Through picturing Heidi's life, Wasserstein reflects on the social, political, and cultural shifts that have characterized those years and their enormous effects on individuals' lives.

As the play unfolds, Heidi's life is traced from her formative years in the 1960s to her adulthood in the 1970s and into her middle-aged times in the 1980s. Act one launches with the successful art history professor, Heidi Holland, prologue to her students at Colombia University in 1989. The scene jumps back to 1965, when the teenage Heidi and her friend, Susan, attend a high school dance. As Susan pursues the attraction of boys, Heidi remains on the periphery not participating in Susan's conquests. In 1968, at the Eugene McCarthy rally in New Hampshire, the Vassar college student and political activist, Heidi, meets the attractive and arrogant leftwing newspaper editor, Scoop Rosenbaum, despite insulting her convictions, he becomes her lover. Then, the action moves to 1970, where Heidi and Susan join the consciousness-raising group along with other female attendees who reflect the gender dynamics in society through sharing their womanly issues. In 1974, Heidi participates in the Chicago Art Institute's demonstration 'women in art'. Act one ends with Scoop and Lisa's marriage in 1977.

Act two continues to present Heidi in a lecture at Colombia University in 1989. Thence, the view leaps back to the 1980s decade, when materialistic and consumerist interests overwhelmed the previous beliefs. At Lisa's baby shower event, in 1980, the attendants, Heidi and Susan, both now successful careerists, bond along with Denise, Lisa's sister, and Betsy, while being there they exchange gifts and gossip about Scoop and his new mistress. In 1982, Scoop, Peter, and Heidi were invited to a T.V. panel show dedicated to the baby boom generation. However, the show turns into a place for male domination as Heidi is disallowed to speak about the issues that matter to her. At a New York restaurant, Heidi meets Susan, the executive television producer, and her assistant, Denise in 1984. Although Heidi hopes to rekindle her connection with Susan, the meeting converts into a business lunch. In 1986, at the Miss Crain's School alumnae luncheon, Heidi exhibits her disappointment with her peers as she addressed the subject of 'Women: Where Are We Going'. On Christmas Eve of 1987, Heidi makes some donations to Peter's AIDS clinic for children and reveals to Peter that she plans to leave New York because of accepting a teaching position in the Midwest. The final scene presents Heidi and Scoop in Heidi's new apartment in 1989. He tells Heidi that he has sold his magazine and is working now on entering politics, whereas, Heidi informs him about her

adoption of a baby girl. The scene closes with Heidi holding her daughter triumphantly in front of Georgia O'Keefe's retrospective banner.

III. FEMINIST THEORY: AN OVERVIEW

Feminism is an ideological belief that demands equality for women since it considers that the whole human culture is a male-dominated one. Thus, it seeks to challenge the old established patriarchal rules and notions by inviting women to have their own voice and views in the private and public spheres. As a social, economic, intellectual, and political movement, its adherents believe that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men in all facets of life. This theory concentrates on the methods men employ in implanting their patriarchal codes in society, particularly religion, philosophy, economy, education, literature, and other cultural means (Dobie, 2012). Significantly, Lois Tyson (2015) defines feminism as an approach that "examines how literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (p. 84). Thus, feminism strives to spread gender parity through dismantling patriarchy.

To better understand the label of patriarchy, in his book *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (1987), Chris Weedon determines that:

The term 'patriarchal' refers to power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take on many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the social organisation of procreation to the internalised norms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on social meaning given to biological sexual difference. (as cited in Hodgson-Wright, 2006, p. 3)

By taking into account this sexual difference, men have established the 'universal' principle, which has relegated women to the private realm of feeling, passivity, nurturing, intuition, and domesticity to define the males' public realm of subjectivity (Rice & Waugh, 2001). With this, they have fostered their power over women while they demolished women's efforts to freedom. Therefore, to delineate women's status in male-controlled communities, feminist theory needs to analyze every aspect that affects their lives (Bressler, 2011).

Accordingly, Christa Knellwolf and Albertus Suwardi assert that feminism as a term was first used in the English language during the years of 1890s; when there was an urgent need to name the activities of the women's movements, specifically the Women's Rights and Women's Suffrage movements that have been emerged in those years (2001, 2010). Needless to say, this theory came to prominence again during the Civil Rights campaigns and women's liberationist movement in the 1960s, when women fought for their political rights under the slogan 'the personal is political' in Europe and the United States. This movement has aimed to show the social injustices against women, women's daily experiences, and the hardships that have resulted from them. For this, feminist activists and theorists have necessitated a cultural transformation and a social reconstruction in all patriarchal societies to free women

from the chains of masculinity and gender discrimination (Plain & Sellers, 2007; Selden et al., 2005).

One of the remarkable figures and forerunners in developing the feminist literary theory that sparked the second wave of feminism was Simone De Beauvoir's ideas. Through her feminist treatise and philosophical landmark *The Second Sex* (1949), she provides a deep analysis of women's conditions and the numerous myths that have been embodied under the emblem of womanhood. In this book, which is deemed the Bible of feminism, De Beauvoir (1956) unveils the various aspects that subjugate a female in patriarchal societies, while relying on existentialist philosophy to study her issues and examine the social construction of her femininity. Therefore, the book begins with the determinant question of "what is a woman?" and her answer comes right after it, saying that "woman is a womb" (p.13). De Beauvoir (1956) believes that the female's fate is bound by this Western anatomical fact since it forbids her from getting her full autonomy. On the contrary, the male never bothers to present himself as an individual of a certain sex because he does not need to do so. Based on this natural order, she argues that the female is always seen as relative to the male and not as an independent being.

Moreover, De Beauvoir (1956) claims that the terms masculine and feminine are manipulated on equal planes, but in reality, they act in opposing directions; for the concept of masculine is used to designate positivity, whilst the feminine one is employed to symbolize negativity. These ideas of positivity and negativity have encouraged two conflicting situations; they enabled the male to be socially and spiritually successful and these in turn have given him a virile prestige. Whereas, the female has been required to renounce her dream of being an autonomous subject and has been obliged to realize her femininity in order to serve man's need in becoming a desired object and prey for him. Because of this, a woman has been seen as the second sex since "she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex', which means that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex — absolute sex" (De Beauvoir, 1956, pp. 15-6). Such beliefs contributed to the female's subordination because she has always been treated as the male's other whose place in society is inessential compared to that of man's in which his role was essential and absolute. As well as, in defining her as an individual, she is constantly defined in relation to him and not him with her. De Beauvoir (1956) remarks that "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other" (p. 16). In the play, Heidi is often seen as the other by the male characters who try to subject her to their authority in order to confine her freedom.

Through her examinations of how women have acquired the other category, De Beauvoir (1956) indicates that the male to assert his manhood; has excluded the female's part and for this, he has reckoned on the scientific, literary, economic, and religious discoveries including, biology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, history, literature, and the holy books. Besides, men have set the social rules and moral values that impose on women certain feminine functions that glorify their otherness such as motherhood, housewife, daughter, lover, and sister.

Thus, employing the aforementioned roles, he has been able to form the female's gender identity.

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an *Other*. (De Beauvoir, 1956, p. 273)

As De Beauvoir elucidates that the female's lot has been predetermined as the other from early childhood and this affects in becoming a woman due to the lack of free will. Whilst, her otherness has been fundamental to man's Selfhood since it ensured his domination and perpetuated the female's conformity.

Additionally, De Beauvoir (1956) maintains that it is not just society that enforces on the female the feminine role, but the parents are also complicit in this act; because they train their daughter to be submissive to the male by urging her to adopt the 'true woman's' values of love and devotion. In order to arrive at the level of true femininity, she has to renounce taking charge of her existence and "count on the protection, love, assistance, and supervision of others" (p. 677). For a female get out of this dilemma and destroy male superiority, De Beauvoir (1956) declares that, she must deny the man-made truths and values since to her "all oppression creates a state of war" and the state of inferiority is no exception (p. 674). To liberate herself from the enclosed sphere of domesticity and reach at the total state of her autonomy, De Beauvoir stresses that a woman needs to identify herself as a man's equal and not as relative to him as these are the only ways that enable her to assert her place in society. Similarly, in the play, Heidi strives to be on equal terms with the males and refuses a society that disregards and limits her role.

IV. HEIDI'S INNER JOURNEY: SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY AND MEANING

The 1950s was a crucial period for American women since lots of them wanted to obtain personal fulfillment along with professional achievement. In an attempt to obtain both, Heidi sets out her search in the play so to find her authentic identity. Throughout the play, Heidi struggles with the questions of purpose and fulfillment about who she is and what she wants out of her life. As Franklin affirms:

Wasserstein's characters have a lot of questions about identity and self-determination, questions that women used to ask silently, if at all: what should my life be like? What if I do this? If I do this, can I still have that? What do I want? And do really want it, or am I supposed to want it? And if I don't want it, what do I do then? (as cited in Dolan, 2017)

In order to find her place and determine her life path, Heidi undertakes a difficult and compelling voyage that is fraught with many dangerous challenges and complexities. Heidi's journey starts as she tries to balance her personal dreams and

desires with communal anticipations (Elhalafawy, 2015). Her search for selfhood begins with the exploration of her role in society and the obstacles that are set before her way. As Gail Ciociola points out “[Wasserstein’s] main characters are not every women, but college-educated and career-driven ‘uncommon women’ determined to ‘fulfill their potential’ even when they have not reached certainty about the direction of that potential” (as cited in Czekay, 2011, p. 21).

As a modern American woman, Heidi is torn between fulfilling the traditional gender norms and the ambition of accomplishing her professional career which the prospering feminist movement inspired her to attain. Thereby, critics regard *The Heidi Chronicles* as a political play for it normalizes the conventional power relations, while it challenges the politics of gender. As Wasserstein asserts “what’s political is that this play exists. What’s political is that we can talk about this play that’s about us—like it, don’t like it; it’s there, it exists, and that’s the forward motion” (as cited in Shih, 2018, p. 218). Thus, through this play, she tries to promote gender equity and end the sexism that has affected every corner of American society during the post-war years.

However, Heidi’s sense of autonomy and identity is affected by the people around her, mainly her friends and her lover. To assert her individuality, Heidi has to face numerous challenges on both personal and professional levels so as to obtain her goals and reach her full agency. Through her interaction with the male characters, i.e., Scoop Rosenbaum and Peter Patrone, Heidi’s personality is overshadowed by them and she is unable to act freely, but she is obliged to define herself through them. As Helene Keyssar (1991) demonstrates Heidi “is often dominated, dramaturgically and politically, by the two men in her life”, since they undermine and trivialize her hopes and desires (p. 96). Therefore, the play dramatizes a world where the patriarchal and feminist discourses confront each other.

In Act One, Scene Two, Heidi is challenged personally and professionally by Scoop who tries to impose his power on her through demeaning her career as an art historian. In their first meeting at the Eugene McCarthy rally in 1968, Heidi tells Scoop that she aspires to become an art historian to revive the forgotten works of female artists, who have been underrepresented by the patriarchal canon, but Scoop dismisses this wish as “really suburban”.

Heidi: I’m planning to be an art historian.

Scoop: Please don’t say that. That’s really suburban.

(Wasserstein, 1988, p. 171)

As this profession has been occupied by males throughout western history; therefore, Scoop thinks it is unfamiliar for a woman to be preoccupied with such a vocation. Barko (2008) argues that Scoop sees Heidi’s choice of profession as elitist and overambitious. More than this, he implies that pursuing this profession is inappropriate for a woman. According to De Beauvoir (1956), a woman in male-centered societies is considered as non-creative due to her sex, men have been regarded as the creator of the universe. As Heidi and the female artists possess dissimilar physical features from Scoop and male artists; therefore, men will underrate their professions also. As a young girl, Wasserstein remembers one of the incidents when she attended Broadway plays. Though she was happy with

watching these plays; yet, she was surprised by the absence of people like her on stage. This dominant gender representation made her think “I really like this, but where are the girls?” (as cited in Lively, 2014, p. 411).

Despite being offended by Scoop’s speech; still, his comments do not discourage Heidi. In response to Scoop’s ill-treating behavior, Heidi replies that she is “interested in the individual expression of the human soul. Content over form” (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 171). Like Scoop who undermines her career as worthless, Heidi also demeans Scoop’s thinking for being too superficial and lacking depth of character. As Barko (2008) clarifies that even though Scoop is attractive and charismatic, Heidi wants someone who possesses more substance and depth of character. In making this statement, Heidi implies that Scoop is shallow and ignorant since he fails to take her career choice seriously.

In revealing that she values content over form, Heidi proves that she is smarter than Scoop. Within demonstrating this, she tends to weaken and destroy his character. De Beauvoir (1956) insists that, for a woman to be able to reject a male’s superiority, she should talk instead of listening, display subtle thoughts and strange emotions, contradict him rather than agree with him, and try to get the best of him.

Subsequently, Scoop labels the women who enter “Seven Sister Schools” as “concerned citizens” who think of themselves to be highbrow persons (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 169). He also devalues Heidi’s intelligence when he refers to the political matters of the country; he says “The changes in this country could be enormous. Beyond anything your sister mind can imagine” (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 170). Besides, he underestimates her question, when she asks him if he works for a newspaper, Scoop responds “did they teach you at Vassar to ask so many inane questions to keep a conversation going?” (Ibid). Meaning that her question is meaningless because she does not have any knowledge about the principles of communication. To undermine Heidi’s personality and undervalue her intellectual aptitude, Scoop uses unfamiliar expressions, like (scoop, dig), and this keeps Heidi in a state of confusion as she has to predict their meanings.

Scoop: ...you better learn to stand up for yourself.

I’ll let you in on a scoop from Scoop.

Heidi: Did they teach you construction like that at Princeton?

Scoop: I dig you, Susan. I dig you a lot.

Heidi: Can we say “like” instead of “dig”? I mean, while I am standing up for myself...(Wasserstein, 1988, p. 171)

Although Scoop’s intelligence perplexes her, Heidi realizes that mentally she is no less than him. Grasping that they are on the same level of cleverness, Heidi reacts by correcting him.

Noticing that Heidi is cold and not interested in him, Scoop approaches and asks her to have a drink with him and Paul Newman, the man whom he awaits. As Heidi declines his offer, Scoop becomes irritated. He then informs her to be careful of herself because he will know every detail about her. In fear of this, Heidi adopts the fake name of ‘Susan’ to conceal her identity. Meanwhile, Scoop begins to boast of his wit and intellect in front of Heidi who cares not about him. To attract

her attention and make her conform to his will, Scoop frankly declares that Heidi will tolerate him since he is very smart, arrogant, and difficult.

Scoop: I like you, Susan. You're prissy, but I like you a lot.

Heidi: Well, I don't know if I like you.

Scoop: why should you like me? I'm arrogant and difficult. But I'm very smart. So you'll put up with me. (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 171)

De Beauvoir (1956) observes that when two groups are with each other one imposes his sovereignty upon the other; the one that is privileged will prevail over the other making the latter live in his objective state. Because she is a female, Scoop sees he can impose his power on Heidi since he considers himself to be the stronger one.

Knowing that she cannot be easily subjected, Scoop starts to Heidi teach her the dictates of patriarchy of how to be a 'nice girl'. As for him, following these rules would increase Heidi's femininity and would reduce his chance of being rejected.

Scoop: Hey, Susan Johnston, wouldn't you like to know who I am?

Heidi: Uh...

Scoop: C'mon. Nice girl like you isn't going to look a man in the eye and tell him "I have absolutely no interest in you. You've incredibly obnoxious and your looks are B—". (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 169)

Scoop aims to put his object, Heidi, under his control and destroy her subjectivity to establish his authority over her. Accordingly, De Beauvoir (1956) contends that since early history, Man had control of all the concrete powers, and the patriarchy has thought to keep women in a state of dependence. Due to this, they have set up their codes of law against her and this has established her as the Other.

Whilst speaking, Heidi observes that Scoop possesses self-assurance and expresses his opinions without any hesitation. However, this prompts Heidi to ask annoyingly what is the mysterious reason that lies beneath mothers teaching their sons confidence that they never bother to tell their daughters about. Hence, Bigsby (2004) admits that Scoop "perhaps boasts, arrogant, difficult and smart. He has the confidence [Heidi] lacks" (p. 347).

Scoop: You're thinking something.

Heidi: Actually, I was wondering what mothers teach their sons that they never bother to tell their daughters.

Scoop: What do you mean?

Heidi: I mean, why the fuck are you so confident? (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 171)

In this excerpt, Heidi refers to the inequity between the two genders. She attributes that this disparity between men and women is the result of the patriarchal culture as it raises men to be self-assertive and confident. Besides, its rules encourage them to cultivate more understanding of their thoughts to make rational decisions and choices. While women are not given that chance to develop their identity as fully actualized individuals.

Instead, they are taught to cherish their inner selves and think emotionally and this culminates in their low self-esteem and passivity (Al-Munshi, 2020). Additionally, Abbotson (2003) indicates that Heidi despises Scoop because his overconfidence offends and undervalues her ability since she cannot be as daring as him. Heidi ponders that this lack of self-confidence in women stems from their being trained to be compliant and selfless. As well as De Beauvoir (1956) confirms that, in raising their child, the parents implant in their son masculine traits so that when he grows up, he will be capable of taking action, but to make the girl fit into the feminine world, the mother trains her daughter with the feminist wisdom and virtues, and this leads to acquiring her passivity. Through Heidi, Wasserstein condemns such society for producing prototypical and determined males like Scoop. In the meantime, she criticizes those mothers who aid patriarchy and partake in theirs and their daughters' subordination.

As Heidi rejects his advances, Scoop starts to assault her dignity by telling her that she is "being very difficult" and that she suffers from "an inferiority complex" (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 168). After discovering her true name, Scoop intimidates Heidi by forcing her to speak. He tries to devastate her personality by stating sarcastically that her whole life is going to change due to feminism and women's fight for equality.

Scoop: You don't have to look at the floor.

Heidi: I'm not.

Scoop: I've got nothing on you so far. Why are you so afraid to speak up? Heidi: I'm not afraid to speak up.

Scoop: Heidi, you don't understand. You're the one this is all going to affect. You're the one whose life this will all change significantly. Has to.... (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 172)

Concomitantly, he diminishes the movement to "just a phase" in which its advocates will be disappointed just like the Trotskyites during Lenin's new economic policy and the worshiper of fallen images in Christian Judea. In analyzing Wasserstein's plays, Ciociola displays that Wasserstein's plays "espouse the liberal feminist ethic of equality between the sexes and, in particular, of achieving parity with men in the workplace and at home" (as cited in Woo, 2011, p. 82). As well as Scoop denominates feminists as going 'hog wild', whilst he denigrates the movement's political beliefs and demands "equal pay, equal rights, [and] equal orgasms". Outraged at Scoop's mocking tone, Heidi retorts opposingly that all people deserve to achieve their potential.

Scoop: You'll be one of those true believers who didn't understand it was all just a phase. The Trotskyite during Lenin's New Economic Policy. The worshiper of fallen images in Christian Judea.

Heidi: And you?

Scoop: Me? I told you. I'm here to have a look around.

Heidi: What if you get left behind?

Scoop: You mean if, after all the politics, you girls decide to go "hog wild" demanding equal pay, equal rights, equal orgasms?

Heidi: All people deserve to fulfill their Potential.
(Wasserstein, 1988, p. 173)

Heidi, who perceives no difference between men and women since they are equal to her, is convinced that every human being deserves to achieve his/her goals and elevate his/her life's opportunities regardless of gender. In pondering on the dialogue and how the characters react to each other, Woo (2011) maintains that Wasserstein gives witty and clever dialogues to Heidi's friends, whereas, she presents Heidi as an idealist whose discourse represents not her beliefs and feelings, but how she regards reality should be.

Furthermore, Heidi stands up for herself saying why should a well-educated woman just like her waste her life cooking for him and his children? To impress Heidi, Scoop agrees with her by responding ironically that neither a well-educated woman nor an ill-educated one should take this task on. In showing agreement with Heidi, Scoop demeans her more by calling her by the diminutive name of 'Heidella' instead of 'Heidi'. Hence, Scoop does not cease at this, for he continues to patronize her by correcting her word choices (Balakian, 2010). However, he concedes that they are unequal in terms of their experience and knowledge and he confesses that his main objective is to seduce her.

Heidi: I mean, why should some well-educated woman waste her life making you and your children tuna-fish sandwiches?

Scoop: She shouldn't. And, for that matter, neither should a badly educated woman.

Heidella, I'm on your side.

Heidi: Don't call me Heidella. It's diminutive.

Scoop: You mean "demeaning," and it's not. It's endearing.

Heidi: You're deliberately eluding my train of thought.

Scoop: No. I'm subtly asking you to go to bed with me... (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 173)

In changing Heidi's name, Scoop wants to destroy Heidi's identity to take over her whole life because, for him, she represents an erotic object only. Simultaneously and by declaring his plan, Scoop tries to impose his power as a traditional man upon his subject 'Heidi'. Li (2016) proclaims that Heidi sees Scoop as the symbol of the prevailing patriarchal authority in which he devalues her to the level of man's sexual other. Additionally, De Beauvoir (1956) argues that since humanity is male, a woman is defined and differentiated concerning man and not he concerning her; she is incidental, and she is inessential to the essential. Man is the Absolute Subject and the female is the Other. Therefore, a woman is what man decrees, and she is not identified in herself as an autonomous being, but as a relative to him. She is essential to the male as an absolute sex and as a sexual being. Thus, she is called 'the sex'.

As a refusal of complying to Scoop's demands, Heidi declines his initial offer saying that she can "take care of herself" (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 173). Infuriated, Scoop starts in belittling Heidi by calling her "kiddo". Besides, he scorns her cause for liberation by distorting the image of the feminist

movement and portraying its defenders as crazy fanatics (Başer, 2016). Therefore, Scoop tells Heidi "You've already got the lingo down. Pretty soon you'll be burning bras" (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 174). By disparaging Heidi's personhood and her aim for individuation, Scoop tends to strengthen his authority as a man. Although Scoop's speech generates self-contempt and frustration in Heidi; yet, she retorts that maybe she will decide to go "hog wild" (Ibid). Within this, Heidi rejects to surrender and "accept the authority of convention" that restrains her independent identity (Roudané, 2000, p. 380). Conversely, she intends to create her own mode of existence by subverting traditional femininity. De Beauvoir (1956) asserts that the codes of man were designed to represent females as inferior and the only way to eliminate this inferiority is by destroying man's superiority. This can be accomplished through refusing his dominance, opposing him, and negating his truths and values. By doing this, she is just defending herself because this state has been imposed on her.

Nevertheless, Heidi's pursuit of individuality is not affected by Scoop only, but by Peter also, the gay pediatrician and Heidi's lifelong friend. As heterosexual and homosexual men, both Scoop and Peter shape Heidi's consciousness in a way that she frames her convictions in response to them (Başer, 2016). Correspondingly, they serve as two sides of the same coin working to suppress Heidi's ideas and thoughts so that to prevent her from developing her feminist identity. De Beauvoir (1956) claims that because a woman has been shut up at her home in the past, she could not establish her existence. For, she lacked the means that were essential for her self-affirmation as an independent person. As a consequence of this, her individuality has not been given recognition. Whilst joining in a women's protest that has been devoted to equal representation of female artists outside the Chicago Art Institute, Peter is expelled from the march by Debbie, Heidi's friend, due to his comic acknowledgment of the patriarchal tradition of art history. Debbie says to Peter "I find your ironic tone both paternal and caustic. I'm sorry. I can't permit you to join us. This is a woman's march" (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 189). In participating with Heidi, Peter seems to be championing the battle of the inclusion and appreciation of the female artists; yet deep down, he sees it as a trivial matter.

Conceivably, the play draws parallel concerns of two marginalized groups. Heidi and Peter share a strong bond of friendship and they support each other's cause in getting freedom and fair rights. However, Peter loses interest in Heidi's political beliefs when he realizes that she is apathetic to his situation as a gay man. Dolan suggests that Wasserstein "pits two marginalized positions against each other in competition for audience sympathies", and this by putting Peter as the representative of gay people and Heidi as the representative of feminist ones (as cited in Potts, 2015, p. 79). Like Scoop, Peter undercuts Heidi's profession and devalues the power of women's struggle, when he equates his own liberation with hers. He tells Heidi:

Heidi, I'm gay. Okay?... *my* liberation, *my* pursuit of happiness, and the pursuit of happiness of other men like me is just as politically and socially valid as hanging a couple of goddamn paintings because they were signed by someone named Nancy, Gladys, or

Gilda. And that is why I came to see you today. I am demanding your equal time and consideration. (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 189)

To get full attention, Peter disregards Heidi's concerns and belittles her profession believing that his case is bigger than her interests.

During the AIDS epidemic, Peter's discontent grows more after seeing so many of his friends dying due to the virus. However, he becomes more hostile towards Heidi believing that she does not understand the sufferings of his community and not standing there for him as a friend. In focusing on his personal predicament, Peter excludes Heidi's issues which seem to be of minor importance for him, while prioritizing his own. When Heidi informs him that she wants to leave for the Midwest because she feels sad about her life in New York; Peter promptly answers that "a sadness like yours seems a luxury" in comparison to his own loss and sadness (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 237). Thus, Balakian (2010) indicates that although gay and feminist characters are so good friends, they do not sympathize with each other's discrimination. Sensing Peter's ordeal, Heidi promises him to "become someone else next year" (Wasserstein, 1988, p. 238). In regard of this, Helen Keyssar (1991) denotes that "Heidi's offer to 'become someone else' is not a step towards a transformation of self but more like a proposal to wear a different dress tomorrow" (p. 97). In detaching herself from his suffering, Heidi rejects to be a mirror for validating Peter's misery. Hence, De Beauvoir (1956) demonstrates that to obtain identification the husband wants to find himself in his wife and the lover in his mistress seeking the myth of his virility, masculinity, and sovereignty of his immediate reality.

In her relationship with the males, Heidi feels the pressure to prove her selfhood; for she must define herself to them. To gain authority over the male-dominated society that oppresses her and restricts her freedom, Heidi "refuses to conform to familiar models", or identify with their struggles since "their privacies are as closed to her as hers seem to be to them" (Bigsby, 2004, pp. 349-50). As De Beauvoir (1956) justifies a woman's lot has been in the hands of a man and he has determined it not according to her interests. Rather, he has modeled it with regard to his projects, fears, and needs. Heidi, who experiences difficulty in succeeding and ascertaining herself in the masculine society, resists deriving her sense of self from men and seeks to construct an autonomous personality away from the one that has been assigned to her.

CONCLUSION

The Heidi Chronicles echoes the ongoing personal pursuit of individualism and authenticity in a world laden with many challenges for women. Through Heidi's character and her multifaceted quest for self-definition, Wasserstein reflects on the complication of modern womanhood and the complexity of searching for one's identity amid the varied social and cultural shifting values. As well as she shows how the male-oriented society restrains a woman's personhood and confines her agency via certain rules and expectations. To assert her identity and prove her selfhood, Heidi shatters the traditional gender

roles and the feminine mystique that forces her to be a dutiful wife and a caring mother. By refusing to conform to the customary norms, Heidi ascertains her independence and abandons the patriarchy that pressures her to embrace gender obligations. Conversely, her journey for self-discovery manifests women's broader struggle for attaining personal identification beyond communal obstruction.

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