

國立臺灣大學文學院外國語文研究所



碩士論文

Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Literatures

College of Liberal Arts

National Taiwan University

Master Thesis

友伴式婚姻之渴求：

德徠賽〈自由〉及〈獨舞的婚姻〉評介與中譯

The Yearning for Companionate Marriage:

A Critical Reading and Chinese Translation of

Theodore Dreiser's "Free" and "Marriage—For One"

劉憶萍

Liu, Yi-Pin

指導教授：李欣穎 博士

Advisor: Hsin-ying Li, Ph.D.

中華民國一〇三年六月

June 2014



國立臺灣大學碩士學位論文
口試委員會審定書

友伴式婚姻之渴求：德徠賽〈自由〉及〈獨舞的
婚姻〉評介與中譯

The Yearning for Companionate Marriage:
A Critical Reading and Chinese Translation of
Theodore Dreiser's "Free" and "Marriage – For
One"

本論文係劉憶萍君（R97122001）在國立臺灣大學外國
語文學系完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 103 年 5 月 29 日承
下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明

口試委員：

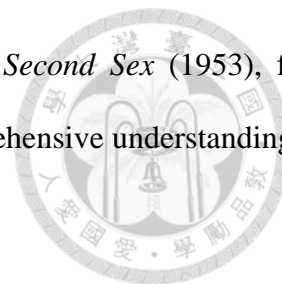
李秋穎

（指導教授）

李紀金

莫永慧

The paper is dedicated to Simone de Beauvoir, whose book *The Second Sex* (1953), first published in French in 1949, remains in my opinion the best single comprehensive understanding of ‘the woman problem.’



摘要

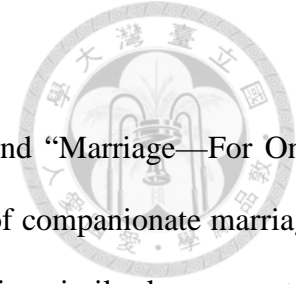
本文以美國作家德徠賽為研究對象。他的兩部短篇小說〈自由〉(“Free”)及〈獨舞的婚姻〉(“Marriage—For One”)，透過「友伴式婚姻」的觀點，體現人們對於營造夫妻親密情感之渴望。一方面，我仿照原文風格將之譯成中文；另一方面，我假定十九世紀的中產階級面臨婚姻的兩難，須兼顧實質上的財富、地位或利益等考量以及情感上難以自抑的奔放流淌，友伴式婚姻強調婚姻的締結由重視社會資產、道德責任轉而重視個人自由、戀愛的可能性。此外，我也主張，儘管十九世紀晚期美國的中產階級宣稱不含感情成分的婚姻形同災難，同時期的自由戀愛主義者甚至堅決婚嫁。理由是，他們認為婚姻讓女性背負了過於沉重的社會批判及多重身分，既要賺錢養家、協助家務，還須贏取他人肯定。因此，想要落實女性真正的獨立，就只能對婚姻說不。

本文接著探討〈自由〉及〈獨舞的婚姻〉的內涵。〈自由〉一文的旨趣，在於摹寫十九世紀步入婚姻的中產階級男女，如何為了成為獨特的個體而奮力一搏。他們不甘被運氣、命運、愛情來電、宿命論、父母介入、或社會義務所擺佈。他們要主宰自己的人生。我發現故事的主人翁郝梅克先生，夾雜在對婚姻愛情的憧憬，與索然無味的婚姻現實之間，掙扎不已。

在〈獨舞的婚姻〉故事中，德徠賽精心描繪了造成那對新婚夫婦不睦的核心要素：身為妻子的貝西，她的性格較為自由奔放，對於丈夫希望她能永遠保持矜持、恬靜、心思單純的想法嗤之以鼻。小說的篇名恰恰呼應了丈夫內心對於封閉式婚姻的期待，也就是非你莫屬的愛情觀的執著，以致於在現實生活中，無法兌現基於自由個體選擇而結合的婚姻。

關鍵字：友伴式婚姻觀；十九世紀中產階級婚姻；十九世紀中產階級；自由戀愛；女性本質執迷；男主外女主內；西奧多·德徠賽

Abstract



In this thesis, I choose to study Theodore Dreiser, whose “Free” and “Marriage—For One” reveal a longing for sentimental closeness between partners in the name of companionate marriage. On the one hand, I translate the two literary texts into Chinese by following similar language style used in the original work. On the other hand, I posit that 19th-century middle class faced with a dilemma between marriage as a result of interested motive, such as wealth, social position, or other advantages and marriage as a result of a predominantly affectionate outpouring of impulse. Companionate marriage is the movement from individualistic liberty and romantic possibility to social propriety and moral responsibility. Moreover, I argue that whilst late-19th-century middle class announced that passionless marriage was a tragedy, contemporaneous Free Lovers rejected marriage because it bears so important public judgment and status for women such as economic support, assistance, or respectability that women’s true independence necessitates an opposition to marriage.

Then, I examine “Free” and “Marriage—For One” in my thesis. “Free” features 19th-century middle-class men’s and women’s struggle to become a unique individual who enters a marital structure, not as an object of luck, fate, chemistry, determinism, parents’ interference, or compulsory social obligations, but as a subject. What I find is that the male protagonist, Haymaker, is sandwiched between his longing for conjugal love and an essential prosaicness of his marriage.

In “Marriage—For One,” Dreiser portrays what he believes to be the very core component in the newlyweds’ dissonance: the wife, Bessie, is more liberalized and goes so far as to reject her husband’s preference for her stagnation in a more innate, inactive, and unchanged state of simple-mindedness. The title of the short story echoes the husband’s expectations of a closed marriage for life with complete emotional exclusiveness that in actuality destroys the promise of forming a marital relation on the basis of free, individual choice.

Keywords: Companionate Marriage; 19th-century middle-class marriage; 19th-century middle class; Free Love; the Cult of True Womanhood; separate sphere; Theodore Dreiser

Table of Contents

Introduction: Cultural and Social Context: Companionate Marriage	1
Section One: Dreiser’s Commitment to the Short Story	13
Section Two: Companionate Marriage in “Free”	19
Section Three: Companionate Marriage in “Marriage—For One”	31
Conclusion	43
Works Cited	47
Chinese Translation of “Free”	54
Chinese Translation of “Marriage—For One”	82



Introduction:

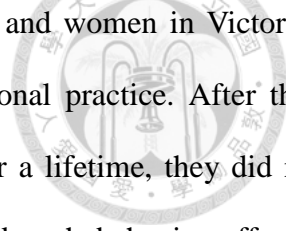
Cultural and Social Context: Companionate Marriage



In this thesis, I choose to study Theodore Dreiser, whose works reveal a longing for sentimental closeness between partners in the name of companionate marriage. Theoretically, this thesis explores the middle-class cult of and striving for companionate marriage. Critics have mostly focused on discussions of Dreiser's novels, his female characters, and his feminist perspectives. I investigate instead the potential benefit from companionate marriage in his two short stories, "Free" and "Marriage—For One," written around the turn of the 20th century. The former is the title story of *Free and Other Stories* and "perhaps the best in the collection" (Griffin 54). Lawrence E. Hussman, Jr. distinguishes, in a chapter called "The Marriage Group," "Free" as "the most brutally honest story about the married state ever written (118). He argues that "Haymaker's marriage, undertaken in a state of youthful idealism and transient sexual attraction, is portrayed as a tragic mistake, compounded with each passing day of self-sacrifice and burning longing to be free" (118). Finally, "Marriage—For One" with the word "marriage" for its title echoes my thematic concern.

On the one hand, I would like to translate the two literary texts into Chinese by following similar language style used in the original work. I attempt to preserve the verbal quality of the original text. Necessary notes and annotations would be added. To take the onset of "Free" for example, it is replete with Haymaker's nervousness over Mrs. Haymaker's blood affliction. The few paragraphs on the first page of "Free" impress the reader with Haymaker's mental exhaustion and his general feeling of debility that has no discernible cause. In my translation the focus is on Haymaker's depressive mood. I try to translate Haymaker's tendency to melancholia, chronic fatigue, and bouts of insomnia. Haymaker's depressed mental state is a good example in which the atmosphere of the story is established and the characterization of Haymaker is vividly given.

On the other hand, in the critical reading, I would like to discuss the two stories on the topic of companionate marriage. Compared to companionate marriage of our own time, a network of



enforcement surrounded marital relationships between middle-class men and women in Victorian America. They lived through adulthood without questioning this traditional practice. After they exchanged public promises to remain together—for better, for worse, for a lifetime, they did not give up on marriage. Divorce meant crossing forbidden boundaries and such behavior affected public censorship and self-repression for 19th-century middle-class couples. Lifelong commitment was a common goal.

Dreiser wants companionate marriage, a marriage that could render 19th-century lifelong marriage obsolete. He wants an era of serial marriage, with multiple marriages and remarriages becoming the norm. In “Free” and “Marriage—For One” he does not depict marriage and love as if the second follows inevitably from the first. As husbands in the two short stories find themselves dissatisfied and their marriages in danger, their fear of divorce should be understood as not only a response to both these individual crises but also the hue and cry about a crisis in a society at large. Whilst divorce is not allowed in Victorian society, I posit that Dreiser envisions a future of companionate union soon to be more fully developed, at the same time exposing 19th-century middle-class straddled attitude towards the nascent, affectional view of marriage. The old-fashioned middle-class protagonists in the two stories not only strive to conform to established conventions of marriage but also desire to get rid of suffocating marital morality. The characters thus reflect a tiptoed attitude towards the revolutionary idea of marriage.

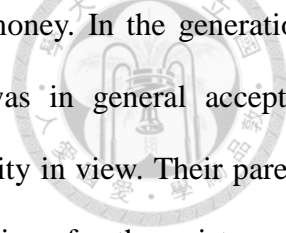
On another level, companionate marriage means a sexual politics of the culture that destabilizes a gender hierarchy that undermines Dreiser by suppressing his publication and that his works, in turn, helps undermine. Dreiser’s rejection of traditional marriage and suggestion for love matches made him meet with a negative reception among editors. In his works, he infers that a soulless union is immoral and ought to be dissolved without dishonor. Comparatively speaking, “[a panoply of American authors in the 19th century] are more concerned with delineating their overriding visions [of the moral adequacy of marriage] than with marriage itself” (Stein 5). As often as not, “marriage plot . . . serves as an index to the social, ethical, and historical orientation of the

novelist . . . What marriage symbolizes . . . is the movement from individualistic liberty and romantic possibility to social propriety and moral responsibility” (Hinz 902-903). Instead, Dreiser is dissatisfied with the maintenance of appearances. To understand Dreiser’s yearning for marriage to be defined as a private agreement, it is necessary to first dissect how the idealized view of marriage appears and spreads.

Historians predicate that marriage had undergone a transformation from a patriarchal institution to a new level of relationship premised on equal and emotional fulfillment by the end of the 19th century. They coin the phrase “companionate marriage” to describe the revolution in late-19th-century marriage, according to which social and economical considerations were more or less replaced by an emphasis on and intensification of companionship as marital ideal for the middle class.

It is difficult to pinpoint the timing of the inception of the new, egalitarian mechanism for marriage with precision. Some scholars point to the culmination of long-term trends to explain companionate marriage. Glenna Matthews discovers that people’s emotional lives had received relatively little notice by studying patterns of marriage during the colonial period (9). Carl N. Degler dates the emergence of the modern American marriage, characterized by companionate norms, as occurring between the American Revolution and about the 1830s (*At Odds* 8). Similarly, Joseph Allen Boone argues that following a general “cultural awakening to the gentle, tender, and softening emotions ‘most amenable to domestic needs and desires’ . . .” (60), in the two decades after the American Revolution, New Englanders began to demand true love to be at the forefront of an ideal marriage.

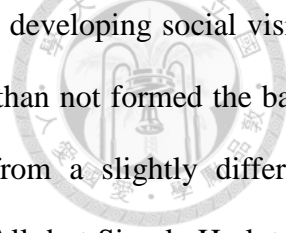
Besides, one cannot place too much importance on 19th-century controversy over marriage as a result of interested motive, such as wealth, social position, or other advantages and marriage from a predominantly affectionate outpouring of impulse (Coontz 145-160). On the one hand, Coontz contends that starting in the Middle Ages, marriage of convenience—of finance rather than romance—was common. There was an old veneration for the proposition that the demands of living



up to one's class position should forestall the desire to marry without money. In the generations preceding the 19th century, marriage contracted for monetary gain was in general accepted, according to which the young should select a partner with financial security in view. Their parents displayed their conviction that far from tainting a loving marriage, marriage for the existence of plenty of money would solidify the partnership and indeed lead to increased love. Finally, conservatives of the 18th century believed since the wife in marriage with a sound financial footing need not become a drudge, marriage for a certain amount of money presumably produced a more economically and thus emotionally stable union.

On the other hand, 19th-century middle class gradually drew a more direct link between fortune-hunting marriage and fallenness (Washington 50-73). After the late 18th century, there was a link between the disagreement over marriage made solely for one's wealth and the argument against prostitution. As William R. Greg puts it, "For one [prostitute] who . . . sells herself to a lover, ten sell themselves to a husband" (12). Although the chain of causality seems a bit tenuous, the link between seeking good fortune rather than love and respect in marriage and chasing a thoughtlessly easy, spoiled, dissipated life of vice reveals much about 19th-century middle-class mindset. Henceforth, the idea that it was prudent to marry with pecuniary concerns was disproved to some extent. More than likely, therefore, companionate marriage became more widespread. Under the heading of "The 'Marriage Question,' or Marriage as Discourse," Josef Ehmer recognizes that marriage coerced by parents or contracted solely for economic reasons began to incur social disapproval. Choosing a marriage partner on the basis of fondness came to enjoy higher public regard (282-286).

Whilst some historians trace the evolution of companionate marriage, other scholars elucidate it. Karen Lystra explains that "Nineteenth-century companionate marriage was based upon an atomistic ideal of two individuals mysteriously but permanently bonded by romantic love . . ." (193). In two researches of a similar nature, Paul Popenoe's "Family or Companionate?" (129-138) and M. M. Knight's "The Companionate and the Family: The Unobserved Division of an Historical



Institution” (257-267) point out that this kind of marriage encompassed a developing social vision of wedlock, according to which intimate, irresistible bonding more often than not formed the basis of late-19th-century middle-class marriage. Making the same points from a slightly different perspective, Rebecca L. Davis stipulates, in her essay “‘Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry’: The Companionate Marriage Controversy,” that companionate marriage to the mind of gender conservatives was “no kind of marriage at all” (1139). If the choice of a marriage partner was a personal decision, critics of companionate marriage argued, an access to easy divorce was encouraged and marriage loosened its social and symbolic orthodoxy. By all accounts, towards the end of the 19th century, “courting couples expected . . . to create a ‘union of *heart* and *mind* and *soul*’ that would last through marriage” (Spurlock, “Married Love” 319).

The following paragraph probes how 19th-century middle class reconsidered the theological, social, and political aspects of marriage. To begin, Roderick Phillips states that since the Middle Ages, the long-term progress of secularization had a marked effect on marriage. Its influence reached new heights towards the close of the 19th century (*Putting Asunder* 361-402; *Untying the Knot* 47-63). When individuals were guided by religious creeds, marriage was ordained by God. The practice of matrimony meant cultivating Christian virtuousness. The failure of marriage was a failure of piety. The typical spiritual, puritan view was that love developed during rather than before marriage. Christian theologians warned that husbands and wives who loved each other too much committed the sin of idolatry.

Nevertheless, owing to Enlightenment, there was a slow decline in the influence that religion wielded in regulating marriage after the second half of the 19th century. It is the time when policies, doctrines, and laws were gradually determined by secular criteria. Norma Basch’s *Framing American Divorce: From the Revolutionary Generation to the Victorians* shows marriage for late-19th-century middle class lost its sacred quality. They challenged the view that Christian-model doctrines should monopolize monogamy, stressing that marriage is essentially a matter for civil law. Espousing informal marriage and snap weddings, several states did not require ceremonies and

created greater accessibility to marriage (Riley 3-9). Supporting flexibility in marriage, the middle class conceived of matrimony as susceptible to change (O'Neill 203-217). They allowed marital separation and the freedom of one of the parties to engage in a subsequent love relationship (Rhode 164-173). Tandem marriage had become an integral element in the system of marriage itself (Wilson 479).

In addition, while once arranged marriage had been seen as a fundamental unit of larger social alliances determined by families' wealth or place within the rigid hierarchy, by the 19th century individuals were encouraged to consider themselves only. To begin with, in the 19th century, "[t]he expanding economy freed young men from traditional occupations [in farming villages] as the spread of the franchise and competing political parties involved them in the business [or] government" (Spurlock, *Free Love* 4). This seismic social shift spurred a change in marriage norms. The spread of chances in the commerce or politics of the day made young people less dependent on their parents for a start in life. A man did not have to delay marriage until he inherited land or took over a business from his father. He could marry as soon as he was able to secure financial settlement. Conversely, in most early modern societies, marriage was hardly conceivable for new couples with no plans to settle down, i.e. who lacked the resources to start a separate household (Fauve-Chamoux 221).

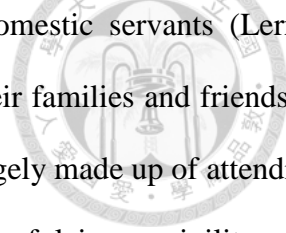
Besides, as Industrialization advanced, production and exchange were increasingly separated from the domestic arena, making the division between "world" and "home" (Wurst 225-238). At this juncture, the market became the frontier, the venue upon which business partners probably "contracted suspicion for one another" (Spurlock, *Free Love* 17). Marriage, then, appeared to be a retreat from strife in an uncertain world and the separation of home and workplace in the 19th century polarized feminized love in marriage (Cancian 692-709). A wife, despite her ignorance of practical matters, such as politics and economic life, could often serve as a moral "mentor" to what may have seemed dangerous. In a sense, "[w]ithin the sentimental culture of Victorian America, [a mysterious force called] influence was believed to be the power by which any person's character

affected the characters of others, for good as well as for evil. . . . [A]s a force for evil, influence was compared to a poison, a disease, a source of contamination and corruption” (Halttunen 4). Typically, women were educated to prepare for the cause of saving husbands from this ruin of character. The code for them was ministering to their husbands who were producers and who were nursed back to health from the wounds of dehumanizing agitation of the marketplace (Bloch 101-126).

The ideal of separate spheres prevailed in the early and middle 19th centuries. Some historians ascertain the parallel between husbands’ economic motor and wives’ sentimental core by titling their chapters with coined symmetrical phrases. Carol Hymowitz and Michael Weissman name a chapter “Bread and Roses” (234-263); G. J. Barker-Benfield entitles a chapter “Strong Men over Orderly Women” (43-54); Gail Collins calls a section “Man is Strong—Woman is Beautiful” (85-88); Laura F. Edwards refers to a chapter as “‘Rich Men’ and ‘Cheerful Wives’: Gender Roles in Elite White Households” (107-144).

Society’s benign approval of feminine domesticity offered disadvantages as well as advantages to middle-class wives. On the one hand, by combining piety with wives’ moral superiority, there was no doubt that the Cult of True Womanhood circumscribed wives’ independence and economic utility. The narrowing of middle- and upper-class wives’ role to carrying emotional weight led to the belief that they did not have sufficient reasoning powers to handle political and economic reform (Cott, *Bonds* 63-100). The dichotomy smoothed the way to popular acceptance of intrafamilial activities by wives (Kerber 16). They were best suited to doing “unskilled,” interruptible, nurturing work and appropriately rewarded primarily by love (Kerber 28). The separation was associated with the victimization of wives for these scholars. Put simply, the polarization of husband’s and wife’s traits reinforced the traditional male-public/female-private hierarchy.

On the other hand, the practice of separate spheres among middle-class wives was a vehicle for closing off avenues to harsh realities of working people’s life (Barker-Benfield, *Horrors* 43-54). The middle class manifested their class and financial differences as husbands advertised their actualization of domestic kingdoms presided over by ladylike wives. Middle-class housewives

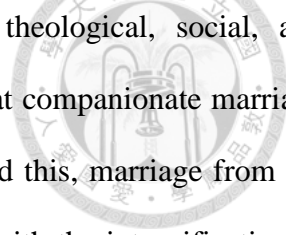


depended on their husbands' wages without working as laborers or domestic servants (Lerner 188-191). Additionally, they were commonly associated with ties with their families and friends or services to the community. Outside activities for privileged wives were largely made up of attending church and visiting friends (Yalom 175-225). They conveyed images of leisure, civility, and delicacy, all of which stood for a pre-eminently class-determined, mercenary hallmark. In a way, as the basic social and ideological mode of the middle-class changed during the Age of Jackson¹, so did the experience and functions of marriage. In short, for earlier-19th-century middle class, the nature of their marital relations is primarily influenced by industrial capitalism and the public affirmation of respective gender roles.

After clarifying theological and social background to marriage for the scope of my project, I would like to outline the influence of political development over marriage. If the husband provider marriage until the mid 19th century was the dominant marital pattern, by the close of the 19th century, a more equalitarian marriage had become widely accepted. Nancy F. Cott admits that essayists, activists, and nonconformists of marriage politicized it (*Public Vows* 56-76). She draws a comparison between husband-wife domestic relations to that of master-servant: "The most important commonality between the two institutions [of marriage and slavery] was the husband-master's power to command the dependent" (*Public Vows* 62). Enlightened, late-19th-century socialists, feminists, and antiracists of America, who emerged from within the antislavery movement, contended that both institutions, slavery and marriage, harbored inequalities inconsistent with American principles of liberty and equality. Women's rights reformers, who found slavery repugnant, raised a complaint in public about their own positions vis-à-vis their husbands (Hartog 6-39). They drew a historical parallel between the abolition of the unpleasant slaveholding and the contemporaneous demand for divorce.

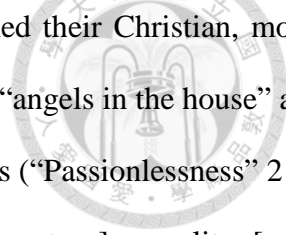
The above-mentioned paragraphs consist of a brief overview of the secularization of

¹ The Age of Jackson has never been easy to define. Broader than his presidency (1829–1837), and narrower than his life (1767–1845), it roughly describes the third, fourth, and fifth decades of the nineteenth century.



marriage—the means by which 19th-century middle class redefined theological, social, and politicized marital dynamics that operate in a culture. It is conceivable that companionate marriage was an innovative kind of marital development in all these fields. Beyond this, marriage from the late 19th century to the first decades of the new century is first saturated with the intensification of affection and then with the contention over wives' changing sexuality. On the one hand, as John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman write, “[19th-century-] middle-class courting couples internalized sexual restraint, confid[ing] their mutual yearning for physical intimacy in highly romantic, even spiritual, terms” (76). On the other hand, the middle class during the early 20th century were more preoccupied with unleashing sexual gratification in marriage, initiated by the New Woman (Coontz 196-215). Prior to World War I, American wives were “liberated from the strictures of ‘Victorianism,’ now an epithet deserving criticism . . .” (McGovern 316). A closer look at the celebration of wives' new position of freedom and choice by reformers of modern era supplies an overview of the role female autonomy plays in marriage.

The following paragraph focuses on 19th-century contention over the sexual subordination of women. To begin, the Christian belief system up to the 18th century called unsanctified earthly women devil's agents. They tempted men who were considered more prone to deviate from virtues by carnality in their “fallen” state. Men's rational control was weaker as they were susceptible to concupiscence. As a result, it was objectionable for the daughters of Eve to exercise sexual initiative, if anything (Welter 137-157). By extension, “sexual appetite was a male quality . . . If a woman showed it, she resembled a man” (Barker-Benfield, “Spermatic Economy” 54). From this religious perspective, 19th-century sexual ideologists accentuated the view that wives lacked sexual aggressiveness (Cott, “Passionlessness” 220). Wives, whose lack of inclination to yield to “baser nature” were epitomized by dispositional and physiological theories (Ortner 28-31), thereby were given greater emphasis to put caring for others first (Degler, “What Ought to Be” 1468). As Charles E. Rosenberg writes, “[wives were subordinated] within the . . . traditional role of female as giving and nurturant . . .” (150).



By the late 19th century, wives' values and virtues had gradually shed their Christian, moral nature. Advocates of the New Woman opposed mid-19th-century notion of “angels in the house” and sexual “anaesthesia,” as Cott calls it, among the so-called respectable wives (“Passionlessness” 219). What is more, John C. Burnham writes, “two fundamentals of [19th-century] morality [were challenged by reformers of the progressive atmosphere], the conspiracy of silence [about sex-related matters] and the double standard . . . for [wives], strict purity, and for [husbands], freedom to indulge” (885-886). Together with these historians' contentions, Marilyn Yalom's *A History of the Wife* (2001) foregrounds wives' right to be a more active participant in marriage (263-293). Simply put, these scholars propound new forms of wives' sexual subjectivity that break with male-dominant gendered marriage.

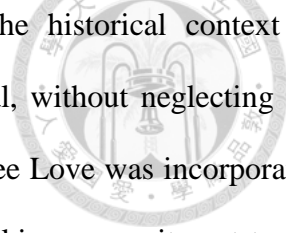
Furthermore, if late-19th-century middle class announced that passionless marriage was a tragedy, contemporaneous reformers of Free Love Movement upped the ante to abolish the institution of marriage (Spurlock, *Free Love* 202-230). Both companionate marriage and Free Love Movement took root as the 19th century drew to an end, but the campaigners of each marital revolution defended their cause differently. While the supporters of companionate marriage wanted to transform the institution of marriage, Free Lovers defined their goal as “[a] demand for marriage as a free contract . . . [, a contract] with the object of overthrowing marriage. . . . Love alone constitutes marriage” (Spurlock, *Free Love* 211, 217). Carole Pateman establishes that Free Lovers “[take] a ‘contract’ to be an agreement between two equal parties who negotiate until they arrive at terms that are to their mutual advantage” (154-155). More to the point, Christina Simmons proclaims that antimarriage radicals challenge not only old-fashioned bourgeois scrutiny of informal unions but also their oppressive control of women by the advocacy of the sanctity of marriage (178-181). Free Lovers decline marriage because it bears so important public judgment and status for women such as economic support, assistance, or respectability that women's true independence necessitates an opposition to marriage (Simmons 180). As Taylor Stoehr highlights: “[E]very . . . free lover, male or female, was also a feminist” (3). Finally, Sandra Ellen Schroer

indicates that for Free Lovers “freedom was aligned with nature and an internal Divinity . . .” (93). That is to say, Free Love radicals maintained that “[i]f all people have constitutional rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness[,] then the law can have no power over marriage” (Spurlock, *Free Love* 211).

There are some similarities between the rationale of companionate marriage and that of Free Love, but the middle class at the turn of the century looked upon the two practices differently. On the one hand, both exponents advocate self-fulfillment and individuated sovereignty, placing a premium on the naturalness of passion. They profess the importance of a spontaneous attraction between potential partners: “Convulsive experience of love, which comes of itself, cannot be reasoned with, and must be obeyed” (Sumner 274). Due to the efforts of the proponents of companionate marriage and Free Love, marriage became more of a private and personal affair before the beginning of the next century. With the advent of cohabiting, the free play of desire was affirmed, as well as the claims and practice of companionate marriage and Free Love.

On the other hand, the adherents of Free Love Movement encouraged overturning the institution of marriage, “invit[ing] . . . moderates to engage in ‘an unqualified and persistent demand for the immediate and unconditional abolition’ of marriage” (Spurlock, *Free Love* 217). In reality, the radicals’ view that mutual satisfaction relies more on love than on marriage diverged from majority viewpoints over the next several years of the 20th century (Spurlock, *Free Love* 209). At odds with the modern middle class’ new conceptions of sexuality within marriage, Free Love lost its prominence and was considered an attack upon prized middle-class values, values set out to credit a popular culture saturated with marriage. By contrast, companionate marriage shifted from its initially installed place centering on open, interdependent commitment to that centering on female sexual emancipation within marriage, as V. F. Calverton suggests in a chapter called “Companionate Marriage and the Sexual Impulse” (145-166).

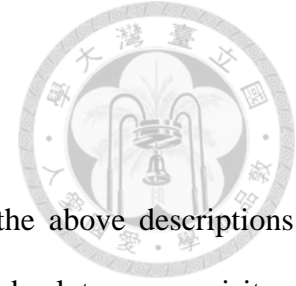
After addressing the background of companionate marriage, I would like to explicate the design of my thesis. Following the Introduction, my project comprises Section One, Section Two,



Section Three, and the Conclusion. The Introduction has recorded the historical context of 19th-century middle-class marriage, be it theological, social, and political, without neglecting the philosophy of companionate marriage. More specifically, the notion of Free Love was incorporated in the Introduction. In Section One, I will unearth Dreiser's feminist thinking, commitment to the short story, and critical reception. Dreiser's gender politics, with its insistence on undoing alienated, ostensible marriage and removing the double standard of matrimonial morality, was hardly much in demand at his time. In Section Two and Three I will claim separately that the two middle-class protagonists, Haymaker and Wray, are starved of the intoxicating feeling of sweetness and loveliness in unforgettable marriages. In Conclusion, I would like to tease out the tortured innermost self of the middle-class male protagonists, Haymaker and Wray, in the light of Dreiser's autobiographical elements. As I illustrated earlier, the purpose of this project is to excavate the uninspiring married relationships and Dreiserian yearning for companionship within marriage. In all important respects, love marriage, brought about by 19th-century middle-class reformation of marriage, becomes the popular notion and perhaps even the norms from where the potentiality of marriage nowadays is given birth.

Section One:

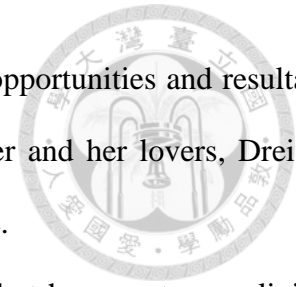
Dreiser's Commitment to the Short Story



To support the contentions I made earlier, I would like to apply the above descriptions to Dreiser's text. That reciprocity in man-woman relationships is an absolute prerequisite for companionate marriage is all the more evident in Dreiser's novels. In this view, Dreiser is considerably less sanguine about the heterosexual ties he describes in *Sister Carrie* (1900) and *Jennie Gerhardt* (1901). In his two major novels, enjoyable relationships are dissolved and the possibility for marriage is denied, let alone a companionate one. The reason why I discuss the two canonic novels here is that they furnish a starting point for Dreiser's tales of married life. The main concern of my study, however, is to offer a more subtle analysis of marriage in Dreiser's "Free" and "Marriage—For One." Essentially, I attempt to exceptionalize marriage as both a central episode and a dominant motif in the two stories.

In *Sister Carrie*, Carrie at first has a hankering for traditional, husband breadwinner marriage. Drouet, her first lover, pays her to live with him and is finally willing to marry her. However, she drifts from him because he is insensitive to her feelings. Likewise, she tires of Hurstwood, her second lover, a saloon manager. She meets him at the moment he has fallen out of love with his wife. He pursues Carrie fervently and breaks mores by escaping from his failed marriage. Carrie initially wants to marry him. While she seems to be reluctant to run away with him, she finally lets it happen and Dreiser does not make it clear how she can believe that Hurstwood has deserted rather than divorced his wife. Carrie learns afterwards that she has a slim chance at marriage, inasmuch as Hurstwood does not divorce his wife.

Afterwards, Carrie decides that she must fight her way out of poverty in a public realm. She is temperamentally suited to Broadway. Thenceforward, the novel goes on to report in detail her self-presentations on stage. Her star quality wins recognition. What is noteworthy is that she is financially self-supporting and therein lays the cause of her new-found unmarried self-sufficiency. As she thrives in New York, readers are led to believe that marriage detracts and obstructs the way

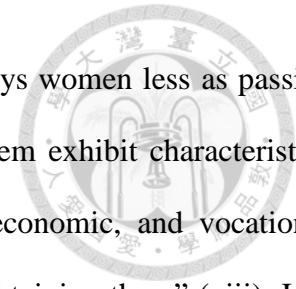


to her female self-awakening. Her lovers are consigned by their lack of opportunities and resultant effeminacy. Through Carrie and the economic discrepancies between her and her lovers, Dreiser exploits the theme of a female seeking fulfillment not met within marriage.

Contrastingly, in *Jennie Gerhardt*, Jennie wants most to be a wife, but has spent years living under the tutelage of men out of wedlock. She, an innocent and virginal girl, has an infatuation with marriage and views it as a means to support herself and her family. She is seduced by and reliant upon wealthy men. Instead of marrying her, her two lovers successively keep her as their mistress, and their relationships are financial. She stays faithful to them and her dependency on them reinforces their power over her. Her self-abnegation makes her wish to live within a limiting, domesticated, asymmetrical marriage. Her hope of being a protégé backfires. The novel deals with Jennie's suffering resulted from an irreconcilable clash between her desire for marriage regardless or in spite of societal pressure and the prevailing view that marital compatibility is judged by outward symbols, a view grounded in established attitude in society. Dreiser articulates his sensitivities to the unreconciliation between romantic excesses and the respectable surface of matrimonial criteria, such as property, reputation, family, and social standing.

Scholars have paid limited attention to the marriage plot in Dreiser's novels and short pieces alike. Not surprisingly, the clarification of marriage politics in every work by Dreiser is found wanting. Earlier critics choose to devote attention to Dreiser's best-known, eponymous works, *Carrie Sister* and *Jennie Gerhardt*. Among the studies, the two female figures, rather than the nature of marriage, are surveyed. More important, with the tide of feminist theory, scholars adopt an approach of feminism to construe Dreiser's crusade against gender stereotypes. Considering that Dreiser's gender criticism, strictly speaking, his feminist urge, has attracted much critical interest, I would like to investigate Dreiser's discourse of feminism, before I enunciate his policy of marriage of his time. An examination of Dreiser's campaign against social construction of sex and gender illuminates the psyche and impediments of 19th-century married middle class.

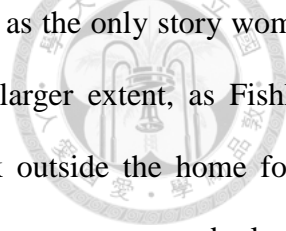
Four feminists have commented on Dreiser's attempt to defy gender systems and cultural



stereotypes of women. Two scholars specifically state that Dreiser portrays women less as passive receptors than as active agents. Miriam Gogol notes that “[m]any of them exhibit characteristics that we would call feminist: primarily their independence in social, economic, and vocational spheres. They pursue worldly goals and through their drive succeed in obtaining them” (viii). In a similar vein, Clare Virginia Eby agrees, in her “Dreiser and Women,” that the current critical climate encourages “depict[ing] Dreiser as challenging conventional views of women . . . [and finding an] aspect of feminine power which he traces through economic [and] social . . . accomplishment . . .” (142-143). Gogol and Eby emphasize that Dreiser’s female characters deliberately use their power to achieve supremacy.

Further, James Lundquist features, in a chapter called “Dreiser’s Women,” Dreiser’s open sympathy for fallen women as an important aspect of his disaffection with restrictive American Puritanism (27-51). What is shocking and innovative about his treatment of a spectrum of women is Dreiser presents them “without moral bias” and their rises are results of their falls (44). Finally, Susan Wolsterholme compresses her review into an autobiographical conclusion: To a certain extent, *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* are drawn from the experience of Dreiser’s sisters. Since Dreiser persisted in expressing sympathetic and sensitive portraits of women through plotting the careers of his sisters, Dreiser is, “if not a feminist, at least a fellow traveler, allied with feminists in a struggle against patriarchy” (261). The above feminists, Gogol, Eby, Lundquist, and Wolsterholme, confirm Dreiser’s representations of female assertiveness. To sum up, Dreiser problematizes “the contingency of the dominant male tradition” (Fishkin 2).

In the previous paragraph, I elaborated the theorization of Dreiser’s feminist analytic mode. It is acknowledged that he works against the legitimacy of “female spirituality” that contributes to the devaluation of women. Nonetheless, the pursuit of marriage by male or female in his novels is passed over by reviewers and, needless to say, in his short stories. Above all else, *Carrie* and *Jennie* do not get married and the two novels are devoid of marital agenda. Shelley Fisher Fishkin argues, in a section called “Gender Stereotypes at the Turn of the Century” (8-10), that Dreiser defied the



general trend towards “the pervasiveness of the tyrannous [marriage] plot as the only story women could tell or enact[, particularly for working-class women]” (8). To a larger extent, as Fishkin remarks, under “the ubiquitousness of the [marriage] plot” (8), “[w]ork outside the home for a woman was viewed, throughout most of the culture, as a sometimes necessary and always unfortunate way station along the road to marriage” (8). In this way, far from assuming that the dream of marriage “loomed large in young women’s imaginations” (9), Dreiser transcends this traditional and even stereotypical assumption. He unveils “the dominance of the [marriage] plot as the key obstacle . . . [for] ‘women to better their economic conditions,’ ‘[as they give] up the world of wages to make a home . . .’” (Fishkin 9). In *Sister Carrie*, a canonical novel taking its title from the name of the leading female character while displaying none of the proper names of men, Carrie shows herself to be an aspiring career woman and actress. Carrie develops pride in her job and is unwilling to give up a job well done to make marriage. Dreiser disputes the fact that a marriage intrigue of some sort is all but essential to the popularity of any novel (Fishkin 8-10).

Since marriage is something to be left out in Dreiser’s novels, his short stories become prime movers of examining his strength in seeing the dominant ideology of marriage of his day. Dreiser’s progress from novels like *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* to short stories like “Free” and “Marriage—For One” concludes itself in his shifting concern from women with romantic-minded individualism to couples in the expectation of a whole-hearted love within marriage. In my opinion, Dreiser’s preoccupation, put forward by the marriage theme in the two stories, is to postulate a mutual consideration and intrinsic gratification in marriage. It follows that Dreiser’s evaluation of marriage is prone to protest cultural conventions, according to which marriage is motivated by and accustomed to social or financial desirabilities (Herman 298-315). It could be argued that Dreiser uses the short story as a genre to lambaste marriage of convenience. In a comprehensive way, “[the short] story which deliberately examines only a single brief episode or encounter avoids the tendency of the conventional full-length novel to come to definite conclusions . . .” (Stubbs 104). In the following paragraph, I would like to quote some critics’ comments on Dreiser’s assumptions

about fashioning stories in order to validate the claim that short story's narrative compression is acceptable to Dreiser if not instrumental in his insight to matrimony.

Joseph Griffin remarks that “Dreiser was able to place . . . [in his] stories . . . his vision of life” (19). Sherwood Anderson declares, in his introduction of Dreiser's collection of short fiction, *Free and Other Stories*, that Dreiser rejects “the ‘trickery’ and plot orientation of conventional magazine fiction [catered for the middle-class taste]” (Griffin 24). The lack of the boost for middle-class moral and social normalcy in Dreiser's works can be explained in part by his denunciations of the popular demand, whose major criterion he refers to as “[making sure] the beauty and peace and charm to be found in everything, the almost complete absence of any reference to the coarse and the vulgar and the cruel and the terrible” (*A Book* 490). As a result of the gulf between the manuscripts he sent magazine editors and their expectations about what magazine fiction ought to be, Dreiser evokes little positive reaction from the popular magazines. More than once, he is on the point of collapse because of the censorship of Victorian gender segregation that came from editors of large-circulation periodicals, a system that deserves condemnation for him by his in-depth feminist thought.

Not only do Dreiser's short stories deviate from regular magazine fare², they manifest the author's ambivalent attitude towards his career as a short-story writer or novelist. In the following paragraph, I would like to include some biographical materials to give a backdrop for Dreiser's interest in short narratives as literary production. That is, Dreiser the novelist is compared with Dreiser the short-fiction author.

Although his *Sister Carrie* was published with poor sales, Dreiser's short fiction was even less welcome. James L. W. West, III, observes that “volumes of short stories . . . brought in [Dreiser] needed money—but not a great deal, since the sales figures for these books were usually modest”

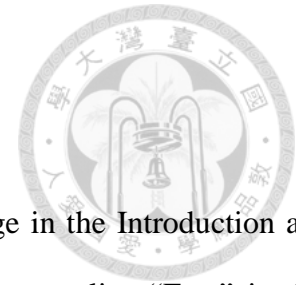
² Occasional acceptance of Dreiser's fiction came from editors who risked popular or professional censure. George Horace Lorimer of the *Saturday Evening Post*, who accepted “Free” on the basis of Dreiser's reputation, was deluged with “dozens of telegrams and hundreds of letters” from readers who condemned the story (Swanberg 227).

(20). Griffin proposes that the author tends to flaunt traditional family values and blur the boundaries between conventional male and female conduct in the state of marriage, with the result that generally Dreiser's short stories received repudiation by magazine editors. Besides, the publishers reasoned with Dreiser that "you are known as a novelist and every time anything by you is published, except a novel, people ask for a novel by you" (Griffin 24). In one respect, "Dreiser seemed driven by the desire to [overcome the unfavorable market]" and editors' tendency "to glorify the traditional values . . . [of the select group]" (Griffin 18). The fact that Dreiser kept producing short stories even if they met with constant objection can be regarded as professional rather than economical necessities.

To seek acceptance from upper-class magazines without compromising his doleful tales of common life, Dreiser resorts to male-female relationships (Hussman 113-125). Particularly, mismatching provides Dreiser access to the mainly harmful effects of "bowing to convention and to the opinions of others" (Gerber 70). In his two short stories, "Free" and "Marriage—For One," Dreiser airs a dissenting view of marriage in which the couple unite out of duty or pity instead of love. It is more often dejection, indifference, and unhappiness rather than loving care that surface in Dreiserian marriage. By depicting disappointing mismatches, Dreiser himself envisages companionate marriage as a preferable form of human relation, which is not so easily attainable. Yet even if, under the marital strains, Free Love becomes a tempting alternative, it is never the first choice. The main aim of the thesis is to develop a more well-rounded understanding of marriage in the particular stories analyzed.

Section Two:

Companionate Marriage in “Free”



After identifying the causes of a change in attitude towards marriage in the Introduction and Dreiser’s utilization of the short story in Section One, I attempt to contextualize “Free” in this section. On the whole, the story demonstrates how the implication of romantic love undercuts duty, custom, public opinion, current beliefs, and community obligations with respect to marriage, putting new strains on them. To begin, “Free” is a thought-oriented story apropos of the sentiments of a sixty-year-old New York architect during his wife’s medical crisis over a four-day period: the three days before and the day of his wife’s death. During these days, the astonishing resurrection of his wife, Ernestine, from her physical symptoms obtrudes upon the meditation of the architect, Rufus Haymaker. He has gathered the fact that his conventional, socially sensitive wife is not the kind of woman that he really craves: “All these years he had wanted, wanted—wanted—an understanding mind, a tender heart, the some one woman—she must exist somewhere . . .” (“Free” 49). Most of all, he has devoted over forty years of apparent servitude to his wife, all the while hoping to terminate his compromisation with social norms.

The story opens with Haymaker, his eyes “weary and yet restless” (“Free” 37), brooding over the news from his wife’s physician that she is in imminent danger of death because of a heart lesion. His wife’s condition has revived his longing to be free, to spend his last few years doing only what he heartily wants to do. As it is put early in the story, “yet how often, viewing his life in retrospect, had he wished that his life had been as sweet as his dreams—that his dreams had come true” (“Free” 40).

In the meantime, Haymaker’s longing is complicated by his self-criticism about his pensive mood, evoked by a strange mixture of self-imprecation and self-assertiveness: “to be unfaithful to a wife, even unkind to her—what a crime . . . Such people ought to be drummed out of the world. They were really not fit to live—dogs, brutes! . . . There was actually a haunting satisfaction in the thought that she might die now” (“Free” 46, 59). To put it differently, Haymaker aspires to summon

not only self-control over susceptibility but also disobedience to other people's appraisal of his wife's impact on him:

He had resolved to do better in his thought, but somehow, in spite of himself, *he had never been able to do so*. . . . [The] doctor, who imagined that he was old and weak and therefore in need of this loving woman's care and sympathy and understanding! . . . Also his children . . . thought him dependent on her and happy with her; his servants and her and his friends [thought] the same thing, and *yet he really was not*. ("Free" 53, 39; emphasis mine)

Throughout the story Haymaker vacillates between his wish that she will die and his built-in protest. The plot arrangement knits together the seesaw of his alternative self-perception. At one time, she makes a partial recovery; at another, she suffers a relapse. In a word, the prolonged exposure of Haymaker's deep thinking is sharply directed by his wife's astonishingly vacillating turn of illness, and then death.

Critics have usually underscored the ramification of the naturalistic concept on Haymaker, on which Dreiser unmistakably concentrates. Dreiser has a unique way of depicting Haymaker's marriage as "some overpowering force, some love or hate or fear, inhibition, jealousy, or greed that has chained its protagonist to his fate" (Matthiessen 214). Consistently enough, two scholars investigate the depth of Haymaker's stress under finding himself a stultified husband. They uncover Haymaker's passivity and incapacity to act upon his life as his story is reduced into a pure reconciliation to and disillusionment with fettered, inevitable responsibility. Robert H. Elias presumes that Dreiser's short story serves to show that Haymaker, impaired in his elements of determination, is limited by feelings or circumstances, steeped in cultural and social rules, limits, and guidelines (209). Griffin contends that Haymaker has lost control over his colorless recollection (54-61). His self-infliction and self-capitulation are so closely juxtaposed as to be inextricably mixed in the overall texture of his reminiscence. According to Elias and Griffin, worried at the outset, Haymaker has forfeited his chances for liberation and has precipitated into a disparity

between his love-seeking wishfulness and outward reality “[that] had suggested to him the love time or youth that he had missed” (“Free” 60).

To complicate the matter further, Griffin prioritizes Haymaker’s conscientiousness (54-61). Noticing the fact that Haymaker’s recrimination racks him so agonizingly, Griffin shows how Haymaker sees perfectly his ulterior motives as reprehensible. Griffin supports the view that Haymaker so rarely succeeds in ridding himself of his demons that he reckons it is his evil curse that is killing his wife. For Griffin, Haymaker’s devastating guiltiness has become so paralytic that Haymaker cannot change and that he is led to remark ruefully his wife’s reach is beyond the grave.

In my view, the above-mentioned reviewers’ naturalistic interpretation, briefly described, doubts the possibilities of Haymaker’s recovery from his sapped confidence. All things considered, they shed light on not only the sensibility of the romantically gloomy Haymaker but also the prevalent pessimism the narrator has expressed towards Haymaker’s story. What has gone unnoticed is that they, in one way or another, may be more concerned with the unfulfillment the one-side repressive marriage per se contains rather than clarifying Haymaker’s effort to overcome not only his ostensibly pleasant marriage but also an external equation of marital obligation with social and moral self-discipline. In that case, their assessment, powerful in their announcement of the environmental and institutional force over an individual’s agency, does not recognize the self-willed man in Haymaker who teaches himself to act on emotive principles. Their readings lean a bit towards a consequentialist stance that relays only to Haymaker’s final letdown.

Whilst these critics have extrapolated Haymaker’s inactivity and inescapability from his discouragement from marital confinement at the end of the story, in this project, I, instead, am more optimistic than informed sources about the likelihood that Haymaker’s unhappy marriage furnishes compensating humanistic dignity which emerges from his attempt at finding a mutually committed woman. On the one hand, his yearning for being crazy about, preoccupied with, and addicted to a woman reflect a human being’s striving for escaping the formula of unheroic, circumstantial pessimism as the total meaning of marriage, even if his quest is in principle conditioned and

controlled by the dull round of daily marital existence. In his character, one sees he is an uncompromising figure who, at least on the surface, has not abandoned his search for purposeful love, for a responsive partner, and for the betterment of his love-life. In his attempt to not only make decisions about the direction of his lovesickness but also satisfy his existential longings for the beloved other, one finds a capacity for humanitarianism. His expectations about feeling loveable with an impassioned lover in marriage lead one to believe that man, for whatever reason, has potential to launch a campaign against the listless dullness of his life even in the face of circumstances over which he has little control.

On the other hand, he further affirms the significance for being an individual in his cogitation on the moral complexities and ambiguities about his unexecuted extramarital affair. By highlighting Haymaker's personal faith in the possibility of a better and freer life, Dreiser directs his attitude towards and thinking against the undue emphasis on ideas about man as an ethical being. With a deep compassion Dreiser seldom assumes the right to pass moral judgment upon Haymaker. No where in "Free" is there a moral. There is no suggestion that there ought to be. Haymaker's yearning for a life-giving lover, instead of a publicly praiseworthy wife and home life, is in no wise judged; and even more astonishing, this illicit love is shown to be a haven in a heartless world. The necessity for Haymaker to love and to be in love goes deeper than self-complacency or mute acceptance of moral standards.

Before I identify and examine the humanistic merits underlying Haymaker's endeavor to seek value in his commonplace marriage, it is necessary first to turn our attention to a historical analysis of late-19th-century urban culture. The particular readjustments and redirections that 19th-century men underwent in their adopted cities altered traditional expectations of marriage as an institution of childbearing, kin, and property relations. By answering at first what the particular urban upheaval that 19th-century men went through, I can argue that Haymaker's attempt at demanding greater privacy and freedom in his unconsummated marriage is of humanistic extraordinariness.

Haymaker's marriage may be conceived of an emotional state wrestling with the whole social

fabric. Compared with earlier generations, there seemed to be ever fewer points at which city-dwelling youths' idea of an exemplary lover and that held by small-town people intersected. To begin, under the aegis of the blossoming expansion of an industrialized world, a crowd of 19th-century unemployed country residents emerged in capitalist cities. By swarming into buzzingly capitalized and industrializing metropolis, the jobless broadened their horizons. They flocked to cities of rapidly glowing population for financial gain. As Industrialism grew, newly-developed job-hunters severed their link to values in the home that contained a courtly reverence for marriage.

In "Free" Haymaker incarnates this relocated ambivalence. As a youngster of humble rural origin emblematic of an augmentation of staid, stagnant, and ingrained impasse, Haymaker leaves home before adulthood. He becomes a newcomer in the city and eventually ascends to the middle class well above average in income and intellectual urbanity. His point of view has been altered by virtue of his growing knowledge of the rechargeable, competitive atmosphere of urbanized environment: "[t]he great city, larger experiences—while [Ernestine] was still enduring the smaller ones—other faces, dreams of larger things . . ." ("Free" 43). Haymaker remembers living in separate cities and provinces during the interim years between the first promise and marriage to Ernestine, his childhood sweetheart, her flowing of charm that drops into an abyss of joylessness. Admittedly, in their initial long-distance attachment, he holds expectations of an optimal match that will bring the reward of a sense of togetherness: "It had been . . . a love match at first sight with them. She had seemed so sweet . . . a dream among fair women" ("Free" 43). However, his wide real-world experience deprives him of Ernestine's attractiveness.

Although life and work have wasted away his premarital ardor of courtship, Haymaker does not intend to cancel the engagement, "to wound [Ernestine], to undo her, to undo her life" ("Free" 44), acknowledging the necessity of exchanging her love for loyalty even at the expense of gratifying his own inclinations. Clearly, he has so uncomplaining a sense of responsibility as to cause me to suppose that his life would have been frustrated even had he left his wife years earlier. The reprehensibility he would have felt over his failed obligation would have allowed him no peace

of mind. In other words, there is an unpredictability in his married life as he ironically first experiences love without marriage and then marriage without love—as if the two are incompatible. His vacillation between resisting to moral consideration and subsequently, painstakingly realizing it gives voice to how 19th-century middle- and upper-middle-class men struggled between the moral dictates of the patriarchal marriage and the liberal subjectivism that helped them to try to envision themselves as an individual with self-worth and self-justification rather than subsumed followers meeting with social and moral approbation.

To put it another way, Dreiser depicts the binary of mate-choices, which we might term the “romantic” and the “socioeconomic” dilemma. The author explicates these two arguments not as complementary elements but as radically and even necessarily opposed tensions that are harmful not only to married individuals but also to the system of marriage in the abstract. The author sees the “socioeconomic” or contractual side of marriage as interfering with and damaging to the touchstone, which he emphasizes, of marriage that is an intrinsically sentimentalized union of two inherently equal persons. For one thing, Haymaker’s expectations for marriage are of heightened sentimentality about honor, fascination, and bewitchment of love. For another, Haymaker struggles to reach a degree of reason, nobility, and moral contribution in his socioeconomically sound marriage. Compellingly, this opposition between the two constituents of marriage becomes a driving force behind the plot of “Free.”

Shortly after his marriage, Haymaker realizes what a total creature of convention he has married. Love, he laments, is truly blind. As the course of the story unravels, it turns out that being an undemonstrative husband has come to be the mainstay of marriage. In this sense, he reveals his true character to very few people at the very time his wife lies dying. Of late, he has thought of himself as resembling the legendary Spartan boy who keeps the raging fox hidden beneath his cloak and never lets on that the animal has afflicted him: “Like the Spartan boy, he had concealed the fox gnawing at his vitals” (“Free” 45). Haymaker is in essence presented as a wonderful husband. Since he follows a set of beliefs that extols scrupulous duties, his reputation is verging on the excellent:

“He had not complained. He had been, indeed, the model husband, as such things go in conventional walks” (“Free” 45). To summarize, by arguing that his marriage is guided by the moral landscape that Haymaker finds himself in, I believe Dreiser points out acutely in “Free” that companionate marriage with any woman might only be illusory for Haymaker.

By presenting my observance of Haymaker’s adherence to moral precepts and social requirements, I assume that Dreiser constructs a critique of the long-standing idea of sex-typed spousal obligations. The conception of maleness and the idealization of husband in fact limit a man’s psychological richness even while they apotheosize him. The almost inviolable prescription of separate spheres encapsulates the belief that husbands are supervisors and protectors while wives are cooks, nurturers, moral guides, and childrearers. Haymaker meets the public-private dual role as both a provider and a sympathizer. He experiences an obvious anxiety over a role-bound domain, being a man of the heart and of the pocketbook. From a romantic perspective, he prefers to be free of his wife and to search for a sympathetic companion without barriers of communication between themselves: “He had dreamed and dreamed of something different until it had become almost an obsession” (“Free” 47). Yet his wild, fiery, impetuous, unencumbered self would be inappropriate by reason of his class position:

[T]he mere breath of a scandal between them, separation or unfaithfulness . . . would have led to endless bickering and social and commercial injury . . . All her strong friends—and his, in a way—those who had originally been his clients, would have deserted him. Their wives, their own social fears, would have compelled them to ostracize him! He would have been a scandal-marked architect . . . (“Free” 56)

The ill effect of his perception of society takes its greatest toll when Haymaker is overlaid with discreet, circumspect self-awareness. His moral compass of right and wrong reinforces his situation to identify completely, powerfully, and sympathetically his future with his wife’s during his life with her. He curbs his fervor for getting, keeping, recovering, or rediscovering love out of wedlock:

[B]ecause of duty and current belief and what people would say and think . . . [h]e had

never even dared whisper [the throes of and unattainable dream about his romantically defined involvements with some woman] to any one, scarcely to himself. . . . [H]e had by then been married so long that it was almost impossible to think of throwing her over . . . (“Free” 49-50, 56)

Haymaker renders a de-sexed, deepening recounting of being a person who not only provides for marriage but also is a sentimental valentine, all the while burying his baffling and uncontrollable soul. He is confronted with an intermediacy between claims of selfhood and social acceptability in marriage, facing contradictory demands. He himself can not get rid of conservative expectations of marriage. Nor can he “make up his mind on the side of moral order, sympathy, and be at peace” (“Free” 61).

A look at the other architect in the short story, Zingara, draws an outline of Haymaker’s alter ego. Zingara is Haymaker’s former friend, who has pursued his profession despite what might be said about him. He has been cut off relations with Haymaker for years since Mrs. Haymaker disapproves of his poverty and slovenly habits and forbids Haymaker to associate with him. Zingara’s constitution is completely opposite from Haymaker’s, a man with no marital want and who has never married. His vocation and peculiarity complement each other and he has become a distinguished success in his field. To put it more straightforwardly, Walter Blackstock gives an explanation as to the situation in his “Dreiser’s Dramatization of Art, the Artist, and the Beautiful in American Life” (63-86): A convergence of creative activity and nonconformative lifestyle seems the most appropriate pursuit for artists.

Culturally speaking, within 19th-century historiographical outline of gender, the middle class thought men as a gender lacked the heartfelt capacity for the intricate, incomprehensible web of love, praising masculine sanity above feminine irrationality (Cott, *Bonds* 161-162). In an age when middle-class women had greater vulnerability and men gained more economic power and individuality, the intensity of Haymaker’s reticence about either his intensified boredom or his unacted extramarital affairs, about his bedeviled tension over the popular attitude towards his

reputation, and about his near-violent proclamation of the necessity of preserving his sparkless marriage intact take me by surprise. By penetrating Haymaker's superior intuition to love or feel, Dreiser seeks to cancel the distinctive identification of husbands with the qualities of wise authority in public realms.

Although Haymaker's behavior seldom evinces a recognition of marriage as a catalyst for passionate inputs in his life, years of marriage usher in Haymaker's effort to maintain an emotional involvement in his wife's final, tentative, dramatic situation, irrespective of all sorrowful, pessimistic atmosphere in the story to dispel it. Haymaker actually displays pivotal, considerate, and transcendent caretaking towards his sickly wife:

During all this period Mr. Haymaker had been, as usual, most sympathetic. His manner toward her was always soft, kindly, apparently tender. . . . He was always glad to see her . . . humanly happy . . . [H]e had been . . . sensitive and kindly . . . to her mental and physical comfort . . . ("Free" 41, 44-45)

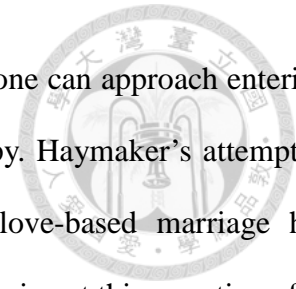
As he is tenderer and more emotionally malleable, he consoles, comforts, and listens to his wife's concern for household, children, and domestic harmony:

[Ernestine] still believ[ed] that he found pleasure and happiness in being with her, a part of the home which together they had built up, these children they had reared . . . He nodded and smiled and told her bits of news [of the house]. ("Free" 45, 64)

More than that, he attaches particular concern for his wife's sickness by taking the so-called "interest factors," his money or financial support, into account:

He had never really begrudged her anything—nothing certainly that he could afford. . . . [He] insisted that no expense must be spared. If her life was in danger, save it by any means—all. . . . [I]f she recovered . . . he would . . . take her away for the summer to some quiet mountain resort . . . ("Free" 41, 61-62)

Haymaker's demeanor is genuine as he comports himself respectfully and affectionately. One cannot disparage his dedication with all its concomitant bonds of warmth. Most important, the

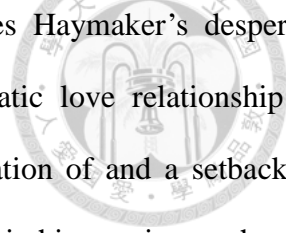


compassion and tenderness he panders to his wife are as close to love as one can approach entering companionate marriage. He has stuck by her, in his wish to see her happy. Haymaker's attempt at breeding love in his marriage offers an example that the idea of love-based marriage has contextually evolved over the course of the mid and late-19th centuries. I arrive at this assertion after deriving inspiration from Steven Seidman's well-written book *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830-1980* in which he expounds on 19th-century middle-class men's and women's struggle to become a unique individual who enters a marital structure, not as an object of luck, fate, chemistry, determinism, parents' interference, or compulsory social obligations, but as a subject. Seidman's reading invests a new conceptualization into Haymaker's in-between state. Haymaker is sandwiched between his longing for conjugal love and an essential prosaicness of his marriage. On the one hand, Haymaker has an unquenchable, unresolved desire for a near-constant soul mate. On the other hand, Haymaker is content to let love fade away after tying the knot, tolerating a friendly rapprochement after the first few years of all the bracing uncertainty of happily-ever-after haze have dimmed. In his voluntary kindness and unsparing thoughtfulness towards his wife, one sees an oscillation between unmatched ecstasy of married life and a habitual routinization that has more to do with an unbroken chain of the bondage of domestic life.

Although Haymaker appears to use muted equanimity to compensate for lovelessness in order to stay together with his wife, I believe his artistic bent is intertwined with his fantasies about a love affair. He diffuses beauty and sensuality into his creation of architectures: “[H]e could lose the memory in his work that his love-life had been a failure” (“Free” 42). Ultimately, he, as an artist, seeks solace in “many interesting and beautiful buildings he had planned . . .” (“Free” 47). His artistic edge, courage, and strength open up an outlet for his eagerness for love:

[H]e was an artist by nature, brooding and dreaming strange dreams and thinking of far-off things . . . [such as t]he nuances of his craft, the wonders and subtleties of forms and angles . . . (“Free” 46)

Haymaker's artistic musings play a crucial role in his rebellion against the crippling restriction of



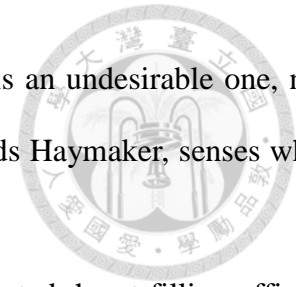
his marriage. By depicting Haymaker's artistic flair, Dreiser sublimates Haymaker's desperate craving for a romantic partner. Given that Haymaker desires an ecstatic love relationship in marriage, but cannot fill up the deep void, one sees there is an expectation of and a setback to companionate marriage in his quandary. There is diminution of magnetism in his marriage as he and his life-long partner cannot get excited about each other. Dreiser represents Haymaker preferring a life connected with architecture to his marooned marriage. Some architecture, away from the terrestrial, materialistic tug of wife and home, pleases him as a measure of a certain success he has fulfilled. By characterizing Haymaker as being pacified by skyscrapers and the vista of towers, Dreiser spells out that art compensates Haymaker for the lack of marital lovingness.

More subtly, it is hardly surprising that Haymaker's romantic sentiments exemplify 19th-century men's and women's preparedness to pursue an intermingling of souls that makes two individuals spiritually one in marriage. Haymaker's psychological context is vital in view of the fact that he does not expect a contrast between courtship and marriage. For Haymaker, there should be specialness about the bond that sets it above any other relationship. Although he does not contract his marriage according to companionate ideals, in which there is an emphasis upon the importance of emotional charisma between partners, he infuses the romantic characteristics of enchantment into his architecture. Haymaker's ineradicable desire for romantic attraction in marriage uproots 19th-century conservative mainstream middle-class from their conviction that marriage, with or without love, is for life. From all accounts, Haymaker's attentiveness to ardent feelings, a trait that unequivocally casts him in the group of enthusiasts for companionate marriage, assists us to understand 19th-century men's and women's searching psyche for crossing the threshold of a static ethos and moralization.

It is significant that the couple of "Free" have different conceptions of their marriage. On the one hand, owing to his compulsion-seeking character, Haymaker feels inadequacy, restlessness, and soullessness in his settled, constrained, and half-hearted marriage. On the other hand, compared to the poignancy of Haymaker's feelings of fruitless marriage, Ernestine is complacent about and

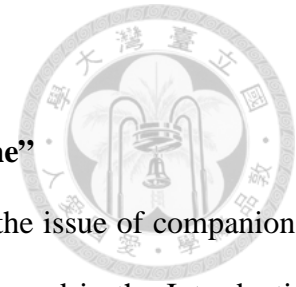
self-satisfied with unromantic marriage. She does not feel her marriage is an undesirable one, nor does she think it is on the brink of falling apart. In her opinion, she attends Haymaker, senses what he is thinking and feeling, and reassures him year after year.

Compared to Ernestine's belief that she and Haymaker have unexpected, heart-filling affinity between one another, Dreiser portrays Bessie, the wife in "Marriage—For One," as a self-reliant woman who renounces her role as wife, leaves her husband, and strikes out on her own. She finds her husband's misconception of companionate marriage to be stultifying. Her husband, Wray, misconstrues the nature of companionate marriage and insists that he could have a complete union with Bessie despite their growing differences. In Section Three, I will argue that the belief that companionate marriage should make husbands and wives feel whole can actually lead to marital conflicts. All in all, the two husbands, Haymaker and Wray, are torn by internal dissensions between they and their wives about wondrous returns on husbands' emotional investment their wives can provide.



Section Three:

Companionate Marriage in “Marriage—For One”



In the third section of my critical reading, I would like to look into the issue of companionate marriage to study the estranged couple in “Marriage—For One.” As I argued in the Introduction, during the later decades of the 19th century, middle-class defenders of companionate marriage prompted an increasingly articulate demystification of not only permanent marriage but also ministering angels. A new middle class found both unequal power relations in love and the woman’s subordinate role simply relics of legal and religious sanctions.

In “Marriage—For One,” Dreiser portrays what he believes to be the very core component in the newlyweds’ dissonance: the wife, Bessie, is more liberalized and goes so far as to call for Free Love, the idea that men and women should not feel bound by institutional ties. The husband in the short story, Wray, finds himself incapable of acclaiming Bessie’s growing self-assertion and subjectivity after marriage. He seethes with unanticipated frustration over imbalanced love as well as her declaration of free choice and personal happiness. On the one hand, he loves her more than he is loved in return. On the other hand, he mistakes companionate marriage for a possessive one. He overglorifies the fantasy of fusion or completion in marriage. The title of the short story, “Marriage—For One,” implies that he is obsessed about making her feel, react, and respond just as he expects. The validity of their marriage must hinge on his rigid, specific, and mandatory expectation of interdepending oneness. He seldom stops thinking how important it is for husband and wife to rely on each other. Since he insists on playing out a belief in this myth, Bessie finally sets off on a self-enhancing quest and demands for self-development, no longer in subjection to her husband.

Early on, Wray aspires to instruct Bessie, who is for him an amiable, eligible, and agreeable young woman. Specifically speaking, he successfully enlightens her during courtship yet once married begins to set limitations and over-protection upon her. Bessie becomes outgoing after marriage and ends up exercising her freedom so thoroughly that marriage is no longer attractive to

her. To Wray's indignation and astonishment, their marriage deteriorates as he transforms into a wishful husband and she a sophisticated wife. In the last rupture, Wray suffers the pain of loss as she has removed herself utterly from his life.

The process of Wray's catastrophic breakup is told by a first-person narrator who is not directly involved in the action he is describing but intrigued by the nature of certain developments in his protagonist's life. As an acquaintance and confidant of Wray, the narrator is privy to Wray's trials and tribulations. The story starts with the narrator's near-documentations of Wray's hypothesis that an honest and industrious woman with sagacious abilities will invariably be more well-suited and soul-satisfying than a woman lacking these exceptional merits. Wray in every way insists that if one persists in selecting a wife who is of placid maturity and is of the same stature mentally as himself, then the marriage must be a success. Meanwhile, Wray awaits a freethinking, unconventional, yet obliging young woman. To put it simply, as a suitor, he deliberately makes his selection:

[There] were the really *sensible* and *worthy* girls . . . He was for the *intelligent* and *practical* and *liberal* girl, if he could find her, one who was his *mental equal*.

(“Marriage—For One” 309; emphasis mine)

Apparently, Wray appreciates a woman with an equally rational, progressive, individualized cast of mind and deplores a subdued, uneducated mate of obviously spiritual difference from him. However, he paradoxically anticipates a prospective partner who possesses an inconsistent degree of forwardness and docility. She should not be foolishly meek, vulgar, or benighted. Neither should she be shrewdly unmanageable, unreasonable, or unpredictable in order to be compatible enough in a suitable future marriage relation:

One had to be sure that when one went a-courting[,] one selected a woman of *sense* as well as of *charm*, one who came of good stock and hence would be possessed of good taste and good principles. . . . and it was one of these that he was going to *choose*.

(“Marriage—For One” 308-309; emphasis mine)

Wray's verdict on female congeniality and companionability are somewhat ambiguous, patronizing, and unattainable. He upholds internally indefinable and contradictory standards, "of *sense* as well as of *charm*" ("Marriage—For One" 308; emphasis mine), of an optimum marriage partner.

As Wray remains convinced of the good qualities of ideal women, he feels that a man lacking foresight or pragmatism will go into hapless marriage. He counsels men to avoid making mistakes. His point seems to be that marriage is enveloped in a risky operation. Witless imprudence, impulsive inattention, or ill-considered simplemindedness sound the death knell for the relationship. Dictates Wray, if a man is not extremely clever or hardheaded in his selection, he will end his days chained by matrimony to a woman who is inferior to him in both morality and sense:

[S]o many women were designing, or at least light and flighty; they could not help a serious man to succeed if they would. . . . [I]t was necessary to exercise care: one might marry a girl who was too narrow and conventional, one who would not understand the world and hence be full of prejudices. ("Marriage—For One" 309)

Wray's preventive undertaking is plain in his dismissive attitude towards mindless infatuation in particular: "So many that went a-courting imagined they loved and were loved when it was nothing more than a silly passing passion" ("Marriage—For One" 308-309).

At any rate, he meets Bessie, a demure stenographer who comes from a very straitlaced family, churchgoing to the extreme, anti-theater in prejudice, and in all other ways ultraconservative:

[Shrouded in] the instructions and orders and tenets of her home and her church and her family circle, [she is anchored in] three worlds [that are] as fixed and definite and worthy and respectable in her thought as even the most enthusiastic of those who seek to maintain the order and virtue of the world would have wished. ("Marriage—For One" 309)

Despite her rather constricted religious background, Bessie seems to fit Wray's dispositions. According to Wray, she is not that kind of wayward, undisciplined and unsophisticated young woman who could never become a helpmate and soul mate. For Wray, her character is impressive



yet malleable. She is practical-minded yet submissively educatable: “She . . . appeared to be practical and sensible in many ways, but still very much in leash . . .” (“Marriage—For One” 309).

With rapidity, Wray carries out a courtship to cultivate her potential:

[H]e was very fond of her and was doing his best to influence and enlighten her. She was too fine and intelligent a girl to stick to such notions [of shy reserve, girlish hesitancy, and puritanical piety]. (“Marriage—For One” 310)

By purposeful courtship procedures, Wray persuades Bessie into abandoning her family routines and religious practices. First and foremost, he delights in his educating her out of her self-denying piousness and into unfettered outdoor activities. Tellingly enough, he has helped in her liberalization by

interesting her in books, especially bits of history and philosophy that he thought very liberal and which no doubt generated some thin wisps of doubt in her own mind. (“Marriage—For One” 310)

Wray, in any case, achieves a success as he has bargained for. Bessie matches him in holding shared hobbies and avocations dear, and in finding enjoyment in similar recreational pursuits: “In short, he emancipated her in so far as he could, and seemed to be delighted with the result” (“Marriage—For One” 310). Not unexpectedly, Wray and Bessie are married.

Not long after marriage, Bessie relishes music, opera, history, philosophy, and literature as forms of incipient and unabated recreations. She glories in a literary society composed of several married women whom Wray finds overly shallow and dishonorable beyond his endurance:

[Bessie] met a certain type of *restless, pushing, seeking* woman for whom Wray did not care . . . [whom], from the first . . . he knew could be of no possible value to any one. . . . [S]he would go [to the grand opera] with . . . those . . . wretched women he was beginning to detest. (“Marriage—For One” 310, 312; emphasis mine)

Wray pigeonholes Bessie’s “new-found friends” (“Marriage—For One” 312) as annoying, pitiable, and deviant women with no personal worth as a whole. To his dismay, he finds that Bessie comes

under the influence of these women who so promote her education in books and the arts that she begins to defeat him

. . . with the force and determination . . . [S]he now aired and defended her new knowledge. . . . She was reading a great deal, much too much for the kind of life she was called upon to lead. (“Marriage—For One” 311)

As Bessie reads voraciously and “[chooses] to question or contradict him as to a matter of fact” (“Marriage—For One” 311) soon after the wedding, Wray comes to believe her homosociality in her book club is fundamentally unsuited to her. Yet she continually socializes with her intimates, avowing the natural outgrowth of friendship. Since she revels in her pastimes, he has been feeling dissatisfied with the way she sheds her former reserved shyness and redirects her energy into self-improvement. In the passage excerpted below, Wray does not support Bessie’s independence, seeing her learning, powers of reasoning, and autonomy in decisions regarding housekeeping and family as a constant irritant:

But Bessie liked [her friends] and was about with them here, there, and everywhere. . . . She was becoming more aggressive and argumentative and self-centred all the time, more this, more that. . . . She was neglecting her home and running about all the time with her new-found friends. (“Marriage—For One” 310-312)

Wray assumes that Bessie’s responsibility is to devote herself exclusively to domesticity and that her mind should not be so “low” as to be influenced by a desire of establishing herself. Besides, he and Bessie have a daughter. His objections to Bessie’s participation in intellectual activities may be based on expectations of her altruistically angelic devotion and unselfish self-effacement in the household sphere to care for their child:

For surcease, she plunged into those old activities that had so troubled him at first, and now he complained that little Janet was being neglected. She did not love her as *she should* or she could not do as she was doing. (“Marriage—For One” 315; emphasis mine)

Moreover, Wray is genuinely shocked to know that Bessie has been reading Pierre Loti, the French novelist, whose writings celebrate the erotic, sensuous, and fun-loving. Also, she expresses an enthusiasm for “Freud and Kraft-Ebbing and allied thinkers and authorities, men and works that he considered dreadful and shameful . . .” (“Marriage—For One” 315). Wray dislikes these authors who write about a fresh view of women or sexual relationships.

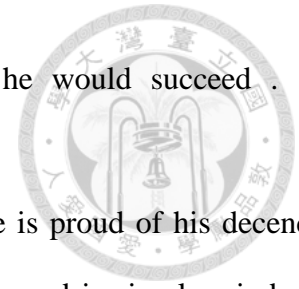
However, after reading works exhorting women to greater frankness about sexual matters, Bessie refuses to be relegated to restricted vocations for wife and mother. She has an ego investment and a need for direction and intention on her part: “[S]he could not help seeing what a chain and a weight a child was to one who had ambitions beyond those of motherhood” (“Marriage—For One” 314). Wray, on the other hand, clings to narrow definitions of woman’s marital and familial roles. To be sure, he is an upholder of the traditional dogma of woman’s essential naivety:

He couldn’t help thinking how *sweet* and *innocent* . . . she was when he first met her, how she loved her parents and respected their wishes. . . . *She was all right as she was* . . . She didn’t know anything about these new-fangled things then . . . (“Marriage—For One” 312-313; emphasis mine)

Wray imagines Bessie’s nature to be a complex of traditionally middle-class values—prudishness and staidness. Each, however, results from woman’s lack of desire to act. Bessie is naturally naive for Wray, and the better off for it. His preference for her stagnation in a more innate, inactive, and unchanged state of simple-mindedness may come from his identification of manhood with an obligation of achievement. Yet, Dreiser portrays Wray as a lackluster, unambitious, and conventionally-minded individual, being contented with his mediocre talent. Wray uncritically believes practical advantages in probity and uprightness:

[W]ith the limitations of the average man he had the ambitions of the average man. . . . [H]e was certain to achieve what was perhaps a fair enough ambition . . . [H]e had the feeling that he was honest, straightforward, not as limited or worthless as some of these

others, and it was on this score that he was convinced he would succeed . . .
 (“Marriage—For One” 307-308)



Wray expresses a feeling of self-satisfaction and self-righteousness as he is proud of his decency. Also, he is motivated to reach an ordinary level of middle-class lifestyle and is simple-mindedly sure of the intrinsic value of a virtuous and upstanding character. In this respect, he and Bessie have disparate perspectives on moral certitudes. He conforms “to the conventional thought and emotions of the majority” whilst she “aspire[s] and dream[s] much” (“Marriage—For One” 312). She believes a woman has the right to an autonomous existence, even if that means denying the claims of a nurturing husband, and the duties of maintaining the physical comfort of home and of ensuring the stability of the husband breadwinner marriage.

In addition to their opposing ideas about not only the parameters of woman’s aspirations but also the importance of moral prudence, the crisis Wray experiences as a husband is further mirrored in his and Bessie’s markedly different reading and theatrical interests: “She read only serious books now and was attending a course of lectures, whereas he, as he now confessed, was more or less bored by serious books” (“Marriage—For One” 312). Consequently, the couple’s dissimilar world-views and antithetical predilection for entertainment result in an irksome incompatibility between themselves. Shortly afterwards, their discordant perceptiveness leads to the origin of their disastrous, climactic split that Wray not only overlooks but also worsens. Elsewhere, he attributes virtually all of their contrasting gaps, intellectual disharmony, and hopeless estrangement to those married women’s personal worthlessness and their poison of philosophy:

Wray now insisted that it was they who were aiding and abetting Bessie in these various interests and enthusiasms and stirring her up to go and do and be. . . . He was doing very well now and they could be happy together if only these others could be done away with.
 (“Marriage—For One” 312)

To some degree, Bessie’s breakthrough in self-improvement erodes Wray’s esteem for female intellect. His endeavor to train her mind has its sexist limitations and selfish motivations. His

investment in her mental development during their courtship is for securing a decent, trustworthy, and accommodating helpmate. Before marriage, his aversion to female tasteless unenlightenment parallels his endorsement for and overemphasis on the necessity of female intelligence to male-female suitability. In contrast, after marriage, he does not want Bessie to be a bluestocking, to talk wisely in clubs, or to be crammed with unassorted bits of knowledge.

Wray is hostile to the extent to which Bessie engages her mind in literary accomplishment, being worried that he might be intellectually nonplussed and overshadowed:

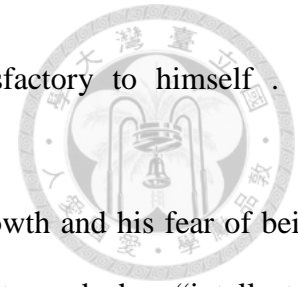
Wray was beginning to feel that the unsophisticated young girl he had married a little while before might yet outstrip him in the very realm in which he had hoped to be *her permanent guide*. (“Marriage—For One” 311; emphasis mine)

Wray intends to be Bessie’s mentor, yet dispute after dispute suggests that the tables are turned. More precisely, she has been emancipated to a degree beyond what he has planned. As he complains that she considers him to be “narrow and ignorant and stubborn” (“Marriage—For One” 312), the thing he can never forget is what begins as enlightening with good intentions and full faith ends in the complete opposite. She is empowered to take an active role in forming and benefitting from marriage. In truth, the reason that Wray runs into a train of obstacles to marriage he has not foreseen is that he possessively wants to have Bessie as his inferior: “[O]ne could see how proud he was of her and of his relationship to her, how he felt that he had captured a prize, regardless of the conditions by which it was retained” (“Marriage—For One” 314-315).

Ironically, whilst Wray feels bitter towards making a mistake on educating Bessie, the fictional narrator wonders if Wray’s encouragement to increase her propensity to reading and the arts is the main reason for their love’s end. In many ways, the narrator sees to a greater extent Wray and Bessie are unlike and inharmonious, after comparing their real characters:

[As the narrator] saw it. . . . they were two differing rates of motion, flowing side by side for the time being only, his the slower, hers the quicker. And *it mattered not* that his conformed more to the conventional thought and emotions of the majority. Hers was the

more satisfactory to herself . . . and his was more satisfactory to himself . . .
 (“Marriage—For One” 314; emphasis mine)



Carried one step further, in contrast with Wray’s distaste for Bessie’s growth and his fear of being dwarfed by her nonconformity, the narrator has a favorable attitude towards her “intellectual pursuits” (“Marriage—For One” 314). Before long the narrator tacitly sanctions her talent on the various occasions when he and Wray meet. For instance, the narrator’s non-judgmental answer to Wray’s question, “But what do you think of [Pierre Loti’s] views of life—of his books as books to be read by the mother of a little girl?” (“Marriage—For One” 315), reveals his position in a conversational tone:

“Wray,” [the narrator] replied, “I can’t enter upon a discussion of any man’s works upon purely moral grounds. . . . [I]t would be unfair to any one who stood in intellectual need to be restrained from that which might prove of advantage to him.” (“Marriage—For One” 315)

Even so, when Wray engages the narrator in a lengthy recital of his woes as Bessie has gone off with another man, the narrator laments and sympathizes with the pathetically compelling Wray since he continues to love Bessie in the face of his troubling doubts and her adamant coldness.

On the one hand, the narrator is moved by Wray’s torment and affected by his sorrow. The fact that Wray finds Bessie’s self-education a source of his annoyance and even distress deepens the narrator’s pity. On the other hand, the narrator ideologically disagrees with Wray and, matter-of-factly, is more closely aligned in spirit with Bessie. The narrator has a liking for her philosophy and style of life and his sympathy for Wray is lessened by his admiration for Bessie’s principles. The narrator is scarcely surprised when he hears Wray complain that his relationship with Bessie comes to an end and that she leaves for someone who suits her. Although the narrator willingly listens to Wray’s complaints about Bessie’s various “duplicities,” including how she has dishonored herself by living a secret life and how her adulterous lover was almost discovered, he actually admires the way she challenges her husband, leaves the paraphernalia of home virtues for

independence, and moves beyond Wray to the point where she no longer has to abide his tendency to stamp out her differences.

Bessie finds Wray's definition of marriage as a relationship where both partners devote fully to each other at the expense of taking away time, energy, and attention from themselves to be boring and stagnant. Whilst Wray seeks continued interdependency, Bessie searches for self-satisfactory aloneness in marriage. When Wray accuses Bessie of her disinterest in and disenchantment with their comradeship, she rejects his ideology of fidelity by establishing a fling with another man. Although the outcome of her affair is not explicitly documented, her willingness to separate from Wray is clear. She has left their apartment, taken a room elsewhere, and resumed her stenographic career. As she works for a living and takes her daughter, Janet, with her, she is more interested in pursuing her personal liberation and refuses to play the role of a conventional mother. She does not want to depend upon Wray for support and tries to dissolve the marriage she considers to be fetters.

As I argued in the Introduction, Free Lovers "adopt a liberal position, arguing for new forms of partnership outside the existing structures of marriage" (Heilmann 109). Bessie is depicted as a free lover since she believes that a woman has nothing to lose and everything to gain by renouncing an unrewarding marriage. When she feels unfulfilled in marriage, she begins relentlessly searching for a sense of aliveness and enrichment outside it. By and large, Bessie pursues Free Love in so far as she does not consider remarrying after she separates herself from a marriage that runs aground.

Moreover, a disequilibrium that leads to the deadening of their marriage manifests itself. Wray's complaints of having too little wifely care highlight inequitable love and an imbalance in the need for intimacy. Bessie's disinclination to look out for his needs first is defeating and frustrating for him. In the end of the story, when the union is dissolved because of Bessie's departure, Wray feels anguish and mistrust, becoming a wistful, victimized, and insecure husband.

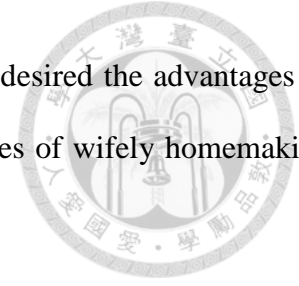
Although Wray wishes to have a companionate marriage, he does his marriage a disservice with his stifling possessiveness and paralyzed permanence. On the one hand, he has a nerve-wracking hunger for feelings of trust, safety, and honesty in marriage. As I argued in the

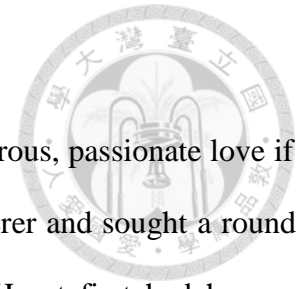
Introduction, “the companionate ideal [marriage] mean[s] a union of mutual and unwavering love . . . [t]he perfect peace of love, the sense of belonging, the absolute willingness to belong forever . . .” (Spurlock and Magistro 108). Wray exaggerates devotedness in marriage and is completely besotted with Bessie.

On the other hand, although Wray defines partnership as a hedge against mistrustful separateness, their bond is not emotionally fulfilling enough to stir up his anticipated sense of connectedness. Put bluntly, being infatuated with Bessie, he fantasizes about finding a sense of wholeness in a permanent marriage. He seeks in marriage an identical personality who under like circumstances would believe naturally as he does, who has congenial modes of thoughts and feelings. The way he indulges in an unrealistic expectation that Bessie should be as self-righteous, self-regarding, and self-complacent as he is separates him from the companionate marriage camp. In his belief that marriage is just, he assumes that he, as an upright and hard-working man, definitely deserves a companionable wife. However, as I argued in the Introduction, a prerequisite for companionate marriage is a sense of self-realization for both the husband and the wife rather than feeling that he and his mate are as one. Wray’s belief that Bessie should devote undivided attention to him and greater involvement in marriage is tantamount to allowing no room for companionate marriage, a more alive and vibrant marriage. By insisting that Bessie spend less time on activities outside the home to be a full-time wife, he demands in their relationship a dedication that suits his needs. In brief, the title of the short story echoes Wray’s expectations of a closed marriage for life with complete emotional exclusiveness that in actuality destroys the promise of forming a marital relation on the basis of free, individual choice.

Despite the narrator’s intimacy with Wray, Dreiser wrote with a tolerance for Bessie’s transgression in his description of her furtive affairs. Her marital difficulties possibly echoed the dilemmas of Dreiser’s own married life. Bessie was contemptuous towards accepted aspects of marriage, fantasies that chastity is assumed to be part of marriage. She is not averse to a flirtation herself. By contrast, the chaste Wray expects in his marriage warmly cordial constancy. Wray and

Bessie represent Dreiser's conflicting attitude towards marriage: Dreiser desired the advantages of couplehood and singlehood and the disadvantages of neither, the pleasures of wifely homemaking plus the perfect freedom of the artist.





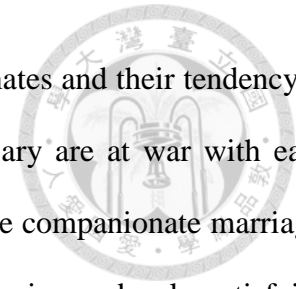
Conclusion

Dreiser was zealous for companionate marriage but accepted adulterous, passionate love if he could not have a marriage with a sense of belonging.³ He was a philanderer and sought a round of intimacies because he could not commit to an enduring relationship. He at first had hopes for finding in his companion refreshing stimuli when he got married. After marriage, however, he was disappointed at the conformity of his wife, Sara White. She had accepted forging a lasting, unchanging bond as a fact of life and believed fixation was necessary, wholesome, and inspiring. In contrast to White's fixed solidity, Dreiser tried to feel being in love in his philandering in the same way as she sought satisfaction in marriage. Among other things, he left White for romantic spontaneity outside marriage and felt burdensome the finality of marriage she expected. Above all, the absence of a marital ideal that suits the temperaments of both the husband and the wife seldom brought them closer to each other.

Dreiser's loveless married experience has soured his view of disharmonious marriages as he thematizes disconnection in Mr. Haymaker's and Wray's matrimony in "Free" and "Marriage—For One." Drabness, aloofness, and loneliness in the two protagonists' despairing marriages are grounded in a modicum of contentment Dreiser realized in his own splitville. Dreiser craved rewarding marriage, associated with excitement, but was thwarted in his attempt to find it. Likewise, Mr. Haymaker's and Wray's marriages suffer from the negative effects of living under one roof but seeming to have little or no emotional connection to their wives.

Despite the fact that troubled marriage was a misfortune Dreiser shared with Mr. Haymaker and Wray, there is a gulf between the writer's and the two protagonists' mentalities of how to handle such a relationship. For one thing, Dreiser was a libertine and uncommitted woman-loving remained enticing for him. For another, the two male characters lived in quiet desperation and saw

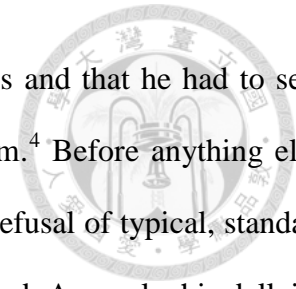
³ I am indebted to Richard Lehan's comments that Dreiser was disengaged from his marriage. The aspect of Dreiser's frustrated marriage is discussed at length in page 138 of Lehan's book. According to Lehan, Dreiser had married a woman who had embodied all conventional values and out of sheer weariness he endured her. After marriage, he became discontent with middle-class values and with White's smug and self-satisfied way of life. Since the marriage was but an empty shell, he sought the woman who would live the liberated and bohemian life of artistic unconformity. Lehan concludes that Dreiser found a number of such women with whom Dreiser lived off and on.



no alternative. In particular, the two husbands' yearning for affectionate mates and their tendency to consider morally restrained coupledness both natural and socially necessary are at war with each other, which lends extra pathos to their longing for essentially unrealizable companionate marriage. Notably, the effects of depicting the two husbands' unmet need for forming a deeply satisfying relationship imply that for Dreiser changes in attitude towards remarriage are needed to make it openly available to people who are under pitiful marriage and hunger for a companionate one.

Although both Mr. Haymaker and Wray are in a similar predicament of isolation, they conceive liaisons differently. Mr. Haymaker for the most part hopes that adultery or a breach of marriage may leave him with greater freedom to lead his own adventurous life whilst Wray condones the profound, unforgivable wrong in Bessie's betrayal of the single-minded relationship. To put it bluntly, Mr. Haymaker is conscious of an exquisite, enchanting romance of vibration and intoxication, an aura that strikes his chord. In a stronger sense, Mr. Haymaker resembles Bessie since monogamous coupling enervates both to the point of straying from their spouses. Both Mr. Haymaker and Bessie value illicit relationships that would catalyze meaningful bounds to make up for their unimpressive marriages. Yet, Bessie actively embraces freeform infidelity whilst Haymaker is too self-conscious to sidestep institutionalized marriage. In adultery, Bessie inverts the proper feminine role by extending overtures to men. Despite the subservient role that the Calvinist Wray expects her to assume, she cuckolds him and becomes a seductress. In turn, Mr. Haymaker lacks willpower. He is married to Ernestine and is subjected to her guardianship. He toils in regretful marriage and considers himself a victim of familiar customs of marriage. His welter of multifaceted inner gloom is implicated in incessant contemplation of pallid marriage. Conceptually, as Mr. Haymaker and Bessie share a sense that marriage includes rather than excludes inconstancy, Wray and Mrs. Haymaker have a similar outlook on a matter-of-fact and taken-for-granted template of marriage. They regard sincere devotion as so social an obligation that they never call its naturalness into question.

In essence, the reason why for Dreiser disloyalty did not need to be explained or justified is



that indecency in his works had made him run afoul of American morals and that he had to seek recognition from women who supplied the admiration editors denied him.⁴ Before anything else, Dreiser's publications were perceived as a threat to public morals by his refusal of typical, standard marriage in which husbands and wives place their hopes in the marital bond. As a rule, his dallying with women was a tonic to him in the sense that he asked some lovely, young women with literary inclinations to be his private secretaries.⁵ They helped him with grammar and structure and read manuscripts for him. With this in mind, Dreiser confided in his assistants his despair when manuscript prices were not met and he suffered as only the rejected artist could suffer. Even so, Dreiser failed to find a woman or women whom he would be with regardless of anything else and let alone to consummate companionate marriage.⁶ He seemed to assume that for most people that ideal was impossible. Briefly, the function of the two stories is not to help us achieve companionate marriage. It is rather to help us cope with the reality that companionate marriage is likely not to work.

Dreiser translated his own experience of entanglements into the uneasy yearnings of his characters. In *Mr. Haymaker's*, *Wray's*, and *Bessie's* emotional turmoil, Dreiser expressed the undercurrent between a conservative spouse and a restless one. In a nutshell, by capturing the three characters' haunting agony produced by long years of unrealized companionship in marriage, Dreiser dealt with the sacred enclosure of marriage itself with suspicion. Dreiser let himself go far into short-lived, self-serving relationships to compensate his futile attempt at companionate marriage.

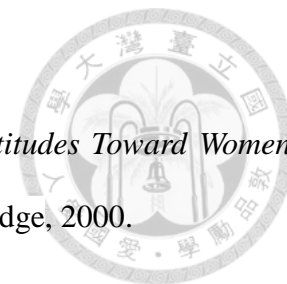
⁴ I am grateful for James L. W. West, III's discussion of Dreiser's impermanent affairs with women and his unfriendly relationship with magazine editors. A good deal of information on the subject of Dreiser's poor market crops up in West's "Dreiser and the Profession of Authorship." Significantly, West maintains that Dreiser's uneasy relationship with editors was in its critical stage as his characters betrayed their spouses in terms of a rejection of conventional mores. West's source is used to arrive at an understanding of Dreiser's respect for himself as an artist rather than a hack. While Dreiser found it difficult to sell his articles in that editors were prickly to deal with, he had become entangled in helpful women to surmount his difficulties with publishers (West 15).

⁵ Two scholars further assert Dreiser resorted to sexual adventurism to carry him through privations of imagination. They argue that Dreiser's enervating marriage, together with his romantic complications, heightened his creativity. "He tried to place himself between opposing forces [of his acrimonious wife and supportive lovers]" in order to gather reactions of a stimulating quality. . . ." (Swanberg 295). Richard R. Lingeman opines that "[f]rom the start, [Dreiser's] creative drive was powered by erotic energy" (126).

⁶ The idea that Dreiser does not enjoy a heart-to-heart relationship is based on Louis J. Zanine's book. Zanine remarks there is little feasibility of playing out Dreiser's thirst for a close lover. In many senses, Dreiser "increasingly surrendered to the 'veritable paroxysms of emotion and desire'" (66).

It cannot be overemphasized that thanks to his stature as a novelist, Dreiser's concern about shorter forms has been largely ignored. It is also worth mentioning that among Dreiser criticism focusing on novels, few acknowledge the inherent gender bias embedded in marriage. Given the fact that the two stories dramatize psychological deprivations in monotonous marriages, it is worthwhile to translate and introduce them to Chinese readers.

Works Cited



- Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life: Male Attitudes Toward Women and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Barker-Benfield, Ben. "The Spermatic Economy: A Nineteenth Century View of Sexuality." *Feminist Studies* 1 (1972): 45-74.
- Basch, Norma. *Framing American Divorce: From the Revolutionary Generation to the Victorians*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2001.
- Blackstock, Walter. "Dreiser's Dramatization of Art, the Artist, and the Beautiful in American Life." *The Southern Quarterly* 1.1 (1962): 63-86.
- Bloch, Ruth H. "American Feminine Ideals in Transition: The Rise of the Moral Mother, 1785-1815." *Feminist Studies* 4.2 (1978): 101-126.
- Boone, Joseph Allen. *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.
- Burnham, John C. "The Progressive Era Revolution in American Attitudes Towards Sex." *JAH* 59.4 (1973): 885-908.
- Calverton, V. F. *The Bankruptcy of Marriage*. London: J. Hamilton, 1931.
- Cancian, Francesca M. "The Feminization of Love." *Signs* 11.4 (1986), 692-709.
- Collins, Gail. *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*. New York: William Morrow, 2003.
- Coontz, Stephanie. *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*. New York: Viking, 2005.
- Cott, Nancy F. "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850." *Signs* 4.2 (1978): 219-236.

---. *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000.

---. *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997.

Davis, Rebecca L. "'Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry': The Companionate Marriage Controversy." *JAH* 94.4 (2008): 1137-1163.

D'Emilio, John and Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997.

Degler, Carl N. *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present*. New York: Oxford UP, 1980.

---. "What Ought to Be and What Was: Women's Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century." *American Historical Review* 79 (1974): 1467-1190.

Dreiser, Theodore. "Free." (1918). *The Best Short Stories of Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. James T. Farrell. Cleveland: World, 1956. 37-68.

---. "Marriage—For One." (1927). *The Best Short Stories of Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. James T. Farrell. Cleveland: World, 1956. 307-319.

Eby, Clare Virginia. "Dreiser and Women." *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. Clare Virginia Eby, and Leonard Cassuto. New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. 142-159.

Edwards, Laura F. *Gendered Strife & Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1997.

Ehmer, Josef. "Marriage." *The History of the European Family: Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1789-1913*. Ed. David I. Kertzer, and Marzio Barbagli. Vol. 2.

New Haven: Yale UP, 2001. 282-321. 2 Vols. 2001-2003.

Elias, Robert H. *Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1970.

Fauve-Chamoux, Antoinette. "Marriage, Widowhood, and Divorce." *The History of the European Family: Family Life in Early Modern Times, 1500-1789*. Ed. David I. Kertzer, and Marzio Barbagli. Vol. 1. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001. 221-256. 2 Vols. 2001-2003.

Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. "Dreiser and the Discourse of Gender." *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism*. Ed. Miriam Gogol. New York: New York UP, 1995. 1-30.

Gerber, Philip L. *Theodore Dreiser Revisited*. New York: Twayne, 1992.

Gogol, Miriam. Introduction. *Theodore Dreiser: Beyond Naturalism*. By Gogol. New York: New York UP, 1995.

Greg, William R. *The Great Sin of Great Cities*. London: John Chapman, 1853. Rpt. of "Prostitution." *Westminster and Foreign Review* 53(1850): 238-268.

Griffin, Joseph. *The Small Canvas: An Introduction to Dreiser's Short Stories*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1985.

Halttunen, Karen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1982.

Hartog, Hendrik. *Man and Wife in America: A History*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.

Heilmann, Ann. *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-wave Feminism*. New York: St. Martin's P, 2000.

Herman, R. Sondra. "Loving Courtship or the Marriage Market: The Ideal and Its Critics, 1871-1911." *History of Women in the United States*. Ed. Nancy Cott. Vol. 2. New York:

K. G. Saur, 1992. 298-315.

Hinz, Evelyn J. "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction." *PMLA* 91.5 (1976): 900-913.



Hussman, Lawrence E., Jr. *Dreiser and His Fiction: A Twentieth-Century Quest*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1983.

Hymowitz, Carol, and Michaela Weissman. *A History of Women in America*. New York: Bantam Books, 1978.

Kerber, Linda K. "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History." *JAH* 75.1 (1988): 9-39.

Knight, M. M. "The Companionate and the Family: The Unobserved Division of an Historical Institution." *Journal of Social Hygiene* 10.5 (1924): 257-267.

Lehan, Richard Daniel. *Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1974.

Lerner, Gerda. "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson, 1800-1840." *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women*. Ed. Nancy F. Cott, and Elizabeth H. Pleck. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979. 182-196.

Lingeman, Richard R. *Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City: 1871-1907*. Vol. 1. New York: Putnam, 1986. 2 Vols.

Lundquist, James. *Theodore Dreiser*. New York: Ungar, 1974.

Lystra, Karen. *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-century America*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Matthews, Glenna. *“Just a Housewife”: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Matthiessen, F. O. *Theodore Dreiser*. New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1951.

McGovern, James R. “The American Woman’s Pre-World War I Freedom in Manners and Morals.” *JAH* 55 (1968): 315-333.

O’Neill, William L. “Divorce in the Progressive Era.” *American Quarterly* 17.2 (1965): 203-217.

Ortner, Sherry B. “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” *Feminism, the Public and the Private*. Ed. Joan B. Landes. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 21-44.

Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988.

Phillips, Roderick. *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Society*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1988.

---. *Untying the Knot: A Short History of Divorce*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991.

Popenoe, Paul. “Family or Companionate?” *Journal of Social Hygiene* 11.3 (1925): 129-138.

Rhode, Deborah L. “Divorce, American Style.” *Inside the American Couple: New Thinking, New Challenges*. Ed. Laura L. Carstensen, and Marilyn Yalom. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002. 164-173.

Riley, Glenda. *Divorce: An American Tradition*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.

Rosenberg, Charles E. “Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th-century America.” *American Quarterly* 25.2 (1973): 131-153.

Schroer, Sandra Ellen. *State of “The Union”: Marriage and Free Love in the Late 1800s*. New York: Routledge, 2005.



Seidman, Steven. *Romantic Longings: Love in America, 1830-1980*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Simmons, Christina. "Women's Power in Sex Radical Challenges to Marriage in the Early-Twentieth-Century United States." *Feminist Studies* 29.1 (2003): 169-198.

Spurlock, John C. *Free Love: Marriage and Middle-class Radicalism in America, 1825-1860*. New York: New York UP, 1988.

---. "The Problem of Modern Married Love for Middle-Class Women." *An Emotional History of the United States*. Ed. Peter N. Stearns, and Jan Lewis. New York: New York UP, 1998. 319-332.

Spurlock, John C., and Cynthia A. Magistro. *New and Improved: The Transformation of American Women's Emotional Culture*. New York: New York UP, 1998.

Stein, Allen F. Introduction. *After the Vows were Spoken: Marriage in American Literary Realism*. By Stein. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1984.

Stoehr, Taylor. Introduction. *Free Love in America: A Documentary History*. By Stoehr. New York: AMS Press, 1979.

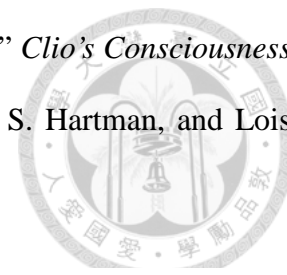
Stubbs, Patricia. *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979.

Sumner, William Graham. "Modern Marriage." *Yale Review* 13 (1924): 249-275.

Swanberg, W. A. *Dreiser*. New York: Scribner, 1965.

Washington, Kate. "The Thing Bartered: Love, Economics, and the Victorian Couple." *Inside the American Couple: New Thinking, New Challenges*. Ed. Laura L. Carstensen, and Marilyn Yalom. Berkeley: U of California P, 2002. 50-73.

Welter, Barbara. "The Feminization of American Religion: 1800-1860." *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*. Ed. Mary S. Hartman, and Lois Banner. New York: Octagon Books, 1976. 137-157.



West, James L. W., III. "Dreiser and the Profession of Authorship." *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser*. Ed. Clare Virginia Eby, and Leonard Cassuto. New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. 15-29.

Wilson, Philip Whitwell. "Divorce and the Church." *The North American Review* 224 (1927): 476-482.

Wolsterholme, Susan. "Brother Theodore, Hell on Women." *American Novelists Revisited: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Ed. Fritz Fleischmann. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982. 243-264.

Wurst, LouAnn. "The Legacy of Separate Spheres." *Shared Spaces and Divided Places: Material Dimensions of Gender Relations and the American Historical Landscape*. Ed. Deborah L. Rotman, and Ellen-Rose Savulis. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003. 225-238.

Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Wife*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

Zanine, Louis J. *Mechanism and Mysticism: The Influence of Science on the Thought and Work of Theodore Dreiser*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1993.

Chinese Translation of “Free”

自由

建築師魯孚斯·郝梅克位於中央公園西路的公寓既寬敞又舒適，而且非常安靜。此刻離天亮尚早。前窗有魔力似地將整間屋子妝點得美輪美奐。從前窗向外望，隱約可以瞧見在公園的一隅，道路對面那一整排壯麗的白楊樹還籠罩在灰濛濛的晨靄中。他的臥室位於大廳的盡頭，在這裡，也可一瞥公園景致。郝先生一早就坐在寬闊的窗戶旁，眺望著白楊樹和遠方的一座小湖泊。他熱愛大自然以各種藝術的姿態展現自己，實在極富詩意。

年近六十歲的他，身材瘦高。儘管略顯駝背，但也不能說他不優雅。何況他那濃密突出的眉髮，以及修剪得十分俐落的灰白短鬚，賦予他一種嚴肅卻又討人喜歡的氣質。他現在披了一件繫著銀色袍帶的淡藍色睡袍，整個人完全裹在睡袍裡。他纖長的雙手細瘦蒼白，手背布滿皺紋，骨節略為突出，證明了他是一位藝術工作者，至少從他散發的氣息看來是如此。而他的雙眼也透露出疲憊不安的神色。

昨天家庭醫生史托姆醫生才剛剛來過。他來照料他臥病了三週的妻子。郝太太正飽受心臟病變、腎毒症及神經發炎之苦。史醫生把他拉到一邊，用非常委婉柔和的語氣，幾近呵護似地對他說：「等到明天，要是夫人的病情依然沒有起色，我會請我朋友葛蘭傑醫生過來幫忙看看，他你也認識。心臟方面的問題(心病！郝先生聽得出他話中帶刺)他懂得比我多。我們會一起幫夫人徹底檢查一遍，希望對她能否康復的機率拿捏得更準確些。夫人的病況非常棘手，這麼說吧，這病很難根治。不過，她求生的意志很強，不管怎麼樣，她一直表現得很好。同時呢，我也不想讓你過份擔心，反正情況也還沒糟到那個地步，只不過我有責任提醒你：她的病情真的很嚴重。我不希望你以為她的病沒救了，那倒不至於，還差得遠。我的看法恰恰相反。她也許可以恢復健康，能再多活個二十年也未可知(郝先生心裡頭深深地嘆了一口氣)。依我看，她的恢復能力良好，但心臟不太好，加上腎臟又出毛病來攪局，現階段她的心臟極為脆弱，偏偏得承受這麼大的負荷。」

「我只能說，她目前的情況不好也不壞。再過一、兩天，最多三、四天後，情況就



會比較明朗了。不過，我之前就講過，我不想讓你過份擔心。現在還沒到絕望關頭，山不轉路轉。我們至今還沒試過換血療法，光這種療法就有好幾種變化。再說，只要她對藥物治療的反應一有好轉，尤其是腎臟部分，她的病情馬上就能大幅緩和下來。」

「但是，我說過，我覺得我有責任必須這樣講，好讓你預先做好心理準備，面對接下來的事情。像夫人這麼古怪的症狀，隨時都可能一發不可收拾，完全無法預測。身為兩位的老朋友，我很了解你們對彼此的意義(郝先生漠然地用空洞的眼神望著他)，所以我認為我有責任讓你做好準備。所有人都免不了生老病死。你也知道，去年我才剛痛失我最小的寶貝女兒瑪蒂爾妲。我再強調一次，我有預感夫人不會那麼快就走。再說，我們，我是指葛醫生和我，一定可以幫她度過難關，我真的有這種預感。」

史醫生望著郝先生，彷彿替他感到十分遺憾。眼前這位長期順著太座生活的老先生，很可能因為她的早逝而傷心不已。郝先生呆若木雞似地看著這一切，但他心裡真正想的是，整件事實在是荒謬透頂，是一連串愚蠢的錯誤和假象所造成。此時的他，六十歲的年紀，對這些事厭煩透了，尤其厭煩他的人生。婚後的他從沒有一刻真正開心過；然而那位躺在病榻上的太太，卻不免俗地以為他過得很開心，或理當過得開心。因此，她的日子自然過得舒適安穩，至少相去不遠了。這位醫生料想他年老體衰，少不了這位愛他的女人在旁服侍他、愛護他、理解他！對此他下意識地舉起了手，表示不以為然。

他的兒女也認為他依賴她，跟她在一起很快樂；他的傭人以及他倆各自的友人也作如是想，但事實上全非如此。一切都是騙人的，他壓根不快樂。似乎這三十一年多的婚姻生活，讓他始終鬱鬱寡歡。幾十年來他沒有一天不是花很多很多很多時間，以一種慘淡而節制的方式(出於什麼原因他幾乎不敢想)，想像自己不再受婚姻束縛，重獲自由，變回認識郝太太之前的自己。

然而，情感表達和成長背景保守的他，完全被時空和處境給牽著鼻子走。諸如人性、禮教、社會觀感等等所帶給他的壓迫，他似乎無能為力。他隨波逐流，不敢輕舉妄動。對，他只是隨波逐流，琢磨著如果時機恰當，不出其他意外的話，說不定能扭轉他的人生，但這個癡夢卻從未實現。如今他已年老體衰，也可說正快速步入遲暮之年，他為自己過去的毫無作為而自責。他問自己，為什麼不在多年前就斷然行動？為什麼不趁為時

未晚前結束婚姻，好拯救自己的靈魂，追尋更多采多姿的生活？沒有，他沒有這樣做。他現在又憑什麼牢騷滿腹？

一天前和醫生討論太太病情的時候，他的臉上勉強擠出乾澀的苦笑，因為他其實不希望郝太太活下去，或者說，至少在那個當下他是那樣想。他對這一切感到無比厭倦和悲哀。所以，經過將近二十四小時不快樂的思緒反覆上湧，他頹坐在這扇窗戶旁，凝望著一棟不遠處的建築物，在薄霧中若隱若現。他將手指滑過頭髮，一邊注視，一邊嘆息。

過去幾個月，甚至幾年的沉悶日子之中，打從他們兩夫妻住在這裡之後，還有之前，有多少次他趁她還沒睡醒，走到這類窗戶旁邊坐著出神。橫豎他們已經好幾年沒有同房，這種情況便逐漸變成家常便飯；倒是她，似乎也覺得沒什麼大不了。對她而言，生活或多或少變成更實際的問題，像是身分、地位、名譽的鞏固。然而有多少次，他回顧自己一生，多麼希望這一生如夢想般美好，美夢成真。

在這個天色仍灰濛濛的大清早，東方尚透著一抹淡粉色的晨光，不久，他深切而哀傷地搖了搖頭，起身沿著走廊回到他太太的臥室。到了門邊，他停下腳步，看著她躺在床上奄奄一息。床邊擺了一張扶手椅，一名受過訓練的護士正坐在上面呼呼大睡。醫生原囑咐她要徹夜看護病人，但是看她樣子無疑是累癱了。他太太也在睡覺，整個人非常蒼白、非常瘦、非常虛弱。儘管疲倦，他偶而還是替她難過，比如像現在。為何他好久以前非得鑄下如此大錯？也許要怪他自己，年輕時不夠聰明。然後，他安靜地回房，躺下來沉思。

這幾天來，由於她病得非常重，能不能活下來都變得十分不樂觀。因此，每個步調緩慢的拂曉促使他開始思考。他彷彿再也無法真正睡得安穩，變得心神不寧且精神恍惚。與其說他累了或體力不支，不如說是悶悶不樂或心情沮喪。生活一直這般折磨他的念頭，在他心裡一遍又一遍地出現。儘管都結婚這麼久了，儘管自己一直照著她的方式對她堅定不移、尊重她並接受她的愛，但他從未真正得到他想要的女人。「照著她的方式，」他躺在那兒，有點自言自語地思量著這句話。

如果他太太的病情沒惡化的話，稍後他將起身、著裝，一如往常下樓走到辦公室。但是(但是，他反問自己)，她的病情會惡化嗎？她那副纖瘦偏又如此耐操的軀體，差不

多跟他一樣蒼老的軀體，是否會不堪這場大病折磨而萎頓？真是如此的話他便可重獲自由。更棒的是，他不需要承擔世人的指責和議論紛紛。到那個時候，他想去哪就去哪，高興做什麼就做什麼，想想看，那可是完全的行動自由呢。就因為她終於病倒了，而且病得很重，結婚以來她第一次承受這麼沉重的病勢。她已經像這樣子躺了好幾個星期，游走在生死邊緣。這會兒病情好轉，隔天馬上急轉直下，死又死不了。她既沒有必死的可能，也沒有好轉的跡象。史醫生堅稱，她是因為心臟忽然冒出一條裂縫，才會造成這麼嚴重的病情。他顯然正為了那條裂縫而絞盡腦汁，苦思對策。

這段日子當中，郝先生就和平時一樣極富同情心。他對她的態度總是那麼和煦、親切，非常之溫柔。他從不吝於給她任何東西，只要他負擔得起。看到她和孩子們開開心心的，他就心滿意足了。他想，即便孩子們最終也多半拜她所賜而辜負了他的期望，那也無所謂，畢竟他總能體諒她不太開心的年少生活，過得那般窘困、捉襟見肘；然而他自己也沒有開心過，婚後的每分每秒都在不快樂中度過。在他最低潮的時候，他不斷告訴自己，如果連她都能熬過年輕時的諸多不如意，他一樣也能。只不過也許女人比男人更能忍，他很樂意承認這一點，差別在於她一直擁有他的愛，或者她自認為如此，一種他始終得不到的內心真正的平靜。她知道自己擁有一個忠誠的丈夫，他卻覺得自己從未擁有一個真正的妻子，一個能真正為丈夫所愛的妻子，他渴望那樣的愛！

這天稍晚他到辦公室去。這間辦公室位於面向麥迪遜廣場的一棟高樓內。他先看了看中央公園西路沿途的路樹，再將目光移往廣場對面公寓大廈的明亮外牆，隨即陷入沉重悲傷的思緒中。這裡的人行道擠滿了保姆和嬉戲的小孩，當然也偶爾夾雜著出來透透氣或辦辦事的市民。這是個晴朗、充滿朝氣的一天，就像春天偶爾會吐露的那股清新氣息。尤其當他看著小孩子，以及那些大都穿著新款春裝往辦公室狂奔的年輕人，他嘆了口氣，但願自己能夠再年輕一次。瞧他們多麼意氣風發、充滿希望啊！一切盡在他們眼前，任憑他們自由發揮。年齡或其他社會成規都阻擋不了他們發光發熱。他問過自己不下千次，他們之中，難道沒有一個人和他年輕時一樣坎坷，擺脫不了生活的索然無味？是否他們每個人都擁有一位迷人的年輕妻子，為他們所深深愛戀？他自己未曾擁有過這樣的女人，還是他們也沒有嗎？

內心正納悶著，他抵達了位於頂樓的辦公室，疲憊地將它掃視了一遍。腳下這棟大樓是紐約市最高的大樓之一，能將全市景觀盡收眼底。從這裡可以看見流經紐約市的兩條大河⁷、林立的高樓、樓頂的尖塔和廣袤的水泥牆。看得出他偶爾甚至能從中汲取活下去的力量和希望。這座城市或其他城市的一切，在他年少時，曾經那樣地撥動著他的心弦。即便現在，只要站在那兒，內心總能獲得平靜，一顆心就像城市本身一般雀躍，遠比待在自己的家要好得太多。從這裡，他可以眺望紐約市的壯麗景緻，做做白日夢；再不然，也可以寄情於工作，忘卻那段一塌糊塗的感情生活。這座偉大城市，以及那些他能一手擘畫的建築物，總是圍繞在他的四周，大大有助於他（而不是她）轉移注意力，不去想隱藏在內心深處的痛苦與失落。

郝太太臥病的這段期間，他自己整天不在家，便將公寓交給一位個性非常嚴謹的歐巴桑負責打理，名喚艾爾弗里奇太太。郝太太早在多年前就開始僱用她。在她下面還有一位名叫海絲特的女傭，負責伺候進餐、幫忙開門等等。現在又加上兩位受過訓練的護士，分日、夜班全天候照顧郝太太。這兩位機靈、健康的碧眼女孩，深深吸引著郝先生。雖然她們象徵著他從未擁有過的青春，卻還不至於令他心緒不寧。可嘆已逝的青春似乎一去不復返了。

當然了，他還有一個寶貝兒子衛斯理和心肝女兒艾賽爾貝塔。他們的名字都是她太太自作主張取的。兄妹倆很早就男婚女嫁，生了小孩，分別住在紐約市不同行政區。他們聽說母親病危，每天都上門詢問病情，三不五時還會待上一整個下午或傍晚，要不就直接從下午待到晚上。艾賽爾貝塔原本打算在母親生病期間接管整間公寓，沒想到喜歡主持家務的郝太太並不同意。她還沒有病到不能講話，仍舊可以對家事發號施令。況且，也唯有艾爾弗里奇太太能像郝太太一樣，有本事讓郝先生感覺非常舒適。起碼她是這麼認為。

說穿了，郝先生和許多同病相憐者一樣，從不渴求肉體上的享受，而是追求心靈與情感的滿足。前面說過，他從未愛過郝太太，至少可以確定的是，打從很久以前他們還

⁷ 兩大河指的是 Hudson River 哈德遜河及 the East River 東河。

住在密西根州的馬斯基根郡時，之後他就不愛她了。馬斯基根郡是他們出生、長大和相遇的地方。那時她十五歲，他十七歲。現在想起來真是不可思議，當年他們兩人可是一見鍾情哩。她出脫得像個甜姐兒，約莫他的歲數或者更年輕些，是當地一位藥劑師的女兒。到得後來，他為現實生活所逼，必須出外打拼闖蕩事業。他寫了很多信給她，心目中的她一直保持十五歲時的模樣，一個夢想中的美女。然而命運之神並未即時眷顧，他的夢想也遲遲無法實現。因此有好幾年的光陰，他被迫與她相隔兩地，無法共結連理。那段時間，確實連他自己也沒發覺，他的視野改變了。究竟如何改變的他自己也說不上來，但事實就是如此。當她還小鼻子小眼睛地坐困在那個小鎮，大城市裡的一切、許多人的臉孔、更偉大的夢想，同心協力地將他的舊視野和待在小鎮的她給無情摧毀了，只是他當時尚不十分明白。他覺得，自己的體會老是慢半拍，當下總是掌握不了事情的全貌。

就是那段期間，他日後告訴自己不知多少、多少次！他早該發現自己犯的錯，他早該罷手的。錯過之後再想放棄已經越來越不可能。既然木已成舟，儘管有點傷她的心，儘管他有些許失落，毫無疑問地，對他來說，一切終將歸於平靜不是？才沒那回事！他太稚嫩、太無知，死守著他那源自純樸西部的一大堆迂腐思想。說什麼婚約就是婚約，無論再怎麼不滿意終究還是婚約。高尚的男人決不會背棄婚約——鄉下地方的衛道人士堅認如此。

的確，那時他或許可以用寫信的方式，或當面告訴她。但他太過敏感、太過體貼，終究難以啟齒。等到後來為時已晚，他又怕會傷到她、毀了她，毀了她的生活。但現在，現在，瞧瞧他過的是什麼日子！他回想結婚前有那麼幾次，他應該要看到、抓緊的一些機會，倘若當時有足夠的勇氣和智慧跨出那一步，自己就能重獲自由。但他沒有。那些責任、規範、從小在家鄉被灌輸的教條，以及美國人的信條、國家對他的期待、她對他的期待，凡此種種，佔據了他所有心思。他不但沒有表示意見，反而依約和她結婚。對於自身的改變他隻字未提，也不讓她知道這些改變讓原本的恩愛已如槁木死灰。老天，他真是蠢到了極點！從此以後他便再三地這麼告訴自己。

唉，既然錯都錯了，或許他該當忠於婚姻，盡力維持，這是現在普遍的看法。至少

在婚姻裡，這充其量不就是一筆交易。但是這樣想並不能讓他開心起來，他自己也忍不住感到難過。因此，過去這許多年來，他始終籠罩在他人的目光和閒言閒語的陰影下，被迫跟她一起生活、呵護她，假裝自己過的很幸福。他有時自詡他們就像「一對神仙眷侶」。實情是，他根本不幸福，一點也不。就連偶爾看到她的臉都覺得厭煩，還有她假惺惺的舉止也一樣惹人厭。偏就那天早上，史醫生一副以為他很寂寞的樣子，擔心萬一夫人病逝，他會傷心欲絕，從此變成孤伶伶一個人。這使他大為光火。醫生的眼神好像在問：以後誰來照顧他呢？偏生他自己卻只想要自己一個人。一生中哪怕只有一次，能夠只為自己，為自己活，好忘掉那段冗長、無味，時時刻刻都得戴上假面具而活的虛妄歲月。

他現在反問自己，是不是在他死前，自己永遠無法跳脫這愚蠢的命運輪迴？才剛那麼一想，他馬上又為這些不當、冷酷且刻薄的念頭而責備自己。這些念頭無疑會讓他受到群眾譴責。畢竟一個人的名譽和社會地位就是由群眾之見所堆砌起來的。

這麼久以來，他對自己蝕磨靈魂般的巨大犧牲從來不願對她吐露一句——不，連半句也不肯。他就像偷了狐狸的斯巴達男孩那樣，為了不被人發現，寧願忍受狐狸啃咬他胸前要害而不吭一聲⁸。他不怨天不尤人。是的，他一直表現得像個好老公，就一般人的標準來看確如此。不信的話，看看他的境況、孩子們的境況，或太太的境況便一目瞭然。即使病魔纏身，她身心受到的悉心照料，使她堅信他就是好丈夫該有的那個樣子。結縭多年，她未曾對他的愛有過一絲懷疑，亦或感覺他特別不開心。再者，即使不太確定，即使不敢百分之百認定他的愛情仍熾烈一如既往，她仍然相信他和她在一起能獲得滿足與幸福。他們攜手建立家庭，共同養育孩子，她放心這個家絕對經得起任何考驗，任何考驗！這些年來，她盡可能在他能接受的範圍內，操控著他和她的生活，以及兒女們的生活，以遂她的心願。她一直以為自己的所作所為，完全是照著他的意思走，至少是為了他和孩子們的最佳利益著想。

⁸ 古代傳說一個斯巴達少年離開城市去到森林，偷了一隻小狐狸。少年把小狐狸藏在自己的長袍裡，打算就這樣秘密地帶牠回去。但是回程中少年遇見了一名同路的成年人。少年害怕被同路者發覺自己偷了一隻小狐狸，就緊緊地按住袍內的小狐狸不讓牠亂動。可是他按得越緊，小狐狸越是掙扎。小狐狸在少年袍內亂抓亂咬，少年忍耐住痛苦一言不發。最後，小狐狸咬破了少年的腹部。少年靜靜地死了，沒有透漏自己的秘密一句。

她多麼熱愛傳統啊！什麼事該什麼樣子她一清二楚，這都要歸功於她娘家故鄉自小的教養，以及傳統美國教育灌輸她的理念。她對交友、孩子的教育等等的看法，即使與先生不太一致，基本上仍掌握了主導權。至於該從事哪些休閒娛樂、該和哪些人來往等等，她總是以傳統標準馬首是瞻，一切她說了算。這當中免不了有一些小小爭執，不過，哪個快樂的家庭沒有呢？但他最後總是屈服，幾乎每一次都讓步，而且還裝出一副很滿意的樣子。

所以，他現在有什麼好埋怨的？她怎麼想得到，或者說，她當初怎麼想得到他過得並不快樂？她現在想不到，當初也想不到。她就像他們家鄉和紐約的親朋好友一樣，小心翼翼地算計一切，只討好她想取悅的人，不顧旁人。她內心更加堅信，唯有她明白什麼對他最好，唯有她了解他真正所求所想。這一點不時讓他感到哭笑不得。

因為在她看來，對他來說，也許別人不同意，婚姻非常神聖，神聖到不可侵犯，至死不渝。每個人一生只能有一個愛人。一個男人一旦接受婚姻的枷鎖，從求婚那一刻起，便有責任履行夫妻義務。不管是違背結婚誓言、出軌、甚至不善待妻子，在她看來，簡直罪大惡極！這種敗類畜牲最好打入煉獄，死了乾淨！

但是，看看他自己，換來什麼下場？他犯了這樣的錯，結果怎樣？他該去哪尋求補救，尋求平靜和幸福？是在這個世界，還是只能在某個虛幻的樂園，一個她篤信的、荒謬的、天堂一般的婚姻樂園？真是可笑！況且，她和他的朋友們一致認為她若是死了，只會為他帶來痛苦，應該會那樣才對。試想，墨守成規和昧於傳統把他與這個世界隔得多麼遙遠！

但那還算不上最糟的，不，也還談不上最糟。最糟的是，這些年來他逐漸明白，自己根本就是娶了一個目光如豆、心胸狹窄的女人。這個女人永遠摸不清他的心思。更確切地講，他的夢想或情感對她而言毫無意義。然而，囿於當初許下的諾言以及自身的誤判，他被迫和她共處一個屋簷下。他坦承她集一切美德於一身：心地善良、活力充沛、工作勤奮、意志堅決，卻仍掩蓋不了這個缺點，而且她絕對改不掉，想都別想。基本上，他老早就發覺她的性格既偏狹又極端保守，而他則是個天生的藝術家。他總是懷抱著奇思異夢，嚮往著未來那些她理解、不能理解、也不在乎的事物。對那些事物她只會擺

出一副冷淡、事不關己的態度。他在建築工藝方面的巧思，乃至對造形和各種角度的微妙運用，她可曾理解這些對他而言多麼重要？遑論對她自己又有多重要。沒有，從來沒有。她根本無法欣賞其中奧妙，從來就不能。搞什麼建築？藝術？就算她有心欣賞，對她來說，這些東西真正意味著什麼？現在的他已無法從他處找到同樣的共鳴。不，他從來沒有認真想這麼做，因為她和眾人一定會反對，他自己也認為不太妥當。

可是，他常自問，為什麼命運之神能夠容許像他這樣一個負載了太多情感，追索著太多理想，而且不完全忠於傳統的人，竟會去尋覓一個像恩妮絲汀這樣一個根本不了解也不在乎他心意的女人向她求愛？愛情真的就像俗諺描述地那般令人盲目？亦或是命運之神精心策畫，用來折磨藝術家心靈的工具？就像祂用一粒細沙折磨牡蠣而孕育出珍珠一樣。對牡蠣看似有害的這粒沙，其實是為了讓牠孕育出美麗的東西？他偶爾這麼想著。或許他親手設計的許多有趣且美麗的建築物——至少，世人作如是觀——它們的美單單來自於他那無所保留的愛，不曾沾染除他以外的愛和美。殘酷的命運哪，對人類的夢想竟這般不屑一顧——摧毀了每個男男女女的願望。

他年紀輕輕就娶了恩妮絲汀，根本來不及瞭解自己未來的志向，以及未來自己心情會如何變化。加上沒有人給他指引、阻止他結婚才會這樣。那個時代的氛圍助長了這場可怕災難的降臨，命運之神似乎巴不得如此。不論哪個地方，結婚生子才是王道。那是不變的硬道理！直到後來，他漸漸明白自己做了什麼。當初為腐舊思想和情勢所逼，落得此刻進退不得的窘狀。他雖然心煩意亂、身心俱疲，卻從來沒有為此大發雷霆，一次也沒有。

不但沒有，他還一直善體人意地瞞著她。然而，他心嚮往內外兼美的女子——在她身上卻看不到影子——他因此傷心不已，痛苦不堪。他不斷夢想著、不斷夢想著另一種人生，幾乎無法自拔。難道此生永遠，隨便去任何地方，再也無法重來了嗎？太悲哀了！他不久也會離開人世，到時候一切希望將隨之幻滅、化為泡影！恩妮絲汀是很迷人，他不否認，起碼初見她是如此。儘管時間證明她不管個性也好外表也罷都無法強烈地吸引他。但是證明了又如何？管什麼用？他這才發現自己厭倦她已超過二十七個年頭，渴望另一種人生的念頭卻不停地增強、增強、增強，直到——

如今他年事已高，她則瀕臨垂死邊緣。不管怎麼樣，對他或她而言已經沒有多大差別了。但也並非毫無指望，純粹因為他渴望須臾的自由，在他撒手之前，哪怕只有片刻也好。

我要自由！自由！

有一件事總是讓郝先生對他太太非常不滿：儘管他基於許多情感和現實的考量，決意不與任何社會禮俗唱反調——他禁不起這麼做的後果；雖然其他美女的眼神和胴體令他飽受煎熬，他的太太卻出於某種病態的心理，害怕他會變心，老是想方設法讓他以為，或者相信——他猜想她是有目的的預謀——自己對女人缺乏吸引力。她讓他相信自己既沒有健美的體態，也沒有其他男性魅力，導致所有年輕貌美的女人對他敬而遠之。想想看！有多少女人曾對他投以試探的眼神！

她竟然還覺得自己主要是出於同情才嫁給他！他寧願讓她誤會，因為他可憐這樣的她。就因為偶爾有別的女人疑似用挑逗勾引的方式對他投懷送抱，她不惜堅稱他根本不算什麼採花高手，更稱不上多情浪子。端的是除她之外，沒有一個女人會看上他這種其貌不揚、粗手笨腳、乏味之極的貨色。

他思索著，在不必要的情況下她幹嘛反覆嘮叨這件事，跟充其量只能算是幻想出來的杞人之憂奮戰不休，即令他從未給過她任何藉口那麼做。任何會對不起她的事，他都沒想過，從來沒有。於是她試圖毒害他對他自己和藝術才華的信心，偏偏——偏偏——哎呀！那些女人偏有拋不完的媚眼、煩死人的美貌，還有沒完沒了的甜言蜜語。怎地他的真實人生竟是這般殘酷？

這當中牽涉到一個令人不安的殘酷事實，那就是，除非一個人願意發自內心堅決主宰自己的命運，憑著這股決心來驅使自己採取行動，否則命運之神根本無視於他，世上任何男女皆然。一個人若不能憑藉從內心生發的堅定毅力，努力為自己而活，可能從此走向腐朽，雖生猶死。命運之神才不在乎。「溫柔的人有福了⁹。」——聖經說得沒錯，但倒不如說有福的是堅強的人，因為他們靠自己爭取幸福，不假他人。這些年來，他明

⁹ 聖經中文和合本馬太福音第五章第五節。

明曉得箇中道理，冀望卻不行動，除了一堆狗屁倒灶的事之外，什麼好事也沒發生。這一路走來，他目睹發生在自己身上的一切，卻仍然囿於禮俗，永遠拒絕行動，反正就是沒擔當。他為人不夠堅強，這點無庸置疑，一直都是。他活脫像一隻籠中鳥，一隻從鐵柵後面探頭探腦的生物，注視著外頭那瀟灑自由思想與積極行動的人間。在許多客廳、街上、甚至自己家裡，他難道不曾注視一個眼神或一張臉龐，隱約透露出諒解、理解和同情之意。儘管她應該不會那麼做，可想而知。不過從宗教和道德的角度出發，這樣的他不失為一名隱士，同時兼顧了責任心、時下的世俗之見以及別人對他的看法；至於恩妮絲汀對他的態度、信任與安慰、他和孩子們的事業那些，他都丟到一旁、拋諸腦後，近乎完全遺忘。這種事做起來有時非常費力且徒增傷感，卻也莫可奈何。

如今，看看他，馬齒徒長，算不上真正年老體衰——不，還不到，沒那麼糟！他卻活得了無生趣，平庸無聊。這些年來，他渴望、渴望、再渴望能遇見一個懂他的女人，一個心思溫柔的女人。世上肯定有這麼一個女人，不但能夠完全接納他性格中脆弱的一面，也願意對他的藝術以及精神上與實質上的夢想給予支持。但是看看他！郝太太永遠跟在他身邊，人在心也在，所以——

即便他絕不會說她讓他生活不順遂——他不會說她有過任何一刻惹他的厭，並不代表她就符合他的需求，所以說……形態對他來說異常重要，顏色亦然。比方說，一副美妙女體的完美無瑕程度，還有她心思和情緒的顏色，必須非常細緻到位，有時就像他自己的一樣細緻。但是沒有，他未曾有過任何機會親近這樣一個女人。沒有，一個也沒有，雖然他夢寐以求已久。他甚至從來不敢跟任何人悄悄提起，自己則幾乎想都不敢想。因為那樣做太不明智，不符合社交禮儀。這類念頭很可能遭到他的（或者更確切地講，是「她的」）社交圈排擠——這社交圈難道不是她一手建立的嗎？

難就難在郝先生無論是心神不寧時，或心裡私下埋怨的時候，都沒辦法下定決心，認定自己這麼想談不上多嚴重的道德淪喪。婚姻中的男女雙方，無論快樂與否，都應該忠於彼此不是嗎？難道沒有某種超自然的法則支配著兩個人的結合？一輩子只愛一個人，這種此生唯一的愛情觀難道不是讓個人的想法、痛苦，以及隨之而來的種種磨難顯得無足輕重？教會宣傳的這一套，一般大眾和法律似乎也能接受。如果人人用情不專，

會衍生不少問題，破壞不少規矩，種下不少痛苦，帶來不少牽涉到小孩的棘手難題。對他而言，就算要賠上自己的靈魂，但無論從社交面、道德面，以及一切重要的面向切入去看，與其製造更多的紛擾和痛苦，難道固守這筆糟糕的交易不是最恰當，且更被祝福的做法嗎？這些他都想過，至少表面看起來如此——只不過——他已經想過不知千百回！

現在來看看其他方面。首先，按照普世標準，郝太太的確具備了作為一名賢妻的所有條件。剛結婚的她擁有足夠的美貌和社交手腕，使他的處境還算可以忍受，但並不表示舊傷口就不痛了。接著，隨著孩子們接連出生，為他的平淡人生注入了新氣象：長子埃爾維爾，以她家族中的一位表親命名，出生兩年就不幸夭折了。接著次子衛斯理和么女艾賽爾貝塔先後出生。他極度厭惡女兒的名字，主要是因為他原本打算幫她取名奧蒂麗或珍妮特，前者是他最鍾愛的名字，後者則是他母親的名字。

說也奇怪，孩子們的接連出生和兩歲就夭折的小 埃爾維爾，不知怎地讓他無視於內心的惶恐，甘願將自己束縛在婚姻裡——使他幾乎能完全撇開她——他抱憾地如此想著——面對這幾個小生命則充滿了責任感甚至滿足感。正如他偶爾告訴自己的，若非看在孩子份上，他早就跟她分道揚鑣，怎可能忍耐到現在。那幾個小傢伙幼年時就十分古靈精怪，非常調皮，但也帶來了許多歡樂。舉例來說，每次他作勢要咬小 埃爾維爾 的脖子，他的鼻子就會輕輕皺一下，開心地喀喀笑起來。那笑聲又甜又膩，簡直讓郝梅克 為之瘋狂。先不論他對恩妮絲汀的那些意見——在那個時代這種事往往被視為不道德，甚至邪惡，可能起因於潛藏他性格中孤癖的基因，這與律法、社會秩序和他人福祉相抵觸。但他對 埃爾維爾 卻有著一份深厚難捨的感情。這孩子以一種幾乎難以覺察的方法，及時化為鎮痛軟膏，減輕了他的苦難，包覆了他傷痛加劇的創口——是誰，或是什麼，用什麼方式派他來的呢？埃爾維爾 牢牢占據了他的心、撩撥著他的心絃。在這孩子身上，他實實在在感受到諒解和溫情；欠缺愛與情感的他，出於對他由衷的愛，似乎也開始具備愛人的能力了。對 埃爾維爾 來說，顯然沒有比依偎在父親臂彎，或靠在他脖子上更開心的事。郝太太 根本比不上。每當他外出散步或去任何地方，埃爾維爾 總是穿好衣服，等著伸長雙手勾住他的脖子一塊出門。奇怪的是，他愛父親的程度似乎遠多過母

親，唯有跟他在一起才會覺得開心。而郝梅克則愈來愈瘋狂疼愛 埃爾維爾——他那小小的臉龐，微微暗示了自己和郝太太的血統，卻沒有太多恩妮絲汀的影子在他身上，至少他心裡這麼想，就算他更像恩妮絲汀，他也不反對。他還沒有小器到那個地步。第二年接近尾聲時，埃爾維爾剛剛學會說一、兩個單字，郝梅克就教他唱那首老掉牙的蠢兒歌：「三隻小貓、三隻小貓¹⁰」，等唱到：「一隻沒有——一隻沒有——」時，他就會停下來問 埃爾維爾：「沒有什麼呀？」小 埃爾維爾 就會咯咯地回答：「撲！」當然啦，他其實是想講「派」。

啊，他多麼想念那段與小 埃爾維爾 共處的幸福歲月。讓他騎在肩上或臂膀上一同散步的美好時光。他想念每一分每一秒，和某個夜晚他輕輕搖晃孩子在他的臂彎裡甜蜜入睡的模樣。恩妮絲汀 總是站在一旁，心滿意足地看著郝梅克 如此深愛著小 埃爾維爾 和她自己，說不定他愛她的成份還要高過一切呢。後面這部分不過是她自己的幻想。當時的他對她根本毫不在意，即使她誤以為他在意。他的愛僅止於 埃爾維爾 一人，她卻把他對兒子的這份愛，誤當成了他對她與日俱增、至死不渝的感情的鐵證——再次顯示了她異於常人的思考邏輯。女人都是那樣——他想——至少部份女人是。

後來，因為某種病菌肆虐，引發可怕的熱病流行。醫生們診斷不出、也無法分離這種疑似導致小兒麻痺症的神祕病菌。小 埃爾維爾 終於病倒，日漸枯槁而死。他的遺體最後被埋在一處景物荒涼、令人發毛的墓地，就在伍德朗鎮附近。他止不住怨懟的心情，將自己沉浸在悲憤與沮喪中，唉嘆一旦死亡降臨，人一生的努力終歸徒勞！彷彿在那個當下，他生命中所有色彩與美麗都永遠棄他而去了。

「人為婦人所生，日子短少，多有患難¹¹；」一位牧師宣讀著。郝太太 堅持請他在喪禮時進來家裡，「……飛去如影，不能存留¹²。」

可不是？小 埃爾維爾 就這樣飛走了，像影子一樣消失無蹤。悲痛欲絕的他自從結

¹⁰ 出自英語兒歌《Three Little Kittens》，摘錄部分原文歌詞如下：「Three little kittens they lost their mittens / And they began to cry / Oh, mother dear, we sadly fear / Our mittens we have lost / What! lost your mittens, you naughty kittens! / Then you shall have no pie / Meow, meow, meow, meow, we shall have no pie」

¹¹ 聖經中文和合本約伯記第十四章第一節。

¹² 聖經中文和合本約伯記第十四章第二節。

了婚，這還是頭一次、也是唯一一次為恩妮絲汀感到傷心，並且深切地感到同情。那是因為見到她遭受如此大的打擊，葬禮後還哭倒在他的臂彎使然。她的悲傷是那樣沉痛，是一位做母親的哀悼長子之死的至沉悲痛！他當時想，為何他一直沒有辦法想像她可以變成，或者使她變成對他來說該有的樣子？此時的恩妮絲汀似乎比之前任何時候的她顯得更加得體、溫柔、仁慈、明理、可愛；比他原本認識的她更值得尊敬、更加風趣。小孩生病那段日子，她靠著母愛不眠不休地悉心照料他，甘願為他做任何事——簡言之，她就像任何一個心中充滿慈愛的人，為了挽救自己的孩子免墜死亡深淵，什麼事都願意做。但即便是那樣的她，還是無法讓他投入真感情。無法！他無法愛她，縱然可悲不仁還是無法。他頂多會同情她，多想想她的好，稍加尊敬她一點！是什麼該死的星象要這樣擾亂人類的心思意念？為什麼人們的美德和良好的品行，不足以讓你愛上他們，並與他們的生命產生羈絆，就像讓你自然而然遠離討厭的事物一樣？為什麼呢？他雖決心要往好處想，但他終究克制不了自己，做不到這一點。

儘管如此，當時的他似乎前所未有地更急切瞭解到她的條理、勤奮、儉樸、有限的美感，以及若干頗值稱許的抱負心，想出人頭地做出一番事業——只不過，只不過他無法贊同她的志向。他實在看不出來，除了見識無可救藥地淺薄且往往流於瑣碎之外，她還能有什麼本事。她不曾展現任何天分，心智也無過人之處。不管他怎麼說怎麼做，她總是把作為與存在的價值難以挽回地和金錢、流行的看法——鄰里的公眾意見——以及在本地的社交地位掛上鉤。然而他很清楚，不凡的作為未嘗不會帶來貧窮、羞愧和恥辱，就像帶來其他東西——例如財富和地位一樣。顯然她從未認清這個事實，儘管他多次試著告訴她，只是每次都惹她不快。

看看那些偉大藝術家的例子吧！本城或史上最傑出的幾位建築師，哪一個沒有一段獨特、令人不愉快的過去呢？但是，郝太太就是不可能理解這種事——更確切地說，任何跟歷史有關的事。她對歷史嗤之以鼻，不願面對它黑暗、傷感的一面。她從來不讀歷史，總之就是不喜歡。談到藝術和藝術家，她也絕對不相信智慧、審美與精確的鑑賞力這些東西，能夠從必然低俗與邪惡的事物中提煉出來——無論如何不信！

就拿年輕時的辛加洛為例吧。三十多年前郝梅克初到紐約時，遇到同樣身為建築師

的辛加洛。那時年輕的辛加洛拼了命想闖出一番名號，可惜他手頭拮据，外表又不修邊幅，看起來不太體面。郝梅克還沒結婚前幾年某日，在昏暗的「派恩與史塔伯德聯合建築師事務所」見到他，立刻就被辛加洛的才具深深吸引。但他整天菸不離手，衣著又寒酸，完全是窮光蛋一個。所以當郝梅克娶恩妮絲汀時儘管已認識辛加洛快四年了，她卻對辛加洛非常反感，認為他這人品位低賤、一事無成、注定跟失敗為伍。有一次她路過一間廉價餐廳，碰巧見到他跟一個看起來十分邋邋的女侍在廝混，從此便把他列為拒絕往來戶。

「親愛的，拜託你別再帶他來家裡了。」她堅持道。他為求耳根清靜也就答應了她的請求——結果呢，現在的辛加洛早已成為一名建築大師。當然拜郝太太所賜，辛加洛故意跟他非常疏遠。這段時間辛加洛不但設計了哈佛醫學院華陀會會所(AEsculapian Club¹³)、外觀精緻的波士頓交響樂大廳(Symphony Hall¹⁴)，還有威爾斯大廈(Wells Building¹⁵)的塔樓。這塔樓將大廈美妙的曲線直直向天際延伸，看起來極富詩意，如夢似幻。不過現在的辛加洛就像郝梅克一樣，只是個愛作夢的隱士，非常獨來獨往，人們對他的看法有如浮雲。這一點郝梅克漸漸明白。

也許不只是因為郝太太腦筋遲鈍，察覺不到生命中那些隱藏在黑暗面的美好與生命的真實意義；有時候，她的短淺見識及隨之而來的咄咄逼人使得她在自己心中尋求並定義了她所謂的成功，那不過是一種幾乎等同於二、三流的人所能達到的成功，這一點尤其令他惱火。他不知試過多少次向她說明真假卓越之間的區別——真實的卓越鮮少與榮華富貴沾上邊。

但是她可不這麼認為。她似乎經常把那些假卓越的人視為真正成功之人，儘管他們事實上根本不是。這些人要不就是很有錢，或稍為比較有錢罷了。

談到教養衛斯理和艾賽爾貝塔以及為他倆籌辦婚事，郝梅克更是嘗盡了苦頭。這兩

¹³ 哈佛醫學院華陀會會所於1901年竣工，為哈佛醫學院醫學系學生與男校友會會址所在地。

¹⁴ 波士頓交響樂大廳於1900年10月15日落成，因為舊有的波士頓音樂廳因為築路和修建地鐵而受到威脅，它便取代了波士頓音樂廳成為波士頓交響樂團的新駐地。

¹⁵ 威爾斯大廈於1917年竣工，這幢大量裝飾的建築物的特徵為：磨光赤陶、(哥德式建築)怪形生物狀的滴水嘴、垂花飾、簷口上的甕缸、花瓶。

個孩子在埃爾維爾之後相繼出生，小的時候都非常可愛。他們縱然比不上埃爾維爾那麼討人喜歡，郝梅克還是跟他們相當親近。可是，隨著他們漸漸長大，恩妮絲汀就像是硬要介入他們一樣干涉所有事情。先是在教養方面，她採用一套非常死板拘謹的禮儀來規定他們的行止坐臥。這套規矩是她從幾個自己景仰的暴發戶那兒學來的。這些人是她不顧他的警告，透過他的關係碰巧認識的。這件事對以建築設計為業的人來說真是諷刺。建築師為了推展事業，往往得和一些怪人交際往來。特別是年輕建築師，不得不對這類客戶低聲下氣。再談到選擇小孩就讀的學校方面，由於郝梅克夫婦出身寒微，起初郝梅克有點兒誤以為非公立學校莫屬。但是隨著他們的經濟環境越來越優渥，私立學校遂變成唯一選項，而且念哪一所學校也不是他能裁決，連她也不能。他們最終把孩子送到巴洛和韋斯特維爾特兩家人的孩子就讀的同一所學校。恩妮絲汀跟這兩個有錢人家十分交好，她相信只要他們中意的學校肯定非常理想。

說到巴洛這家人哪！有錢是有錢，在他眼中不過就是個粗俗的三流角色。他們在西部地區靠著生產專利藥發了大財，便來到紐約大肆揮霍。由於郝梅克幫他們在城裡蓋了間宅邸，使他獲得不錯的風評，卻只有恩妮絲汀對他們產生好感，他自己反而不怎麼看得起他們。他認為這家人簡直糟糕透頂，既拙於應對又極度乏味，卻頗合恩妮絲汀對當時社交圈的品味。她說，她喜歡他們是因為這家人善良、富同情心，就像她西部家鄉的鄉親一樣，儘管他們並非真的那般存心良善。這純粹只是她的幻想。這家人說起來還算正派，只是沒什麼品味罷了。他們把小弗瑞德·巴洛送到靠近莫瑞斯鎮的私立貴族學校蓋拉德男子小學就讀。這裡專門教授各種禮節、儀態及一些郝梅克認為無關緊要的小事。恩妮絲汀堅稱該校也有提供宗教課程，因此衛斯理無論如何非念這所學校不可，即便只念一小段時間也好。這間學校是最棒的。

同樣地，就因為那個呆頭呆腦、傲慢虛榮的小傢伙默西迪斯·韋斯特維爾特被家人送到白原市附近的波利亞克里夫小學就讀，所以艾賽爾貝塔非該校不讀。想想這有多荒唐、多魯莽！他清清楚楚地記得在敲定學校之前，郝太太投入了多少時間，花了多少力氣，使了多少手段。為了這所學校將來對女兒在社交上的重要性，郝太太可說連哄帶騙，發動淚眼攻勢。每當郝太太想要什麼，她的眼淚總能說掉就掉，或看起來一副泫然欲泣

的模樣；不知怎地，雖然他很清楚這眼淚掉得太輕易，或只是為達目的而算準時間才掉，他卻總是抵擋不了。她對此心中雪亮。他總是會被她的眼淚所打動，不由自主地心腸為之一軟。他雖恨她每次吵架就一把鼻涕一把眼淚，自己手中卻毫無反擊的武器。往好處想的話，郝太太有時可以像馬基維利一樣狡黠果斷，讓人一直誤以為她個性溫柔婉約，懂得犧牲小我，待人寬厚高尚，外加一堆其他優點，最終目的就是要遂她的心願。從某種角度來看，她的手腕或許值得欽佩，卻總是為他所不齒。但是，假若一個人覺察不出自己的言行不一實際上已對他人造成了困擾，你又能拿他們怎麼辦？

依舊是同樣的窘況。那時他結婚已久，拋棄妻子這種事情幾乎是不可能的，連想都不敢想。他們當時已經具備一定的社經地位。理論上是兩夫妻齊心協力才爬到這個位置，實際上全都是他的功勞，而且還不是他夠格享有的地位。任憑他出於多少好意為妻子設想，恩妮絲汀這種人著實不可能攀附上那些有頭有臉的人物。無論如何，倘若他們夫妻之間敗露出任何一丁點家醜，譬如分居啦、出軌啦（儘管郝先生壓根都沒想過那些），他預料自己的下場除了無止盡的爭吵之外，還得賠上個人的形象和事業。原因是她那些友人個個來頭不小，他自己的友人某種程度上也算。這些人原先都是他的客戶，最後都將棄他而去。他們的太太擔心自己的名譽受到波及，不得不逼他們跟郝梅克謝絕往來！他堂堂大建築師就像臉上被刻了醜聞兩個字，成了十惡不赦的壞蛋——因為他竟敢背叛這樣一位仁慈、忠貞、深情的好老婆。說不定他當時真的會變成那樣，他自己也說不準，因為情況實在是太過錯綜複雜。

再拿他兒子衛斯理的婚姻為例。親家公喬治·德高不過是個已退休的炒作房地產業務，手上有的是錢，其他則一無是處！媳婦艾爾瑪·德高粗俗不堪又愛感情用事。她雖擁有無可置疑的美貌，收入也相當穩定，起碼表面上是那樣，但除此之外還剩下什麼？沒有！什麼也沒有！他兒子衛斯理至少在交往之初，似乎看出了一點端倪。郝先生推斷，恩妮絲汀之所以跟他覺得人品卑劣且心胸狹窄的德高太太結交，多半是為了衛斯理的婚事鋪路。總之，為了鼓勵衛斯理和艾爾瑪走進禮堂，可說用盡了一切方法。如今看看他們的下場！婚後，德高先生破產，沒有留下分毫讓女兒繼承；艾爾瑪對任何事情都興致高昂，唯獨對衛斯理的事業興趣缺缺。凡是暴發戶之間流行的東西，她只要覺得時髦就

會跟著一起瘋——這群新貴遠比恩妮絲汀所能想像地更加趕時髦、更瘋狂、更走在最新潮流前面！現在的艾爾瑪滿腦子下午茶、鄉間俱樂部還有劇院，除此之外她懂什麼？

衛斯理自己倒是早早認清事實。他現在的頭銜是工程師，受雇於一間大型建設公司，事業表現差強人意。想當初恩妮絲汀一手促成這門親事，一心以為此乃天作之合，現在就連她都對艾爾瑪失望透頂。幾年前艾爾瑪開始不理她的時候，她就看穿她的底細了。在那之前，恩妮絲汀整天只會滿口歌頌德高家這個那個的。老天哪！誰要是能娶德高家的女兒為妻，譬如艾爾瑪小姐，夫復何求？後來艾爾瑪和衛斯理私下發生爭吵，郝太太堅稱都是艾爾瑪拖累他的，這種女人不配當他的妻子。因此，儘管近乎違反她所有的道德偏見，郝太太也樂見兒子離開她。只是如果換成郝梅克自己有這個想法的話……

然而郝太太考量到當時德高家在社會上的地位，仍舊打定主意要讓衛斯理將艾爾瑪娶進門。衛斯理如今落得只能像普通人那樣拼命幹活，好讓艾爾瑪躋身紙醉金迷的二、三流所謂社交圈。儘管衛斯理已經做到那樣，她還是出軌了——郝梅克約莫是這麼相信的，因為有太多不尋常的跡象都指向這一點。但是此時的他不願介入，他怎麼能？艾爾瑪已經厭倦了衛斯理，這正是問題的癥結。他非常篤定她的心已不在此。

再多舉一個例子，看看艾賽爾貝塔的遭遇吧。瞧這名字取得多棒啊！雖然恩妮絲汀下定決心要栽培女兒出人頭地來光耀門楣，藉此炫耀自己教養的功勞，但她確實達到目的了嗎？可以肯定的是，比起衛斯理，艾賽爾貝塔的婚姻在財務方面是稍微健全一點，但其他方面她是否也過得比較好呢？她先生約翰·凱索，或傑克——她一向這麼稱呼他，是個舉止輕浮，腦袋不正經的傢伙。這人沒有一點本事，不過是個愛揮霍的廢物！他的父母只會一味袒護他，對他而言堪稱雪上加霜。因為凱索這家人很有錢，尤其是約翰的爸爸和媽媽，導致郝太太也誤認為這麼棒的孩子簡直是完美的化身，是女兒可託付終身的理想歸宿。霍納爾·凱索在芝加哥的銀行業中小賺了一筆後就到紐約定居，享用這筆到手的財富。那年艾賽爾貝塔十五歲，在學校認識了格雷斯·凱索。

好了，看吧！現在的她不能不算漂亮，儘管非常矯情，但舉手投足間尚稱優雅。她不但富有，還擁有一幢位於公園大道的舒適公寓。然而擁有這些又有什麼意義？她的先生約翰從未做過任何正事，至今一事無成。就算他曾經想過要成就一番事業，但父母對

他的溺愛和金錢上的源源供應，加上年輕時為了躋身上流社會所受到的教養，已經徹底將他毀了。他跟艾爾瑪·德高一樣成日無所事事，只懂尋歡作樂、好逸惡勞。這兩個人才是天生一對，只不過他們鐵定受不了彼此。即便如此，長袖善舞的郝太太卻急於向凱索一家猛獻殷勤，三不五時就舉辦個茶會啦、宴席啦或者組團看戲。郝先生則不曾和凱索夫婦講上十句話，連他們的小孩也沒有。想想有多離譜！

到頭來，儘管郝先生小時候對她呵護備至，現在也仍像一位慈父，艾賽爾貝塔卻離他漸行漸遠，證明了她其實是個眼光短淺，而且保守傳統的女孩，有點像她母親。對於母親的意見她比較聽得進去，儘管他並不十分在意，反正之前衛斯理也做過同樣的事了。或許不管怎樣，孩子們都有權保有自己的好惡。

他不時捫心自問，為何自己可以容忍這一切？為什麼？有什麼好結果，假如有的話，因此達到了嗎？他們的孩子真的算傑出嗎？他們的生活算得上美滿嗎？假如沒有她，說不定他會過得更好。甚至如果他娶了別的女人，他們的孩子會過得更好；她如果嫁給別的男人，也是一樣。倘若他肯與她決裂，一走了之，他豈不是能過得更好？當然，痛苦是免不了的，還得面臨可怕的後果，但付出這些代價卻可讓他換來更多的自由，隨心所欲去自己想去的的地方，做自己想做的事，重新活過。堅持不婚的辛加洛就做了明智的選擇。不了，不了，我不可能啦！一切都是傳統惹的禍，一大串非結婚不可的理由和恐懼感不斷縈繞在他心頭。是他讓自己被別人牽著鼻子走，只有上帝知道其中隱情，一切就是那樣。或許你可以說他太過軟弱使然，也可以說是太過畏縮，害怕別人對他指指點點。

現在的他發覺到，自己經常擔心倘若未能顧守傳統禮教和道德秩序，並且負起讓社會維持穩定，以及不讓妻兒和他自己蒙羞的責任，所帶來的悲慘後果。然而這麼一來也同時毀掉了他對生命感知的能力。得到他人尊重乃首要之務，即使犧牲自己的心也在所不惜。不過現在想這些已是多餘。郝太太病倒了，在垂死邊緣掙扎著。按理他應當希望她早日康復，兩人幸福快樂地白頭偕老才對！幸福快樂哪！儘管他但願自己或認為自己能夠為她做些什麼，他卻辦不到，他甚至不希望她好起來。

要求他做到這一點實在太強人所難了。想到她此刻可能撒手人寰，說實在的他感到

一股揮之不去的快感。起碼爭取到幾年的自由——享受幾年的生活不算多，但聊勝於無，算不錯了。他身體尚稱硬朗，搞不好還可以多享幾年清福——而且——而且——這美夢——這美夢——縱然目前還無法成真——實際上並不能——然而——然而——他渴望自由，重新過一個自己想要的人生，高興做什麼就去做，想去哪就去哪，愛想甚麼就儘管想，任憑自己為不曾擁有過的一切懊悔沮喪——為自己不曾擁有過的一切懊悔沮喪！可是，可是，每當看著她蒼白的病容，摸著她孱弱的雙手，他如何能那般忍心。他不能，即使是現在這種時候，那似乎太冷酷、太殘忍——可是——可是——他的心動搖了。

不行。儘管她過去盡做一些蠢事，儘管他身不由己，儘管他處處忍氣吞聲，或以為自己處處忍讓，他仍然希望她可以活下去，雖然這希望並非出自肺腑。沒錯，就讓她活著吧，如果她能撐過去的話。她的死活對他來說又有什麼區別？他一看見她就忍不住想，少了他，她會有多無助？她活到這把年紀，卻一事無成等等。還有長久以來，他苦澀地反覆告訴自己：她始終以為而且覺得自己竭盡心力為了他、為自己、為孩子在操煩！她以為自己真是他完美的另一半，讓每一分錢都花得值得，讓每一次樂趣都達到極至，讓自己每一個行動看起來都像是為了全家人著想！沒錯，這些全是事實，還真令人感傷，不是嗎？但就實際結果而論——

翌晨，即郝先生跟史醫生會談後的第二日清晨，他發覺自己再度頹坐在那扇前窗旁，像往常一樣，想起過去種種，更多的回憶湧上心頭。

似乎對他而言，過去這許多年來，他已然是第一千遍或第一萬遍獲得相同的結論：他這一生已經完了。他但願有片刻的自由能夠一個人好好靜一靜，想一想，說不定能找出這一生的其他可能；唯有在她重病的這個當下，他灰暗的心境能塗上一抹色彩，在絕望中誕生新的轉機。昨天下午由於郝太太的病情惡化，葛蘭傑醫生跟史醫生為她進行了會診。對她的病束手無策的兩位醫生今天決定放手一搏，要為她試行輸血療法。這次輸的血取自一位體格強壯的退伍騎兵，雖然不能保證成功，但這已是最後的希望所寄。偏在這個節骨眼上他依舊猶豫不決。要是輸了血之後她還是回天乏術該怎麼辦？到時候他將如何自處？不一會兒，他回到她的床榻，見她依舊熟睡著。此刻的她不再像從前那樣

強健，總之看來是那樣子；護士也說她的脈象虛弱。此時，他的心又像往常一樣轉而同情她，但也只維持了短暫片刻。一會兒她醒來，氣色似乎好些了，身體也感覺舒服些。

不多久他走進餐廳，護士正在那兒用早餐。他在她身邊的位子坐下，問道：「妳覺得她今天狀況怎樣？」這是他近來養成的習慣。

接連數天，他和這位值夜班的護士就這樣共進早餐。這位菲爾森小姐個性非常溫柔，容色雅麗，舉止端莊，金髮碧眼。那對眸子是那種少女獨有的眼睛和顏色，常令他想起已然錯失的美好時光與青春歲月。

菲爾森表情凝重地望著他，彷彿真的很害怕最糟的情況到來，卻力圖掩飾內心的不安。

「應該沒有惡化，也許還好轉一些了。」她答道，對他投以憐憫的眼神。他看得出她跟其他人一樣覺得他老了，將來可能沒有人會照顧他。「夫人的脈搏略有起色，目前接近正常值，睡眠情況良好。史醫生和葛醫生十點鐘會先過來一趟，再決定下一步該怎麼處理，假如情況不妙，我想醫生會試試看換血療法。捐血人都安排好了。史醫生要我等她早上醒來，先餵她喝一碗濃牛肉湯，艾爾弗里奇太太正在煮。不過我想，夫人的病況沒有急遽惡化，算是好兆頭吧。」

郝先生卻只是用他濃灰眉毛下的雙眼直視著她。他這般精疲力盡，愁腸百結，不單是因為最近睡眠不足，也受到心情變化的來回拉鋸所影響。難道他再也不能自己決定自己究竟要什麼了嗎？難道他永遠無法跟這種沒完沒了的道德性靈問題尋個了斷？為何自己不能下定決心站在道德規範和同情憐憫這一邊，好好與世人和平共處？菲爾森小姐喋喋不休地舉其他心臟病人為例，說是有好多人明明早該死於各類心臟病變，卻還是安然無恙地年復一年活了下來。郝梅克思索著這晦暗詭譎的一切、他索然無味的人生，以及他心情的反反覆覆。為何他會這樣？有時候他變得非常怪異，近乎邪惡又狡詐；其他時候則非常軟弱。昨晚當他看著躺在病榻上的恩妮絲汀，以及今晨尚未見到她之前，他心想，她要是死了多好。他盼自己能重獲自由之身，即使遲至今日也無妨。可是當他今早再見到她奄奄一息的病容，聽見菲爾森小姐提到換血療法時，他內心又感到歉疚不已。她現在死了對他有什麼好處？為什麼他非要她的命不可？像這麼邪惡的念頭不論今

生或死後能躲得過老天的懲罰嗎？假如孩子們猜到了他的心意又該怎麼辦？若是她現在就走了——今天早上他還巴不得她趕快死一死——他會有什麼感覺？要知道，恩妮絲汀並非一直那麼糟，她也努力過，不是嗎？——只不過在他看來，她一直未能成事，而且他一直無法愛她，如此而已。如今他再度自責自己這些想法太過殘酷。

兩位醫生認為郝太太的情況並未好轉，因此決定動用第一種換血療法，也就是直接透過唧筒將新血注入的方法。只要她的心臟沒有讓輸入的血大量流失的話，這麼做可使她元氣大增。然而，進行治療之前，兩位醫生循往例找郝先生商量。陷溺在極度自責當中的他，堅持要不惜一切代價救回太太。倘若她有生命危險，付出一切也要把她救活。她若能獲救對她和他自己，以及孩子們而言，可謂極為寶貴。他對醫生這麼說。講這些話，讓他感覺自己已盡力在滿足別人的期待。只差無法衷心希望她好起來，甚至在這緊要關頭，他仍力有未逮。他說不出有多厭倦這一大堆傳統義務和責任。醫生們似乎認為換血療法可望使她重獲健康。真是那樣的話，意味著夏天來臨時，他就必須帶她到某座清靜的山中好生休養，時刻伴她左右，以度過讓身體復元的漫漫長日。關於這一點，他不會抱怨，這算還好，他還做得到。當然他會感到厭煩，就像往常一樣。不過若她明明可救卻救不了，那可真太不幸了。沒錯，話雖如此，但——

他再次下樓到辦公室去。同一時間，醫生們正試行第一種換血療法，結果顯然非常奏效。她感覺好多了，因此日班護士三點整打電話通知他，說她好很多了。一直到五點半郝先生回家之前，再也沒有傳出任何壞消息。她躺臥在墊得高高的枕頭上。相信嗎？她看來非常快活，更像是恢復了老樣子，而不像他之前某些時候所見到的她。

他的心情立刻又產生了變化。這真是令人吃驚，他心中的思想竟能如此變幻莫測，幾乎像化學反應一樣，而非出於自由意志。這對一個理應熟稔自己心境的男人而言，絕對不太尋常——但是又有誰真的自知？現在她不會死了。他心裡有數，這下子一切將全部照舊。那麼，他不妨還是將就著安於原來的挫敗感，反正恢復自由之身已是奢望，就讓一切照舊走下去，明天和後天不都一樣。太可怕了！他雖然看起來很歡喜——某種程度來說，他確實因為見到她能夠重新振作開心起來，對未來充滿希望而萬分感激——但是那如影隨形的挫敗感，以及永遠擺脫不了她的噩夢再度降臨。夜深時分，他躺在床上

喃喃自語著：「既然她肯定會康復，一切都將恢復舊觀，我再也不可能獲得自由，連一天也不可能——哪怕只有一天！決不可能了！」

想不到隔天早上，她的病情又轉趨不樂觀，他的心也隨之夾雜著驚訝與憂懼，同時卻又鬆了一口氣。他再次為自己的歹念感到自責。這難道不是害死她的元兇嗎？他自問——兇手不就是他變幻莫測的心嗎？他那惡毒的詛咒難道不具某種法力？他這樣做比起殺人犯豈非毫不遜色？想想看，要是從今以後，他永遠都得以為是自己的惡念害死了她，豈不是太折騰人了——真的很恐怖，可不是？那到底他為何會那樣？難道他就不能有人性些？

上午史醫生接到護士的電話後，九點半就匆匆趕到。他表情凝重地表示，應該改輸馬血比較妥當，因為馬血比人血來得黏稠——用作血漿注射的話，不容易因心臟跳動而排出——站在他身邊的郝先生既自責又難過，惶惶不安。他非常篤定會發生這種意外全都是自己昨晚以及這幾天盤踞在他心中的邪思歹念造成的。他心想，自己果真是一名殺人兇手，一名凶惡的罪犯，處心積慮要致她於死地嗎？究竟為什麼？為何他昨晚要咒她死？她都已經病入膏肓了。

他吩咐史醫生：「你一定要盡力救她，不管用什麼方法——在你的能力範圍內。」

「不會的，郝先生，」醫生深表同情地說，「我會毫不保留地盡一切力量醫好她。請您放心。我在想昨天輸的血可能不太夠，再怎麼說，人血畢竟不夠濃稠。換血後她雖然略有起色，但復元情況不盡理想。我們今天會再試試其他辦法。」

背負著丈夫責任的郝先生聽完後默默走開。他強抑心中之苦，悲傷得不能自己。他再度下定決心，告訴自己無論內心感受如何，他絕不容許自己再有那些邪惡的想法，一定要想辦法丟掉才行。那實在太齷齪了。他幾乎可以肯定那些邪念最終還是會暗地溜回他的心房，並對她造成傷害。如果她能夠得救，她就有權重獲健康，他決沒有反對的理由。事已至此，他只能多犧牲自己一些，不計代價。唯有這樣做才叫高尚，才叫有人性。反正都過了這麼多年，他有什麼好抱怨的？再多熬幾年又會怎麼樣呢？傍晚他回到辦公室，感到聊以慰藉，不僅因為自己的善念，也因為一通下午三點的電話留言，大意是他太太的情況已經大幅好轉。第二次輸血證實有效得多。馬血果然對她更有益，使她有力

氣可以坐起來了。他五點進房門的時候，看見她躺在那兒，既蒼白又虛弱，還好她的眼睛尚透著一絲光芒，雙頰也恢復了少許血色——他這麼想著——她精神健旺了些，對著他淺淺一笑，身體明顯有所好轉。仁慈的史醫生真是了不起呀！醫術果然高明！但願她能馬上康復！但願這病痛的折磨能快快消失！晚上八點，史醫生會再來看診。

「那個，你還好嗎，親愛的？」她握住他的手，甜蜜深情地望著他。

他彎下腰吻了一下她的前額——假惺惺的猶大之吻。直到現在他的吻都是別有圖，但今晚例外。今晚的他充滿慈悲憐憫之心——甚至急切盼她能戰勝病魔。

「還好，寶貝，我真的很好，妳呢？今晚很適合出去走走，妳應該馬上就會好起來，享受一下春天的氣息。」

「我會的，」她輕柔地答道。「我感覺身體好多了。這段時間你過得好不好？工作還順利嗎？」

他點頭微笑，告訴她一些消息。艾賽爾貝塔打來說她會帶著紫羅蘭來看她；衛斯理說他和艾爾瑪六點到；另外還有許多人向她問安。說到這兒，他捫心自問，自己怎會壞到去咒她死？她明明沒那麼糟啊——她確實有她迷人的魅力，儘管不適合他，卻可能是另一個人理想的妻子。她跟他一樣有權過好日子，享受人生。說到底，她是孩子們的母親，陪他身邊也這麼多年了。再說，這一天是那麼美好——此時此刻也是——五月天裡一個美妙的傍晚，空氣中瀰漫著沁人心脾的氣息，天空被抹上一層薰衣草般的淡紫色。此時電話鈴聲響起，又是一堆詢問她病況的電話。女傭說連日來這樣的電話不勝枚舉，特別是今天。她遞給郝先生一張來電致意的名單。就說吧，他想，她朋友甚至比他還多呢。她這麼善良、忠貞，是名副其實的賢內助。為什麼他非希望她遭逢不幸？

艾賽爾貝塔和衛斯理到家後，郝先生便與他們同桌共進晚餐，開心地閒話家常——這是他幾星期以來聊得最開懷的一次。他很高興不用再為自己捉摸不定的心情而沮喪，此刻的他心情非常愉快。他忙問他們孫子們好不好？都在幹些什麼？晚上八點三十分，史醫生再度進房。他宣佈經過仔細評估，郝太太確實大大好轉。

「依我看，她的情況相當樂觀，」他說。「再安然度過一、兩晚沒惡化的話，應該就會漸入佳境了。她的體力似乎恢復了一些些，但還不容過於樂觀。」

這種病相當棘手，先看看她明天感覺如何，再決定是否要增加輸血量。」

史醫生告辭後，艾賽爾貝塔和衛斯理也於十點鐘離開。臨走前吩咐萬一她病情惡化，一定要馬上通知他們。留下他再次孤身一人獨坐沉思。到了十一點，由於這些日子以來史醫生指示病房內必須保持絕對安靜，郝先生在病榻旁靜靜地待了一會兒之後，便上床睡覺去。他睏倦極了，似乎是因為腦海中起伏不定的思緒，他稱之為泯滅良心，這些不斷給他帶來痛苦，使他總是疲憊不堪。但今晚他非常篤定自己可以安然入眠。他對自己、對人生變得更有信心了，今天的他表現得很不錯呢。當初他千不該萬不該容忍腦中這些罪惡思想萌生。然而——然而——然而——

他躺在床上向外望，緊臨床邊的窗戶，恰可瞥見公園一隅。春樹盎然如昔，被街燈照射出一派銀白氣象，另一端則閃耀一角湖光粼粼。居住在城市中，即使能看見這樣一撮蔥鬱綠意也相當罕見，要付出的代價可不小。他年輕的時候就非常喜歡親近水邊，任何小湖、小溪、小池塘都是他的最愛；那時的他也喜歡月亮，喜歡在黑夜中散步。這一切總是容易讓人聯想到愛與幸福，那是他夢寐以求卻未曾擁有過的東西。他曾經設計過一間遊艇俱樂部，底部的造型令人聯想到海浪；多年前他也曾想替自己和期盼中的美好情人設計一間可愛的農舍或鄉間小屋——一位美好的情人——如果有這麼一個女人且他是自由之身的話，那該多好！如今——如今——都這種時候了還興這種念頭，尤其明知為時已晚了，似乎更顯出他悖理逆天，以及他的刻薄、冷血、敗德和邪惡。他把臉別過去，避開了月光。他嘆了口氣，決定一睡了之，看看能否將過去這些逐漸陳舊晦暗卻甜滋滋的綺思鎖在記憶的門外。他辦到了。

不久他做了個夢，夢中彷彿出現一位動人的美麗精靈，一個他夢寐以求的美人兒。她拉著他的手帶他出去，來到漣漪陣陣的小溪、清澈見底的湖泊，以及一條宏偉壯麗的公路。那裡有許多用白色大理石砌成的神殿、塔樓和塑像。他走在上頭，感覺彷彿有人允諾了自己什麼事似的——讓自己夙願得償——不料這個世界目前依舊昏暗蒼茫，帶著些許感傷和壓抑的氛圍，予人一種令人不安、更為陰鬱的距離感。雖然明擺著朝美、善前進，但他仍不斷尋找、尋找，前頭是一片漆黑，當他終於——

「郝先生！郝先生！」一個柔和的聲音傳來，乍聽之下幾乎難以辨認，然後愈發清

晰，愈發令人不安，將一隻手放在他身上，說道：「請您立刻過來好嗎？郝太太不好了！」

他聞聲立即抓起掛在床頭的那件藍色絲質睡袍，邊走邊穿奪門而出。艾爾弗里奇太太和值班護士一臉慘白，表情茫然地握緊雙手跟在他後頭。單從她們那副模樣就看得出大事不妙。他一到房裡——她的房裡，看見她躺在那兒彷彿還活著——她一動也不動，非常安詳，身體垂軟，就像睡著了似的。她那薄薄的一一有時他覺得冷冰冰的雙唇，此時微微地張開，嫣然一笑，或者說，是看起來像在微笑。他偶爾也會見到她像這樣臉上掛著一個非常親切而睿智的笑容，讓她看起來比實際上聰慧。她那原本修長、纖細而優雅的雙手攤了開來，五指微微分開，彷彿非常、非常疲累似的。她的眼皮也沒精打采地擱在睏倦的雙眼上。還有她一向瘦削的身材，在單薄的被褥下，輪廓清晰可見。晚班護士菲爾森小姐正在解釋自己不過是睡著了一下下，醒來就看到郝太太這副模樣。或許是史醫生的緣故，她感到非常沮喪，心亂如麻。

郝先生停下腳步，眼前所見令他驚詫不已。自從小埃爾維爾過世之後，再也沒有任何事情能讓他如此激動。無論如何，她奮戰過，也盡力了。現在她卻先走一步——在他倆廝守了這麼多年之後！他踏前一步，憐憫的淚水盈滿了眼眶。他跪倒在床邊，生怕驚動了她的右手。

「恩妮，親愛的，」他輕聲呼喚，「恩妮——妳真的要離我而去？」儘管他語帶悲傷，自己卻覺得虛情假意。

他難過地將她的右手舉到自己唇邊，再將頭緊挨著她，默數著自己這些日子以來陷入的長考和反覆的心情。一旁的艾爾弗里奇太太和護士則頻頻拭淚，深自替他感到難過，畢竟他已經是個年邁的老人了！

不一會兒，在她們的勸慰下，他終於起身。看來極度悲痛且神情恍惚的他，拜託艾爾弗里奇太太和護士先別驚動孩子們。就算他們知道了也無濟於事，倒不如留給他們一夜好眠。於是他回到自己房裡，在床上坐了片刻，凝望著外頭那幕向來令他醉心的銀白色天地。太可怕了，難道是他卑鄙的詛咒終於應驗？說不定是他歹毒的邪念害死了她。有沒有這種可能？莫非是他心中默念的禱詞以這種殘酷的方式得到了神明的應允？她現在是否明瞭了他究竟打的什麼主意？全是些惡毒的算計。她現在到哪兒去了？她知道

了真相後會怎麼想？她會恨他嗎？做鬼也不饒他嗎？此時天還沒亮，大約凌晨兩、三點而已，月光依然皎潔。郝太太的屍體就躺在隔壁房裡，蒼白而冰冷，永永遠遠地從他的生命中消逝了。

一會兒，他起身走進那間他平時很喜歡待的舒適客廳，然後回到她房間，再次端詳著她的遺體。既然她已經走了，走得很徹底，徒留一具死透的皮囊，他似乎比較能夠整理自己紊亂的思緒。她看得見實情也好，發現了他的陰謀也罷，如今一切都結束了。只不過他不禁感到些許罪惡感。她再怎麼不好，卻一直忠於家庭，為了丈夫和孩子兢兢業業。他大可不必讓她在臨終前這幾天因他邪惡的思想而受苦。他雖百感交集，大半時候不知所措，然而同一時間，舊時代的倫理標準，以及他對她的滿腔怨懟都必須得到適度的調整，他的心才能獲得真正平靜。非調整不可，只是該怎麼調——怎麼調才好呢？他和艾爾弗里奇太太說好今晚不再驚動史醫生，所有人都同意天亮以前該好好休息一下。

一段時間過後，他再度走進起居室，坐望著公園。也許，只有在這裡，他方能為自己解開所有謎團，理清所有頭緒，並發覺自己切身的感受。他的邪惡種因於他單方面的所求所願、所知所想。然而，他也有自己的一套說詞——他要過自己的生活。黎明即將破曉，東方的天空仍掩映著一股灰茫的蒼涼，房間隱約透出一絲光亮。夾在兩扇窗子之間的一架高大穿衣鏡，對他映照出他最真實的模樣——瘦骨嶙峋、不修邊幅，凌亂的鬍子和頭髮，以及一雙疲憊的雙眼。這鏡中的體態，對照於他幻想一旦自由後實現幸福生活的美好，狠狠地打擊了他。這分明是鬧劇一場！慘不忍睹！他為什麼偏要去預想那些未來重獲自由後，以愛編織成的幸福呢？瞧他鏡中那副德性，什麼鬼樣子——垂垂老矣、滿頭華髮、風燭殘年！難道他從沒意識到這一點？那豈不是太不像話？為何仍一味縱容這些毫無意義的空想？如今的他又能希冀什麼呢？他再也得不到佳人垂青，當然不可能。年輕時的綺夢就像海市蜃樓一般的癡心妄想，一去不復返。對他而言，他太太是生是死所能帶給他的改變幾乎沒什麼兩樣。只不過，幾乎可以說，儘管他的情緒陰晴不定，他真的自由了。然而他現在卻顯得年邁、疲憊、不中用，像一個孤獨而笨拙的老頭子。

人生殘酷的本質，從命運之神對他嘲弄似的漠不關心可見一斑，如此大量又快速地

積壓在他心頭。試問他從中得到過什麼？又錯過了什麼？他頭一次黯然地盯著自己布滿皺紋的暗沉皮膚；兩邊的眼角爬滿了魚尾紋；整個額頭和雙眼之間滿是皺紋；過去他自認修長而漂亮的雙手，現在看起來既黑又皺；身材則是變得消瘦又僵硬。想當初他自認是人中之龍，相貌堂堂、做事有魄力、充滿幹勁——而今風華已去！他轉過身，眺望種滿了幼樹的公園。湖泊在粉紅色晨曦的映照下，化成一抹殘跡。此時此刻，窗外的此情此景別具意義，黎明的曙光彷彿為年輕一輩帶來煥然一新的氣象。再回頭看看他自己，如今的他還能希冀什麼、祈望什麼呢？

沉吟間，他憶起先前的夢。在那奇幻的夢境裡，他尋尋覓覓，有人引領著他的腳步，應許他美好的前景，然而他卻一步步被帶往愈發陰暗幽森的所在。這夢意謂著什麼？是否蘊含了任何實質意義？未來的一切是否將更加陰暗？這夢是否象徵了他的一生？他陷入了沉思。

過了片刻，「自由了！」他喃喃道：「我自由了！我終於明白自由的滋味。我終於自由了！自由了！…自由了！…沒錯——我可以自由地…去死了！」

他站在那兒，陷入憂思，一邊順了順他的頭髮和鬍鬚。

Chinese Translation of “Marriage—For One”

獨舞的婚姻

每當我琢磨何謂愛情和婚姻，總會想起瑞伊。那個老古板的傢伙，心思也一樣古板。我剛到紐約不久就認識他了。他和無數在紐約力爭上游的人一樣，傾全力衝刺事業。依我看，儘管他和一般人一樣才學有限，幸好他胸無大志。那時他正在某家大型商業徵信公司上班，負責調查商人的信譽，再把調查結果向其他商人待價而沽。他不僅樂在其中，似乎也對這工作感到挺滿意的，因為他自認只要堅持下去的話，一定可以達到一個還算不錯的目標：升任這間大企業的分公司經理，年薪高達五、六千元。他之所以令我感到興趣，除了他溫和討喜的個性外，還有就是，儘管他有非常多的機會研究人心，諸如人的應變能力、靈活思維；自我設限或自由奔放；人的心緒、憂傷、以及常見的機巧善變等等，他卻將大部分心思單單用來調查各種商人的聲譽，也就是他職責所在。譬如，他們有償付能力嗎？他們能夠且確實會支付帳款嗎？他們持有的股本有多少？手頭握有多少現金？．．．這些才是他需要的資料，其他事他大都提不起興致。

不過，他經常得應付他們百出的奇招。這些人要嘛堅不吐實，要嘛謊話連篇，卑劣之極。搞得他一會兒啞然失笑，一會兒驚詫不已，時而勃然大怒，時而自以為是。他這個人自詡誠實，行事光明磊落，不若同行某些人不堪大任、一無是處。正因如此，他堅信成功指日可待，後來果然成功，當然指的是他能力範圍所及的那種成功。我之所以對他感到興趣，乃至將他視為絕佳範例，是因為他相信懷抱理想必能得到相應的甚或適當的回報，但他這合乎中產階級穩重得體的信念卻終歸徒勞。倘若一個人能恪遵本分，勤奮誠實，簡樸達禮，並且謹守更多我們理當奉行的美德，那麼以他條理分明的行事作風，肯定比其他人更加勝券在握。怎有可能——一個正直、勤勉、細心的人會輸給那些絲毫不具這些特質，甚至棄之如敝屣的人，對吧？豈有此理！品德操守才是硬道理。當然，天有不測風雲，人有旦夕禍福，狗咬狗、黑吃黑之類的事情天天上演，他都看在眼裡。銀行一倒閉，各類資產信託和併購機構如雨後春筍，這些機構的存在卻未必能完全符合一般大眾的利益。即便如此，整體而言，平凡人若能將上述德行奉為圭臬，獲得成功的機率自然大大增加。總之，世界上確實存在這樣的「準正義」。原則上正義必勝，邪惡

必遭天譴，理應如此。

談到愛情觀和婚姻觀，他也自成一套看法。不能說他眼界過於狹隘，他也並非動不動就喜歡苛責那些生活過得不如他希望地那般順遂的人。只不過在他看來，就婚論婚，一些適度的手腕會帶來美滿婚姻，一如具備前面提過的優良品性能使世俗或實際生活臻於完滿。男人必須懂女人。男人追求女人，必想尋找一位內外兼修，因出身不凡而品味出眾、節操高尚的女性。她不必富有，甚至很窮也無妨。但他必須非常確信自己愛她才可行。許多男人談戀愛時自以為彼此深愛著對方，實際上自己不過是一時被情慾沖昏頭的傻瓜。瑞伊深諳箇中道理。許多女人居心不良，要不就是輕佻侮慢，水性楊花。就算她們肯，也很難助一個認真的男人在事業上有所斬獲。話雖如此，世上還是有不少懂得人情事理的好女孩住在比較偏遠的地區，能娶到她們真是三生有幸。他打算娶一個這樣的女孩進門。不過，婚姻這檔事還是謹慎些好，難保不會娶到一個過於守舊、井底之蛙的太太。那種女人沒見過什麼世面，凡事充滿偏見。倘若能夠，他發願要找到足堪與己匹配的心靈伴侶：一個聰慧、務實、胸襟開闊的女孩。

就在他擔任某個大人物的秘書那陣子，有一天，他在自己的辦公室內遇見了一位幾乎集所有他認定的完美品性於一身的女子。她和父母共組小康家庭，住在靠近某市的郊區。當然，她還是位十分能幹且可靠的速記員。要是你見過她出身的那個名聲響亮的郊區，你就會明白為什麼了。她不僅擁有美貌，在許多方面尚且顯得既務實且明理，卻還是脫離不了來自家人、教友和親族的那套家訓、教義及信條的重重約束。她認為這三方共築成一個穩固、明確、令人肅然起敬的世界，是那些最熱衷維護世上一切秩序與美德之人一心嚮往的所在。我跟瑞伊每次碰面，總會彼此交流一下近況。有一次他迫不及待地向我講述，那個女孩非常排斥看戲、跳舞、任何形式的晚宴或在非假日進城。她也反對任何她家人和教友認為會褻瀆安息日¹⁶的活動。我還記得，他當時斥她是村婦之見，希望她和他生活一段日子後，能夠變得開明一點。他說話時還帶點消遣口吻，一副即使要帶她在安息日那天去家裡附近的小河划船郊遊這種簡單小事也不可能辦到的樣子，只

¹⁶ 安息日為星期日，大多數基督教會認為應當休息和祈禱的日子。

因此舉她無法接受。他反而必須跟著她及岳父母上教會做禮拜。儘管他不信上帝，而且對社會主義略感興趣，卻處處瞞著她。對她來說，看戲甚至稱不上是娛樂；她不會也不願意跳舞；她認為他鍾情這些逸樂不僅庸俗，而且過於放縱敗德。然而他卻向我透露，他對這樣的她情有獨鍾，願意盡力去影響她，給她開開眼界。像她這般冰雪聰明，不會一輩子死守著那些舊教條。她一定能走出牢籠。

在追求她差不多兩、三年之後，他的努力以極慢的速度漸漸獲得回報。她終於首肯隨他於非假日進城用餐，甚至在星期天晚上陪他出席聖樂會或音樂會。想當然耳，這些都得背著她父母和左鄰右舍暗中進行。但他自認最高明之處，就是引起她對讀書的興趣，特別是史、哲相關書籍。他認為這類書思想兼容並蓄，必能讓她對既定的事理存疑，不再一味堅信。另外，酷愛看戲的他，往往將看戲視為最重要的休閒活動，畢竟看戲沒什麼壞處。他終於說服她和他一同上劇院，看完了一場又一場。總之，他拼盡全力將她從窠臼中解放出來，對於結果似乎相當滿意。

婚後，他倆過著截然不同的新生活，尤其是她。他們在紐約的一幢小公寓裡共築愛巢。原本她對這座城市還不太放心，但隨即便開始廣交好友。他們住處附近有一個文學讀書會，剛成立不久她就加入了。她在那裡遇見了一群不安現狀、充滿幹勁、積極追尋自我的女性，是那種瑞伊不屑一顧的女人。正如他事後告訴我的，打從一開始，他就認定其中像德雷克太太、孟蕭太太這幫人根本就是無聊人士罷了。但他老婆貝西偏偏跟她們要好，到哪兒都同她們一起。

約莫就在那時，我頭一回對他們令人稱羨的美滿婚姻是否亮起紅燈起了疑心。這陣子我很少見到瑞伊，但每次去他們的小公寓做客時，很難不發現瑞伊太太在當初他試圖引起她學習興趣的那個領域中，表現地多麼出色。她顯然已經掙脫了她那些迂腐思想，不再把看戲、讀書及世俗享樂視為一種罪過。瑞伊猶如白馬王子，翩然走進貝西的祕密花園，喚醒沉睡的公主，引領她到做夢也想不到的大千世界。以她現在的程度，已能侃侃評論她讀過的某些當紅作家，論述一段有趣地啓人深省的法國歷史，甚或暢談新近加入的讀書會正在研讀的哲學和詩歌。就我們三個人聚在一起聊天的內容來看，瑞伊漸漸感到，這個不久前剛過門的傻妞，眼看就要青出於藍了，特別是在那些他原本希望自己

能夠永遠擔綱指導角色的領域。我不只一次注意到她理所當然地質疑他或反駁他。他縱不惱羞成怒，也絕對訝於她的知識比他豐富，譬如能讀懂某段小說情節隱含的深意，或理解某些特殊日子在歷史上的相對重要性。憑藉著先前那股促使她堅持舊信念的魄力和決心，她開始發表並捍衛自己的新見解。她不會自認高人一等，說起話來也不至於令人不悅，反而客氣地處處向他請益，尊重他的看法。從這一點可以得知，那時的她尚無意在自己不擅長的領域逞能。「不對，親愛的。他名叫賓特利。去年在本地公演的那齣《曼弗雷德的七只戒指》，就是他的作品，你忘了嗎？」瑞伊再不情願，也不得不承認她說得對。

然而自此以後，每當瑞伊跟我單獨碰面時，總會向我吐露他心中與日俱增的憂慮和疑惑。現在的她不再是當年他初次邂逅的小女孩貝西，正如他不再是十歲的小男孩。在她身上產生了非常、非常驚人的改變。她變得越來越愛挑釁，咄咄逼人且極為自我。諸如此類的變化無所不在。她博覽群籍，數量之鉅，就為人妻子而言，委實太多了。他們兩夫妻近來經常發生一些無謂的口角，吵得不可開交卻一點意義都沒有，但不管怎樣最終總會和平收場。倘若吵架的結果不順她的意，她就會變得躁怒。她對這個家漠不關心，整天與新結交的朋友四處遊走。他愛看的戲她都不愛。他偏好輕鬆一點的喜劇，她卻對嚴肅的戲情有獨鍾，尤其是那些隱含道德教訓或情節曲折的劇碼。現在的她只讀正經八百的書，還會去聽課呢。反觀他自己，他承認自己多少讀膩了那些正經書。說穿了讀這種書有什麼好處？不過就是激起一絲思想感情上的漣漪，何況這種感觸還是不碰為妙。她醉心於音樂，或者假裝喜歡，忒愛歌劇、獨唱會之類的音樂表演，而他則是興趣缺缺。他不諱言歌劇令他生厭，但若不陪著她去，她必會邀請讀書會那兩個討厭的女人同行。他漸漸看她們兩個不順眼，不過就是仗著老公有點錢，縱容她們在交際和文化活動方面肆意妄為。她們無須操持家務，可以隨心所欲地交際應酬。瑞伊堅稱都是她們倆在旁慫恿貝西害的，激發了她多樣的興趣和熱忱，鼓勵她做自己。他該如何是好？再繼續這樣下去，後果不堪設想。小倆口動不動就一言不合，近來她更屢屢放話要離家出走，在紐約自力更生。他深知她說到做到。其實此時的瑞伊事業有成，只要不再發生那些煩心的事，幸福近在咫尺。

此事過後還不滿兩個月，有一天，瑞伊憂心忡忡地跑來找我。他先是故作鎮定，若無其事地談些別的事情，接著就向我坦承老婆離開他了。她在外頭租了個房間，重新做起了速記員。雖然他偶爾會在地下鐵遇見她，她卻不想再和他有任何瓜葛，決心與他做了斷。我能相信嗎？她指責他心胸狹窄、無知又固執，簡直有數不完的缺點！想想看，明明不過三、四年前，她還堅持安息日划船或進城用晚餐是大錯特錯。天底下哪有這種事？儘管經歷多番風雨，他愛她的心仍然不減。他情不自禁想起他們初見時，她是何等甜美、爛漫又羞赧，對她的父母敬愛有加，如今卻完全變了調。「神哪，」他遙想著她昔日的美好，突然大聲喊道，「早知當初真不該急著逼她改變，她原本的樣子不是挺好，我卻非要她喜歡上那些她完全不懂的時髦玩意兒才甘心。這下可好，她不但離我而去，還說我拘泥固執，阻攔她在學問上繼續長進。這全都是因為我無法完全配合任何她想做的事情，對她熱衷的活動也興致缺缺才會這樣。」

我搖了搖頭。事已至此，我還能給出什麼有價值的建議？何況我這個人總認為，婚姻關係中要嘛不是其中一方的性格由於巧合的事件或際遇修正或改變，要嘛就是機運使個性不合的兩個人漸行漸遠。即便如此，禁不住他苦苦哀求，我大膽借用別人的點子給他出了一個蠢主意。瑞伊說過，只要能讓老婆回心轉意，他願意少唱一些毫無意義的反調，避免跟她起衝突。當初若非爭吵不休她也不會離家。只要她肯回到他身邊，她想讀什麼書就讓她讀個夠。看到他那無助又滿心期待的神情，我建議他試試一個別人在類似狀況下用過的法子。為了挽回愛妻的心，任憑她開出條件，一律先答應再說；然後再勸誘她懷孕生子給她家庭的羈絆。有了小孩之後，她就再難狠下心說走就走，讓她在疼愛孩子之餘，不知不覺多了一分對孩子父親的關心。有小孩的夫妻很少分居的——我這麼說著。

他對這個主意很感興趣，因為非常符合他實事求是的古板個性。他滿懷希望地向我告別，接下來幾個月音訊全無。隨後，他前來通知我，一切都進行地很順利。她回家了，而他為了履行協議，在城裡很受歡迎的地段租了一間更寬敞的公寓。貝西繼續回到讀書會，他也不再反對她做任何事。這一年，孩子出世了。接踵而來的是那些育兒家庭的平凡瑣事，以及隨著養育小生命而來的家庭責任和羈絆。

不過我日後才知道，即便是當時，並非所有事都如我想像地那般順利。有一次，貝西趁瑞伊不在時偷偷對我說，有自己的孩子固然令她感到欣慰，她卻覺得自己好比一頭後面跟了一隻小牛的乳牛，必須照顧牠到牠能自立為止。還有一次，她把當母親的比喻成無給薪的僕傭。雖然她非常疼愛女兒，對於不滿足於單純當一個母親的她而言，忍不住將她視為沉重的枷鎖及負荷。但死腦筋的瑞伊卻因此而開心的不得了。他們住家附近有座小公園。工作閒暇之餘，瑞伊會推著一台漂亮的嬰兒車帶他的寶貝女兒到公園去散步。看到有父母帶著和他女兒年齡相仿的孩子，他便會一屁股坐下來，或者走近他們身邊，好比較彼此的小孩。他喜歡思考嬰兒身上散發的可愛和純真；發現別人的寶寶有一大堆他不曾留意的小細節，覺得十分有趣。當時，他已開始籌畫小珍妮特的未來。顧及到讓小孩悶在擁擠的城市公寓裡實在不太好，他計畫一、兩年之內，若能說服貝西同意，他們將搬到郊區去住，好讓珍妮特享受享受鄉間的新鮮空氣。

那時他們收入頗豐，請得起保姆了。瑞伊太太因此得以重拾書本，自由地追求學問。自始至終，任誰都看得出來，她雖敬瑞伊是一位富有責任心、對她一往情深，而且處事井井有條的好丈夫，她卻無法愛他或敬仰他，主因是橫梗在他們之間那條才智上的鴻溝。他雖極力掩飾，卻掩蓋不了自己作為一個胸無大志之人，與懷抱鴻鵠之志的她之間，存在著明顯的差距。箇中關鍵並非完全取決於他倆才智程度上的優劣。依我看，與其說她高人一等，毋寧說她與眾不同。更確切地說，他們就像兩道不同前進速率的水流，只有剛開始時短暫地並肩前行，時間一長他便慢了下來，她則加快許多。重要的不是他多半時候願意信守大多數人奉持的傳統思想和情感，那無關宏旨。她順心而為，燃起一股強烈的行動欲望，使他為之一懼而不敢小視；他也順心而為，卻是能閃則閃、步履蹣跚。只要觀察一下他們兩人在一起的情景，暫且不論為了維持這段婚姻雙方的付出，任誰都看得出來他多麼以她為榮，好像中了大獎一般，夫妻之情溢於言表。另一方面，任何人也一眼就看得出他在她心中的地位多麼微不足道。對於她很懂而他卻不感興趣或反對的事，她偏偏一再地拿來當作與別人聊天的話題。

為了跳脫婚姻的牢籠，她一頭栽入早先那些令他惶惶不安的活動。他抱怨她冷落了小珍妮特，沒有盡母親的本份好好疼她，也缺乏她投入其他活動時的那股熱情。更糟糕

的是，她開始愛上了佛洛伊德¹⁷、克拉夫特-埃平¹⁸那一路的思想家和學術泰斗的著作。他認為這些傢伙的為人和作品既差勁又下流，儘管他壓根就搞不懂他們的思想真正的意涵。

有一天他來找我問道：「你聽過一位名為皮耶·羅迪¹⁹的作家嗎？」

「聽過，」我答道，「我曉得他的作品。他怎麼了？」

「你認為他怎樣？」

「以他身為一位作家而言嗎？怎麼，我非常尊敬他。為何突然提到他？」

「噢，我就知道，從知識份子的觀點來說，他或許是個出色的作家。那你對他的人生觀有何看法——對一名育有小女兒的母親研讀他的作品這件事，你怎麼看？」

「我說瑞伊，」我答道，「我不能純粹從道德的角度去論斷任何人的作品。他的作品對某些母親而言可能是良藥，對別的母親而言卻是劇毒。會因為文學作品中對人生的描摹而受傷的人就是會受傷，不然就該避免深受其害；但能從中獲益的人依然能獲益。不論是書本還是人生，我找不到其它方式來討論。我認為值得一讀的書不過是以某種形式真實地呈現人生，如此而已。若他的作品能讓人從中獲益，你卻要阻止別人讀，不免有欠公允。但這只是我個人的看法。」

沒過多久，聽說他們又吵架了，而且貝西再度離開了他。她這次走了就再也沒回來過。她冒著犯法的危險帶著孩子離家出走，對他而言不盡公平。我雖不清楚為何他們的關係以破裂告終，但可想而知是兩人日漸分歧的觀念造成的。對於如何體會人生，他倆的意見南轅北轍。他曾迫切希望她能夠體會——不過必須從他的觀點出發。如今她的視野已遠遠超出他的期待，她體會人生的方式同樣令他心生不滿。夫妻倆意見不合，實屬必然。

¹⁷ 西格蒙德·佛洛伊德 (Sigmund Freud, 1856年—1939年)，奧地利精神分析學家，猶太人。精神分析學的創始人，著作《夢的解析》、《精神分析引論》、《圖騰與禁忌》等。提出「潛意識」、「自我」、「本我」、「超我」、「伊底帕斯情結」、「性衝動」(Libido)、「心理防衛機制」等概念，認為人類男性天生具有弑父娶母的慾望和戀母情結（即伊底帕斯情結），其成就對哲學、心理學、美學甚至社會學、文學等都有深刻的影響，被世人譽為「精神分析之父」。

¹⁸ 男爵理查·馮·克拉夫特-埃平 (Krafft-Ebing, Baron Richard von, 1840年—1902年)，德國神經病學家。他出版的《性精神病態》一書中，雖大多為對病情的描述，但推動了對性異常的科學探討，這種探討在二十年後佛洛伊德的理論中達到了頂點。

¹⁹ 皮耶·羅迪 (Pierre Loti, 1850年—1923年) 法國小說家和海軍軍官，著有《冰島漁夫》、《拉曼邱的戀愛》、《菊夫人》等書他的作品極富異國情調，在當代非常受到歡迎。

由於好一段時間沒有他的消息，於是我打電話給他，才知道他仍然住在之前那間寬敞的公寓。那間房子四個人住剛剛好，不適合單身獨居。七、八個月來，老婆不在身邊，他就這樣一個人生活著，屋裡每一樣東西都讓他忘不了妻女。至於他自己，受創愈恨的心逼得他將自己武裝地既嚴肅又沉默。他假裝不在乎，好像對現狀很滿意，無法想像他當初對她是多深地愛戀著。是的，她離開了，她鑄下了大錯，總有一天她會明白。生活並非如她想像那麼簡單。她跟別的男人跑了，這點他很確定，雖然不清楚那傢伙是誰。只能說所有禍端全都是德雷克太太惹出來的——她是她的兩個手帕交之一。他對那兩個女人熱衷的事物絲毫提不起半點興致。又過了一段時間，他告訴我他去見過貝西的父母了。真不知他為何這麼做，除非是因為太寂寞了。愛得不可自拔的他，以為他們會幫他釐清眼前這棘手的難題。

再次見到他，已是整整一年半後。據我所知，這段時間他仍住在他和貝西共同生活過的那間公寓。此時他已當上公司某部門經理，規律地往返於自家和辦公室之間。他悶悶不樂地獨居了一年多，忽然在某個十一月的雨夜前來探望我。看他的打扮顯然衣食不愁，對穿著十分講究；但就是清瘦了點，舉止間顯得有點侷促不安。他坐在壁爐前方，自稱最近日子混得挺不錯的，因此打算休一次長假，到西岸去拜訪朋友（他曾向我透露有人告訴他貝西人在加州）。沒錯，他仍住在老地方，我可能覺得奇怪，但他從不認為有搬家的必要。這樣只是另覓他處居住。那些舊家具很難打包，他又住不慣旅館。

突然間，他發現我正納悶地打量著他，便開始心浮氣躁，最後忍不住站了起來。他來回踱著步，一會兒假裝賞畫，一會兒假裝研究我的藏書。他這種舉止神態，就像一個內心茫然若失之人，雖然挺身對抗寂寥孤單，卻陷入深深的無力感。接著他猛然轉身對著我說：「我受夠了，這就是問題癥結。我真的再也受不了了。我試過一遍又一遍，以為有了小孩就會雨過天晴，但她不想。她根本不想要小孩，還一直怪我誘拐她懷了珍妮特。還有，她那股對文學該死的狂熱——全是我咎由自取。誰教我要鼓勵她閱讀和看戲呢！我以前老愛損她跟不上時代，勸她要快快覺醒，自己去發現這個世界進步成什麼樣子；我還勸她要多多親近那些有智之士。但結果全變了調。倘若她是個懂得分寸的女人，又怎會做出那些事來。」說到這兒他停頓了一下，激動地攥緊拳頭。這些話不像是對著

我說，反倒像是當她的面斥責她一般。

「瑞伊啊」，我插嘴道，「現在說這些已無濟於事。我們兩個又何曾達到過我們理想的目標呢？你何苦這麼說呢？」

「我告訴你她幹了什麼好事」，他氣憤地說道，「你絕對無法想像我的遭遇，慘到什麼地步。有一次，她為了擺脫我，竟然想毒死我。」他語帶傷感，簡述了一個走投無路的女人，如何在幾經波折與煎熬之後，渴望逃離一個想盡辦法要絆住她的男人。他接下去說道：「她愛上了別人，只是我永遠無法得知那男人究竟是誰。」此時他將說話的聲音壓低、放柔，即便到了那個時候，他仍想追問謎底。「我還知道她動過手術，但我沒辦法證明。」他向我詳述了一堆他們暗中來往的情節，以及他如何秘密跟蹤他們。這些作為、跡象、心境變化及不斷的爭吵，在在說明了他們之間有著一道無可彌補的裂痕。「還沒完呢，」他大吼一聲，「她根本是在折磨我，你不知道我有多苦，你根本不懂。可我就是愛她……我如今依然愛著她。」說著說著，他的十指再度扣緊，面色發白，眼神猶如鬼魅一般。

「有一天下午，我站在一間公寓的窗外。我知道她人在裡面，也清楚裡頭住著什麼人。我後來打聽才知道那個男人把房子分租了出去。她將珍妮特帶在身邊，想想看——那可是我跟她生的小女兒！我曾見她來到窗前向外張望，親眼目睹她待在別的男人房裡。我一氣之下狂奔上樓，用力猛敲房門，想把門砸爛。我大喊大叫要她給我出來，但她抵死不肯。我只好去找警察來逼他開門。可當我回來時，卻見一名女傭走上樓來，彷彿她已離家許久了。那女傭開了鎖後便走進去。我心裡有數，這全是他們設下的圈套。她們母女倆不在屋裡，她早就帶著珍妮特跑了。我記得她對我提過她們要去韋徹斯特。」

「另一次，她說要去拜訪一位朋友，我便尾隨她到一間餐廳。我懷疑她所謂的朋友就是她搞外遇的對象，來者卻是一位我素未謀面的陌生男子。當他們用完餐走出餐廳，正要進入馬車時，我走上前去，告訴他們我是如何看待他們這種下流行徑。我揚言要殺了他們，她只好請他先走，再隨我回家，我卻對她一籌莫展。她一句話都不肯對我說，只說假如我不喜歡她那樣，我大可以放她走。她希望我恩准她離婚。儘管我曾經那樣想過，卻還是不忍和她分開。過去，我對她用情至深；如今，我依然深愛著她。我太愛她，

愛得無法自拔。」說到這兒他停了下來，聽得出他語中充滿了痛苦和憾恨。

「又有一次，」他繼續說著，「我跟蹤她到一間旅館——你沒聽錯，是一間旅館。可當我走進旅館，卻發現她正在等我；原來她早就發現我了。我還瞧見一個男人朝她走過去——但他並非我心中料想的那個傢伙——他一見到我，轉身就走，所以我也無法確定那人是不是專程去見她的。我一跟她問起這人是誰，她理都不理轉身就走，我們便在沉默中回到家。我拿她實在沒輒，她寧可整天坐著看書，一連數天對我視若無睹——一連數天耶，聽清楚了——她連一個字都不願對我吐。」

「我明白了，」我說，「你這麼做未免太過愚蠢，不但沒有用，也毫無指望。你就這麼想不開嗎？」

「我懂，我全都懂，」他嚷道，「可我情難自禁，不能自己。我愛她，無可救藥地愛她。失去她讓我痛苦不已。我知道自己那麼做愚不可及，但我的一顆心早被她奪去。她愈是恨我，我愈是愛她。此分此秒我仍愛著她，無法自拔地愛她。曾經有段日子她不斷折磨我，我心下忐忑，忍不住大嘔特嘔。我的身體禁不起折磨而病倒了。在她面前我總是直冒冷汗；她每次出門，我總掌握不了她的行蹤。為此我食不下嚥，輾轉難眠，不知如何是好。為了找她，我曾在大街小巷尋上好幾個鐘頭，甚至好幾天。蒼天可證！」他暫停了一會兒，拳頭緊握，接著說：「我什麼事也做不了，只能不斷想來想去，想了又想，這就是我現在在做的事情——我左思右想，一直想個沒完。因為她的離開，我不再是原來的我。我就是無法將她從記憶中抹去。沒錯，我不願搬走，但我為何不搬呢？因為說不準她什麼時候會回來，畢竟我們在那裡一同生活過啊。我苦苦等待，明知道這很蠢，卻仍願繼續守候。我這麼癡等是為了什麼？天可憐見！我仍在等她，噢！」他嘆道：「三年了，整整三個年頭！」

他住了口，不再言語，與我面面相覷。眼前的現實激盪著我們的心，確實沒有任何人能解決他的問題。眼前此人——過去對於女人可謂瞭若指掌。他曾力圖開她的竅，以便跟上時代，對世界採取更開放的態度，可如今她人安在？我懷疑她身在何處？心中可曾想到過他？她是否為重獲自由而雀躍？接著，他毫不費力地穿好雨衣，撐起雨傘，昂然走進了雨中。我猜他是為了要邊走邊想吧。他走後，我把門帶上，研究著這一道道牆，

琢磨著——失望，激情，忿怒，絕望，愛情。我思忖著：「至少從單方面來說，這是真愛；至少從單方面來說，這也是婚姻。靈性上，他娶了一個瞧不起他的女人為妻；而她或許也在靈性上嫁給了一個可能不把她放在眼裡的另一個男人。無論愛情或是婚姻，都是一廂情願的事情。今晚，我在這房裡看清了這一點，而且是親眼目睹。」