Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman

**Introduction:**

Short story about a woman who takes a stand against an authoritarian husband: Harper’s Bazaar magazine September 1890 and in 1891 A New England Nun and Other Stories, which is a collection of Freeman’s works.

Celebration of a woman’s strength in a patriarchal society.

Autobiographical elements about the life of the auhor.

**Biography**: Freeman was born on October 31 in Massachusetts in 1852. In 1882 she became a full-time writer. In 1925 she was awarded by the American Academy of Letters (Medal for distinction in fiction) and she died in 1930 the 15th March.

**Historical context:**

The new England Town: no men due to the westward expansion + Civil War. Woman = housewifes. Close-knit community.

Calvinism: Strict version of Christianity. Human filled with sin.

Changes coming to England: economic depression and the arrival of new immigrants.

The roles of women and women writers: new female consciousness 1880s. Freeman was a part of a new school of writing: realism.

**Characters: Sarah Penn, Adoniram Penn, Nanny Penn and Sammy Penn.**

**Themes:**

Gender of roles (“the boy started in the chool. The girl began to wash the dishes”), Repression of woman (“You ain’t found out yet we’re women-folks”, “nobody’sever heard me complain”), God and religion (Providance: type of Christianity, “opportunities are the guideposts of the Lord”), Rebellion (“to move all her little household goods into the new barn while her husband was away”, “nobody but the Lord is goin’ to dictate to me”), Self-Assertion (“But we’ve come here to live, an’ we’re goin’ to live here”).

**Symbols:** Barn.

**Space**:

Location: farm, rural New England, late 19th century.

Action: House, old barn, new barn.

**Time**:

Examples: “The barn was all completed ready for use by the third week in July” (page 6), “at five o’clock” (page 8), “at six o’clock” (page 9), “Friday” (page 9), “toward sunset on Saturday” (page 9).

Narrator: third person narrator: descriptive, omniscient.

Narrative Technique: objective and straightforward. With dialogues and speech.

Figures of speech: alliterations, oxymorons, similes…

Conclusion:

Binary oppositions: male and female, individual and society.

Male dominant society.

Marriage: lack of communication.

Call for revolution? What do you think?

Redefinition: the act or process of causing people to consider it in a new way.