

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS

#### **4.1 The motives of Mrs. Arbuthnot's Struggle in Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance***

In Oscar Wilde's drama text *A Woman Of No Importance*, Mrs. Arbuthnot is a strong and friendly woman. She adores her son and has raised him to have good morals and character. Although she has nothing and living alone without a family, she is capable of raising her own son. She does not even tell her son that his father is living and she is in an awkward place when she realizes that the man who has offer Gerald such a good position as secretary at a famous company is his own father, Lord Illingworth. Lord Illingworth knows that he has a son that was Gerald. Lord Illingworth tries to enter Gerald's life as his father and employer. Lord Illingworth tries to have a good relationship with Gerald, but Mrs Arbuthnot makes it clear that she and Gerald do not want anything to do with him.

Mrs. Arbuthnot has many problems in her life related to her past. Because of that, she always has a motive to fight her troubles. Motives are passions or energies that direct behavior. However, sometimes problems can lead to depression or stress. Therefore, people need to find a good way to deal with it. This drama depicts Mrs. Arbuthnot's struggle, in which she must face many things to survive. In her struggle, she experiences many things that turns her into a different person. Turning fear into a solid plan of action is a fighting motive based on fear. People who have a motive in fighting for their life will be very focused on achieving their goals so they can see beyond that fear.

In this drama it is told that Mrs. Arbuthnot's struggle in her life to raise her child named Gerald independently, because Mrs. Arbuthnot feels the deepest heartache and disappointment to Lord Illingworth. Lord Illingworth is the man who had impregnated Mrs. Rachel Arbuthnot out of wedlock and then left her just like that. In raising her child Mrs. Arbuthnot feels ostracized from some people around her house because the people around only know that she has a child alone without a husband.

The motive of Mrs. Arbuthnot's struggle in this drama is that she doesn't want Gerald to be taken by his father Lord Illingworth, who is never responsible to Mrs. Arbuthnot from the time she was pregnant until she gave birth. Mrs. Arbuthnot doesn't want Gerald to become Lord Illingworth's personal secretary because she doesn't want to lose her child. She has educated and raised Gerald alone until Gerald grows up to be a good man. The motive for this struggle is shown in the quotation below:

Lord Illingworth: How can you prevent it? What excuse can you give to him for making him decline such an offer as mine? I won't tell him in what relations I stand to him, I need hardly say. But you daren't tell him. You know that. Look how you have brought him up.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I have brought him up to be a good man. (Wilde, 1893:26-27)

Lord Illingworth did not give up and kept pushing Mrs. Arbuthnot so that Mrs. Arbuthnot allowed Gerald and Lord Illingworth to be his personal secretary. According to Lord Illingworth, by making Gerald the secretary, Gerald's life will change and he can become a more successful person than he is now. It is shown in the quotation below:

Lord Illingworth: Quite so. And what is the result? You have educated him to be your judge if he ever finds you out. And a bitter, an unjust judge he will be to you. Don't be deceived, Rachel. Children begin by loving their parents. After a time they judge them. Rarely, if ever, do they forgive them.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: George, don't take my son away from me. I have had twenty years of sorrow, and I have only had one thing to love me, only one thing to love. You have had a life of joy, and pleasure, and success. You have been quite happy, you have never thought of us. There was no reason, according to your views of life, why you should have remembered us at all. Your meeting us was a mere accident, a horrible accident. Forget it. Don't come now, and rob me of .

. . . of all I have in the whole world. You are so rich in other things. Leave me the little vineyard of my life; leave me the walled-in garden and the well of water; the ewe-lamb God sent me, in pity or in wrath, oh! leave me that. George, don't take Gerald from me.

Lord Illingworth: Rachel, at the present moment you are not necessary to Gerald's career; I am. There is nothing more to be said on the subject.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not let him go.  
(Wilde, 1893:28-36).

In this quotation, it is very clear that Mrs. Arbuthnot again reveals all the wounds that occurs in the past. For twenty years she experiences sadness and destruction in her life because she has to raise Gerald alone. On the other hand, Mrs. Arbuthnot also feels very happy even though she only lives with Gerald, because she has only Gerald and she loves Gerald with all her heart. In the quotation it is also seen Mrs. Arbuthnot begs Lord Illingworth not to take Gerald from her life because Gerald is the only happiness she has, while Lord Illingworth has everything; joy, pleasure and success.

Another reason for Mrs. Arbuthnot to reject Lord Illingworth's offer in Oscar Wilde's *A Woman Of No Importance* is she feels disappointment over Lord Illingworth who has ruined her life. It is shown in the quotation below, when Mrs. Arbuthnot chats with Lady Hunstanton:

Lady Hunstanton: Ah! we women should forgive everything, shouldn't we, dear Mrs. Arbuthnot? I am sure you agree with me in that.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I don't, Lady Hunstanton. I think there are many things women should never forgive.

Lady Hunstanton: What sort of things?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: The ruin of another woman's life.  
(Wilde, 1893:1-4).

In the quotation above, it can be seen that there are two different opinions between Lady Hunstanton and Mrs. Arbuthnot. According to Lady Hunstanton, women should forgive everything while according to Mrs. Arbuthnot there are many things women should never forgive; like the ruin of another woman's life. That's why Mrs. Arbuthnot will not be able to forgive Lord Illingworth and will not marry Lord Illingworth, because Lord Illingworth has ruined her life a lot since the first time she knew him.

#### **4.2 How Mrs. Arbuthnot's Struggles in Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No***

##### ***Importance***

Struggle is closely related to effort and the activity by exerting the power, mind, or body to achieve a purpose. Life means a continual battle, one's success, failure, happiness, or unhappiness mostly depends upon one's knowledge of this battle. In order to understand this struggle, one must see that there are three sides to it: struggle with oneself, struggle with other, and struggle with circumstances. The one who struggles with himself first is the wisest, because he has done it struggle with himself, which is the most difficult struggle, other struggles will become easy for him. The point is to fulfill one's condition with understanding and with complete resignation.

As discussed in this drama, a mother who gives birth to a child out of wedlock will still try to maintain her pregnancy and will experience an inner conflict that is very difficult to forgive or forget on its own. Single mothers will also be wracked with immense guilt and shame for giving birth to children out of wedlock. Struggle is a personality characteristic that can help individuals reduce the impact of stressful life events by improving strategies for dealing with life's problems. An individual who has a struggle will have commitment, control, and challenge in her. Single mothers who doesn't have any struggles in their life will have difficulty in dealing with a problem. The role of a mother who has become a single parent will be able to overcome a problem, take care of herself well, be able to interact with the surrounding environment, have the courage and motivation for her life. Women who become mothers without marrying the father of their children or choose not to marry have the potential to have an emotional life that is influenced by subconscious elements. She will experience inner

conflict, frustration, trauma, criticism from society, shame and hurt. So the first thing that must be met is the condition as it is and second is to improve conditions. Life is a struggle and people must be ready to fight.

In the drama text of Oscar Wilde's *A Woman Of No Importance*, act two begins with the revelation that Gerald is the son of Mrs. Arbuthnot and Lord Illingworth, who was formerly known as George Harford. Many years before, Mrs. Arbuthnot is pregnant with a child, but Harford refuses to marry Arbuthnot. Harford has offered to provide financial security through his mother, but according to Mrs. Arbuthnot, it is Lord Illingworth's refusal to marry that forces her to leave him and leads a difficult life as a single mother, which is disgraceful. Mrs. Arbuthnot harbors a strong bitterness towards Illingworth, but also begs him to leave her son alone, stating that after twenty years of motherhood, Gerald is all she has. She refuses to allow Gerald to live with his father, but Illingworth questions how Mrs. Arbuthnot will force Gerald to do what Gerald wants. He tells Mrs. Arbuthnot that Gerald should be able to choose his own future. Gerald then enters, and Lord Illingworth assures him and his mother that Gerald has the highest qualities a man could expect from a secretary. Illingworth demands another reason for Mrs. Arbuthnot to protest Gerald's opportunity. Unwilling to reveal her son's true legacy, Mrs Arbuthnot says she has no other reason. It is shown in the quotation below :

Lord Illingworth: So that is our son, Rachel! Well, I am very proud of him. He in a Harford, every inch of him. By the way, why Arbuthnot, Rachel?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: One name is as good as another, when one has no right to any name.

Lord Illingworth: I suppose so but why Gerald?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: After a man whose heart I broke after my father.

(Wilde, 1893:1-4).

It can be seen from the quotation above that Mrs. Arbuthnot informs that Lord Illingworth has no right to any name for Gerald, as Lord Illingworth has broken her heart in the past.

Lord Illingworth : Well, Rachel, what is over is over. All I have got to say now in that I am very, very much pleased with our boy. The world will know him merely as my private secretary, but to me he will be something very near, and very dear. It is a curious thing, Rachel; my life seemed to be quite complete. It was not so. It lacked something, it lacked a son. I have found my son now, I am glad I have found hi

Mrs. Arbuthnot: You have no right to claim him, or the smallest part of him. The boy is entirely mine, and shall remain mine.

Lord Illingworth: My dear Rachel, you have had him to yourself for over twenty years. Why not let me have him for a little now? He is quite as much mine as yours.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Are you talking of the child you abandoned? Of the child who, as far as you are concerned, might have died of hunger and of want?

Lord Illingworth: You forget, Rachel, it was you who left me. It was not I who left you.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I left you because you refused to give the child a name. Before my son was born, I implored you to marry me.

Lord Illingworth: I had no expectations then. And besides, Rachel, I wasn't much older than you were. I was only twenty-two. I was twenty-one, I believe, when the whole thing began in your father's garden.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: When a man is old enough to do wrong he should be old enough to do right also.

(Wilde, 1893:5-15).

From the drama quotation above, it is explained that Mrs. Arbuthnot strongly objects to what Lord Illingworth has said to her. Lord Illingworth says that he is very happy to have finally found Gerald, let the world know that Gerald is his secretary,

but Lord Illingworth will love his son (Gerald). While Mrs. Arbuthnot disagrees with this saying that, Lord Illingworth has no right at all to Gerald, Mrs. Arbuthnot emphasizes that Gerald is completely hers. Lord Illingworth has another opinion, he says that Gerald has been with Mrs. Arbuthnot then now is the time for Gerald to be right with Lord Illingworth. Lord Illingworth says a defense that the incident in the past was an accident because at that time Lord Illingworth is still young, only twenty years old, but Mrs. Arbuthnot says that when a man is old enough to make mistakes, he should be old enough to do the right things. In the quotation above Lord Illingworth says Mrs. Arbuthnot leaves him, but Mrs. Arbuthnot has her own defense. Mrs. Arbuthnot says it is Lord Illingworth who leaves her when Mrs. Arbuthnot is pregnant with Gerard. Lord Illingworth is not responsible for what he has done. Lord Illingworth chooses to leave Mrs. Arbuthnot and does not wish to marry her either.

Lord Illingworth: My dear Rachel, intellectual generalities are always interesting, but generalities in morals mean absolutely nothing. As for saying I left our child to starve, that, of course, is untrue and silly. My mother offered you six hundred a year. But you wouldn't take anything. You simply disappeared, and carried the child away with you.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I wouldn't have accepted a penny from her. Your father was different. He told you, in my presence, when we were in Paris, that it was your duty to marry me.

Lord Illingworth: Oh, duty is what one expects from others, it is not what one does oneself. Of course, I was influenced by my mother. Every man is when he is young.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I am glad to hear you say so. Gerald shall certainly not go away with you.

Lord Illingworth: What nonsense, Rachel!

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Do you think I would allow my son

Lord Illingworth. Our son.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: My son [Lord Illingworth shrugs his shoulders]—to go away with the man who spoiled my youth, who ruined my life, who has tainted every moment of my days? You don't realise what my past has been in suffering and in shame.

Lord Illingworth: My dear Rachel, I must candidly say that I think Gerald's future considerably more important than your past.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Gerald cannot separate his future from my past.

(Wilde, 1893:16-27).

From the quotation above, Mrs. Arbuthnot was determined not to let Gerald go with Lord Illingworth. Lord Illingworth who ruins Mrs. Arbuthnot, who ruins Mrs. Arbuthnot, who has tarnished every moment of Mrs. Arbuthnot. Lord Illingworth doesn't realize how Mrs. Arbuthnot is in agony and shame. Lord Illingworth thought Gerald's future was far more important now than discussing the past, but Mrs. Arbuthnot says that Gerald would not separate his future from Mrs. Arbuthnot. The disappointment experienced by Mrs. Arbuthnot makes her refuse everything that Lord Illingworth offers. Although Lord Illingworth tells his mother to give Mrs. Arbuthnot six hundred euro for a year, Mrs. Arbuthnot refuses and will not take a penny, because that is not a responsibility as a father, and it is not worth what he does, by leaving without a sense of responsibility, which makes Mrs. Arbuthnot feel how broken her life has been. Mrs. Arbuthnot has raised her child independently with a sufficient economy and when growing up, her child is asked by a man who has made Mrs. Arbuthnot feel disappointed, and unfair.

Lord Illingworth: That is exactly what he should do. That is exactly what you should help him to do. What a typical woman you are! You talk sentimentally, and you are thoroughly selfish the whole time. But don't let us have a scene. Rachel, I want you to look at this matter from the common-sense point of view, from the point of view of what is best for our son, leaving you and me out of the question. What is our son at present? An underpaid clerk in a small Provincial Bank in a third-rate English town. If



you imagine he is quite happy in such a position, you are mistaken. He is thoroughly discontented.  
(Wilde, 1893:28-31).

From the quotation above it is clear that Lord Illingworth wants the best for Gerald. He doesn't want Gerald to be a petty clerk, troubled and unhappy. Lord Illingworth says sternly to Mrs. Arbuthnot that he wants Gerald to be happy by making Gerald his personal secretary at the company. Lord Illingworth keeps blaming Mrs. Arbuthnot for being thoroughly selfish the whole time and can not think from the common-sense point of view, from the point of view of what is best for Gerald.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: He was not discontented till he met you. You have made him so.

Lord Illingworth: Of course, I made him so. Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation. But I did not leave him with a mere longing for things he could not get. No, I made him a charming offer. He jumped at it, I need hardly say. Any young man would. And now, simply because it turns out that I am the boy's own father and he my own son, you propose practically to ruin his career. That is to say, if I were a perfect stranger, you would allow Gerald to go away with me, but as he is my own flesh and blood you won't. How utterly illogical you are!

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not allow him to go.

Lord Illingworth: How can you prevent it? What excuse can you give to him for making him decline such an offer as mine? I won't tell him in what relations I stand to him, I need hardly say. But you daren't tell him. You know that. Look how you have brought him up.  
(Wilde, 1893:32-38).

It is explained here that Lord Illingworth insists on the suggestion he makes, as he thinks it would be best for Gerald for his career, but here Mrs. Arbuthnot persists that Gerald should not go with Lord Illingworth. Mrs. Arbuthnot keeps persistent not to let Gerald go with Lord Illingworth. Lord Illingworth tells Mrs. Arbuthnot that Gerald should be able to choose his own future. Mrs. Arbuthnot still insists that she can take good care of Gerald even in her condition because all this time Mrs. Arbuthnot has raised him, while Lord Illingworth doesn't.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I have brought him up to be a good man.

Lord Illingworth: Quite so. And what is the result? You have educated him to be your judge if he ever finds you out. And a bitter, an unjust judge he will be to you. Don't be deceived, Rachel. Children begin by loving their parents. After a time they judge them. Rarely, if ever, do they forgive them.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: George, don't take my son away from me. I have had twenty years of sorrow, and I have only had one thing to love me, only one thing to love. You have had a life of joy, and pleasure, and success. You have been quite happy, you have never thought of us. There was no reason, according to your views of life, why you should have remembered us at all. Your meeting us was a mere accident, a horrible accident. Forget it. Don't come now, and rob me of . . . of all I have in the whole world. You are so rich in other things. Leave me the little vineyard of my life; leave me the walled-in garden and the well of water; the ewe-lamb God sent me, in pity or in wrath, oh! leave me that. George, don't take Gerald from me.

Lord Illingworth: Rachel, at the present moment you are not necessary to Gerald's career; I am. There is nothing more to be said on the subject.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not let him go.

Lord Illingworth: Here is Gerald. He has a right to decide for himself.

(Wilde, 1893:39-48).

From the quotation above, the reason Mrs. Arbuthnot fights for her child not to be taken or not to go with a man who impregnates her out of wedlock and is irresponsible is explained. Mrs. Arbuthnot does not want to lose the only child she has raised so lovingly despite the many obstacles she faces during her pregnancy and raising him. Gerald is the only thing she has so far. She doesn't want Gerald to be with Lord Illingworth, and she would always fight him on this case. The struggle of Mrs. Arbuthnot as a mother for her child is indeed very big, a mother she will struggle to do anything as long as she does not lose her child.

In the third act Mrs. Arbuthnot tell her son the truth about her past life with Lord Illingworth, but she tell story in the third person, to describe the despair of a betrayal from a man to that a woman faces. Mrs. Arbuthnot explains to Gerald how a woman struggles to survive despite being pregnant with an irresponsible man, and to raise a child alone, even though many people think negatively, but she still doesn't care and continues to fight until her child grows up. This can be seen in the quotation below:

Gerald: Mother, tell me what Lord Illingworth did? If he did anything shameful, I will not go away with him. Surely you know me well enough for that?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Gerald, come near to me. Quite close to me, as you used to do when you were a little boy, when you were mother's own boy. [Gerald sits down beside his mother. She runs her fingers through his hair, and strokes his hands.] Gerald, there was a girl once, she was very young, she was little over eighteen at the time. George Harford—that was Lord Illingworth's name then—George Harford met her. She knew nothing about life. He—knew everything. He made this girl love him. He made her love him so much that she left her father's house with him one morning. She loved him so much, and he had promised to marry her! He had solemnly promised to marry her, and she had believed him. She was very young, and—and ignorant of what life really is. But he put the marriage off from week to week, and month to month.—She trusted in him all the while. She loved him.—Before her child was born—for she

had a child—she implored him for the child’s sake to marry her, that the child might have a name, that her sin might not be visited on the child, who was innocent. He refused. After the child was born she left him, taking the child away, and her life was ruined, and her soul ruined, and all that was sweet, and good, and pure in her ruined also. She suffered terribly—she suffers now. She will always suffer. For her there is no joy, no peace, no atonement. She is a woman who drags a chain like a guilty thing. She is a woman who wears a mask, like a thing that is a leper. The fire cannot purify her. The waters cannot quench her anguish. Nothing can heal her! no anodyne can give her sleep! no poppies forgetfulness! She is lost! She is a lost soul!—That is why I call Lord Illingworth a bad man. That is why I don’t want my boy to be with him.  
(Wilde, 1893:33-43).

Mrs. Arbuthnot decides to tell her son the truth about his origin and her past life with Lord Illingworth, but she does so in the third person, being sure to describe the despair of a betrayal that a woman faces. Indirectly Mrs. Arbuthnot emphasizes to Gerald that Lord Illingworth is a bad person through the story using a third person. Mrs. Arbuthnot explains in the story that there is a woman who is eighteen years old, she believing in a man so much and loving him so much that the woman leaves with the man because the man promises to marry her. The man delays the marriage from week to week, month to month until the woman becomes pregnant. The woman begs to marry him immediately for the sake of the innocent child, but the man refuses. After a child is born, she takes the child away. Her life and her soul is shattered, all that is sweet is shattered and she suffers a lot. She will always suffer. For her there is no joy, no peace, no redemption and nothing can heal the wound. After Mrs. Arbuthnot tells the story, Gerald does not believe that Lord Illingworth would be able to do the same in the story. Gerald is a naive young man who believes that anyone can change, even his irresponsible father. Much to his credit, he tries to see the good in people, but does not realize how hurtful it would be to include his father in his life until the end of the story. For Gerald, this play is a time of coming of age. Gerald must grow up and take responsibility for caring for the mother who sacrificed so much for him. That’s where Mrs. Arbuthnot is very disappointed with Gerald, as shown in the quotation below:

Gerald: My dear mother, it all sounds very tragic, of course. But I dare say the girl was just as much to blame as Lord Illingworth was.—After all, would a really nice girl, a girl with any nice feelings at all, go away from her home with a man to whom she was not married, and live with him as his wife? No nice girl would.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: [After a pause.] Gerald, I withdraw all my objections. You are at liberty to go away with Lord Illingworth, when and where you choose.

Gerald: Dear mother, I knew you wouldn't stand in my way. You are the best woman God ever made. And, as for Lord Illingworth, I don't believe he is capable of anything infamous or base. I can't believe it of him—I can't.  
(Wilde, 1893:44-48).

Mrs. Arbuthnot's struggle in act four starts from Mrs. Arbuthnot's conversation with Gerald at home. Mrs. Arbuthnot exclaims that his father must not enter her house, and the two argue over her marrying Gerald's father. Gerald claims that the marriage is her duty, while Mrs Arbuthnot retains her integrity, saying that she will not make a mockery of marriage by marrying a man she despises. She also tells of how she devotes herself to the dishonour of being a single mother and has given her life to take care of her son. Not long after, Lord Illingworth comes and says to Mrs Arbuthnot that he will marry Mrs Arbuthnot to be with his son. Mrs Arbuthnot refuses to marry him and tells Lord Illingworth that she hates him, adding that her hate for Illingworth and love for Gerald sharpen each other. Mrs Arbuthnot still insists that she would never marry Lord Illingworth because she has been ashamed of being alone, with no one to help. She provides for Gerald alone and she would never marry Lord Illingworth who has ruined her life. Mrs. Arbuthnot struggles to maintain her dignity as a woman is shown in the following quotation :

Gerald: I have written to Lord Illingworth to tell him that he must marry you.

Mrs. Arbuthnot:.. Marry me?

Gerald: Mother, I will force him to do it. The wrong that has been done you must be repaired. Atonement must be made. Justice may be slow, mother, but it comes in the end. In a few days you shall be Lord Illingworth's lawful wife.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: But, Gerald—

Gerald: I will insist upon his doing it. I will make him do it: he will not dare to refuse.

(Wilde, 1893:14-19).

An act four opens with Gerald writing a letter in his mother's sitting room, the contents of which will ask his father to marry Mrs Arbuthnot. Gerald says that he has given up on being his father's secretary, and he has sent for Lord Illingworth to come to his mother's estate at 4 o'clock to ask for her hand in marriage. The quotation above explains that Gerald wants his mother to marry Lord Illingworth who turns out to be his own father. Gerald thinks it is good for his mother. However, Mrs. Arbuthnot says otherwise, Mrs. Arbuthnot could not do what Gerald wants. Mrs Arbuthnot still refuses to marry Lord Illingworth. It is shown in the quotation below:

Mrs. Arbuthnot: But, Gerald, it is I who refuse. I will not marry Lord Illingworth.

Gerald: Not marry him? Mother!

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not marry him.

Gerald: But you don't understand: it is for your sake I am talking, not for mine. This marriage, this necessary marriage, this marriage which for obvious reasons must inevitably take place, will not help me, will not give me a name that will be really, rightly mine to bear. But surely it will be something for you, that you, my mother, should, however late, become the wife of the man who is my father. Will not that be something?

(Wilde, 1893:20-25).

The quotation above implies that Gerald still cannot understand his mother's feelings. Gerald still continues to give positive words so that his mother would marry

Lord Illingworth. According to Gerald, if his mother marries Lord Illingworth their life would change. Gerald says that the marriage is not for himself but for Mrs. Arbuthnot. The marriage must be done for a clear reason that must happen. Gerald stresses that the marriage would definitely be something for his mother, though late. Arbuthnot has to marry a man who is the father of her child, whereas according to Mrs. Arbuthnot, all of that is too late and is not a liability. It is shown in the quotation below:

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not marry him.

Gerald: Mother, you must.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not. You talk of atonement for a wrong done. What atonement can be made to me? There is no atonement possible. I am disgraced: he is not. That is all. It is the usual history of a man and a woman as it usually happens, as it always happens. And the ending is the ordinary ending. The woman suffers. The man goes free.

Gerald: I don't know if that is the ordinary ending, mother: I hope it is not. But your life, at any rate, shall not end like that. The man shall make whatever reparation is possible. It is not enough. It does not wipe out the past, I know that.

But at least it makes the future better, better for you, mother.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I refuse to marry Lord Illingworth.

Gerald: If he came to you himself and asked you to be his wife you would give him a different answer. Remember, he is my father.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: If he came himself, which he will not do, my answer would be the same. Remember I am your mother.

(Wilde, 1893:26-34).

Here Mrs. Arbuthnot starts to get annoyed with Gerald who keeps forcing her to marry Lord Illingworth. According to Mrs. Arbuthnot there will be no

atonement for a wrong done. There is no atonement possible to Mrs. Arbuthnot was humiliated while Lord Illingworth lived happily. Everything is the usual history of a man and a woman. As it always happens that the ending is the usual ending where the woman suffers and the man can go free. Mrs. Arbuthnot still refuses everything Gerald says and whatever his reason is. Even though it is Lord Illingworth who comes and says it himself, Mrs. Arbuthnot would still refuse to marry him, because according to her, it is not a penance after what Lord Illingworth has done in the past.

Gerald: Mother, you make it terribly difficult for me by talking like that; and I can't understand why you won't look at this matter from the right, from the only proper standpoint. It is to take away the bitterness out of your life, to take away the shadow that lies on your name, that this marriage must take place. There is no alternative: and after the marriage you and I can go away together. But the marriage must take place first. It is a duty that you owe, not merely to yourself, but to all other women—yes: to all the other women in the world, lest he betray more.  
(Wilde, 1893:35-37).

From the quotation above, it is explained that Gerald wants his mother to marry Lord Illingworth. He forces his mother in any way, because he thinks it is a way to get rid of a bitterness, and it is a debt of obligation. After the wedding, Mrs. Arbuthnot could go with Gerald, but the marriage has to go ahead in order to dispel the bad images of Mrs. Arbuthnot. However, Mrs. Arbuthnot still struggles to refuse for the same reason, namely the feelings of hurt, shame, and disappointment that she still feels. It is shown in the following quotation:

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I owe nothing to other women. There is not one of them to help me. There is not one woman in the world to whom I could go for pity, if I would take it, or for sympathy, if I could win it. Women are hard on each other. That girl, last night, good though she is, fled from the room as though I were a tainted thing. She was right. I am a tainted thing. But my wrongs are my own, and I will bear them alone. I must bear them alone. What have women who have not sinned to do with me, or I with them? We do not understand each other.  
(Wilde, 1893:38-40).



Mrs. Arbuthnot's struggle is also seen in act four when she explains about her struggle to raise Gerald by covering her disgrace for twenty years, as shown in the following quotation:

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I do not know it. I do not feel it, nor will I ever stand before God's altar and ask God's blessing on so hideous a mockery as a marriage between me and George Harford. I will not say the words the Church bids us to say. I will not say them. I dare not. How could I swear to love the man I loathe, to honour him who wrought you dishonour, to obey him who, in his mastery, made me to sin? No: marriage is a sacrament for those who love each other. It is not for such as him, or such as me. Gerald, to save you from the world's sneers and taunts I have lied to the world. For twenty years I have lied to the world. I could not tell the world the truth. Who can, ever? But not for my own sake will I lie to God, and in God's presence. No, Gerald, no ceremony, Church-hallowed or State-made, shall ever bind me to George Harford. It may be that I am too bound to him already, who, robbing me, yet left me richer, so that in the mire of my life I found the pearl of price, or what I thought would be so.

(Wilde, 1893:7-12).

The reason Mrs. Arbuthnot rejects the marriage mentioned in the quotation above is because according to Mrs. Arbuthnot marriage is only done for two people who love each other, not hate each other. She would not take an oath before God's altar to love someone she hates so much. Mrs. Arbuthnot also emphasizes how the struggle she keeps from Gerald for twenty years when Mrs. Arbuthnot hides Gerald from the world's sneers. In the end, Mrs. Arbuthnot reiterates that there would be no lying to God, there would be no ceremonies consecrated by the Church or instituted by the State to bind her to Lord Illingworth. Mrs. Arbuthnot would never want to do that.

Gerald: I don't understand you now.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Men don't understand what mothers are. I am no different from other women except in the wrong done me and the wrong I did, and my very heavy

punishments and great disgrace. And yet, to bear you I had to look on death. To nurture you I had to wrestle with it. Death fought with me for you. All women have to fight with death to keep their children. Death, being childless, wants our children from us. Gerald, when you were naked I clothed you, when you were hungry I gave you food. Night and day all that long winter I tended you.  
(Wilde, 1893:13-16).

In the quotation above, Mrs. Arbuthnot struggles to make Gerald understand so that Gerald does not ask her to accept Lord Illingworth's marriage offer anymore, because all this time Mrs. Arbuthnot struggles to take care of Gerald, look after Gerald, provide food, drink alone without anyone's help. All of that will not be easily paid for with a late wedding. Mrs. Arbuthnot tells that to give birth to Gerald she has to fight desperately and to raise Gerald she has to mingle with her past with Lord Illingworth.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: No office is too mean, no care too lowly for the thing we women love—and oh! how I loved you. Not Hannah, Samuel more. And you needed love, for you were weakly, and only love could have kept you alive. Only love can keep any one alive. And boys are careless often and without thinking give pain, and we always fancy that when they come to man's estate and know us better they will repay us. But it is not so. The world draws them from our side, and they make friends with whom they are happier than they are with us, and have amusements from which we are barred, and interests that are not ours: and they are unjust to us often, for when they find life bitter they blame us for it, and when they find it sweet we do not taste its sweetness with them . . . You made many friends and went into their houses and were glad with them, and I, knowing my secret, did not dare to follow, but stayed at home and closed the door, shut out the sun and sat in darkness. What should I have done in honest households? My past was ever with me. . . . And you thought I didn't care for the pleasant things of life. I tell you I longed for them, but did not dare to touch

them, feeling I had no right. You thought I was happier working amongst the poor. That was my mission, you imagined. It was not, but where else was I to go? The sick do not ask if the hand that smooths their pillow is pure, nor the dying care if the lips that touch their brow have known the kiss of sin.

(Wilde, 1893:16-24).

In the quotation above, Mrs. Arbuthnot explains all the struggles she has done so far to survive, to continue living with shame. Mrs. Arbuthnot tells how in the past she always closes the door from the sun and sits in the shadow, so that people would not know the secret if she has son without a husband. She has all that shame herself. In the quotation above Mrs. Arbuthnot also says that when a person feels bitterness in life, he/she will blame others for it, but when someone feels happy in life, he/she do not share that feeling of happiness with others. Mrs. Arbuthnot feels that sadness again as she defends herself, so that Gerald would understand that something that has ruined her life could not be forgotten.

It was you I thought of all the time; I gave to them the love you did not need: lavished on them a love that was not theirs . . . And you thought I spent too much of my time in going to Church, and in Church duties. But where else could I turn? God's house is the only house where sinners are made welcome, and you were always in my heart, Gerald, too much in my heart. For, though day after day, at morn or evensong, I have knelt in God's house, I have never repented of my sin. How could I repent of my sin when you, my love, were its fruit! Even now that you are bitter to me I cannot repent. I do not. You are more to me than innocence. I would rather be your mother—oh! much rather!—than have been always pure . . . Oh, don't you see? don't you understand? It is my dishonour that has made you so dear to me. It is my disgrace that has bound you so closely to me. It is the price I paid for you—the price of soul and body—that makes me love you as I do. Oh, don't ask me to do this horrible thing. Child of my shame, be still the child of my shame!

(Wilde, 1893:24-29).

From the quotation above it is explained that Mrs. Arbuthnot tries to explain in detail to Gerald so that Gerald could understand what his mother feels and what is experienced by his mother. Mrs Arbuthnot sadly explains to her son Gerald why she doesn't want to marry Lord Illingworth, why she doesn't want to do what Gerald asks. Because Mrs. Arbuthnot has loved only Gerald, a sense of love and affection is given only to Gerald. Mrs. Arbuthnot just wants her child to understand her condition as a mother who has raised him with love and care despite the many obstacles and difficulties that often befall her. Mrs. Arbuthnot also explains that she is use to spending too much time going to Church, and on Church assignments. According to Mrs. Arbuthnot where else could she turn, God's house is the only home where sinners are welcomed, and Gerald is always in her heart. For though day after day, in the morning or evening, Mrs. Arbuthnot has knelt in the God's house, she has never repented of sin. Mrs. Arbuthnot said how she could repent of her sins when Gerald is the fruit of her love.

Then Mrs Arbuthnot continues to fight against Lord Illingworth not to take Gerald and not to force her to marry him, because Mrs Arbuthnot still refuses and Mrs Arbuthnot would go far with Gerald and live happily with Gerald and Gerald's lover. It is shown in the following quotation:

Lord Illingworth: The boy is to be with you for six months in the year, and with me for the other six. That is perfectly fair, is it not? You can have whatever allowance you like, and live where you choose. As for your past, no one knows anything about it except myself and Gerald. There is the Puritan, of course, the Puritan in white muslin, but she doesn't count. She couldn't tell the story without explaining that she objected to being kissed, could she? And all the women would think her a fool and the men think her a bore. And you need not be afraid that Gerald won't be my heir. I needn't tell you I have not the slightest intention of marrying.

(Wilde, 1893:18-21).

Lord Illingworth suggests what if Gerald is with Mrs. Arbuthnot for six months of the year, and with Lord Illingworth for another six months. Lor Illingworth

says it is very fair that Mrs. Arbuthnot could have whatever money she asks for, and could choose where she wants to live. Mrs. Arbuthnot still refuses all these offers. Lord Illingworth puts a pressure on Mrs. Arbuthnot about Gerald if Gerald doesn't come with Lord Illingworth. Lord Illingworth thinks Gerald would be better off if Gerald goes with him. It is shown in the quotation below:

Mrs. Arbuthnot: You come too late. My son has no need of you. You are not necessary.

Lord Illingworth: What do you mean, Rachel?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: That you are not necessary to Gerald's career. He does not require you.

Lord Illingworth: I do not understand you.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Look into the garden. [Lord Illingworth rises and goes towards window.] You had better not let them see you: you bring unpleasant memories. [Lord Illingworth looks out and starts.] She loves him. They love each other. We are safe from you, and we are going away. (Wilde, 1893:22-27).

Mrs. Arbuthnot says that Lord Illingworth is not needed for Gerald's career. Gerald doesn't need Lord Illingworth, for Lord Illingworth brings unpleasant memories. Mrs. Arbuthnot persists that she doesn't want her son to go with Lord Illingworth. Mrs. Arbuthnot wants Lord Illingworth not to see them anymore. Mrs. Arbuthnot doesn't want to see Lord Illingworth again, because it would remind her anymore of her dark past.

Lord Illingworth: Where?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: We will not tell you, and if you find us we will not know you. You seem surprised. What welcome would you get from the girl whose lips you tried to soil, from the boy whose life you have shamed, from the mother whose dishonour comes from you? (Wilde, 1893:28-30).

The reasons stated by Mrs. Arbuthnot to Lord Illingworth come from what Mrs. Arbuthnot feels in her past. She tells Lord Illingworth that after she is abandoned by Lord Illingworth she feels life is completely ruined.

Lord Illingworth: You have grown hard, Rachel.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: I was too weak once. It is well for me that I have changed.

Lord Illingworth: I was very young at the time. We men know life too early.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: And we women know life too late. That is the difference between men and women. [A pause.]

Lord Illingworth: Rachel, I want my son. My money may be of no use to him now. I may be of no use to him, but I want my son. Bring us together, Rachel. You can do it if you choose. [Sees letter on table.]

Mrs. Arbuthnot: There is no room in my boy's life for you. He is not interested in you.

(Wilde, 1893:31-37).

In the final part, Mrs. Arbuthnot begins to fight against Lord Illingworth because Lord Illingworth continues to insist on bringing Gerald. Lord Illingworth says he wants his son (Gerald). Money may be useless now. He only wants his child. He begs Mrs. Arbuthnot to unite him with Gerald. Mrs.

Arbuthnot says there would be no room for Lord Illingworth in Gerald's life because Gerald would not be interested in Lord Illingworth. Mrs Arbuthnot finally puts up a fight to keep Gerald from being taken by hitting Lord Illingworth hard in the face, to get Lord Illingworth out of her house. It is shown in the following quotation:

Lord Illingworth: So you really refuse to marry me?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Yes.

Lord Illingworth: Because you hate me?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Yes.

Lord Illingworth: And does my son hate me as you do?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: No.

Lord Illingworth: I am glad of that, Rachel.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: He merely despises you.

Lord Illingworth: What a pity! What a pity for him, I mean.

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Don't be deceived, George. Children begin by loving their parents. After a time they judge them. Rarely if ever do they forgive them.

Lord Illingworth: [Reads letter over again, very slowly.] May I ask by what arguments you made the boy who wrote this letter, this beautiful, passionate letter, believe that you should not marry his father, the father of your own child?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: It was not I who made him see it. It was another.

Lord Illingworth: What fin-de-siècle person?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: The Puritan, Lord Illingworth. [A pause.]

Lord Illingworth: [Winces, then rises slowly and goes over to table where his hat and gloves are. Mrs. Arbuthnot is standing close to the table. He picks up one of the gloves, and begins pulling it on.] There is not much then for me to do here, Rachel?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: Nothing.

Lord Illingworth: It is good-bye, is it?

Mrs. Arbuthnot: For ever, I hope, this time, Lord Illingworth.

Wilde, 1893:66-85).

The quotation above explains that Mrs. Arbuthnot wants Lord Illingworth to leave her with her son Gerald, and asks him not to come back. As seen in the quotation, Mrs. Arbuthnot is very sure of rejecting Lord Illingworth's marriage proposal because she hates Lord Illingworth so much. Mrs. Arbuthnot explains that there is nothing more for Lord Illingworth to do as she only want Lord Illingworth to go and never return to her life. That's Mrs. Arbuthnot request to Lord Illingworth.

Lord Illingworth: How curious! At this moment you look exactly as you looked the night you left me twenty years ago. You have just the same expression in your mouth. Upon my word, Rachel, no woman ever loved me as you did. Why, you gave yourself to me like a flower, to do anything I liked with. You were the prettiest of playthings, the most fascinating of small romances . . . [Pulls out watch.] Quarter to two! Must be strolling back to Hunstanton. Don't suppose I shall see you there again. I'm sorry, I am, really. It's been an amusing experience to have met amongst people of one's own rank, and treated quite seriously too, one's mistress, and one's—.

[Mrs. Arbuthnot snatches up glove and strikes Lord Illingworth across the face with it. Lord Illingworth starts. He is dazed by the insult of his punishment. Then he controls himself, and goes to window and looks out at his son. Sighs and leaves the room.] (Wilde, 1893:86-91).

In the quotation above, Lord Illingworth says words that deeply hurt Mrs. Arbuthnot. Lord Illingworth says at this time that Mrs. Arbuthnot looks exactly as Lord Illingworth saw Mrs. Arbuthnot twenty years ago. Mrs. Arbuthnot still has the same expression on her mouth. Lord Illingworth says no woman has ever love him as Mrs. Arbuthnot because Mrs. Arbuthnot gives herself to Lord Illingworth like a flower, to do whatever he wants. Lord Illingworth says that Mrs. Arbuthnot is the prettiest toy, the most interesting little romance. Then at the end of the quotation, Mrs. Arbuthnot is angered by Lord Illingworth's words. Mrs. Arbuthnot then snatches up the glove and strikes Lord Illingworth across the face with it. Lord Illingworth then controls himself and left the room.



From the text of the drama above, it can be explained that Mrs. Arbuthnot is very sure she would be able to make Gerald happy in his own way. Although Gerald doesn't become Lord Illingworth's secretary, Mrs. Arbuthnot is sure Gerald would be happy and successful. Mrs. Arbuthnot would not be able to forgive what Lord Illingworth has done in the past. Mrs. Arbuthnot has struggled a lot in the past twenty years. Mrs. Arbuthnot is ashamed of having a child from an extramarital affair. Mrs. Arbuthnot also closes her house so that the world would not know the disgrace. She struggles alone to raise Gerald. She has only Gerald and she loves him more than herself. Mrs. Arbuthnot is willing to die to protect Gerald. That way, it won't be easy for Lord Illingworth to take Gerald when Gerald is an adult. Lord Illingworth has no right to rule over Gerald. Lord Illingworth has made Mrs. Arbuthnot devastated, hurt, and ashamed.

At the end of the story, the writer sees Mrs. Arbuthnot's strength, as she refuses to marry Lord Illingworth, realizing that his proposal has nothing to do with love. Mrs. Arbuthnot and of all people knows what kind of man Lord Illingworth has turned out to be. Mrs. Arbuthnot strongly rejects Lord Illingworth's offer to get married because according to Mrs. Arbuthnot, by marrying her now that the child is grown, she could not repay what Lord Illingworth has done, leaving her while pregnant with Gerald without being married. Also, the feelings of disappointment, hatred, sadness still surround Mrs. Arbuthnot. So, according to Mrs. Arbuthnot, it is not as easy to refer back as before the condition of her pregnancy.