

**BAŐKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI
TEZLİ YÜKSEK LİSANS PROGRAMI**

**FEMINIST REPRESENTATIONS OF THE VULNERABLE SELF
AND VULNERABLE RELATIONALITY IN IDRA NOVEY'S THOSE
WHO KNEW AND *WAYS TO DISAPPEAR***

HAZIRLAYAN

PINAR AKGÜL

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

TEZ DANIŐMANI

DR. ÖĐR. ÜYESİ MERVE SARIKAYA ŐEN

ANKARA - 2022

BAŞKENT ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

Tarih: 05 / 06 / 2022

Öğrencinin Adı, Soyadı: Pınar Akgül

Öğrencinin Numarası: 21820112

Anabilim Dalı: Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı

Programı: Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı

Danışmanın Unvanı/Adı, Soyadı: Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Merve Sarıkaya Şen

Tez Başlığı: Feminist Representations of the Vulnerable Self and Relationality in Idra Novey's *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*.

Yukarıda başlığı belirtilen Yüksek Lisans tez çalışmamın; Giriş, Ana Bölümler ve Sonuç Bölümünden oluşan, toplam 96 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 05/ 06/2022 tarihinde tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 4'tür. Uygulanan filtrelemeler:

1. Kaynakça hariç
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ONAY

Tarih: 05.06.2022

Öğrenci Danışmanı Unvan, Ad, Soyad, İmza:

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Merve Sarıkaya Şen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the course of this thesis, I would like to convey my profound appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Merve Sarıkaya Şen, for her patience, encouragement, advice, and feedback. She was there to provide me with wisdom and inspiration in the most trying circumstances.

I would like to offer my appreciation to the thesis committee members, Asst. Prof. Dr. Selen Aktari Sevgi and Asst. Prof. Dr. Sibel İzmir, for the contribution they made to the completion of my thesis by providing useful recommendations and constructive criticism.

I would like to express my gratitude to all of the professors whose counsel has been very valuable to my view on schooling in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Başkent University. They were always helpful in assisting me with my studies by giving me the essential analytical insight and bravery during my MA student period.

Also, I would want to express my gratitude to my friends Mutlu, Sinem, and Gülşen for being there with me during all of those difficult and joyful times and for the excellent conversations they provided me with during my stressful moments. I would also like to thank my dear neighbor, Birgül, for her wonderful companionship.

Lastly, I want to thank my family: Zeynep Akgül, Azmi Akgül, Çağlayan Akgül, Çağrı Akgül, Kim Peltzer Akgül, Merve Akgül and my nephew, Mustafa Kerem Akgül for all their endless support.

ÖZET

Pınar Akgül, Idra Novey'in *Those Who Knew* ve *Ways to Disappear* adlı eserlerinde Kırılğan Benlik ve Kırılğan İlişkiselliğin Feminist Temsilleri, Başkent Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı, 2022.

Amerikalı yazar Idra Novey, *Those Who Knew* (2018) ve *Ways to Disappear* (2016) adlı romanlarında, yirmi birinci yüzyılın savunmasız insanların nasıl çeşitli siyasi, sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ve toplumsal cinsiyet tabanlı baskılarına maruz kaldıklarını ve yerleşik ataerkil uygulamalar ve zihniyetler nedeniyle, tüm bu baskıların, karakterleri nasıl görünmez, kırılğan ve güçsüz kılan çeşitli mücadelelerin her biri üzerinde farklı derecelerde savunmasız bir etki yarattığını anlatıyor. Bu travmatik olayların her biri, doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak, karakterlerin birer birey ve toplum üyesi olarak tüm hayatlarını etkilemektedir. Benliğin ve ötekiyle olan ilişkinin zaaflarının, çaresizliklerinin, kırılğanlıklarının inşasında temel faktör olan ataerkillik, kırılğanlıkla sonuçlanan suistimallerin ve yaraların doğrudan kaynağıdır. Idra Novey, siyasi baskıya maruz kalmış bir grup insanı ele alan *Those Who Knew* (2018) ; kayıp bir yazarı arayan bir grup insanı anlatan *Ways to Disappear* (2016) adlı romanlarında ataerkil norm ve uygulamalara dikkat çekerken savunmasız insanlara ışık tutar. Bu tez, şiddet, hegemonik erkeklik ve etik bilgi eksikliği sonucunda bireysel ve ilişkisel benliklerde kırılğanlığın nasıl geliştiğini ve dolayısıyla onları görünmez, güçsüz, zayıf ve sahipsiz kıldığını inceleyecektir. Feminist bir teori çerçevesi kullanan bu tez, feminist bir dönüşümsel perspektiften, kırılğanlığın olumsuz çağrışımlarının, açıklık, edilgenlik, mülksüzleştirme, sorumsuzluk, ötekilik ve etik olmayan tutumların benlik ve ilişkiler üzerindeki etkilerinin incelenmesi yoluyla yapı bozuma uğratılacağı bağlamı oluşturacaktır.

Keywords: Kırılğanlık, İlişkisellik, Idra Novey, *Those Who Knew* ve *Ways to Disappear*

ABSTRACT

Pınar Akgül, Feminist Representations of the Vulnerable Self and Vulnerable Relationality in Idra Novey's *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, Başkent Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Programı, 2022.

In her novels *Those Who Knew* (2018) and *Ways to Disappear* (2016), the American author Idra Novey depicts how vulnerable people of the twenty-first century have been subjected to multiple forms of political, social, cultural, economic, and gender-based oppression, and how all of these oppressions create a variety of struggles that render them invisible, fragile, and powerless because of deeply entrenched patriarchal practices and mindsets, all of which have had a vulnerable impact on each of the characters to varying degrees. Every single one of these traumatic occurrences, whether directly or indirectly, has affected the characters' entire lives as individuals and members of society. As that of the essential aspect in the formation of the weaknesses, helplessness, and fragility of the self and connection to the other, patriarchy is the primary cause of the abuses and wounds that lead to vulnerability. Idra Novey brings attention to patriarchal norms and practices while shedding light on vulnerable people in her novels *Those Who Knew* (2018), which addresses a group of people subjected to political oppression; and *Ways to Disappear* (2016), which portrays a group of individuals in search of a missing author. This thesis will examine how vulnerability arises in individual and relational selves as a result of violence, hegemonic masculinity, and an absence of ethical understanding, hence leaving them invisible, powerless, vulnerable, and dispossessed. This thesis will establish the context within which, from a feminist transformational perspective, the negative connotations of vulnerability will be deconstructed by examining the concepts of openness, passivity, dispossession, irresponsibility, otherness, and unethical practices on the self and relationships.

Keywords: Vulnerability, Relationality, Idra Novey, *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*

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INTRODUCTION

“All oppression creates a state of war. And this is no exception. The existent who is regarded as inessential cannot fail to demand the re-establishment of her sovereignty”

Simone de Beauvoir from *The Second Sex*

Idra Novey, a contemporary American writer, poet, and translator, portrays the fragility of people in the twenty-first century in order to heighten readers' ethical consciousness. She is the author of the novels *Ways to Disappear* (2016) and *Those Who Knew* (2018), the poetry collections *Exit, Civilian* (2011) and *The Next Country* (2008), as well as several translations into Portuguese, Spanish, and Persian, and essays on patriarchy and the reflections that follow violent experiences. During the course of her studies in Brazil and teaching practices in Chile, not only her political perspectives but also her writing style have been shaped as well. Novey's works mostly depict the many injustices to which humans are exposed. In her literary works, she has emphasized contemporary individual stories, which have been crucial in establishing the discipline of vulnerability. Aside from that, Novey is interested in traumatic and abusive real stories in her writings because they reveal how patriarchal ideas and structures in society have an impact on people's sense of self and their interpersonal connections. Individuals who are susceptible, according to Novey, are forced into invisibility by society. In a reference to a real-life account of a domestic violence victim, Novey depicts the appalling treatment Christine Blasey Ford had during her time as lead prosecutor in the Department of Justice. Christine Blasey Ford is a psychology professor who has accused Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault. Kavanaugh is now being considered for confirmation to the Supreme Court. When Novey uses this harrowing example of physical abuse to show how crying out the assault is, in actuality, a display of emotional openness, she is contrasting this with the commonly held belief that vulnerability is a sign of weakness. Both in the American political context and in American literature, she believes that vulnerability is a crucial subject to be addressed in detail. She feels that when it comes to current manipulative understandings such as otherness, patriarchy, and different

forms of violence, vulnerability is often concealed. As a result, she criticizes Brett Kavanaugh's manipulative speech, noting that his “description of his daughter’s prayers at dinner brought to mind the theatrical piety of the Bible salesman in Flannery O’Connor’s story “Good Country People” (Novey, 2018). While writing her second book, *Those Who Knew*, Novey says that she had the following revelation: “I tried to figure out how to capture the clanging anger that resounds in my character’s head as she turns away from yet another picture of that senator who once left her unconscious on the floor” (Novey, 2018). In addition to this, Idra Novey creates a realistic portrait of American society's ethical conscience in response to a rape story involving a football team in Steubenville, Ohio, by posing the question of how a person can stay quiet in the face of rape. She is thus drawn to writing about abuse not just because of her own interest in the invisibility of vulnerable victims, but also because she wishes to raise readers' ethical awareness of vulnerability.

Idra Novey's contemporary novels *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew* are outstanding vulnerable texts at the core of vulnerability studies, “by teaching the reader to be alert to the singularity of practical situations” (Ganteau & Onega, 2017, p.172). Through the strange disappearance of Brazilian author Beatriz Yagoda, Novey demonstrates invisibility as a physical and figurative protest in *Ways to Disappear* by developing a magical narrative for the characters and the readers, the author is able to capture their imaginations. Emma Neufeld, an American translator, and Beatriz's children work together to search down the author in a violent and hazardous environment where they must go on a perilous journey to find her. This is a completely unexpected absence. Throughout this quest, they must face their weaknesses, not only in terms of themselves, but also in terms of their relationships. In *Those Who Knew*, Novey analyzes the suppressed vulnerability of people who have been affected by a cruel dictatorship's relentless political control. Due to her story being woven throughout the novel's plot, Lena, the novel's major heroine, is at the heart of the concept of vulnerability. Novey's deliberate depictions of self-violence and other dichotomies try to show the fragility of individuals living under the repressive government that has ruled the island since the turn of the twenty-first century. Both works include vulnerable characters whose subjectivities and relationalities are crucial to the narratives. The novels deal with traumatic experiences that cause bodily and spiritual harm, as well as the exploitation of self-other duality and other types of hegemonic violence. Through her depictions of social, economic, political, and

familial violence, she has concentrated the self-and-other dichotomy on the subject of vulnerability. However, both novels conclude with the protagonists resolving their conflicts—with their vulnerable selves and with one another—in a pleasant climate conducive to the discovery of many new solutions for themselves and for others. Novey makes use of the characters' attempts to demonstrate that vulnerability's impermanent perception and portrayal as weakness may be altered. Despite all the obstacles that seemed unfavorable, the frail and wounded structures of the characters exposed to extreme ambiguity become new brand acquisitions in terms of awareness and recognition. Novey does this by highlighting women's and marginalized characters' fights against patriarchy, corporal brutality, and hegemonic political power. A vulnerability that is explored in both *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew*, two contemporary American novels by Idra Novey, is framed against a social and political background of the twenty-first century that is a reflection of the time period in which we have been living, respectively. Novey's writings are sensitive novels that, via their characters and plotlines, reveal a deep-rooted, undetected fragility that has been kept concealed from the reader for the majority of the novel. In order to draw attention to and show vulnerability, Idra Novey in American literature "[renews] the more conventional forms and channels of commitment by pointing in the direction of another type of democracy" (Ganteau, 2017, p. 172) with the goal of drawing attention to and disclosing weakness. She demonstrates, on the one hand, how vulnerability develops in a context of weakness and negativity within twentieth-century social, political, and economic relations. The author, on the other hand, demonstrates how vulnerability may be converted into positive and healing notions in the context of twentieth-century social, political, and economic interactions. While the characters have gone through transformational experiences in which they have learnt to accept their defects in the search for greater self- and collective knowledge, the plot revolves around the characters' going through transformative experiences. Consequently, Novey utilizes her works as metaphors for the struggle of vulnerable individuals who ultimately find peace as they all have ethical standpoints over the course of their battles.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the origins and effects of vulnerability in the vulnerable selves of the characters as well as the self-other connection in light of ethical responsibility from a feminist perspective. Accordingly, this study reveals how feminist academics' ideas turn the characters' negative repeating

connections with the notion of vulnerability, such as weakness, fragility, openness, passivity, dispossession, otherness, and loss, into transforming meanings for the characters. Thus, within a feminist framework, this thesis will examine the vulnerable characters in Idra Novey's contemporary novels *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew* through the lenses of feminist scholars such as Judith Butler, Erinn Gilson, and Ann V. Murphy, who specialize in vulnerability, philosophy, and feminism, as well as Susana Onega and Jean Michel Ganteau's vulnerability studies that have established a context for vulnerability and literature. Additionally, the thesis will examine the concepts of renowned academics such as Emmanuel Levinas, Martha Nussbaum, Martha Albert Fineman, Kelly Oliver, Robert E. Goodin, Carol Gilligan, and Rosalyn Diprose, who laid the groundwork for vulnerability. The introduction section will explain the relationship between contemporary conceptions of vulnerability and violence. Moreover, the part will explain how feminist academics conceptualize vulnerability in terms of violence, subjectivity, corporeality, and relationality within theoretical frameworks as well as in practice. The first chapter will investigate vulnerability via the lenses of the characters' subjectivity and corporeality, both of which are shaped by hegemonic power connections. Also, the first chapter will analyze the conceptions connected to the negative implications of the term "vulnerability" in relation to the development of the self and the construction of corporeality via a feminist transformational perspective. The second chapter will employ the discussion of the vulnerability–relationality conflict in feminist thinking, and the negative connotations of vulnerability will be investigated through the transformative lenses of feminist perspectives that emphasize ethical accountability in the creation of the vulnerable self's relationality with the other.

1. Vulnerability and Feminist theory

In contemporary circumstances, there has been a rise in interest in vulnerability studies, despite the fact that they have always been on the agenda throughout history. The idea of vulnerability has sparked contemporary critics' interest in the topic of new humanism and the setting in which it is practiced and investigated. Academics assess

vulnerability primarily in terms of its negative associations. However, feminist scholars have established various positive associations with the term "vulnerability" and emphasized its transformational potential in the production of subjectivity and relationality. Numerous feminist academics give emphasis to the word "vulnerability" in their revolutionary works by using ethical arguments to support the term's transformative perspective. To investigate the term's transformational potential, feminist scholars concentrate on the fundamental cause of vulnerability: violence. Because proximity to violence engenders negative connotations with the concept of "vulnerability," which includes weakness, susceptibility to pain and harm, apathy, and frailty.

Therefore, the prevalence of violence in today's social, political, economic, cultural, and geographical settings in our current society is the subject that has sparked the interest of many feminists concerned with vulnerability. For example, Butler et al. (2016) argue that vulnerability is a reality of life for everyone, considering how quickly accidents, diseases, and terrorist attacks may interrupt our lives and alter our situations. They face an outsized amount of the cost because of their inability to get proper shelter, food, and medical care. This is a condition that society created to add to their severe agony, which resulted in vulnerability (p.25). Kelly Oliver (2018) supports that "vulnerability is distributed according to political and social power" (p.621). Jean-Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega (2017) state that political, social, economic, and even ecological disasters have left irreversible scars on both individual and collective levels in our contemporary world because we are "dominated by the trauma paradigm, and that individuals and groups are apprehended as susceptible to wounding" (p.1). It is nearly impossible to avoid being physically or psychologically wounded in the century we live in (p.1). Drichel and Ziarek (2013) claim that academics in the international social sciences have been focusing their attention on vulnerability since the 1970s. These interdisciplinary studies of vulnerability, which integrate sociology, climate change, politics, and cultural geography, focus on people's susceptibility to environmental, economic, and political disasters by combining environmental, economic, and political disasters. Vulnerability refers to the possibility of being attacked by hostile troops or, more lately, terrorist attacks in the context of national security. Identification and repair of vulnerability patterns and causes, including but not limited to natural disasters and political catastrophes, as well as economic and political disempowerment and military defensive weaknesses, are critical for public

safety (p.67). As a result, Butler (2004) concludes that this sensitivity to the other as a hallmark of everyday bodily existence is a susceptibility to an unexpected address from somewhere else, one that we cannot anticipate. Because of this, many feminists who are concerned with vulnerability have shown an interest in the prevalence of violence in today's social, political, economic, cultural, and geographical settings in our contemporary society.

In order to describe our violent contemporary environment in terms of vulnerability, we must first understand what vulnerability is. Jean Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega are two significant people who have made significant contributions to the twenty-first century literature on vulnerability. They stress "the consciousness of living in" (p.2) the world of Mark Seltzer's "wound culture" (Seltzer, 1997, p.3) in their book *Victimhood and Vulnerability in Twenty-First-Century Fiction*. According to Mark Seltzer (1997), the essential idea of connectivity in wound culture is contingent upon the arousal of not just the fractured and exposed body, but also the fragmented and opened person "as a public spectacle" (p.4). In a similar vein, Jean Michel Ganteau and Susana Onega (2017) connect the vulnerability structure, which is constituted of being vulnerable to or exposed to aggression, namely violence (p.3). In this view, vulnerability must be examined in relation to the question of violence, which promotes openness but destroys the self's independence. To explain why this "wound culture" is open, Ganteau and Onega (2017) assert that, aside from significant historical, social, cultural, and economic developments such as Imperialism, the two World Wars, decolonization wars, and the threat of terrorism, the awareness of living in a "wound culture" (Seltzer, 1997, p.3) has been influenced by mainstream pop culture, particularly the mass media's dissemination of traumatic information (p.2). As a result, popular culture perpetuates the situation of being wounded alive in the present day by delivering accurate knowledge about large-scale catastrophic events occurring simultaneously around the globe. Therefore, people are continually agitated and anxious, and suffering for ourselves and others becomes commonplace and readily tolerated; in other words, violence becomes normalized, and vulnerability becomes inescapable. As a consequence, our contemporary world has become a place of susceptibility to violence.

The term "vulnerability" refers to an individual's or a society's status of being open to weakness or harm. Etymologically, vulnerability comes from the Latin word *vulnus*, which means "wound" and alludes to the possibility of sustaining an injury or

being hurt (n.p). In the OED, it is defined as "the fact of being weak and easily hurt physically or emotionally" (n.p.). Similarly, in Merriam-Webster, it is described as being "open to attack or damage" (n.p.). In American myth, vulnerability has always been associated with danger and risk in every field of American society. However, as opposed to its implications of weakness or impotence in American myth, in Greek philosophy, as stated by Marina Berzins McCoy (2013), vulnerability is regarded to be at the heart of being human, with its potential for openness to wounds in the pursuit of self-sufficiency and autonomy. The ability to be hurt is recognized as a distinct virtue since it is related to a chance in the search for self-awareness. Only in this way can a person fulfill the larger significance of his or her existence (p.vii). McCoy (2013) states that vulnerability as a phrase conveys the potential for an experience that leads to the self-awareness of the persona in terms of pain and suffering. A person's vulnerability to damage may be discovered via painful experience, but it can also be discovered in subtler ways through an awareness of danger and the chance of it occurring. Vulnerability, therefore, includes not just the here and now, but also the prospect of what could come next. To exist as temporal creatures, we are vulnerable to change and transformations of all sorts and must know that our surroundings may alter at any moment, so we are always on alert. These transformations may be both joyous and fulfilling at times, as well as difficult and necessary at others. In order to appreciate the significance of his or her existence in terms of a broader temporal whole, a self-conscious and aware individual must first recognize vulnerability as a component of that whole (p.vii). Accordingly, in Greek philosophy, vulnerability, as opposed to its contemporary connotations of weakness or impotence, is viewed as vital to being human, with its capacity for wounding in the interest of self-reliance and independence.

The concept of close proximity to violence fosters negative connotations with the concept of "Vulnerability," which includes frailty, sensitivity to pain and harm, apathy, and fragility. However, as with Greek philosophy, feminist scholars recognize the term's transformative potential and examine the ramifications of various readings of the concept of vulnerability, placing a premium on the term's ontological and ethical characteristics. In this approach, feminist scholars reintroduce a positive meaning to the word "vulnerability." By doing so, feminist researchers want to demonstrate how the frail connections associated with vulnerability may act as a catalyst for the development of good self and other awareness and how "being philosophically

sophisticated, predicating an ethics on vulnerability has specifically feminist merits" (Cousens, 2018, p.47). For example, Gilson (2014) argues that the reductively negative interpretation of vulnerability that she has developed does the same thing: by understanding vulnerability as susceptibility to damage, weakness, inactivity, and incapacity, we disguise the ambiguous core of vulnerability and the potential for harm that it involves (p.127). By reframing the word "vulnerability," feminist researchers cast ethical doubt on the self's ontological and physical weaknesses. In other words, the ethical perspective is employed to reframe the negative connotation of vulnerability. Additionally, they address negative implications via research on interdependence, or ethical relationality, and caring. Thus, feminist academics emphasize the significance of ethical responsibility in order to explain the self's ontological vulnerability and to emphasize the relevance of ethical relationality in terms of the self-other interconnection.

According to Butler (2004), the study of feminism asks how the collective responds to its vulnerability to violence, how an individual learns to live in a way that is neither emotionally dead nor mimetically violent, and how an individual learns to completely break free from the vicious cycle of violence. Feminism strives to establish a society in which physical vulnerability is protected, if not entirely eradicated (p.42). Gilson (2016) illustrates from a feminist perspective that, in prevailing cultural perceptions, sexual fragility is seen as inherently feminine, while male sexuality is viewed as fundamentally aggressive and impenetrable. Women's bodies are often seen as being weaker and less sexually enticing than men's bodies, contributing to their perceived fragility. Both of these elements—inferior strength and feminine sensitivity—combine to create a unique kind of feminine fragility, one that is dualist and reductively negative in nature (p.75). Fineman (2012) states that when we speak of vulnerability, we are referring to the fact that we are all born, live, and die inside a fragile materiality that renders us all perpetually vulnerable to destructive external forces and internal disintegration. When properly understood, the idea of vulnerability is generative since it creates chances for innovation and growth, as well as for creativity and enjoyment. It is critical to comprehend both the negative and positive effects of vulnerability by recognizing the inevitable ties and interconnections that constitute human life. The frailty of our embodied bodies, as well as the tangled web of reliance that usually results from physiological or psychological demands, cannot be disregarded throughout an individual's life and must be taken into account while

debating what constitutes a good and responsive state. Similarly, just as aging does not imply loss, vulnerability should not be connected with damage. As embodied and sensitive creatures, humans are prone to powerful emotions such as love and respect, as well as curiosity and amusement, as well as want, all of which motivate us to reach out to others, develop connections, and build institutions (p.71).

Gilson (2011) believes that vulnerability is a more inclusive term that encompasses ideas such as fleeting impressions of passivity, affectivity, openness to change, dispossession, and exposure, all of which serve as the foundation for certain basic subjectivity, language, and social structures. When seen in this light, vulnerability may be regarded as a fundamental state that enables the existence of other states. Rather than restricting our capabilities, vulnerability may actually serve as a source of power. Being susceptible does not imply that you are prone to making errors. To be vulnerable is to be open to both being impacted and having an influence on one's own life (p.310). Murphy (2012) states that in the last decade, the growth of a feminist perspective on vulnerability has been marked by an analysis of the experience of vulnerability in terms of ethical and political challenge. It has been argued that anyone interested in the potential of nonviolent ethics can benefit from incorporating the subject of vulnerability into their work. As a result, feminist philosophy's contemporary return to vulnerability has both restorative and aspirational implications for the future (p.68).

In the context of feminism and vulnerability, Ann V. Murphy elevates the human body. Murphy (2011) adopts a humanistic language in her paper "Corporeal Vulnerability and the New Humanism" by stressing the human body's vulnerability to pain and violence. When it comes to violence, she believes that the human body should take precedence since our environment is replete with "metaphors and images of violence" connected to the human body (p.576). According to Ann V. Murphy (2011), the two intrinsic features of the human body, sensitivity and susceptibility to violence, should be viewed ethically since they are existential components of the human body (p.577). Additionally, she emphasizes "the consideration of ethical address to corporeal vulnerability, particularly in the context of contemporary political violence" (Murphy, 2011, p.576), stating that "ontological facts about the human body—particularly its vulnerability and exposure to violence—might be read as indicating certain ethical obligations" (Murphy, 2011, p.577). She emphasizes the human body's corporeality, namely its corporeal vulnerability, when examining the relationship

between violence and vulnerability. As a consequence, Murphy addresses the human body's vulnerability to abuse, pain, and violence.

On the one hand, Butler (2004) asserts that violence is clearly a touch of the most heinous kind—a method of revealing a basic human vulnerability to others in the most heinous manner conceivable. To the extent that we commit violence, we are acting against someone, putting them at risk, causing them injury, and threatening to expel them. The very existence of life may be erased by another's deliberate act (p.29). On the other hand, Butler (2004) argues that being harmed enables reflection on the nature of the damage, education about the methods by which it is spread, and the discovery of who else is impacted by permeable borders and unanticipated violence. The chance of being harmed, the possibility of inflicting violence on others, and the possibility of being murdered at the whim of another person all contribute to an individual's vulnerability. However, the vulnerabilities and sense of loss engendered by acts of violence and retribution are less well recognized than they should be (p. xii). For example, Butler (2004) claims that losing is an inescapable fact of life. However, there is also the unpredictable and life-altering effect of loss. While it is possible to make an effort at selection, the experience of change may deconstruct decision-making at some level (p.21).

Gilson (2014) asserts that vulnerability is an inherent part of humanity's nature, particularly having "a reference point" (para.1) with violence, because vulnerability is unavoidable: we are all affected by "concerns about violence, war, terrorism, sexuality, and embodiment" (Gilson, 2014, para.1). Gilson (2014), like Murphy, stresses human beings' corporeality in terms of vulnerability and violence. According to her (2014), both our physical being, namely, our corporeality, and our relational being are susceptible (p.15). Additionally, she (2016) notes that because "the vulnerable person" is defined as "weak, incapable, and powerless," the term "vulnerability" acquires a negative connotation (p.74), owing to the fact that "predominant social practices, norms, conditions, and structures enshrine a reductively negative understanding of vulnerability" (p.4). In this view, since vulnerability is associated with being wounded, subservient, and helpless, it is incompatible with ideal virtues such as authority, wisdom, and satisfaction. As a result, Gilson (2014) calls into question its primacy and the way it is perceived as the core of what it is to be vulnerable (p.178). In this regard, vulnerability is intrinsically tied to violence in Gilson's perspective.

The idea of vulnerability has caught the attention of both modern humanists and contemporary critics. When it comes to vulnerability, studies focus on unfavorable interactions between people. Numerous feminist researchers use ethical concepts to further the transformative view of language that has gained popularity among feminist thinkers and activists in recent years. To better comprehend the term's transformational potential for women, feminist academics underline the most basic source of vulnerability, which is violence.

2. Feminist Representations of The self and Corporeality in Vulnerability

In order to demonstrate the transformative potential of vulnerability, feminist researchers concentrate on the ethical understanding of vulnerability. One of the most essential topics in relation to vulnerability is "the self," which refers to the subjectivity of the individual. In his ideas on subjectivity and vulnerability, French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas examines the factors that contribute to a person's vulnerability, such as openness and passivity. It is considered unfavorable when a person is open and passive since it makes the subject susceptible and exposes the subject to harm all of the time. Butler (2004) states, "speculations on the formation of the subject are crucial to understanding the basis of non-violent responses to injury" (p.44). Gilson (2014) argues that seeing openness and passivity negatively has clear consequences: we turn them into sources of dread and aversion, avoiding not just empathy for individuals we socially stigmatize as "weak," but also consideration of the ways in which vulnerability may affect us personally (p.127). As a result, feminists are correct in supporting Levinas' thoughts that, when it comes to the subject's exposure, it is critical to exercise ethical responsibility. In this scenario, it is possible that the ethical obligation will be able to assist in the survival of the vulnerable individual.

The widespread perception of vulnerability as weakness and incapacity has a detrimental effect on the person. The vulnerable individual is seen to be the one who needs constant assistance to live in current social, political, and economic settings. For example, Gilson (2016) asserts that the vulnerable subject is seen as weak and incapable of defending her own interests in a democratic society. This leads to a mindset that encourages injustice and hierarchy rather than recognizing and pursuing justice for all members of society. In a society where vulnerability is seen negatively

as oppositional and fixed, vulnerable individuals must appeal to or surrender to others who assume the role of the invulnerable savior (p.75). According to Fineman (2010), her investigation of vulnerability and the notion of a vulnerable person developed into something more. By focusing on vulnerability, the debate is prompted to include and criticize societal systems. The notion that the state should be more cognizant of human vulnerability is predicated on the inherent fragility of humans. This is mostly as a result of the formation and maintenance of social institutions (p.256). According to popular belief, the vulnerable person is the one who needs ongoing care in order to survive in today's sociopolitical and economic environments.

In light of the aforementioned views regarding vulnerability, it may be inferred that vulnerability results from political and social violence. However, "[i]t also describes the very structure of subjectivity" (Boublil, 2018, p.184). Levinas describes subjectivity in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, by asserting that "the essence claims to recover and cover over every exception-negativity, nihilation" (Levinas, 1998, p.8). To be specific, the essence is claimed to be capable of reversing and concealing exclusions, pessimism, and destruction. Gilson (2014) places a strong emphasis on the development of a particular sense of self and type of subjectivity—entrepreneurial subjectivity—in conjunction with broader cultural meanings and norms around responsibility and risk-taking. Individuals become increasingly morally opposed to vulnerability as a result of entrepreneurial subjectivity's reductively negative view of vulnerability, which they see not only as a condition to avoid but also as an undesirable character trait to possess. As a result, responsibility for risk and common human vulnerabilities is increasingly privatized rather than shared. As a result, entrepreneurial subjectivity contributes to our inability to comprehend the full normative importance of vulnerability and to respond ethically to other people's vulnerabilities in unpleasant situations, as well as to vulnerability as a feature of life (p.98). Nortvedt (2003) comments that in an ethical encounter, the human subject is charged, assigned, and declared accountable in ways beyond comprehension, even for its own responsibility. In exploring the development of subjectivity, a process in which the sensible subject is awakened and constantly redirected by the other (p.223).

Furthermore, Levinas (1998) asserts that "the exception of the "other than being", beyond not-being, signifies subjectivity or humanity, the oneself that repels the annexations by essence" (p.8). Levinas' notion of subjectivity is consistent with the feminist battle to re-define the concept of vulnerability in contemporary society.

For this reason, the ethical position on vulnerability held by Levinas is often used by feminist academics in the process of redefining the word "vulnerability." For instance, according to Boubilil (2018), the subject's vision of the environment is shaped by his or her degree of vulnerability. Thus, rather than a failure or frailty, what is being described is a "vulnerability" to being wounded. Following that, it is possible to view it in terms of an individual's expressive uniqueness, as well as their capacity for diversity and innovation (p.184). In this view, the subject's vulnerability is proportionate to her openness to the outside world. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas (1998) states,

The subjectivity of a subject is vulnerability, exposure to affection, sensibility, a passivity more passive still than any passivity, an irrecuperable time, as an unassemblable diachrony of patience, an exposedness always to be exposed the more, an exposure to expressing, and thus to saying, thus to giving (p.50).

In this view, Levinas' concepts imply that the formation of a person's subjectivity occurs via their vulnerability and exposure. Thus, openness becomes a property of a subject, and this openness results in persistent passivity, necessitating the assumption of personal responsibility on the part of the subject. It is within the framework of responsibility that a person should develop an ethical worldview. Gilson (2014) states that we must, for example, dispel the myth that vulnerability is associated with passivity in our society. In this context, vulnerability is not merely defined as a condition of being acted upon, and a passive notion of one's own actions is both restricting and limiting. The link between passivity and vulnerability also has implications for how we feel, behave, and respond when we face what we refer to as vulnerability, as well as for our sense of what constitutes a vulnerable experience (p.128). In this sense, Gilson's passivity necessitates the acceptance of one's own responsibility for one's own vulnerable self. According to Butler (2005), the establishment of responsibility takes place in the sense that the phenomenal world of people and things can only be accessed when a self has been constituted as a consequence of the major impingement that has taken place. Because the feasibility of an epistemological contact presumes that the self and its object world have already been constituted, it is impossible to inquire into the process of construction via such a contact in the first instance. Preontological idea: intended to provide a solution to this issue (p.86).

Butler (2004) states that loss and vulnerability appear to be a natural outcome of our being socially formed bodies, connected to others and at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others and at risk of violence as a result of that exposure (p.20). The vulnerability and sense of loss evoked by acts of violence are less widely recognized than they should be (p. xii). Thus, Butler accepts Levinas' ontological vulnerability as a feminist, and she reshapes the definition of vulnerability as originating from loss into a transformative understanding of vulnerability.

Furthermore, as Butler points out, the subject cannot exist apart from the other. While the subject is subjected to sadness or anguish, the subject's openness to the world converts the subject into a source of sorrow and suffering for everyone else. For example, "to say that 'I am vulnerable' is not to make a claim about my particular individual situation but rather to make a claim about my connection to those across the globe" (Cousens, 2018, p.47). Butler, on the other hand, is making a statement about a person's connection to people all over the globe, not about his or her own particular vulnerability. Accordingly, Butler's vulnerability embraces not just the subject but also the other in terms of subjectivity and relationality, as well as the other's vulnerability. "Butler is elaborating on a notion of equal vulnerability that applies to all living things" (Cousens, 2018, p.47). For example, Butler states,

I cannot muster the 'we' except by finding the way in which I am tied to 'you,' by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know (p.49).

According to Kathy Dow Magnus (2006), in her article "The Unaccountable Subject: Judith Butler and the Social Conditions of Intersubjective Agency," Butler argues that the most critical step in the search for ethics is to acknowledge one's own fallibility and lack of self-coherence. To acknowledge one's own limitations in self-understanding and to accept these limitations as not only the condition of subjects, but also humanity as a whole. The one who acknowledges her inability to fully account for her actions is compelled to accept the defects of others around her. A subject of this kind is prone to virtues such as honesty, benevolence, perseverance, endurance, and repentance, to mention a few. In other words, these are the characteristics that make a person successful in the face of ethical aggression (p.93). Magnus (2006) adds that we are forced to view ethics in terms of forgiveness rather than judgment, and in terms of patience and tolerance rather than prohibitions and condemnation, according

to Butler's understanding of the "unaccountable" subject. She offers a significant and long-lasting contribution to feminist ethics by championing qualities that nourish relationships and promote peace, as well as opposing actions of judgment and condemnation that encourage division and incite violence (p.102).

As a consequence, vulnerability is often seen as a sign of ineptitude and weakness, which has a detrimental effect on the person. Susceptible individuals must appeal to or submit to others who assume the role of the invulnerable savior. By contrast, Levinas' ethical concept of vulnerability and the feminist perspective's transformative perspective provide a new understanding of the vulnerable subject in terms of two important characteristics of subjectivity: openness and passivity.

Physical violence is seen as one of the sub-titles of subjectivity in terms of vulnerability, and it is classified as such. Cavarero and McCuaig (2011) assert that humans' ontological uniqueness also creates vulnerability, especially when examined through the perspective of the body (p.20). According to Vaitinen (2014), a susceptible body is a living creature that is organically sensitive to the processes of life: aging, degradation, and death. This biological fragility is not a reason for alarm or anxiety. It is an unavoidable reality (p.104). According to Drichel and Diprose (2013), the intercorporeal nature of human life not only exposes us to loss and violence, but also allows us to experiment with new ways of being. Contrary to popular belief, intercorporeality is a basic dynamic of the body. In the absence of absolute nonviolence, the ambiguity of physical connection raises ethical questions (p.185). Accordingly, subjectivity in the context of vulnerability includes physical violence.

Many feminist academics place a strong emphasis on the subject's embodiment, or physical vulnerability, which they argue "always signifies an opportunity to wound" (Whitney, 2011, p.557). In this regard, when researching vulnerability, it is important to remember that the "focus on the politics of recognition of corporeal vulnerability allows a consideration of "the body," embodiment, vulnerability, and suffering" (Cadwallader, 2012, p.106). According to Murphy (2012), the recent reevaluation of dispossession and vulnerability is significant in current feminist philosophy. Historically, women's greater vulnerability to sexual assault has been the main focus of redress, although this is a shift from previous approaches. Bodily integrity has been elevated to a vital political goal, one that women should demand but is always under attack, particularly in the US (p.70). As a consequence, physical fragility becomes a significant factor in the genesis of vulnerability. Many feminist researchers, in addition

to emphasizing the relationship between violence and physiological harm, also emphasize the ethical stance on the topic.

Murphy (2012) claims that the profusion of violent imagery in philosophical literature has raised awareness of physical fragility, a contentious subject in modern feminist philosophy. She claims that a vulnerability-based appeal cannot build a normative morality. The body's ethical ambiguity, together with its propensity for suffering and harm, serves as a wake-up call (p.65). By rethinking our ties with others, Cousens (2018) argues that bodily vulnerability has become a fundamental idea in feminist ethics. Consideration as a new "vulnerability" necessitates the streamlining and deletion of vast amounts of literature with little reader participation. Wherever it comes from, corporeal vulnerability lacks the capacity to distinguish between multiple bodies that may be lived in or rendered sensitive in various ways (p.53). According to Murphy (2011), feminist theorists have recently had the opportunity to explore the question of corporeal fragility as a consequence of the frequent use of violent imagery in body philosophy. At present, violence is considered a necessary prerequisite for the construction, recognition, and identification of embodied identity. If you are a feminist who rejects the notion that violence and the body are inextricably connected, you must consider if your work inside and outside the canon makes it more difficult to reject and criticize this connection (p.576).

Butler (1997) contends that although my body's border serves as my identity's boundary, it is never really mine. Indeed, the body's fundamental sociality as a social creature has more to do with establishing boundaries between self and others than survival. The body is perceived as social in both appearance and function, while the mind is recognized as unique. Depth and breadth are vital for existence, but they are also conditions that put our lives and survival in jeopardy in certain social situations. Physical coercion may include being tied, gagged, forcefully exposed, or ritually humiliated. When we analyze people who have had their physical vulnerabilities exploited, we ask what, if anything, accounts for their tolerance. Indeed, the fact that one's body is never really one's own, that it is constantly constrained and self-referential, is the condition of emotional interaction, of desire and longing, and of addressability. In cases of unintentional coercion, constraint, physical pain, and violent acts against the victim, this exposure or dispossession is exploited (p.55).

Butler (2009) contends that we may make more expansive social and political claims about the right to protection and the entitlement to survival and flourishing in

the world only if we construct a new corporeal ontology. Vulnerability and injurability, as well as dependence and exposure, are being reassessed within this new body ontology, as are physical persistence, desire, labor, as well as language and social membership claims (p.2). While injuries are one possible outcome of having a sensitive body, they are far from the only one. Susceptibility does not always imply malice. Unintentional closeness to people and events beyond one's control is expressed in the body's irreversible connection to the external world. However, it is more than probable that the body's reaction to the environment is initiated by the first perceptible change. This response may take on a variety of forms, including pleasure, wrath, agony, and hope, to mention a few (p.34).

Murphy (2012) asserts that, while the figure of the weak body is unambiguous as an ethical provocation of physical fragility, it is not as simply perverted in the service of a prescriptive morality as it may appear. It is critical to understand that the picture in no way encourages or prohibits violence; rather, it causes violence by prompting an unconscious response. According to Murphy, there is no inherent characteristic in vulnerability that fosters tolerance, restraint, or compassion; rather, confronting one's own vulnerability may be unpleasant and result in a desire for vengeance on the part of the individual. According to touch phenomenology, one's body's perception of touch is contingent upon the amount of it received. This exposure, on the other hand, encompasses the subject's own self in a manner that is neither normatively ambiguous nor prescriptive in any way (p.66).

As a consequence, the idea of the female body's fragility is a crucial feminist concept, particularly in relation to vulnerability. We are exposed to loss and violence, but they also provide an opportunity for us to experiment with new ways of being ourselves. As a result of intellectual aggression, bodily awareness has increased. A new body ontology must be established in order to widen the spectrum of social and political grounds for protection. This new body ontology entails reevaluating bodily persistence and damage, according to the transformative concept of feminist vulnerability readings.

With reference to the theoretical debates discussed above, the first chapter of this thesis will analyze Idra Novey's *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew*, both of which are often regarded as instances of contemporary vulnerable fiction. Novey digs into the subject of vulnerability in the twenty-first century via the creation of strange environments governed by hegemonic violence in these volumes. Accordingly, on the

one hand, the first chapter studies the dichotomy of vulnerability and the self through the characters; on the other hand, it analyzes the corporeal vulnerability portrayed in the novels. *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew* bring new assumptions to vulnerability studies by highlighting the ethical importance of people's vulnerabilities and by highlighting the influence of deep-seated beliefs on vulnerability in terms of feminist transformative ideas on the negative associations of vulnerability. While *Ways to Disappear* provides an opportunity to analyze an author's aesthetic weaknesses as well as translation studies, *Those Who Knew* demonstrates not just how dominating political power leads to vulnerability but also where that vulnerability is derived. The ethical focus on the vulnerable subject and its relationship with the other has always found a place in literary works, as in Idra Novey's *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew*. However, this time, the ethical and feminist standpoints on vulnerability employ new perspectives by reflecting on real-life issues. Both of these novels mainly offer some important insights into the characters' ontological vulnerabilities. Through narrating their trauma-induced vulnerabilities, Idra Novey underlines how contemporary negative understanding of vulnerability can turn into a success story for each character through a feminist perspective. Hence, her novels provide an important opportunity to examine the negative idea of vulnerability that exists in current American literature via her works.

3. Feminist Representations of the Self-the Other Relationality in Vulnerability

When someone is vulnerable, they are prone to another's aggression, and as a result, a fundamental idea must be examined in terms of typical human behaviors: vulnerability. Given that vulnerability involves exposure to wounds or violence, there appears to be another person to suffer for the self-vulnerable. Accordingly, vulnerability demonstrates that an individual "is always in an interdependent and interconnected world of connections" (Ortin-Sen, 2020, p.4). As a result, this interdependence "challenge[s] sovereignty [that] revolves around ... [a type of] vulnerability in association with relationality" (Sabsay, 2020, p.187). According to Jean-Michel Ganteau (2017), reliance is a vital component in creating a sense of the common good. In these circumstances, interdependence necessitates a radical

anthropological sensibility (p.447). Ganteau (2017) adds that the fact that risk, and the exposures and vulnerabilities that come with it, should be the fuel for a strong ethical vision is surprising and instructive. Rather than embracing liberty, this perspective appears to be based on a desire for dependency (p. 449). In this regard, feminist scholars studying vulnerability assess relationality ethically to transform it into a healthy level of functioning by "argu[ing] for an ethics in which... we are obligated to that which sustains us, including relations with other people" (Oliver, 2018, p.620). Vulnerability is important from a moral and political standpoint since it is a necessary prerequisite for interpersonal relationships.

A phenomenological ethics of vulnerability would emphasize the malleability of our limits. Levinas' idea of "the other" is crucial to examine when it comes to morally sustaining connectivity and interdependence. According to Ganteau, a vulnerability loop or cycle is developed based on the fragility of persons receiving care. Nussbaum studies the frailty of virtue in relation to relationality. Gilson reframes vulnerability as a condition of both self and other in a relationship via openness and passivity. Butler delves into the nature of sadness and its significance in the formation of human connections.

Gilson (2014) argues that the word "vulnerability" is dubious since "it connotes passivity and weakness" (p.130). However, it centralizes subjectivity, and the transcendental quality of subjectivity focuses openness and flexibility on change. "[T]o be vulnerable is to be passive, subject to something" (p.130). Gilson redefines vulnerability in this manner by defining it in terms of openness and passivity, which encompasses both the self and the other in a relationship. Gilson asserts that we, as sensitive creatures, are capable of sensing, thinking, imagining, and feeling because we are always in contact with other bodies. That is, our perceptual nature is defined and enabled by such openness, which is fundamentally the porousness, impressionability, and responsiveness of our bodies (p.130). Gilson (2014) supports that Merleau-Ponty's "openness to the world" refers to a more muted relationship with the environment than our conscious, deliberate attitudes and forms of engagement since it serves as their necessary condition. As a consequence, it has been disregarded and taken for granted throughout philosophy's history (p.130).

Butler (2009) defines relationality as the subject's vulnerability-induced openness. Although my body's limit determines who I am, it will never really belong to me. The physical barrier to one's identity is less important than the intrinsic sociality

of the body. Compared to our bodies, which are vital for our survival, in certain cultures, they endanger our life and capacity to survive. Physical coercion occurs when someone is shackled, gagged, forced to expose themselves, or subjected to ritual humiliation. So we can explore what we can learn about the survival of those whose physical frailty has been abused. For emotional touch, longing, and yearning, as well as the address and addressability processes that promote the experience of being alive, one's body is never really one's own, unlimited, or self-referential. Accidental coercion, restriction, bodily damage, or violence exploits the body's effort to survive in social space and time (55).

Gilson (2014) points out that while openness to the world implies belonging, it also implies solitude. As a consequence, continuity is intrinsically related to distance, which might manifest as gaps, divergences, noncoincidence, and dehiscence inside the self, between the self and the world, or between objects of the world. We are linked to, but not identical to, the cosmic things we observe. Because we are disconnected from our surroundings, they can only "connect through" and "possess" us (p.132). Our bodies' inherent openness allows us to inhabit common locations and temporalities (an "interworld") via the interactions that make it up (p.132). Gilson defines passivity as being basic to the human capacity for experience—continuous and shared, defined by distance and divergence, and constitutive of relationships. We are drawn away from the constituted subject's usual focal point, action, to how passivity supports such activity (p.133). Thus, passivity is not a sign of weakness or vulnerability to the environment or others. More than that, it's a way to connect with other bodies. Also, this potential is not inherent in anyone's body but comes via inter-body connections. It is neither "my" because it is tied to my body, nor am I. It's the inventor or creator because of the "basic links of reliance" that identify me. Things speak through me because they own me, and I can engage because I own things. In this way, the dualism between inactivity and action is erased (p.133).

Butler (2004) examines the function of sadness in the formation of relationality. A portion of ourselves becomes obvious to others when we lose people in our lives or move away from a place or group. "I" cannot live freely in one place and then lose contact with "you" in another. In these conditions, I may lose sight of you, and although I will miss you, I may also be bewildered by your absence (p.22). Grief is depoliticizing because it isolates us. However, I think it adds to the feeling of political community it fosters, particularly by illustrating the social links that impact

fundamental dependence and ethical responsibility. "We" are pierced by a relationality we cannot deny without rejecting something fundamental about our social growth (p.23).

Relationality, according to Butler, is synonymous with reliance. Butler (2009) asserts that the ontology of the body serves as a jumping-off point for this rethinking of responsibility. The body is exposed to others on both its surface and depth, which makes it vulnerable by definition. However, it is not only a surface onto which social meanings are etched, but also that which suffers, enjoys, and responds to the exteriority of the world. Its fundamental existence is dependent on social conditions and institutions, which suggests that it must rely on external forces to "be," in the sense of "persist." Given the body's socially ecstatic structure, how can responsibility be conceptualized? By definition, the body is vulnerable since it is prone to social manipulation and pressure. The body's inextricable connection to the external world reflects the broader issue of inadvertent proximity to persons and events beyond one's control. This "confrontation" is a manner of defining the body. And yet, this obvious change to which the body is exposed may be, and often is, the catalyst for response to the environment. This reaction may take many forms: pleasure, wrath, anguish, and hope, to name a few (p.34).

According to ethical principles, Boubilil (2018) asserts that the need for communal bonding derives from a feeling of intersubjectivity. If self-exposure is seen as a state of openness to alterity and hence as a state of possibility for self-transformation, then a phenomenological ethics of vulnerability would highlight the malleability of our boundaries. Similarly, one's understanding of fundamental and ontological relationality, which includes existential fragility, has ramifications for one's own social and political identities (p.189). Gilson (2018) argues that it is possible to redefine safety and security in terms of a relational ontology based on the premise that people and the places they create and occupy are essentially susceptible, and that this vulnerability is ultimately a matter of relationality (p.230). Vulnerable means openness to something, but the nature of that item is influenced by particular social conditions. Its significance and worth are based on certain perspectives, experiences, and events. Vulnerability is morally and politically relevant since it is an essential condition for relationality (231).

On the one hand, Ganteau (2015) notes that the OED definition of vulnerability as "openness to harm, or exposure to risk and a capacity for damage" can be interpreted

in the sense that the OED emphasizes the unresponsiveness of vulnerability while also emphasizing its potential through the use of the term capacity. On the other hand, since vulnerability is concerned with universal human traditions, Ganteau (2015) emphasizes that vulnerability does not imply sovereignty, but rather mutuality and interdependence (p.5). According to Ganteau and Onega (2017), since vulnerability is defined as exposure to violence, there has to be another person who makes "autonomy impossible" (p.3). That is, vulnerability is a clash between self and other.

Regarding relationality, Levinas outlines the centrality of violence, alterity, the self, the other, responsibility, and vulnerability in *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*. According to Levinas (1998), responsibility is a response to the impulse represented in the particular act of confronting, and responsibility is a connection with the other. This kind of relationship with alterity is a component of subjectivity, namely the self (p. xix). Additionally, Levinas (1980) posits that this meeting between self and other might occur via people's faces, which are symbols of not just pictures but also of all meanings (p.297). According to Ganteau (2015), Levinas equates vulnerability with passivity in *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, in that vulnerability is inextricably linked to the face of the other, which implies that I am exposed to the other person via the face (p.6). Additionally, Ganteau (2015) asserts that Levinas defines this exposure in terms of responsibility for the other, commenting on Levinas' hypothesis that "the ethical relation as a non-violent relation to the other is grounded in the destabilizing experience of the other's extreme vulnerability, which renders us hostage to and solicits our responsibility for the other" (p.6). As a result, in light of Levinas and Ganteau, an ethical perspective on vulnerability and relationality seems to exist as a result of the structure of relationality that causes vulnerability to violence within the framework of alterity. Levinas' concept of 'the other' is critical for ethically preserving connectedness and interdependence. He believes that "in ethics, the other's right to exist has precedence over my own, a primacy exemplified in the ethical edict: you shalt not kill, you shall not endanger the other's life" (qtd. in Cohen, 1986, p.24). According to Levinas (1986), the face is a duty, more precisely a responsibility to the other, and the other's vulnerability comes before the self, implying that responsibility to the other is critical for the preservation of relational ethics (p.24), because, as Levinas suggests, "in the relation to the face, I am exposed as a usurper of the place of the other" (qtd. in Cohen, 1986, p.24). As a consequence, when the ethical viewpoint retains its power in the other's engagement, the connection becomes more calmly

linked. Nortvedt (2003) supports that Levinas discusses an ethical sensitivity that is irreducible to knowledge when the subject and awareness are rocked by the other person's alterity. For Levinas, this pain for the other manifests itself in a paradoxical relationship with something that indicates without disclosing itself, which Levinas refers to as the "face" (p.224). For example, Butler used Levinas' idea of "face" to stress the "ethic of nonviolence" (Butler, 2004, p.131) when conceiving the binary of humanization and dehumanization in terms of precariousness, or vulnerability. Butler (2004) asserts that a person who is capable of speaking for themselves has a chance to be civilized. Butler questions Levinas' concept of "face" in light of contemporary communication venues such as the media in this context. According to Butler, the media uses "face" to promote dehumanization. Additionally, she asserts that "for Levinas, the human cannot be caught by representation, and we can observe that when the human is "captured" by the picture, some loss of the human occurs" (p.145). As a consequence, Butler highlights that although Levinas' "face" concept relates to nonviolent humanization, it has been used as a symbol of dehumanization in contemporary culture, resulting in heightened vulnerability. As Butler's ideas reveal, the word "face" should be viewed ethically in relation to the self and other dichotomies associated with the concept of violence.

Gilligan (2016) argues that in a world where relationships have shifted from permanent dependency to interdependent, the word "relationship" has become out of step. The concept of care is expanded to include an encouragement to act responsively toward oneself and others, rather than a paralyzing admonition not to do harm to others. To keep the relationship, the term "responsively" might be modified to include the word "responsibly." As women became more aware of their exclusion from their own lives, feminists advocated the notion of inclusion, which resonates in their thoughts to this day. Females develop an appreciation for their awareness of relationships as their concern for care progresses beyond an admonition not to harm others and evolves into an ideal of responsibility in social interactions, and females develop an appreciation for their awareness of relationships as a source of moral strength as their concern for care progresses beyond an admonition not to harm others and evolves into an ideal of responsibility in social interactions. (pp. 149–150). Ganteau (2015) asserts that ethics produces a vulnerability loop or cycle based on vulnerability toward the vulnerable, with vulnerability serving as both a condition and a symbol of dependence (p.11). Ganteau (2015) situates vulnerability and ethics within

Robert E. Goodin's (1986, p. xi) concept of "special obligations," according to which all persons are expected to be responsible for one another (p. 2). Additionally, Goodin suggests that all of these "positive duties" should stem from "self-assumed" obligations (Goodin, 1986, p.xi). Ganteau (2015) observes that the OED definition of vulnerability as wounded or susceptible to attack may be tied to care-related obligations and describes vulnerability as a phrase evoking images of humans in misery in need of care, aid, and responsibility from an ethical standpoint (p.11). As a consequence, ethics becomes an additional point of debate within the context of relationality. In terms of ethics and relationality, Nussbaum explores the frailty of goodness in connection to relationality in *The Fragility of Goodness, Luck, and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. She argues that vulnerability-based relationality encompasses not only the "self-sufficient spectrum" (p.343) but also "the good activities connected with citizenship and political attachment, as well as those involved in personal love and friendship"(p.343). Ganteau (2015) asserts that Nussbaum provides an indirect but critical view on the complexities inherent in the paradigm of human connectivity and interconnectedness "by paying attentive textual attention to hyper-canonical titles of ancient literature" (p.13). Relationality, as defined by Nussbaum (2001), is an ethical understanding of human nature. This nature establishes connections as a means of communication with the environment and maintains that self-other relationality is not only required but also valued (p.343). As a result, Nussbaum assesses the duality of self and relationality from an ethical standpoint in terms of vulnerability.

Because of this, it is necessary to study relationality as a fundamental human activity from the perspective of vulnerability, which suggests that someone is vulnerable to the aggressiveness of another person. Because vulnerability entails exposure to wounds or violence, it is necessary for another person to suffer in order for oneself to become susceptible. Feminist scholars assess relationality from an ethical stance in order to transform it into a level of performance that can be sustained throughout time. Therefore, it is not enough to analyze relationality from only a phenomenological perspective; instead, as it centralizes human nature, it is supposed to be studied in terms of ethical relationality through the lens of Feminist researchers focusing on the transformative structure of vulnerability. That is to say, the vulnerability of the self stems from both the other-relation and the self-relation. Even if the self has an internal connection with itself, it also has an external and permanent connection with the other. In literature, Ganteau (2015) states, relationality, the

unifying theme of many different types and examples of vulnerability, can be perceived as a conceptual device in which the literary art forms constitute the collaborative faculties. Ganteau (2015) claims that contemporary narratives still lack "modal or generic purity" (p.167). Ganteau (2015) highlights "the prominence of relationality as the main characteristic of vulnerability and the vulnerable, both in and outside literature, and essentially as regards the literary" (p.167). In this sense, Ganteau supports the notion that vulnerable text or fragile form helps us to respond more fully to the document's originality and the uniqueness of the conditions it offers us by allowing us to participate more literally and meaningfully in its performance and making us captives of the event. As a direct address to the theoretical assumptions above, the second chapter of this thesis focuses on the vulnerability and relationality dichotomy about the self and the other pattern by explaining ideas of Feminist theories on relationality. The failure or success of the relationality among characters in the novels are related to personas' vulnerability because examining the past or present relationalities of the characters is important to understand the wounds. In the American Novels *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, the success or the failure of the characters are discussed by the author to show for what reasons the susceptibility of 21st-century people stems from especially in the context of I and the other relationality. Idra Novey stresses the interconnectedness of her characters in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* to unveil their vulnerabilities.

CHAPTER 1

FEMINIST REPRESENTATIONS OF VULNERABILITY IN *THOSE WHO KNEW* (2018) AND *WAYS TO DISAPPEAR* (2016)

"Weakness' is weakness only in light of the aims man sets for himself, the instruments at his disposal and the laws he imposes."

Simone de Beauvoir from *The Second Sex*

This chapter presents that in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, Idra Novey depicts the issue of vulnerability as an example of the vulnerable text of contemporary American fiction. In *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, Novey portrays not only confused and tender characters but also violent and dominant characters to explore vulnerability in depth. The first section of this chapter discusses the relationship between violence and vulnerability and how violence affects an individual's vulnerability. The second section of the chapter discusses how Idra Novey depicts weak demonstrations of vulnerability in her characters' experiences and how these weak associations of vulnerability in each novel can be evaluated from a feminist perspective in the light of vulnerability's transformative effect on issues such as the self and corporeality.

In terms of vulnerable narratives, Ganteau (2015) argues that it is critical to note that, in contrast to merely depiction, there has been a preferred narration style for the effectiveness and demonstration of the manifestations at the heart of the vulnerable text; thus, "diegetic and textual symptoms are no longer related through resemblance but rather through contiguity or continuity, one being a modality of the other" (p.171). Thus, "the vulnerable text and literary vulnerability" (p.171) have been envisioned independently in relation to an ethics of vulnerability "that in many ways builds on an ethic of alterity and an ethic of care made to collaborate as an ethic of literature" (p.171). In this regard, it is self-evident that the mystical and terrifying rhetoric

combined with the ignorant and perplexing structure of *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew* transforms the books into an "exposure of icons of vulnerability [that] contributes to a politics of literature" (Ganteau & Onega, 2017, p.178). Thus, using brutal and actual facts becomes a required mode of writing in order to accept the major metaphor of disappearance or the mystical ambiance of the plotlines in *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew*. On vulnerable narratives, according to Ganteau (2015), susceptible works of fiction provide transparency and clarity of thought, regenerating earlier traditional forms and paths of involvement by aiming toward a certain kind of politics known as "the democracy of literature" (p.172). Ganteau states,

these vulnerable fictions [are] a specifically literary engagement with and contribution to the "distribution of the perceptible" ... sees as a capacity of literature. ...such a re-distribution is what literature in general—and I would argue vulnerable narratives in particular—contribute to, in a specific way, by refusing to trade in abstract generalities (p.172).

Idra Novey's dystopian novel *Those Who Knew*, published in 2018, centralizes a vulnerable woman character named Lena and her friends living in an old port city on an unnamed island whose citizens have been subjected to violence by the tyrannical Cato administration for a long time. The narrative begins a decade after the fall of the barbaric regime, with information about the mysterious death of Maria P, an activist student working for Victor, a corrupt senator of the Justice and Truth Party who has gotten away with several murders. Novey opens her work by introducing her key character, Lena, by writing, "Precisely a week after the death of Maria P., which was declared an accident, a woman reached into her tote bag and found a sweater inside that didn't belong to her" (Novey, 2018, p.1). Novey introduces the novel's protagonist, Lena, in this odd setting. The central character is portrayed as a weak figure whose mind is confused because of the many violent experiences. She is depicted as concerned about the sweater and Maria P., highlighting the intriguing narrative. In the novel, Novey portrays Lena as an activist professor and a mysterious figure who is pursued by her wounded past throughout the plot. Novey provides Lena a voice in regards to how her background has contributed to her fragility. Not only Lena but also Lena's friends Olga and Freddy, are sensitive characters, who have become fragile because of their violent past. Roberta Culbertson (1995) describes how violent experiences slumber for a long period of time until the schemata are aroused by a stimulus in prior memories:

Repressed memories are nevertheless memories; they are not circumstances of what "never happened" or what has been "forgotten." They are, at worst, temporal blanks, as if the mind recorded as it continuously does the passage of time, but left a particular stretch simply open, the images and experience elsewhere, not accessible to the normal process of constructing a narrative of one's life. Those who find themselves now and again having "gone blank," particularly after a triggering event of some sort, might indeed be having a memory, revisiting a time in which they "went blank" in the midst of terror, entered another level of experience retained elsewhere in the mind and triggered by other stimuli. (p.175)

All of the characters are emblems of openness and passivity due to their fragile natures resulting from violent experiences and assaults, since they are direct victims of the ruthless dictatorship and hegemonic masculinity. Altez-Albela (2011), influenced by Levinas' theories on passivity, asserts that because of the intensity of pain, it is possible to view sensitivity's passivity as a weakness; it hurts more where the self is truly tormented, her moral consciousness torn by the face's challenge; it hurts more where the self is truly pained (p.42). In a similar spirit, Ganteau is another academic motivated by Levinas' linkages between vulnerability, femininity, and passivity. Ganteau (2015) states,

for Levinas the issue of vulnerability is examined in relation to feminine values. Hosting, hospitality, and passivity are traditionally associated with femininity; and such categories, precisely, help define the Levinasian subject as absolute host. (p.6)

Shortly, Idra Novey's dystopian book *Those Who Knew* follows a sensitive professor and her close friends as they live in a historic port city on an unnamed island whose citizens have been subjected to brutality by the tyrannical Cato government for a long period of time, provoking their susceptibility.

Ways to Disappear, written by Novey in 2016, revolves around a disappeared author, her friends and children. Like *Those Who Knew*, the book portrays the issues of vulnerability. The novel begins with the disappearance of a Brazilian writer named Beatriz Yagoda, in her sixties, who is running away from her online gambling debt and the gangsters demanding their money. As soon as the protagonist of the novel, Emma, hears of the disappearance of her best writer, she flies to Brazil to find her with Beatriz's children, Raquel and Marcus. As in her second novel, *Those Who Knew*, Novey opens up *Ways to Disappear* with a magical and mysterious portrayal of disappearance. To convey the setting's mysterious mood, she describes Beatriz, one of the important characters, as follows: "In a crumbling park in the crumbling back end of Copacabana, a woman stopped under an almond tree with a suitcase and a cigar."

After staring for a minute up into the tree, she bit into her cigar, lifted her suitcase onto the lowest branch, and climbed up after it "(Novey, 2016, p.4). Again, Novey employs a surprising and metaphorical opening to entice readers into deciphering the hidden meaning of the words and the novel's central hidden subject, compelling the characters to journey through the past experiences that triggered their vulnerability. Emma, the protagonist, and the author's siblings, Raquel and Marcus, have all suffered atrocities at the hands of the Brazilian gambling mafia in their pursuit of the author. Each character is confronted with threats, perils, and tyranny throughout the story, all of which contribute to their fragility.

Novey begins each of her books with a scene that leaves readers puzzled, evoking the state of mind of the novel's primary protagonists. *Those Who Knew* opens in a confused environment in which the protagonist, Lena, has discovered the sweater in her bag for the second time, despite having handed it to the cashier the first time she discovered it in her bag. The depiction of Beatriz Yagoda's disappearance in *Ways to Disappear*, in which she climbs an almond tree with a cigar and a luggage, immediately makes the reader skeptical. Novey's purposely bizarre description draws the reader's attention to the plots of the books in order to establish a connection with the characters' vulnerability. In this regard, Novey's use of narrative techniques to reveal the characters' vulnerability, such as fusing reality and unreality in the examples above, is consistent with Ganteau's (2015) idea on the concept of vulnerable novels, which "give visibility and a measure of articulacy" (p.172) to painful narrations. Evidently, the mystical beginnings in both novels are also a way for the protagonists to enter a vulnerable story that involves suffering, abuse, agony, danger, and oppression.

In *Those Who Knew*, through the power dynamics between the characters, Novey emphasizes the significance of overcoming barriers, the majority of which result in human nature's weaknesses, and the strength of unity regardless of power. The novel's storyline centers on Novey's protagonist, Lena, and the characters in her life, including Victor, Olga, and Freddy. In that regard, the novel's primary tone stresses how damaged individuals subjected to various forms of abuse become survivors, despite their susceptible natures. As a consequence, the dystopian novel *Those Who Knew* is about more than vulnerability. Furthermore, it is a metaphorical struggle for defenseless individuals against violence perpetrated by several forms of authority, in which the protagonists attempt to fight both for themselves and for others.

Novey's *Ways to Disappear* tells a story set in Brazil, with characters that are bewildered, amazed, and fearful of death. The novel centers on the disappearance of Brazilian writer Beatriz, which has a direct influence on three distinct characters: Emma Neufeld, an American translator who is trapped in her life in America; Raquel, Beatriz's furious daughter; and Marcus, Beatriz's sensitive son. Three individuals whose paths cross while on the search for the Brazilian writer are told in pursuit of a same objective: to locate Beatriz Yagoda. However, Novey demonstrates how each person is controlled throughout their journey by their subjective fragility as well as the Brazilian male gaming mafia. Thus, *Ways to Disappear* illustrates the struggle of helpless persons who are exposed to violence on a constant basis while striving to find the author, who has gone missing.

Throughout the examination of vulnerability and the discourses it generates, the characters' subjectivity and corporeality in relation to violence and hegemonic power relations play a critical role in comprehending the context for the vulnerability shown in both books. As such, it is vital to emphasize the reflections of vulnerability on the self of all the characters. The following characters feature in *Those Who Knew*: Lena, a fragile scholar; Olga, a silent bookstore owner; Victor, a vindictive and power-hungry figure; and Freddy, Victor's playwright brother. In *Ways to Disappear*, these are; Beatriz, the enigmatic lost writer; Emma, the helpful but indecisive translator, Raquel, the helpful but unsure and Beatriz's furious daughter, and Marcus; the young, sensitive, and exuberant boyfriend of Emma and son of Beatriz. Correspondingly, although Lena and Emma's stories are crucial to the books, the other characters must be understood in terms of vulnerability. Whether they are exposed to violence or not is critical since, although some characters are characterized as victims, others are described as perpetrators of violence, resulting in vulnerability. Essentially, the subjectivity of each character reveals their weakness. Additionally, several characters are exposed to physical assault. Thus, throughout the investigation of vulnerability, an understanding of the characters' subjectivity and corporeality in relation to violence is critical for appreciating the context of the feminist representations of vulnerability depicted in both works.

1.1. Hegemonic Violence and ‘The Vulnerable’ in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*

This section will analyze how Idra Novey depicts vulnerability in the setting of violence in her books, *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*. The books' specific examples will be discussed in the context of a feminist perspective on vulnerability. This section of the chapter will examine the violent settings of the books, *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, that incorporate hegemonic violence and patriarchal beliefs, as well as their reflections on the characters' vulnerability.

In *Violence in Literature: An Evolutionary Perspective*, Joseph Carroll (2013) explains that writing about violence is common in literature because both authors and readers are interested in diving into the depths of human nature. All human interests are at conflict with the interests of others in some way. Even among close relatives, there are certain overlaps and conflicts in terms of fitness preferences. Individual fitness interests that inspire suspicion, jealousy, resentment, fury, and occasionally hatred intersect with collective fitness interests that inspire love or solidarity between parents and children, siblings, spouses, coalition partners, and members of one's own tribe. Whenever competing interests reach a critical mass of tension, violence is the tipping point to be avoided. In literature, violence reveals the fundamental structure of human intents and feelings, just as it does in reality (p.1). Fradinger (2010) supports that a particular kind of violence, referred to as binding violence, establishes the autonomous collective's new boundaries. This kind of assault does not defeat an enemy; it annihilates it. It is aimed against an internal opponent forged from the remnants of a once-friendly group. As so, this opponent exemplifies a crisis of limits: it keeps its interiority while inhabiting a liminal position that starts to establish the boundaries between the outside and the inside (p.4) and he adds that as a violation of life, which may be done by or against another, violence is understood in contemporary civilizations as a rupture of either one's own or another's wholeness, with both being considered whole entities. As another example, consider the term "linguistic rupture," which refers to anything that causes communication with another to be disturbed, or the term "breaching reason," which refers to anything that is illogical or nonsensical in its application. The code of social reason, which encompasses concepts of class,

race, and gender, with ethnicity being the most recent addition, is more likely to depict complete units that are fractured but do not belong to a single person (p.12).

In *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, Novey analyzes how hegemonic violence influenced the social structure of communities in the 2000s. Hegemonic violence creates many forms of vulnerability across our current environment as a result of premeditated cruelty. Further, it is vital to ascertain how people of the period attempted to withstand the consequences of their injured personal lives, especially their vulnerable subjectivities. Both works illustrate the relationship between violence and vulnerability through the use of the circumstances in which each character encounters different forms of violence. Ganteau (2015) specifies that "[i]n contemporary parlance, 'vulnerability' and more generally 'the vulnerable'—a phrase that lays the stress on the suffering people even while eschewing individualization and the taking into consideration of singularity" (p.3) becomes a visible key concept for the fictions of the 21st century. In this regard, Novey's characters, subjected to violence because of governmental and patriarchal power dynamics, become personas who "may be wounded, susceptible to receiving wounds or physical injury" (Ganteau and Onega, 2017, p.3), and "open to attack or, injury of a non-physical nature" (p.3). Butler (2004) asserts that susceptibility is significantly increased in cultures and governments where violence is the norm, as well as in societies and governments where people have few self-defense options (p.29). For example, the harsh dictatorship tyrannized all of its citizens in repressive ways in *Those Who Knew*, while the hegemonic power dynamic is represented by the Brazilian gambling mafia, which controls individuals in *Ways to Disappear*. As a result, the norm becomes violence in both novels, causing the protagonist to suffer, as Butler stated above. In this way, the characters in both novels can be evaluated as vulnerable victims since vulnerability is related to sensitivity and receptivity on a physical as well as a mental level, which makes them "open to a violent expression of alterity" (Ganteau and Onega, 2017 p.3).

Therefore, the settings of both novels become more of an issue in portraying the violence in the characters' vulnerability. It is necessary to evaluate the social environment in order to comprehend and analyze vulnerability since the characters' fragility manifests itself in these violent settings, which requires to be understood and analyzed. Butler et al. (2016), for instance, illustrate a distinct vulnerability when we are unsupported, when the infrastructure that defines our social, political, and economic lives starts to erode, or when we find ourselves radically unsupported in

insecure or deliberately hostile circumstances (p.19). The social context is cited as a source of vulnerability by Butler; in the same vein, the social environment is cited as a source of violence by Murphy. Murphy (2012) contends that individuals are not born more violent or violable than others; rather, their social contexts mold them in this manner. To build and maintain our autonomy and integrity, we must first acknowledge our complete dependence on others to establish and maintain our social identities (p.69). According to Fineman (2012), developing choices and alternatives for addressing human vulnerability in society is dependent upon the formation of government and social institutions responsive to human vulnerability, which must be driven by law. Individuals gain from institutional institutions such as education, finance, and health care that equip them with assets that enable them to be more resilient in the face of our common vulnerability, whether in concert or independently. To function effectively, the institutions of a responsive state must guarantee that all individuals have meaningful access to and opportunity to gain money throughout their lives. Moreover, the state must ensure that no individual or group of people is subjected to unfair treatment (p.72). However, this is not particularly true with the violent Cato government in *Those Who Knew* and the vicious Brazilian gambling mafia in *Ways to Disappear*, which are the primary causes of the characters' vulnerability in both novels. As a result, both books' settings must be thoroughly examined in order to understand how vulnerability is formed.

Novey establishes the U.S supported Cato government in *Those Who Knew*, a harsh governing structure that renders women, activists, students, and the poor invisible. In such a brutal and violent atmosphere, people's susceptibility increases tremendously. The prevailing notion is that on this nameless island, massive discrepancies between men and women, as well as between the powerful and the powerless, have existed. In connection to violence and vulnerability in a feminist perspective, Murphy (2012) highlights that feminist philosophy is interested in women who are dispossessed, helpless, and exposed, and is investigating how such experiences may result in retaliatory acts of aggression and violence (p.69). Novey uses the island's hegemonic structure to illustrate the grounds for the island's residents' vulnerability. In this way, *Those Who Knew* portrays individuals, particularly women and marginalized people, whose worries, paranoias, obsessions, psychological struggles, conversations and attitudes, and even head voice reveal the depth of their battle against dominant violent patterns. To illustrate, the regime's assassination of

Victor and Freddy's uncle, Olga's exile in the Cato prison and the disappearance of her girlfriend in this prison, the marches of activist students against the Cato regime, Lena's family's support for the regime, Freddy's silence and plays critical of the regime are all connections that contribute to the characters' vulnerability in terms of the environment and political atmosphere in which they find themselves.

In *Those Who Knew*, Victor, a prominent politician in the Justice and Truth Party today, and his brother Freddy, a stage artist, both grew up under the brutal Cato dictatorship's grip during their childhood and adolescence years. To emphasize the island's oppressive and insecure atmosphere at the time, Novey depicts their missing school teacher uncle, who was protesting the dictatorship, by stating, "For over a decade, Victor's father had been trying to find out what had happened to his brother Edgar, who'd been among the school teachers rounded up for protesting the bogus election results declaring Cato the new president" (p.40). In this regard, their family has seen directly the merciless administration's treatment of anyone who resist it, including the kidnapping of their uncle Edgar. Further, in a society where citizens are being slain or vanishing, the regime's harsh and repressive structure is clearly apparent. However, Novey demonstrates to the reader via the siblings that, although Victor and Freddy, like the other characters who have been exposed to the merciless regime's horrors, Freddy becomes more susceptible than Victor. As a consequence of his upbringing in a harsh political context, Freddy is portrayed as a frail and defenseless man who turns his frailty on the stage throughout his plays. While Victor has developed a reputation for abusing women, in one way, he exposes the cruel ruling structure of the Cato dictatorship via his plays about political victims and their families; in another, he heals his own frailty. For example, he was moved by his uncle's disappearance and wrote a play in which he emphasized the Cato regime's oppressive and insecure structure that is shown in the following:

SCENES FROM THE PRUNING OF A FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

[...]

At the outset of the regime

SET

A shabby kitchen, paint chipping on the cabinets.

A platter with a roasted chicken reigns, untouched, on a simple table.

The lights come up as the father closes an imaginary door and says good-bye to someone who has already stepped out.

[...]

MOTHER

They'll release him.

They can't keep all those people locked up indefinitely, and your brother knows everyone.

He'll find someone who can—

FATHER

Just stop it, would you please?

What do you know?

You don't know anything.

Pause.

[...] (Novey, 2018, p.47)

Another character who embodies both violence and vulnerability is Olga, Lena's best friend in *Those Who Knew*, who is described as possessing a personality that is both assertive on the surface and vulnerable on the inside. Similarly, Novey portrays Olga as a character shaped by her heinous past. By detailing Olga's exterior and interior character structures, which are distinct from one another, Novey highlights that the fragility resulting from extreme events must constantly be concealed, and at the same time, how fragility produces reflections in people's inner worlds. Namely, For Novey, it's vital to highlight that Olga's character structures are unique from each other, both from an exterior viewpoint and an internal one; she also points out that Olga's experiences have made her vulnerable and contemplative, making her open and passive. Olga was an activist during her time as a college student, participating in student marches. She is depicted as a tough and logical woman who spent time in prison as a victim of the Cato regime and is now free. The following example illustrates the pernicious consequences of her experience under the Cato system:

Olga had pursued a ghost once herself, a man who sat down across from her on a bus a few months into her exile years. He'd had the same splotchy pigment across the back of his hands as the soldier who'd brought food into the room where she and the love of her life had been detained. (Novey, 2018, p.15)

To understand what Olga has endured can be viewed in the perspective of Gilson (2014), who argues that violence draws our attention to a domain of suffering that is separate from physically damaged conditions (p.48). In the same manner, as a consequence of constant violent abuses (p.48), “[t]here [appears] a feeling of vulnerability, exposure, that never goes away, that lurks beneath the surface” (Hooks, 1999, p.151). Gilson claims (2014) that violence exposes one to the potential of an unexpected violation, which may throw one's control, circumstances, and attitude out of whack (p.48). Violence is a scenario that results in disturbance due to its rapidly

converted structure (p.48). From this perspective, Novey introduces us to the character as the owner of a bookshop who keeps a diary titled “Transaction Log for Olga's Seek the Sublime or Die” and also shows her vulnerable inner world in this sentence: “The less she needed, the less guilty she felt about continuing to live when the love of her life had not” (Novey,2018, p.13). Because another source of vulnerability for Olga is the disappearance of her partner, Sara. Sara, Olga’s girlfriend, was also an activist student who was anti-regime and disappeared as a result of her political and Jewish identity during the Cato regime exile. Therefore, Olga’s journals, in which she details her daily routines to her missing lover, Sara, are an example of her mental fragility full of anguish in an environment of vulnerability. The following is an example of Olga’s meticulous writing:

September 6th

10:05, Kundera Report

Dear S, just sold another Unbearable Lightness to a student with curls as thick and self-determined as yours. If you’d lived till Kundera came out in translation here, I’m sure you would have known why his books are like cocaine for the undergrad mind. (p.21)

Novey shows Olga's battle to overcome her unhappiness and bad memories concerning Sara via her daily diary writing. Novey portrays Olga's sensitive inner world, which is in shambles, by meticulously recording every moment. Olga's journal writing is distinct from physical vulnerability in that it is a true account of emotional suffering caused by vulnerability. On the one hand, Olga is shown as a strong and rational heroine who has spent some time in prison as a victim of the Cato regime. On the other hand, she represents the visibility of marginalized people, who are believed to be invisible because "the visibility of bodies, individuals, and things under a system of centralized observation," (Foucault and Gordon, 1980, p.146), as exemplified by the Cato regime's ruling, was a primary governing principle of patriarchal hegemonic power. In addition to this, Olga’s writing activity is portrayed how she uses the writing as a tool to overcome her fragility, and, also how Novey underlines the place of diary writing in literary connotation which is generally connoted with femininity and negativity. To illustrate,

Women's writings have often been devalued in light of men's, a practice which may be traced to the establishment of a canon of sacred religious texts in the Middle Ages, and which extended over time to embrace secular, literary works, predominantly those written by men. Women's diaries in particular have suffered the fate of being gendered

"feminine" and thus of less historical, cultural, and literary value than "masculine" works. (Podnieks, 2000, p.51)

Therefore, Novey uses Olga's journal writing not merely as a means of healing or as a physical evidence of her vulnerability, but also as a protest against the negative or humiliating connections associated with women's writing. In addition to this, Olga's consistent correspondence with Sara has shown that she is still going through the stages of grief, which indicates that she has been experiencing a great deal of pain. In this way, Novey demonstrates, on the one hand, how women express themselves under the tyranny of a fascist regime and oppressive governmental conditions and, on the other hand, how they cope with their fragility.

An additional component of vulnerability as a consequence of the Cato regime is that the novel's heroine, Lena, is related to the dictatorship via her familial ties, which makes her even more vulnerable. Lena is from a well-to-do family on the island, and her whole family supports the Cato movement. In spite of her adamant resistance to the dictatorship, Lena has grown up under the influence of the political ideals held by her parents and grandparents. The lines following describe how she feels about this condition the following:

She knew everyone assumed her family, as owners of one of the largest juice factories on the island, had supported the regime... Her grandfather had hired only workers who professed to support Cato. Throughout her childhood, her grandfather had repeated the same justifications for the roundups that everyone in their world of gated homes had, insisting the numbers of people detained and killed were wildly exaggerated. (Novey, 2018, p.23)

Thereby, one of the factors contributing to Lena's inherent fragility is her family's political views, which places her in an uncomfortable and vulnerable position, particularly among the other activist students. Novey demonstrates how Lena has been under the influence of the other people by noting that "she needed to be more courageous during the marches..." (p.24) since "... her family could secure her release with a simple phone call..." (p.24) "throwing more Molotov cocktails than all of the other girls combined" (p.24). Lena's experiences may be explained in the light of Butler's "voice of the government" (Butler, 2004, p.1) and "personal pathology" (Butler, 2004, p.1) theories to understand her vulnerability as a result of oppressive power. The fact that Lena is stranded between these two worlds adds another layer of intrigue to her narrative of vulnerability. Through her family, she is constantly exposed to notions of a cruel government, which makes her sensitive and vulnerable. Thus,

Butler (2004) refers to the prevailing hegemony as one that "rests on an affiliation or identification with that voice" (p.1). This voice establishes policies and politics for the public, which, as in *Those Who Knew*, never tolerates criticism. This voice is that of the Cato dictatorship, which Lena and her activist colleagues resist. Butler (2004) claims that the government's voice generates a fearful environment in which voicing one's views risks being branded and stigmatized with a heinous term. It is difficult to preserve one's voice in such cases since one must not only disregard the reality of the designation, but also confront the stigma that comes from the public sphere. Disagreement is mitigated in part by frightening the speaker with the loss of his or her identity (p.xix). In this way, what Lena has endured demonstrates to the reader that both her familial links to the dictatorship and the government itself have placed Lena in a vulnerable position in relation to the others. As a result, the only option for Lena to escape her delicate and fragile surroundings is for her to fall for Victor, which will be discussed in relational terms in the second chapter of this thesis.

It is thus argued that the brutal and severe political dominating structure of the Cato dictatorship, which is seen as a symbol of patriarchal hegemonic power and masculinity, is at the root of the events of *Those Who Knew*, because it serves as a foundation for the individuals' susceptibility to capture. Olga's journal writing and Freddy's plays, as well as Lena's position in her family and among the activist students, demonstrate how hegemonic violence and abusive settings make people especially vulnerable. Furthermore, Olga's journal writing, Freddy's plays, and Lena's love for Victor all demonstrate that sensitive individuals attempt to find a way to heal in their own unique ways. As a result, despite the fact that each of them has been through a range of difficult and painful events, they are able to alter themselves through their vulnerability and by discovering their own solutions. As a result, what Novey represents in her work is congruent with feminist opposition to the use of vulnerability or the perception of vulnerability as a sign of weakness.

Similarly, the setting constructed in *Ways to Disappear* demonstrates how Novey builds a violent context to emphasize the correlation between vulnerability and violence. Novey creates a hazardous, frightening, and largely full of illegal gangs setting under the sway of masculine oppression through her depiction of the metropolis. The protagonist, American academic Emma Neufeld of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, takes an aircraft to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's mobster and mafia capital. There appears to be a domineering and harsh power in this novel again, and that has

an effect on the characters. Also, the frightening masculine power dynamics reveal how they must deal with the vulnerability resulting from the fear of being killed. In this regard, the physical environment enables the characters "to be open to a violent expression of alterity" (Ganteau and Onega, 2017, p.3), or otherness; hence, vulnerability is seen as a pattern that renders "autonomy impossible" (p.3) through violence. This puts the characters in a vulnerable position throughout their quest for Brazilian author Beatriz, who is also presented in a vulnerable manner because of her debt, personal and professional problems. However, even if this vulnerability generates weakness and fear for the characters, the fragile character Emma falls in love in the middle of this stressful atmosphere. Novey depicts Emma by stating, "The world, according to [Emma], made no exceptions for lovers" (Novey, 2016, p. 98). Even if she is in the midst of a perilous adventure, she may think about and fall in love. Specifically, this openness creates a transformative understanding in one way for the protagonist. For example, Gilson (2011) states that it is because of our vulnerability that we suffer, are victims of violence, and are injured. But it is also because of this vulnerability that we may fall in love, acquire knowledge, appreciate and find comfort in the presence of others, and that we can feel all of these emotions at the same time (p.310). In this light, it can be concluded that the portrayals of Novey in *Ways to Disappear* show the reader that on the one hand the violent setting of the novel forms a basis for the character's fragility. On the other side, characters might develop coping mechanisms in order to deal with their vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, Novey shows the violence in her setting in *Ways to Disappear* via the Brazilian gambling mafia and the gangster-infested cities of Brazil full of illegal people: "Half the people in Rio have guns in their jackets" (Novey, 2016, p.14). Specifically, Novey recasts the masculine language and violence of the mafia in terms of Butler's idea of the "voice of government" (Butler, 2004, p.1), describing how the Brazilian mafia exists as the voice of domination and how it sustains repressive power relations. The Brazilian gambling mafia's "or else" approach, full of violence, terror, and the threat of murder, exacerbates Novey's characters' vulnerability in the search for missing author Beatriz. For instance, Emma's first encounter in Brazil is with one of the criminals seeking money from the missing author. Novey gives the hegemonic patriarchal voice through Flamenguinho in the following:

Listen, he said to her breasts, fuck the story. You know what I want? I want the six hundred thousand fucking dollars she owes me. Okay? I know she's broke. So you need

to get the damn book from her. Whatever you get for it in your country, half a million is mine, and then I won't have to kill her. (Novey, 2016, p.10)

It is undeniable that because of the "or else" mentality of the Brazilian gambling mafia, which is filled with brutality, terror, and the fear of murder, Novey's character's vulnerability in the search for missing author Beatriz is heightened even more in this sense. In the example above, not only has Emma been exposed to patriarchal violence, which surprises and distresses her, but also she has experienced "situational vulnerability" (McKenzie et al, 2013, p.7) that may emerge in a social setting for a variety of reasons. With regards to this, Cudd (2006) explains that violent behavior has the unfortunate side effect of predicting future violent behavior. For the victim as well as the perpetrator, this suggests a potentially dangerous situation in which further violence is likely to occur, as in the example of Emma above. The victim is concerned about further attack, while the offender is concerned about retribution or becoming a victim of another perpetrator's violence. When there is a clear and present risk, fear becomes more genuine (p.90). From this perspective, Emma becomes a victim of an abuser during her talk with the cab driver, who is also a member of the gambling mafia in pursuit of money. In this scenario, the setting of the book *Ways to Disappear* demonstrates that the protagonist and other characters are continually exposed to threatening macho 'or else' rhetoric, and this contextual exposure reinforces their vulnerability.

Regarding Emma, in her article "Translation and Retranslation" on *Ways to Disappear*, Michelle Bailat-Jones (2016) comments that Emma's journey to Brazil constitutes a strangeness for Emma, as well as the reader. The fact that Emma is an American in Brazil "tak[es] the reader with her to a foreign destination, with its unfamiliar sights, flavors, and sounds" (Bailat- Jones, 2016, p.26). Furthermore, Emma is portrayed as a person who uses the act of translation in her social relationships as a translator. Bailat-Jones describes Emma as a person "who becomes the silent and often-overlooked mediator for the transfer of meaning between one set of people and another" (p.26). However, this spontaneous attitude Emma is good at because of her profession does not make Emma happy; instead, she is described in the following sentence: "If only she'd been born a man in Babylon when a translators were celebrated as the makers of a language" (Novey, 2016, p.62). It is demonstrated that Emma, a strong American female figure in Brazil, has been profoundly influenced by not only her dissatisfied American life in Pittsburgh, which is centered on her fiancé's desire to

marry her, but also both the masculine hegemony in her occupation and by hegemonic masculinity in Brazil. In light of the feminist viewpoint and vulnerability, it is possible to infer that the patriarchal hegemonic view of women in professional life makes women more vulnerable and unhappy.

As indicated before, Emma's quest starts when her favorite author, whose works she is translating into English, vanishes. Surprisingly, Beatriz's disappearance coincides with the disappearance of Emma from her personal life, who is about to marry. Unlike Beatriz, Emma is portrayed as an artistic or visionary force in the novel, leaving the reader to wonder whether Emma flies to Brazil to find the author or to escape her stationary life. Novey, for example, depicts Lena's self-questioning when she is photographed on the boat with Marcus in this sentence; “[she] had come to find the unease this conflict produced in her curiously alluring. She couldn't help winding herself tighter and tighter around it like a thread around a spool” (Novey, 2016, p.56). Novey emphasizes how she uses the disappearance of her best author to escape from her dull life in which she is supposed to get married and settle down. She is eager for an adventure, even though her boyfriend Miles “told her she spent too much time fretting over unanswered emails” concerning her author, Beatriz (p.5). However, “his preferred subject of late was when they might get married, and whether they had to invite everyone in their Road Runners” (p.5). In this regard, Emma is portrayed as someone whose vulnerability stems from her structure because, even if she becomes paralyzed in her life, she lacks the courage to say no. Emma's vulnerability can be explained by what Ganteau and Onega (2017) explain on vulnerability. They suggest that susceptibility appears as a state that makes autonomy impossible, a position in which the individual manifests itself in response to some controlling other (p.3). Therefore, Emma uses her vulnerability to create room for herself on this trip. Clearly, Emma's best writer's departure gives her a new, more liberating environment to escape from her mundane existence, which she has been severely questioning for some time. Her inner voice is portrayed in the sentence; “spending her life desperate to measure exactly how much she knew, and what had it gotten her? ...a boyfriend who spent his evenings charting the rise in his pulse during his morning run” (p.80). Despite her social vulnerability in Brazil and threats from a gangster, Emma uses her self-questioning to change her negative situation into a source of personal knowledge for herself. Novey used the self-questioning in this way to demonstrate to the reader that even when Emma is threatened and in the midst of dangers in Brazil, which enhances

her vulnerability, she utilizes her inquiring mind to find a solution for herself, which is consistent with feminist transformational vulnerability concept. As a result, Emma is portrayed as a character who takes advantage of her weaknesses. This is due to the fact that, at the same time as she is searching for Beatriz, Emma is also striving to determine what she wants out of her personal life.

To put it another way, in general, Novey creates complex characters and weaves them together into a dramatic and allegorical story to demonstrate to the reader how hegemonic violence affects people, or how violence plunges the person into uncertainty by making them "the vulnerable". In both works, "the vulnerable" are represented as weak, defenseless, marginalized individuals who become vulnerable as a consequence of ongoing oppressive and violent events, and they are typically in need of others' assistance and protection. Through the main characters, Lena in *Those Who Knew* and Emma in *Ways to Disappear*, Novey demonstrates that even the most accomplished and intelligent individuals who are supposed to be the forerunners of others recognized by society in the twenty-first century have been influenced by their vulnerability in academic, social, and political aspects of their lives. Women protagonists are not the only ones that are oppressed by patriarchal society; other characters, such as Olga and Freddy in *Those Who Knew* are also marginalized due to their homosexual identities. Also, Lena's son, Cosmo – because of her American identity and physical appearance- and, Cristina's son- because of her Father's political corruption, become vulnerable. In addition to this, Lena and Cristina are connected with Victor, since both have children with him. In *Ways to Disappear*, Novey constantly interrogates the question of a satisfying life through Emma in terms of her joyful love affair with Marcus- Beatriz's son- whereas she has a fiancé. In addition to Emma, she portrays an enigmatic disappearance of a famous writer, Beatriz, who hides the secrets and unhappiness in her literary life. In each of her works, the protagonists become "the vulnerable" as a result of their surroundings, patriarchal norms, and oppression.

As regards to patriarchal reflections, Novey highlights the experiences of her female heroines, Lena in *Those Who Knew* and Emma in *Ways to Disappear*. Both are professors who are presented as driven and accomplished in their fields, but hesitant and confused at the same time. On the one hand, Novey emphasizes the patriarchal patterns' predominance in their natural state as a consequence of vulnerability. On the other hand, she exploits the characters' doubts by emphasizing their capacity to

discover the truth via their self-awareness and realization amid the anguish they have endured. To illustrate, when she returns home after being subjected to a severe assault by Victor, who "seize[ed] her wrist in the lobby" (Novey, 2018, p.74), she suffers a type of collapse. Her self-examination results in unfavorable judgments about herself. In this sense, her gender may be assessed on the basis of "personal pathology" (Butler, 2004, p.5), and her "personal pathology" (p.5) can be assessed in terms of "susceptibility to suffering" (Onega and Ganteau, 2017, p.3). Her inner dialogue with herself exemplifies her triggered vulnerability, and her investigation may be read in the following patriarchal phrases:

Wasn't this one of the ways women unraveled? They failed to marry at the expected age, they got lonelier, stuck on some ex-lover's success while they remained trapped in one demoralizing position after another, their thoughts growing increasingly erratic and unhinged. (p.74)

The more her sensitivity is piqued, the more self-conscious she becomes. And she feels that "her perceptions were becoming unreliable" (p.88). As a result, she becomes more vulnerable, perplexed, and unbalanced. Onega and Ganteau (2017) bolster the argument that individuals nowadays are motivated by traumatic situations that often result in vulnerability (p.1). Furthermore, Lena's violent assault by Victor, as Susan J. Brison states, causes to interrogate herself as she thinks that she was no longer the person she was before to the assault, and one area in which she seemed to have altered was her relationship with her body. Her body was now seen as an enemy for infringing on her newly acquired trust and interest in it, as well as a source of increased vulnerability (Brison, 2003, p.44). This sensitivity to damage becomes rather high as a result of the hegemonic masculine mindset inspired by patriarchy. What Lena goes through in terms of her wounded self makes sense in this view. As a consequence, her inner dialogue with herself exemplifies her triggered sensitivity as a woman, as her fragility prompts her to doubt her femininity.

With a particular emphasis on Emma's vulnerability as a woman and the dominant male dialectic, Novey demonstrates her character's self-consciousness about her private life. What Novey emphasizes about Emma's identity is her perspective on love, life, relationships, and everything else associated with her profession as a translator. Emma's worldview is affected by her translator's vision. As she waits for Marcus in the hotel room, her uncertainty about her private life—which includes

having an affair with two men, Marcus and Miles—can be heard in her mind's voice, which can be heard in the phrases following:

In translation, this kind of dilemma was known as domestication. A translator could justify moving around the objects in a sentence if it made it easier for her audience to grasp what was going on. She could even change an object into something more familiar to the reader to avoid baffling him with something he wouldn't understand. (Novey, 2016, p.108)

As a result, in her private life, she thinks in the way of a translator, which is not surprising. For example, her insecurity over how she feels when she is in the presence of Marcus and Miles illustrates how she is genuinely weak and frail. Emma's frailty is shown via the lens of the feminine/masculine dialectic, with particular emphasis focused on Emma's self-doubt over her love life, professional career, and reputation. In this regard, and in connection with feminist perspective and vulnerability, what Emma has gone through in her private life can be evaluated in terms of her surviving strategies, even if she has been fragile and vulnerable as a result of the patriarchal oppression she has experienced as a woman.

In *Those Who Knew*, Novey emphasizes patriarchal aggression that oppresses women to demonstrate how the characters are subjected to anti-humanitarian violence and discrimination, as well as how the hegemonic authority uses its power repressively. Thereby, it can be concluded that Novey views patriarchy as a necessary concept for dealing with the characters' vulnerability. Throughout the story, the expression of vulnerability can be seen in how it impacts the characters' liability with regards to violence, repression, and unethical views. Within the context of unethical and violent examples of oppression discussed earlier, Olga's love affair with a woman, her girlfriend's disappearance in prison, and the suppression Freddy faces as a gay man should be read through the lens of "the face" (Levinas, 1980, p.297), "which means that I am exposed to the other person through the face" (p.6) because what the characters have endured demonstrates that without an ethical understanding or manner, patriarchy and hegemonic violence result in vulnerability. In the following, Novey depicts Olga's reflections on the harsh patriarchal understanding she is subjected to;

They already had some idea of what soldiers had done to her. Everyone in walking distance of the bookstore knew some rumored version of what she must have endured at the outset of the regime, when she'd been rounded up with hundreds of other student protesters. Although what had been done to the love of her life, right in front of her, was known to no one. (Novey, 2018, p.13)

Since she has been ostracized because of her homosexuality or because she holds opinions that are in opposition to those of the regime, Olga has become a symbol for the regime's hatred, discrimination, and persecution of people who are marginalized. While on the surface, Olga seems to be fragile and vulnerable, she utilizes this vulnerability to protect her companion Lena from the danger of Victor. As an example, when Lena discovers the knitwear of the dead girl, she is shocked and mystified. However, she has been calmed down in a witty manner by Olga as in the sentence:

I think you're reading too much Saramago, Olga said as she pushed open the front door and stepped outside. What you need to do is sit down with a cup of tea and read someone who doesn't stray so much from reality, someone like—. (p.5)

Their deep affinity demonstrates to the reader that Olga, who has been exposed to a variety of harsh and aggressive attitudes and is very fatigued, has grown wary and protective of her companion, even if she later believes her.

Another vulnerable victim subjected to hegemonic masculinity is Freddy, who has the option of remaining silent in the face of patriarchal family relations. As a result of his uncle's death and their father's teachings on brotherhood, he develops a quiet and, at times, confused attitude. His inner anguish is evident, most notably in Victor's destructive female relationships. Freddy interrogates her brother regarding Maria P.'s death, stating, "You must know something, Freddy had said, "you slept with her Was she inebriated? Was she irresponsible? How did she wind up in front of the bus? you might wonder "(p.29). Additionally, since he is homosexual and a poor writer, he is at a loss about how to behave in light of Victor's prominent political prominence. Victor, in contrast to Freddy, is a rough, brutal, and strong embodiment of hegemonic masculinity. While he was watching Freddy's Play, he is given voice in anguish:

The play was set in a gay bar but the leading actor wasn't another version of Freddy this time. The lead was a closeted married man, a father who loathed himself for being unable to resist the lure of the bar and the men inside it. A father whose sister had been killed in the roundups, but who otherwise was more or less their father, which was ludicrous. It was libelous. It was outright lunacy. Victor watched in horror as the father figure on the stage danced alone with a purple feather boa. (p.69)

Freddy's susceptibility stems from a conflict between his father's teachings on commitment and brotherhood and his own. Likewise, Victor, his brother, does not accept him as a gay guy. Freddy's vulnerability may be characterized by "emblematic faces of passivity" (Ganteau, 2015, p.6). Ganteau, drawing on Levinas' idea of

vulnerability, asserts that susceptibility to the other is one of the variables that lead to ethical indifference (p.6), as shown by Freddy. Due to his brother and father's rejection of him as a homosexual man, Freddy develops a quiet and meek personality, influenced by his brother Victor's influence. Along with his silence, his sibling has ridiculed his work. The play, on the other hand, is an illustration of Freddy's silent lament about who he really is. Freddy's turmoil makes him weak and frail in one manner, but he also creates art and converts his fragility into a piece of art. In connection to vulnerability and homosexuality, Butler (2004) argues that a starting point should be the reality that minorities, especially females and LGBT individuals, are often the targets of violence and, in some circumstances, the perpetrators of violence. Our bodies' social fragility—as sites of desire and physical weakness, as well as locations of aggressive and open publicity—implies that we are all politically susceptible to some level. We are social beings who rely on others and are thus vulnerable to the loss of such reliances and exposures, which adds to our sense of helplessness and vulnerability (p.20). Within Butler's framework, Freddy may be seen as an image of vulnerability due to his homosexuality, and his relegation to invisibility and isolation is a tangible representation of what gays have endured under the patriarchal masculinity paradigm as the marginalized or vulnerable group are believed to be a threat to patriarchal hierarchy. But his silent cry depicts a homosexual father dancing in a bar. However, in patriarchal culture, the traits of a man are already known or established, and the concept of a homosexual parent has no place in hegemonic masculinity. As a result, Victor despises the character, which bothers him since his father once chased their uncle into a pub while being pursued by the Cato government. Freddy is therefore rendered impotent as a result of the brutal regime's and its crimes against mankind. As a result of his distinction, he is vulnerable to discrimination and prejudice.

The vestiges of patriarchal oppression that women typically experience as a result of their gender may be portrayed in *Ways to Disappear* through Emma's inquiring mind, which occurs throughout the novel. Emma is on the verge of marrying Miles, despite the fact that she is well aware that she has not been satisfied with him so far. However, during her search for Emma, she started to spend more time with Marcus and disregard Miles, since it is only in a fresh environment that she can realize her true aspirations, as seen by the sentences,

Her inbox contained two messages from Miles but she didn't open them. She'd paid for only ten minutes and wanted to search for the genus of toad she'd discussed with Marcus in the cab. In English it was called the red-belly. (Novey, 2016, p. 21)

To liberate herself from Mile's oppression about marriage and to rehabilitate her condition, Emma converts this Brazil journey into a self-interrogation. To explain what Emma has gone through, it can be concluded that the oppression imposed by patriarchal culture has an influence on women's sense of self and their ability to participate fully in society. Despite their abilities, women are unable to put them to good use. To show how Emma defies patriarchal expectations, she decides to settle in Brazil permanently and live with Marcus at the novel's conclusion. Moreover, even though she's taken a risky trip that has left her defenseless and powerless, she still maintains a positive outlook on life.

Novey demonstrates another kind of subjugation to the reader via Beatriz's literary identity. Beatriz is described as an author whose weakness is exacerbated by literary hegemony. She is defined as a person who uses metaphors to express herself as a result of the oppressive power she has experienced. Emma notices that Beatriz's genuine disappearance is similar to "the warden who disappears into a tree" (p.7) in one of Beatriz's earlier narratives. The story is about:

A minor character who climbed a palm tree outside the walls to listen to the lizards and found the distance so freeing, sitting there elevated and unseen, away from the other wardens and their prisoners, that he never came down. (p.7)

In some ways, this narrative serves as a flash forward to what would become Beatriz; in other ways, it serves as a hint that Beatriz is trapped and feels as if she is a prisoner in her existence. Beatriz's vulnerability in her work is partly a result of her money-minded publisher Roberto Rocha, who "like[s] to test his steaks to see if the meat was worth what he had paid for it" (p.95). Perhaps one of the reasons for her disappearance is because her publisher is too concerned with the sales of her books. For example, upon the disappearance of Beatriz, it is believed that "[w]ith all the media attention, the book will sell out immediately" (p.95). Within this context, Novey's use of the dictionary term can be assumed how Beatriz as a writer is constrained by literary clichés. Her usage of the word promise is an example of her outcry for oppression:

Promise: From the late Middle English *prom-is*. First known use 15th century. 1. A declaration of what a person intends to do, which may correspond to what a person actually does, or may not. 2. A verb used to assure of a certain outcome, as in with time, a translator gets used to promising the impossible the way a loan shark gets used to

promising carnage. See also: humanity after Babel, hangings during the Inquisition, chamber music in the dark. (Novey, 2016, p.12)

In fact, by emphasizing the ways in which characters become vulnerable throughout the book, Novey draws attention to the patriarchal and violent environmental tendencies that exist in today's society. Although patriarchy establishes the major grounds for being vulnerable to wounds, it also frames vulnerability as a sign of weakness on the other hand. Gilson, however, concentrates on invulnerability in order to dispel the negative connotations associated with vulnerability. Gilson (2011) supports that our feelings concerning vulnerability are vague, and we do not take a stance on the subject based on our beliefs. By disregarding vulnerability, we might avoid falling prey to the fallacy of a weakness that is both universal and common. We, on the other hand, reject vulnerability in both our thoughts and actions. We make a commitment not to the actuality of invulnerability, but to the social advantage that invulnerability may provide for us (p.314), and she goes on,

Invulnerability has social utility because we understand vulnerability in the conventional manner described above that collapses all forms of vulnerability into one negative conception and equates vulnerability as susceptibility to harm with weakness, dependency, powerlessness, and defect: if to be vulnerable is to be weak and subject to harm, then to be invulnerable is the only way to be strong and competent. (Gilson, 2011, p. 314)

Accordingly, the environment, patriarchal standards, and oppression are the leading causes of vulnerability. Charlton (1998) states that as a consequence of their membership in a specific social group, persons who are exposed to oppression suffer from a systematic political, economic, cultural, and social deterioration. Those who are oppressed are those who are subjected to oppressive hierarchical systems of dominance and subordination that are built on notions of superiority and inferiority (p.8).

Consequently, with all these oppressive and violent behaviors and attitudes emanating from both hegemonic ruling power dynamics such as the Cato regime and the Brazilian gambling mafia, Novey demonstrates how women, homosexuals, and minorities must deal with a variety of forms of abuse in patriarchal environments and understandings. Within this context, it might be argued that the reason Novey's character becomes weak is because they are seen as inferior in the repressive atmosphere in which they live. They are especially susceptible because of patriarchal oppression and aggression, which prevents them from finding a safe haven in which

to live their lives freely, and as a consequence, they are rendered invisible. As it was mentioned earlier, invulnerability, on the other hand, provides a societal advantage because we perceive vulnerability in the traditional manner described above, which condenses all types of vulnerability into a single negative picture. However, given the feminist perspective on vulnerability, it is important to note that being invulnerable entails being strong and knowledgeable regardless of the situation.

1.2. Feminist Representations of The self and Corporeality in Vulnerability

The self and corporeality in the context of vulnerability in the hegemonic and patriarchal settings depicted in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* will be discussed in the following section of this chapter from the perspectives of feminist transformational and ethical considerations in terms of the concepts of openness, passivity, and loss using concrete examples from the novels.

As discussed above, Novey depicts "the vulnerable" in her books as an indication of frailty in settings and contexts controlled by hegemonic violence and patriarchal norms. By doing this, Novey is attempting to emphasize the relevance of the characters' surroundings in the establishment of vulnerability. In addition to hegemonic violence and patriarchal standards, there have been two critical challenges in the understanding and production of vulnerability in both novels: the subjectivity and the corporeality of individuals. Novey emphasizes how the characters have coped with vulnerability in their ontological frameworks first, and then she illustrates the consequences of vulnerability in their individualities and corporeality second. That is to say, *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* are about stories "of the interrelation among textuality, violence, and subjectivity" (Marshall, 2002, p.34).

The narratives include a large number of characters, the majority of whom are women, children, gays, and students, all of whom are on their own personal survival journeys. While Novey emphasizes the negative consequences of vulnerability on the characters, she also illustrates their unintentional efforts to avoid vulnerability, which becomes a stumbling block in their travels on the other side. In this sense, it is evident that Novey identifies the ways in which characters are hampered by their weaknesses,

whether they are aware of them or not. Each character has various types of violent exposure; some are a result of family relationships, while others are a result of masculine domination. When the basic cause of self-inflicted wounds is examined, their subjective natures become open and passive as a consequence of their vulnerabilities. Precisely, the fact that they become open and passive as a consequence of hegemonic violence is one of the most crucial aspects in the development of their susceptibility. On the basis of this analysis, it can be argued that the subjectivity of the characters is harmed as a result of their “shared openness to affecting and being affected” (Gilson, 2014, p. 121). Regarding vulnerability and openness, Gilson (2014) explains that vulnerability is derived from the Latin word "vulnerare," which literally translates as "to be exposed and susceptible"(p.127). This openness implies that we are unable to foresee, control, or completely comprehend what we are open to and how it will affect us, which is critical to understanding and appreciating its importance and meaning. Those seeds of the unexpected, the uncontrolled, and the unknown have the ability to cause us to go through changes that are likewise unforeseen, uncontrollable, and unknown (p.127). Likewise, despite their difficulties on their quests, Novey’s protagonists in her both novel undergo transformations that have concluded in positive in their conflicts with one another. Thereby, based on a feminist perspective, these compelling but ultimately successful personal journeys may be explained by the transforming structure of the term "vulnerability," or, in other words, the healing capability of vulnerability, even when it is generally seen as bad.

Female characters in the book, *Those Who Knew*, are the first specific illustrations of openness and passivity in a literary context. The protagonist of *Those Who Knew*, Lena was raised by a wealthy family that supported the Cato dictatorship. During her university years, she was one of the activist students that were against the regime. Besides, as previously stated, Lena has a lover, Victor, who continuously blames her for not being ambitious enough in her protests against the regime and for being a member of a Cato regime-supporting family. Furthermore, to all of this oppression, as Lena has been subjected to Victor's physical assault, she has been silent for a long period of time until she heard of the death of university student Maria P. Even, her closest friend Olga uncovered the sexual attack years later. As Gilson (2014) stated in the context of a mutually shared connection, both mental and bodily abuses contribute to Lena’s vulnerability by making her a figure of openness (p.130).

In terms of being an icon of openness, Olga is another figure when it comes to her lesbian identity and her militant political stand that is opposed to the fascist regime, The Cato. In a similar way to Lena's isolation that keeps the years, Olga prefers to be invisible in order to protect herself, or to live in mourning because "Sara, who had been the love of her life" (Novey, 2018, p. 157) has vanished under the exile of the regime in prison. As members of vulnerable and oppressed groups, both Olga and Sara are figures of invisibility; Sara is literal, while Olga's is figurative. The major reason for this passiveness is inextricably linked to the structure of male culture based on the idea that "lesbian experience is perceived on a scale ranging from deviant to abhorrent, or simply rendered invisible" (Rich, 2003, p.632) in patriarchal societies. After everything they have been through, both characters dwell in an invisible manner that is believed to be safe and protective until the sweater Lena finds becomes peripeteia for the rest of the storyline that all the characters have come together, and have started a symbolic fight against hegemonic masculinity. For example, Olga and Lena have chosen to tell Sara about Victor and his violent and sexual attacks. Sara was the niece of Olga's missing lover, Sara, and had been working as Victor's secretary, as mentioned in the following sentences:

Olga went on in her email, adding that she had a plan in mind already, both to get Sara out of his office and to get that bastard. Tell her about Maria P., Olga ordered; tell her about him nearly killing you. (Novey, 2018, p. 157)

Sara has taken the time to read the warning letter regarding Victor. They are all on the same page when it comes to Victor's corruption and assault, and they all have the same activist beliefs about it. Therefore, in order to endure another woman's susceptibility to being wounded by Victor, both Olga and Lena utilize their delicate, sensitive selves to survive her. The feminist togetherness has been shown in the following:

Lena skimmed through the thank-you and statements of commiseration: . . . had to invent a boyfriend for him to stop . . . but again at lunch . . . his arm . . . started to question . . . yet stayed on . . . his fight for the amnesty laws . . . having been named for an aunt who . . . about to meet Olga . . . emboldened after hearing from you both . . . want to do something . . . perhaps you have heard on the news here . . . the vile smell . . . (p.159)

Olga and Lena's contact with Sara demonstrates how they may make the most of their vulnerability in a good way, especially when Sara accepts their offer of assistance. The instances of Olga and Lena's assistance, according to this viewpoint, demonstrate a feminist transformative knowledge of vulnerable situations. In this picture, while Lena

can exact vengeance on her abuser and bring him to justice, Olga can aid her long-lost lover by assisting her niece.

By the same token, Beatriz has developed into a figure of openness in the novel *Ways to Disappear*. Her disappearance is explained by Novey as a result of problems in her life, such as the persecution she faced from her publisher over book sales, as stated in the following sentence: “After her next book won every major award in Brazil, he’d encouraged Beatriz to leave his press for a larger, international house” (Novey, 2016, p. 23). In addition, she incurred gambling debt, which startled her daughter, who expresses herself in the following sentence: “her mother had gone on playing as if gambling online were no more than a tale she had invented, as if she were still a child and didn’t know the difference” (p.27). As a consequence of her experiences, she has made the decision to vanish. Despite the fact that her absence seemed ludicrous and unknown to everyone, Beatriz's virtual invisibility served as a metaphor for the hunt for her whereabouts. Another way to understand this is to consider the ethical subjectivity of the other individuals who are on the lookout for her. Levinas writes in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* that this ethical subjectivity is derived from a sense of duty. Further, “Levinas’ philosophy is bound up with the ideas that the subject is fundamentally ethical and that ethical subjectivity arises through an encounter with another person” (Spencer, 2010, p. 138). Levinas (1998) explains that taking responsibility is a shared goal. He or she is in a strong relationship with an order, a command, that is very important. All of your subjective movements have to be done in a certain way. This is called “subjection.” This bond doesn't just make a person act; it makes them who they are, which makes them who they are” (p.xix). Thus the damage done to subjectivity by vulnerable situations calls for an ethical mindset and a sense of responsibility. This perspective assists or contributes to the sensitive subject's healing process, making it easier to deal with their inadequacies or limitations. The others, such as Emma and Raquel, were inspired by Beatriz's invisibility in a metaphorical sense, and unfortunately, by the conclusion of the search, they had been through a lot of things that had profoundly impacted their delicate selves. Raquel, for example, is dealing with the loss of her mother's devotion, while Emma has decided to end her relationship with Miles. But the fact that they both choose to ignore the threats of death and the violence of the mafia in order to find Beatriz places them firmly in the gray area of ethical subjectivity.

In view of the openness that creates the vulnerable self, aforementioned, Novey's vulnerable subjects can be regarded as how they become invisible and silent because of their openness. To get past this openness and the vulnerability that comes with it, Novey sends her characters on magical and bizarre adventures, which can be called journeys of the survival. Novey demonstrates to the reader, using the spectrum from invisibility to visibility, how an "identity undergoes a change in signification through a change in context" (Diprose, 2022, p.99), and how "perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization" (Butler, 1990, p. 138). On this account, openness has been taken out of its context and regenerated for each character, and the negative connotations that were attached to it have been changed into positive and healing ones, especially with the help of ethical relationality and solidarity, which will be talked about in more detail in the second chapter of this study.

Likewise, Levinas (1998) asserts that the fact that one is exposed to vulnerability, does not necessarily imply that one is a reflection of one's own self (p. 62). Generally, the true source of weak connections of vulnerability is believed to be this proclivity for wounds, namely this openness to wounds. Because the openness creates spaces for the subject, and accordingly, the subject suffers a wound in the self. What to do in this case is to cultivate an ethical mindset and attitude. For this reason, this vulnerable subject/ self "appears to come with a moral dimension that demands action and support" (Waiton, 2019, p.5) because "the ethical question lies in the way one responds to" (Boublil, 2018, p.189) this vulnerable subject, and more importantly, the violence behind this vulnerability. To exemplify, Novey presents Lena's deficiency in her self-esteem through her conversation with her mother. Besides, accused of coming from a family that supports the fascist regime by Victor and other students, she has been deprived of her mother's emotional support because her mother criticizes her because of her activist ideas and acts. Novey underlines how Lena's wounded self deepens as a consequence of his loved ones' continual criticism and lack of emotional support. The accusative tone of Lena's mother and the accusation that Lena has been subjected to can be seen in the following:

Your real problem, her mother insisted, her voice strident and rising, is not the judgment of anyone else on this island. It's that you can't stop judging yourself. That's your real problem, and it always has been. Your family didn't kill anyone. I've never understood what you're so ashamed of. (Novey, 2018, p.143)

Hence, Lena turns into a victim by being open to all negative criticism of her loved one. However, her vulnerable subject is in the need of ethical manners of the others because psychological oppression “can block the way to and be conjured up by making oneself physically and emotionally vulnerable or receptive” (Cvetkovich, 2003, p.63), so the self becomes fragile, raising doubts on the subject's perspective of herself. Thus, in the example of Lena’s vulnerability is the deficiency of ethical manner of her mother and partner. However, Lena has overcome this vulnerability originated from openness years later when she has tried to prove that Victor is an abusive and corrupt politician with help of her friends. Her openness turns into a feminist battle where she fights for rights of the others, particularly ‘the vulnerable’.

In the same vein, when Raquel talks about her mother in *Ways to Disappear*, her delicate personality, which is both furious and loving at the same time, is clearly obvious. In part, this is due to Raquel's lack of a warm and emotional connection with her mother, which is reflected in the following statements she makes about her mother:

When people asked what it was like to be the daughter of someone who came up with such peculiar stories, Raquel told them the truth. She’d never read her mother’s books. She had no patience for the illusion that you could know someone because you knew her novels. What about knowing what a writer had never written down—wasn’t that the real knowledge of who she was. (Novey, 2016, p.19)

She is not as taken aback as Emma and Marcus are by her mother's absence, since she has always been more aware of her mother's peculiarity than the others. For instance, while they were watching television together, Raquel was unable to obtain the information that she sought due to her mother's figurative language replete with metaphors; however, her inner voice is reflected in the example sentence: "She would have liked to have spoken with her mother just once about what was actually happening" (p.20). Raquel has clearly never had a genuine and satisfactory connection with her mother, one in which she feels full and at ease. Raquel is vulnerable as a result of her openness, which stems from her mother's treatment of her. Even though she resented her mother, she has faced mafia members' abuse and death threats.

In connection to the vulnerable embodiment of the self about ethical subjectivity, Per Nortvedt (2003) indicates that the Levinasian hypothesis "the face" is brought into perspective in terms of its link to responsibility. Latest research done by Levine and Manning-Scheffler, Levinas reveals that the Levinasian idea of sensitivity for the other person, which is anchored in a non-verbal language of bodily displays, reveals a basic

ethical sensibility (p.228). Nortvedt, further, explains that most successfully, Levinas' ethics locates the moral imperative in physical or bodily displays of vulnerability, and in the nakedness of human destitution as reflected in the eyes of the other. Levinas contends that ethics actually locates the moral imperative, specifically the imperative of unconditional moral value, in sensibility: a sensibility awoken by an alterity manifested in the concreteness of the face, an alterity that is an expression of infinity rather than finitude, and that is manifested in the concreteness of the face as an expression of infinity. Levinas argues that ethics actually locates the moral imperative, specifically the imperative of unconditional moral value, in vulnerability (p.229).

In the same manner, corporeality of the vulnerable subject is taken by Gilson as the victim of physical violence as well as sexual violence. In order to understand how the connection between vulnerability and sexual violence form, it is necessary to look at “a phenomenological account, one that articulates the embodied nature of subjectivity, is better equipped to illuminate experiences of sexual violence and express the harms involved” (Gilson, 2016, p. 79). *Those Who Knew* explores bodily vulnerability through the perspectives of two revolutionary university students, Lena and Victor, who are joining in protests against the Cato dictatorship's downfall. Unfortunately, just before the next march, Lena drops the pamphlet, revealing the next protest strategy. The regime's security forces understand how and when the next protest will be staged and how to prevent it. Victor, Lena's boyfriend, thereupon loses control, and Lena becomes a victim of his excessive violence. While Novey presents Lena, the following words demonstrate her delicate construction:

Lena could still recall the splatter of Victor's spit on her face after she told him she didn't know where she'd misplaced it. When he pushed her against the wall and grabbed her throat, she'd thought he was just panicking for a second. But then he'd smashed his palm over her nostrils. He'd shouted about her father and grandfather, yelled they were the reason she was so careless and couldn't be trusted with anything. Each time she'd managed to gasp for air, she'd apologized again, but Victor had just clamped his hand down, harder. (Novey, 2018, p.24)

Accordingly, it is clear that Novey underlines the Lena's traumatic abuse that goes on for a long period at the basement in order to underline how hegemonic violence has been a normal act for an activist student protesting a fascist ruling system. Ironically, although Victor is given as the reason of the Lena's traumatic abuse, whose embodiment is shattered, he is also portrayed as the leader of the activist student opposed to Cato regime. In this regard, Novey shows how corporeal vulnerability and

hegemonic masculinity has a deep rooted mutual relation as Ann V. Murphy (2011) explains violence is acknowledged as an essential component in the identification and creation of embodied identity (p.576). Following her maltreatment at the hands of the other, Lena finds herself in a position of vulnerability, her subjectivity being damaged and injured. Gilson (2016) supports that one point of contention is that victimization is founded on a reductionist understanding of vulnerability. Given that victimization implies harm, this circumstance may seem to justify such feelings of vulnerability. Nonetheless, this concept of vulnerability frames victimization attributions in ways that severely restrict who may be considered a victim and who cannot; in other words, it serves as the foundation for moralizing and normalizing judgements about victims themselves. As a consequence, feminist theorists have examined the term critically (p.79).

In a similar context, *Ways to Disappear* vividly depicts how Raquel has been exposed to horrible mistreatment of members of the Brazilian mafia over the search of their mother. Throughout the novel, Novey portrays her as perplexed and uncomfortable as her flaws become more apparent, placing her in a state of self-doubt. This leads us to the conclusion that Novey employs vulnerability on the one hand to demonstrate to the reader that violence results in mental vulnerability as opposed to psychic vulnerability, which can result in suffering or agony in the mind (p.48), and on the other hand, this mental vulnerability stems from gangsters, who are the embodiment of hegemonic power dynamics based on violence, and thus vulnerability can be viewed as an indicator of a discussion of the nature of violence directly related to the subject that results in numerous wounds. Murphy (2012) asserts that, while the figure of the weak body is unambiguous as an ethical provocation of physical fragility, it is not as simply perverted in the service of a prescriptive morality as it may appear. It is critical to understand that the picture in no way encourages or prohibits violence; rather, it causes violence by prompting an unconscious response. According to Murphy, there is no inherent characteristic in vulnerability that fosters tolerance, restraint, or compassion; rather, confronting one's own vulnerability may be unpleasant and result in a desire for vengeance on the part of the individual. According to touch phenomenology, one's body's perception of touch is contingent upon the amount of it received. This exposure, on the other hand, encompasses the subject's own self in a manner that is neither normatively ambiguous nor prescriptive in any

way (p.66). For instance, Raquel is depicted in the midst of the verbal and physical torture and threat:

She was punching in the words on her phone when something yanked at her neck and pulled her off the sidewalk and into a recessed doorway. It was a man's arm, closing around her throat so fast there was no time to cry out. The man already had her crushed against him, her face to the wall, the muzzle of his gun pushing into her back. You need to tell your brother and that translator to stop screwing around and get the money, you hear me? he said from behind her, breathing into her ear. (Novey, 2016, p.36)

In view of this aforementioned, in the face of such violent and abusive situations that Lena and Raquel have been exposed to, the critical thing to remember is Gilson's concept of invulnerability because Gilson (2016) states that invulnerability is an important part of skillful subjectivity because it gives the impression that the person is in control. Perfect mastery, complete control, and complete impenetrability are all things that can't happen. The fact that invulnerability is a myth and that vulnerability will always be there is very important to understanding the nature of invulnerability. Having vulnerability means that we are open to being hurt and hurting, but having invulnerability means that we are close to the forms of being hurt that make us most aware of our own vulnerability (p.76). Thereby, considering Lena's vulnerability, it can be concluded from the novel that Lena is under the effect of that vulnerable trauma triggering her vulnerability today that described in the following:

More than ten years later, the thought of those seconds before she'd blacked out in his basement still caused her lungs to stiffen, the memory of her nose crushed under his palm still startling enough to suck all the other contents out of her mind. (Novey, 2018, p. 25)

However, on the one hand, this traumatic abuse transforms Lena's vulnerability in a level where supports her in her quest to find who she really is because even if her vulnerable subject becomes paralyzed, she starts a journey in which she targets to stop Victor. Today, Victor is running for senator for the Justice and Truth party, while Lena is an academician at a local college ten years after their violent meeting. Butler examines corporeal vulnerability within the context of political violence. Butler opens her discourses on "new corporeal ontology" in *Frames of War*, which is covered in detail in the introductory section. Butler (2009) supports the ideas of Melanie Klein, that it is not just through networks of sexual desire connection that we are linked to others, but also through unintended dependency and intimacy, which may have unclear psychological consequences, including bonds of aggression and desire (p.30), and further she (2009) asserts, "the body is constitutively social and interdependent"

(p.31). As a result, the aim of Butler's this new bodily ontology is to refigure the negative context of passivity and openness in terms of vulnerability. When Maria, who was working for Victor's campaign, mysteriously dies, the novel's flow brings Lena and Victor together for the first time. Novey establishes a connection between Lena and Maria P. via a sweater Lena discovered in her shopping bag and a sweater Lena wore as a college student when she spent time with Victor. Because of the sweater, Lena believes that Maria P. perished as a result of Victor's bullying behavior toward her. Within this context, the sweater can be seen as a peripatetic of Lena's trip throughout the novel, as Novey declares: "she had once risked her life in a similar garment and still regarded that time as a pivotal aspect of who she was, she lifted the sweater over her head and pulled it on" (Novey, 2018, p.3). Thereby, it can be concluded that Novey pushes her protagonist by compelling her to examine or struggle in the midst of her vulnerable subjective negative mindset that is formed by patriarchal or hegemonic powerful worldviews and summons her to find the transformational effect of vulnerability. Furthermore, Cvetkovich states,

Femmes reframe a conception of the violation of bodily boundaries as traumatic by suggesting that opening the body and, by extension, the self to the experience of being vulnerable is both welcome and difficult and hence profoundly transformative. (2003, p.66)

Butler contextualizes the vulnerable self's capacity to deal with the vulnerability engendered by the idea of loss. Butler (2004) points out that one mourns when one realizes that the loss one has will change one's life, maybe for the rest of one's life. Some people think that grieving is agreeing to go through a transition or a change that can't be predicted in advance. Butler explains that the act of losing is one thing; the transformational impact of loss, on the other hand, cannot be predicted or prepared for. Although one may seek to choose it, the experience of transformation may erase the ability to do so on some level (p.21). Novey's heroes, for example, are faced with real-world examples of loss. While *Those Who Knew* starts with the death of a young woman, Maria P, *Ways to Disappear* begins with a portrayal of a woman's disappearance, the author Beatriz Yagoda. While Maria P. is a university student who works for Victor, a senatorial candidate, Beatriz Yagoda is a Brazilian novelist whose novels are translated into English by Emma, a native of the United States of America. Faced with these losses, Emma in *Ways to Disappear* and Lena in *Those Who Knew* find themselves in an unpredictable cycle of events that activate their sensitivity. In

both storylines, the beginning of the characters' trip is uncertain, making it hard to determine who is following whom or who is pursuing what. Novey, in particular, use this metaphorical creative storytelling to underline the concept that individuals who have been exposed to violence and are vulnerable are always on an uncertain trip in which everything is entwined. As a consequence, she presents her characters as befuddled and nervous as their flaws become more apparent. Thus, the characters are placed in a position of self-doubt. Although it seemed to be a tragic event, the loss of these individuals began a transforming path.

For example, when Lena is in the supermarket, where she discovers a sweater in the checkout line, which serves as the novel's opening sequence, all of her violent and abusive memories come flooding back, and she feels compelled to either solve the murder or bring an end to Victor's corrupt and abusive political career. The fact that Maria P. died as a result of being subjected to Victor's physical aggressiveness suggests that Lena has a solid grasp on what she may have been going through just before her death, according to her. In order for Emma to inform Olga of what Maria P. may have done, she is granted the opportunity to speak:

The sweater has the same open neckline and the check mark on the front is practically a zigzag. It's from her, I'm certain of it. And I could go to the police right now. I drank at the Minnow in my student days. I know that curve on Trinity Hill where she was killed. I could describe it, how I was walking up Trinity that night and saw Victor push her in front of that bus. (Novey, 2018, p.6)

It is apparent from the quotation above that Lena is suffering from an internal wound of significant depth and vulnerability. Suddenly, the death of a young lady provides her all the fortitude she needs to take the next step in her journey. Thus, Butler's opinions on loss are consistent with what Lena has been feeling throughout the story; Lena's spontaneous instinct to do something transforms into a feminist act in which many other vulnerable characters take part, demonstrating Butler's understanding of the human condition. The vulnerability that Lena experiences in the setting of Maria P.'s strange death may have an important role to play in Butler's explanations of loss and sadness, as well as her explanations of exposure to violence, in light of Butler's theoretical disagreement. Meanwhile, Lena and her companions are engaged in combat with Victor, a young woman named Sara is saved from becoming yet another victim of Victor's devious schemes. In order to demonstrate that Sara is the next victim of Victor's vengeance, the following phrases are provided:

Sara lifted her face and he saw that his compliment had endowed her brown eyes with a glassy shine. Pleased with himself, he planted his other hand on the back of her chair and asked if she could join him for lunch to talk some more about the slogan. I was trying to remember the name of your aunt, he said—what was her name again? (p.121)

Sara, with the assistance of other characters, not only saves herself from an abusive environment, but she also assists others in uncovering Victor's political corruption and corruption in politics. A large part of the corruption involves pig farm manure that pollutes the pond and the people who live in its immediate vicinity. The owner of the farm is Victor's cousin. Those living in close proximity to the factory must have been exaggerating according to Victor. In all likelihood, there couldn't have been enough waste running through the system to generate a large body of fecal sludge. However, after swimming in a local pond and complaining of nausea and dizziness, four teenagers were sent to the hospital. Their parents believe the cause was industrial effluent that had leaked into the pond under their home. On this, Victor's cousin sent another check to Victor as a hush share. However, no one expected a second contribution check to be made, and that was never planned. Given the considerable national media coverage, it was most likely hush money, and his relative should have known better than to cash any suddenly received funds. However, Victor was able to convince his cousin that government personnel were often rewarded with consultation fees in addition to their salaries, despite the fact that this was never acknowledged. And, Sara shares all the information with media. Besides hearing this corruption news, the wife of Victor, Cristina, with whom Victor got married for her father's political power, takes many messages about abuses of Victor; "It was the third call this week she had received inquiring about Victor and the pretty girl who'd introduced him at the marches, the one who died on Trinity Hill" (p. 207). And, more importantly, at the heart of these examples, there lies the death of a young girl named Maria P. that sparked a feminist movement in which the word "loss" was transformed into identity politics for the vulnerable characters in *Those Who Knew*.

In *Those Who Knew*, Olga is another example of transforming loss. Novey's other female character in *Those Who Knew* is Lena's closest friend, who has a personality that is described as powerful on the outside and delicate on the inside. In a similar manner, Novey portrays Olga as a character who has been formed by her horrific past. When she was in college, Olga was an active participant in student marches, which she continued throughout her career. She is shown as a tough and

logical woman who has spent the most of her life in prison, where she was one of the victims of the Cato regime, and who is now free. Novey introduces us to the character via his role as the owner of a bookstore. Sara undergoes a period of grieving after the disappearance of her lover. In one sense, she is running her bookshop as usual; in another, she is incessantly consuming marijuana and writing a journal to late Sara like in the example sentence “Still Thursday, S, but had to fill you in on this curious abundance of an afternoon!” (Novey, 2016, p.37). To explain how Olga has been crushed by the death of her lover, Novey uses her smoking and diary writing to indicate how she has a wounded self. Novey also represents the gossips and her neighbors who, already had some idea of what soldiers had done to her. Everyone in walking distance of the bookstore knew some rumored version of what she must have endured at the outset of the regime, when she’d been rounded up with hundreds of other student protesters. Although what had been done to the love of her life, right in front of her, was known to no one. (p.13)

Having suffered from her loss, she believes that “The less she needed, the less guilty she felt about continuing to exist while the love of her life had not” (p.13). Olga's pain, which stems from the death of Sara, causes her to be sensitive, cautious, and protective of her companions. Even though she did not believe Lena at first when she told her of Maria P's death, she makes a significant role to Victor's downfall. Therefore, the activist nature of Olga wakes again in the feminist outcry of women against abusive Victor despite her wounded self. Furthermore, as a result of Victor's defeat, she is relieved and feels tranquil.

A consequence of this is that the popularly known negative concept of loss gets transformed in a manner that is consistent with Butler's transformative context for it. A sequence of events starts to unfold as a result of the death of Maria P., which culminates in a feminist scream. Therefore, the vulnerable characters in the novel get together to fight abusive politician Victor in the name of equality. Victor acts as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity while also serving as a source of vulnerability for women in *Those Who Knew*.

In *Ways to Disappear*, Emma is also another example of how Butler's notion of transformational loss is used to investigate the concept of self and vulnerability in *Ways to Disappear*. Emma's adventure begins with the inexplicable disappearance of her beloved author, whose writings she is translating into English. Surprisingly, Beatriz's departure coincides with Emma's disappearance from her personal life.

Unlike Beatriz, Emma is portrayed as an artistic or visionary force in the novel, leaving the reader to guess on whether Emma goes to Brazil to seek the author or to escape her sedentary life. For instance, Novey portrays Lena's self-doubt in this statement when she is photographed on the boat with Marcus: "[she] had grown to find the disquiet this conflict caused in her strangely appealing. She couldn't stop twisting herself tighter and tighter around it, like a thread around a spool" (Novey, 2016, p.56). Novey highlights how she utilizes her best author's absence to escape from her mundane existence, which requires her to marry and settle down. She is anxious for adventure, despite the fact that her boyfriend, Miles, "told her she spent too much time fretting over unanswered emails" regarding her author, Beatriz (Novey, 2016, p.5). However, "his preferred subject of late was when they might get married, and whether they had to invite everyone in their Road Runners" (p.5). Emma is presented in this light as someone whose fragility arises from her structure, as she lacks the guts to say no even when she gets paralyzed in her life. Emma's susceptibility may be described by the concept of vulnerability as defined by Ganteau and Onega (2017). They argue that susceptibility reveals itself as a condition that precludes autonomy—a state in which the person expresses themselves in reaction to some dominating other (p.3). However, when she is presented with a chance to flee, she does not hesitate to take it. As a consequence, Emma's hasty escape to Brazil might be seen as a reaction to the patriarchal acceptance/vulnerability duality. Even though she feels dreadful and nervous, Emma discovers an unanticipated feeling of pleasure and freedom when she is suddenly pulled from her own life. In other words, Emma feels more free and joyous after suddenly abandoning the life she had embraced on her way to marriage. It is a version of oneself she cannot accept for herself, but one with which she feels comfortable when she goes away. Novey portrays Emma's fragility as a means of self-preservation. Emma is another illustration of the concept of self and vulnerability from *Ways to Disappear*. Consequently, *Ways to Disappear* chronicles the heroine Emma's personal growth after a loss. Rather of being passive, Emma takes responsibility and embarks on a journey for her author and, indirectly, for herself. In this view, the departing author becomes only an impetus for Emma to alter her own course of action. Emma chooses to stay in Brazil and live with Marcus rather than marry Miles after the conclusion of her search for Beatriz. As with *Those Who Knew*, the reader may experience loss' transformational power in light of Butler's transformative concept of loss that described in *Ways to Disappear*.

As regards to the concrete examples and theoretical discussions above, through the novels analyzed in this thesis, Novey argues that vulnerability, which has been known for its common negative connotations, is mostly because of hegemonic violence, masculinity and patriarchy. Her two literary works serve as a platform for communicating collective or personal unpleasant experiences, providing an opportunity to see and learn about others' vulnerability. Therefore, in her two novels, she basically portrays her vulnerable characters in these aforementioned settings where their fragility, weaknesses, and vulnerability have been triggered. Through the fascist regime, she uses the oppressive political environment to argue how people, particularly those accepted as marginalized as women and homosexuals, have become vulnerable and how they have to struggle to survive in these repressive environments. She uses the Brazilian mafia to explain how people, particularly those seen as "weak" and in need of assistance or in the midst of a crisis, struggle to continue. Because of this, Novey depicts vulnerable selves in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear*, two contemporary American novels that deal with vulnerability in order to demonstrate how vulnerability has been accepted and can be transformational within the context of activist feminist ideas in terms of subjectivity and corporeality. It is thus necessary to study Novey's books in terms of susceptible views that are current in contemporary culture. This is especially true since the novels are reflections of real-life situations, the majority of which have a place in our present society. The narratives of the books, even if they are dystopian, are very comparable to real-life concerns when it comes to the fragility of our day. Finally, the significance of feminist thinking on vulnerability has contributed to the revitalization and conceptualization of the word vulnerability, which has traditionally been defined primarily by patriarchal understandings, which is mostly seen as deficiency especially for the subjectivity of women.

CHAPTER 2

FEMINIST PORTRAYALS OF THE VULNERABLE

RELATIONALITY IN IDRA NOVEY'S *THOSE WHO KNEW*
(2018) AND *WAYS TO DISAPPEAR* (2016)

“One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation and compassion.”

Simone de Beauvoir from *The Second Sex*

The chapter contends that Idra Novey's portrayal of vulnerable characters' relational dynamics in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* is critical for comprehending and analyzing the concept of vulnerability in terms of how disavowed connotations such as powerlessness, silence, weakness, and suffering should be recast in light of feminist perspectives, particularly from an ethical standpoint. The characters' relationship dynamics were shaped by a variety of adverse situations, including violence, otherness, and patriarchal hegemonic masculinity. With reference to the concept in the introduction and discussion about subjectivity and vulnerability in chapter 1, this chapter examines the negative implications of vulnerability in relationship contexts in *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* first. Then, using concrete examples from both books, the importance of ethical standpoints in relationality will be examined in terms of feminist concepts in regard to vulnerability.

Those Who Knew and *Ways to Disappear* delve into various facets of representations of relational vulnerability in order to investigate how vulnerability has been not only shown but also derived from within the context of contemporary human relations for a variety of reasons, such as openness, passivity, irresponsibility, dispossession, and unethical attitudes. In her novels, Idra Novey brings out fragile characters whose vulnerabilities are entwined with one another in the plotline and are mostly caused by the effect of self-doubt, wounds, weaknesses, and sufferings as they have encountered different types of challenges in these relationships for the negative reasons above. In both novels, Novey's characters are "dependent on others, and

[exposed to the others] ... and [the] social conditions in which [they] come into being; these conditions, in turn, are unevenly distributed to the point that they might fail [them], generating different modalities of precarity" (Sabsay, 2020, p.187). Accordingly, Idra Novey underlines how the ethical viewpoint has been vital in the constitution of relationality and, in addition to this, how vulnerability has occurred in the deficiency of ethics in human connection. By the same token, Novey makes use of the hegemonic patriarchal context to emphasize the characters' vulnerable relationalities because "vulnerability involves a constitutive openness in the subject, regardless of whether it is wanted or not. This openness could be interpreted as a reminder that we are socially formed subjects whose shape and agency are actually constitutive with an outside" (Butler et al., 2016, p. 285), which refers to the others and the term "otherness." Novey employs this openness and passivity of characters in her novels because they are regarded as the other in the environment in which they are placed. Also, in a similar vein, Gilson (2011) asserts that vulnerability is a basic condition of being open to being influenced and affected in both positive and negative ways, and that it manifests itself in a number of ways depending on the social context (p.310). In *Those Who Knew*, this social context is represented by the island ruled and dominated by the fascist dictatorship, and in *Ways to Disappear*, it is represented by the Brazilian gaming mafia, which wields hegemonic power in the country. By rendering people passive and silent, these oppressive surroundings produce their own oppression. Gilson asserts,

As oppressive relations, the dominant forms of relationality have rendered one vulnerable in certain negative ways. For instance, the stereotypical gender norms that prescribe activity and dominance for men and passivity and submission for women clearly make women vulnerable to harm in various ways. (Gilson, 2011, p.322)

Fighting for vulnerability becomes tough in these violent and repressive environments. However, Gilson contends that the concept of invulnerability may be utilized to address the vulnerability inherent in feminist philosophy. The term "invulnerability" refers to the feminist way of overcoming vulnerability in this context. Gilson (2011) asserts that "invulnerability is a central feature of masterful subjectivity because it solidifies a sense of control, indeed, an illusion of control" (p.312). As a result, Novey's characters who are presented in vulnerable relationalities will take on new significance when seen through the lens of feminist viewpoints on vulnerable connections.

Likewise, Novey portrays the vulnerable relationality of the characters that have been shaped by interconnectedness, socially formed in violent hegemonic-masculine surroundings. When the characters in both books experience "violent suppression and occupation" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p.94), it is as a consequence of violent relationality that they become dispossessed from their environments or relational environments in which they find themselves. For example, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) suggest that an ethical viewpoint should underlie relationality since self- and other-exposure has low vulnerability effects and should be supported by an ethical position (p.94). Correspondingly, Novey exemplifies this kind of alterity, or being other, in the context of any type of relationality, and she not only demonstrates otherness with specific instances such as being a woman in a male-dominated setting, being an activist against a fascist governing regime, having a lesbian or gay identity, or being a foreigner, but also displays how otherness and relationality play a role in analyzing vulnerability in its formation. Namely, Novey explores the characters in *Those Who Knew* who are seen as outsiders because they oppose the fascist dictatorship, are lesbians or homosexual, are Jewish, or are women. She discusses the characters who are perceived as the others because of the oppressive mindset of the power dynamics. In the same way, the protagonists in *Ways to Disappear* are subjected to violence as a result of their association with members of the Brazilian Mafia. This is due to the fact that not only does the fragile nature of the characters make them "open to a violent expression of alterity" (Ganteau and Onega, 2017, p.3), but also their compulsory abusive relationality makes them vulnerable during the search for Beatriz (Ganteau and Onega, 2017). In light of the above, Novey's books offer an environment for vulnerable relationality, which requires examination of particular instances of hegemonic masculinity infiltrating relationality.

Along with the previously mentioned components, it seems as if there is one more concept that should be addressed in the context of developing vulnerable relationality: responsibility. The feminist concept of "responsibility" is used as a platform to communicate a method for overcoming the negative link that people have with vulnerability in relationships. For example, regarding the term, Levinas asserts, "[T]he alterity of the other is the extreme point of... terror for all violence," and "from that fear for the other man develops an unlimited responsibility" (1999, p.30) for all of humanity. In the same vein, Idra Novey argues that she authored *Those Who Knew* to inspire those condemned to solitude as a result of violent relationality by stating,

What I wanted to write was the “we,” the silenced people who know the truth and what the powerful politician at the center of the novel is concealing. I wanted to write about what’s it like to have your vulnerabilities leveraged in a way that consolidates power for someone else. (Edwards, 2018)

Thus, Novey depicts a setting and a narrative in which each character must take responsibility for the other. Indeed, Novey's "we" is an ethical attitude or understanding, a form of "sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility" (Gilligan, 2016, p.16). In this way, Novey confronts her readers by compelling them to examine their ideologically formed worldviews regarding otherness and silence, and then summons them to take the "special responsibilities" (Goodin, 1986, p.xi) according to which all individuals are meant to be accountable for one another, making them aware of the necessity of ethical responsibility. Novey believes that those who remain quiet yet are aware of the truth should raise their voices. Otherwise, the quiet accentuates the flaws, and those who are susceptible are seen as weak, helpless individuals who need constant attention and protection; however, relationality, as defined by Nussbaum (2001), is an ethical understanding of human nature. This nature establishes connections as a means of communication with the environment and maintains that self-other relationality is not only required but also valued (p.343). In reality, however, these sorts of perspectives are heavily influenced by patriarchal masculinity and are passed down from generation to generation by their descendants. Hence, vulnerability-based relationality encompasses not only the "self-sufficient spectrum" (p.343) but also "the good activities connected with citizenship and political attachment, as well as those involved in personal love and friendship"(p.343). As a result, it is necessary to examine the dichotomy between self and other in terms of its relationality by thinking about vulnerability.

In her novel *Ways to Disappear*, Novey looks over the characters' diverse circumstances as well as the manner in which these repressed individuals are given voices and representation in their interactions with themselves and others. The narrative, thus, begins with the people who were astonished when Beatriz vanished. This demonstrates that the other characters, too, are victims of their frail personalities, ingrained personal difficulties, and societal bonds in a patriarchal environment such as Brazil, where the destructive effects of hegemonic masculinity can be experienced through the Brazilian mafia or in other ways. Brazil is shown to prove that it has been under the control of illegal hegemonic power rooted in patriarchal relationships. Thus,

Novey depicts not just the patriarchal aspects of the setting, but also the impact of patriarchy on the characters' relationships, making them cautious and uneasy in human interactions. In her review of *Ways to Disappear*, Nina Schuyler focuses on relationships in the novel by stating,

People can also disappear to each other when they see only parts or fragments. Emma idealizes Beatriz; Raquel sees Beatriz as a strange, unreliable mother. Raquel remembers when the government dynamited the prison on Ilha Grande island, and she and her mother watched it on TV. Her mother pointed to the birds and said, "Look, the birds are collapsing in the sky. She would have liked to have spoken with her mother just once about what was actually happening. A demolition." Beatriz's longtime editor and publisher, Roberto Rocha, views Beatriz as his first true author, and her book as his only success. And Beatriz's gun-toting loan shark, who has funded Beatriz's online gambling habit and now wants his money back— he only sees the author as a source of money. (Schuyler, 2017)

Thus, in a manner, Novey explores the effects of masculinity and entrenched patriarchy in order to better understand how the relationships in *Ways to Disappear* came to be. In other words, she narrates the story of how these individuals are dealing with their own weaknesses as a result of their exposure to various types of relationships. In the same way, Novey created fabricated persons in this work whose flaws become apparent in the context of the plotline.

In the same way, Novey uses specific illustrations to highlight how internalized oppression and oppressive social settings impair or destroy an individual's power, which thus underlines a feminist perspective on relational theories of sovereignty. To look into the feminist viewpoint on interdependency and relationality, in her article "Independence, Dependency, and Interdependence: Struggles and Resistances of Minoritized Women within and on Leaving Violent Relationships," as stated above, Khatidja Chantler (2006) provides an example of a discussion of patriarchal reliance and its consequences for masculine thought by stating that over the course of several decades of feminist study, the concept of "independence" has been a topic of debate and disagreement. The white heterosexual middle-class male who is capable of conquering and regulating his own life and environment is seen as the ideal of independence by the majority of the population. In this structure, independence is considered as a state of being free from external influence, and it is highly valued as a quality associated with strength and autonomy (Hare-Mustin and Merecek, 1986). Dependence, or the need to rely on someone else for help, is seen unfavorably and as

a sign of weakness on the opposite side of the spectrum. Under this paradigm, independence and reliance are seen as diametrically opposed, rather than allowing for the possibility of being both reliant and independent, strong and weak, simultaneously. Another problem is that it doesn't take into account the idea of interdependence, which is about having to depend on each other and having a strong sense of give and take between people (p.29). By the same token, Novey makes use of concerns about love and justice to underscore the need for care in interpersonal interactions. In each of her pieces, she depicts relationships that are both heterosexual and homosexual. Violence, sexism, and sexual violence have all had an influence on some of these interpersonal connections. Novey depicts how the limitations of the male or male-based society supremacy that becomes powerful mostly through violence have penetrated into different aspects of relationships of vulnerable people

that has consistently been described as distinctive in its greater orientation toward relationships and interdependence implies a more contextual mode of judgment and a different moral understanding. Given the differences in [the vulnerable]'s conceptions of self and morality, [they] bring to the life cycle a different point of view and order human experience in terms of different priorities (Gilligan, 2016, p.22).

To sum up, in her both novels, vulnerability has been displayed and drew upon in modern human relationships for a number of reasons. Idra Novey creates fragile characters that struggle with self-doubt, scars, and imperfections mostly stemmed from relationships. Thus, the importance of ethics in human contact is shown, as well as the vulnerability that arises from a lack of ethics. The hegemonic patriarchy draws attention to the characters' interpersonal weaknesses. When discussing fragile relationships, it seems like the word "responsibility" should be brought up for discussion. Throughout the novels, Novey develops a universe and stories in which each character is held accountable to the other characters and encourages her readers to examine their own assumptions about other people and silence in a fresh light. Besides that, she wants them to accept responsibility for their own behavior. Novey uses a combination of love and justice to help people develop compassion in their relationships. Among her works of art are depictions of straight and lesbian romantic partnerships, namely figurative representations of heterosexual, lesbian or gay love relationships may be seen in her artwork. Further, "Reviewing the literature on love ... [Novey] talk[s] about the impact of patriarchy, the way in which male domination of women and children stands in the way of love" (Hooks, 2018, p. xxiv). Numerous

these frail bonds were formed as a consequence of violent occurrences throughout the cycle. Novey argues that male or male-based societal dominance has invaded many aspects of vulnerable people's interpersonal connections, including their romantic relationships. Life stages, especially those dominated by patriarchal patterns, each carry with them a unique set of self- and other moral ideas, and the vulnerable are no exception to this rule. Nonetheless, the vulnerable are the ones who suffer the most because of openness, passivity, weaknesses and unethical understanding in relationships. However, when the negative connections of vulnerability are addressed, the feminist concept of constructing the neediness of ethical relationality becomes obvious.

2.1. Feminist Representations of Relationality in the context of Vulnerability

This section of the chapter examines the concepts of openness, responsibility, passivity, otherness, dispossession, and interdependence through the lens of relationality and vulnerability from a feminist perspective, illuminating the patriarchal mindsets and patterns that contribute to vulnerability through relationships and demonstrating concrete examples from Idra Novey's novels *Ways to Disappear* and *Those Who Knew*, which emphasizes the critical importance of ethical understanding in relationships.

In the interview titled "An Issue of Boundaries: An Interview with Idra Novey," by Magdalena Edwards, Idra Novey points out that by placing Victor, the antagonist, at the center of *Those Who Knew* and by attempting to understand how he could justify his cruel and violent behaviors against himself, she demonstrates that Victor is the embodiment of the twenty-first century masculinity crisis. In light of this "21st century masculinity crisis," each character who has a connection with Victor and his abusive attitudes is portrayed while they are exposed to his unethical relationships with him, as well as his direct and indirect use and abuse of women, relatives, students, and homosexuals, showing that Victor can be analyzed in terms of the #MeToo movement, which is one of the protest activist cries against the hegemony of twenty-first century masculinity, as stated by Magdalena Edwards. In addition, in the interview, Novey asserts that a survey on gender views among teenagers in the United States revealed that one in three males felt pressured to "dominate" and "be in control of others." Only

2% of the guys questioned felt respected for their integrity or moral character, which constitutes a crisis (Edwards, 2018). In a similar spirit, her novel *Ways to Disappear* places the protagonists in compulsive connections with a violent patriarchal society, Brazil, and its manifestations, such as the gambling mafia and its abusive and violent methods of communication. In this light, Novey portrays the characters in both books as being on a journey in which they must contend with both their own frailties and the weaknesses of their interpersonal relationships. But it is interesting to note that the fragile selves of the characters and their relationships are primarily shaped by patriarchal patterns for the majority of their time together. Thereby, a feminist perspective must be applied to the relationalities shown in the books at this juncture in order to illuminate the deeply entrenched causes of the vulnerability that results from these types of relationships.

Those Who Knew is a metaphorical title that emphasizes the plight of those who have been silenced and isolated. It was Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel *Autumn of the Patriarch* that inspired Idra Novey, which depicts "a lonely and miserable man who is disconnected both from everyone around him and from himself" (Edwards, 2018). In the same way, Novey's story places a premium on the heroine, Lena, as well as her companions, Olga, Freddy, and a few other vulnerable individuals who are pushed into silence and insecurity as a consequence of their abusive relationships. Additionally, these personalities take on the roles of others in the culture in which they dwell. For this reason, the term "Those" refers to these people who have known the truth about Victor's abuses and even murders, and who have decided to act or speak out against him. Ironically, all of these people are intimidated and silenced in the face of this powerful politician because "Victor is a political animal" (Masad, 2018). Aside from that, the characters have been exposed to a variety of various injustices perpetrated by the dictatorship known as The Cato. Of these characters, Novey centralizes the vulnerability of the protagonist, Lena, through her love affair with Victor, the antagonist, by stating, "Their relationship ended after he nearly choked her to death in a move that calls to mind recent testimony regarding allegations of male violence" (Masad, 2018). And, it is intended for the readers to understand how this love connection has altered her life. Ganteau (2015) states that the precondition for vulnerability is being in the midst of a process in which a relationship takes place, which is demonstrated by Novey in *Those Who Knew* with the relationship between Lena and Victor. Examining the characters' relationships in terms of violence reveals

how their vulnerability occurs (p.5). In order to bring attention to not only their frailty, but also the patriarchal violence patterns on which this relationship is based, Novey makes use of their connection. Novey, in particular, emphasizes how vulnerability can arise as a result of hegemonic male tendencies in society. On hegemonic male dominance in relationships, Bell Hooks states,

we can only end male violence against women by challenging patriarchy, and that means no longer accepting the notion that men should have more rights and privileges than women because of biological difference or that men should have the power to rule over women, that is when the agreement stops. There is a gap between the values they claim to hold and their willingness to do the work of connecting thought and action, theory and practice to realize these values and thus create a more just society. (2018, p.90)

As demonstrated by the plotline, Lena's vulnerability and silence for the rest of her life are caused by Victor abusing her in a variety of ways, both physically and verbally. Because of their relationality, Lena's vulnerability is portrayed as a result of her love for him; this is in line with Nussbaum's (2001) observation that love and friendship as well as political and social commitments, to name a few, are significantly more relational concerns that make people vulnerable than the "self-sufficiency spectrum" (p.343). Lena is subjected to many forms of aggressive behavior by Victor. She maintains the pretense that nothing occurred in order to protect her emotions for Victor. In this sense, Lena's predicament might be described in terms of what Nussbaum (2001) refers to as the "self-sufficiency spectrum," which is a theory about how people develop different levels of self-sufficiency (p.343). According to the book, Lena is not as self-sufficient and rational in her relationship as she thinks she is: "She'd known that his interest in her had been the only reason she'd been included among the students secretly organizing the marches" (Novey, 2018, p.17). The real reason of this is that Lena becomes a figure of openness by turning into a very passive character as a result of Victor's dominance and oppression. As a consequence, while Lena is aware of Victor's genuine interest, she is unaware of the extent to which Victor is selfish, aggressive, and uncontrollable in his thoughts and actions. She has embraced her connection with Victor, despite the fact that it makes her more vulnerable. And, "[T]his [kind of] vulnerability [that Lena has experienced] is fundamentally a matter of relationality, [as a result of which] becomes possible to redefine safety and security in terms of a relational ontology" (Gilson, 2018, p. 230). Lena remains silent for years as a physical manifestation of this toxic relationship. The lengthy silence for Lena demonstrates to the reader that the susceptible individual feels insecure because "fear

is the primary force upholding structures of domination. It promotes the desire for separation, the desire not to be known” (Hooks, 2018, p.93). This explains why Lena has become more silent and vulnerable as a result of her relationship with Victor.

However, the same vulnerability was also the reason for Lena's overcoming weaknesses and the otherness through the solidarity of her friends and other vulnerable people. In this sense, Novey first depicts the negative consequences of the relationship, and then she depicts how Lena can overcome the negative consequences of the relationship that have an impact on her life through friendship. Through her novel, Novey emphasizes the value of friendship throughout, because "when we choose to love [,] we choose to move against fear—against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect—to find ourselves in the other "(p.93). Therefore, a subplot is created by Novey in which Lena is compelled to collaborate with her pals Olga and Freddy in order to beat Victor in this manner. As an example, Novey begins her work with the death of Maria P., a character who is linked to the main character, Victor, because "[Lena's] ability to position herself in front of someone who disempowered and demeaned her and to challenge the firmness of his worldview comes from a place of vulnerability; by doing so, she opens herself up" (Gilson, 2016, p.3). This openness inspires Lena and her friends to unite in opposition to Victor as an example of feminist solidarity. In this way, the supportive relationship between Lena and her friends acts as a vehicle for the narrative's narration, emphasizing the necessity of ethical relationality in opposition to patriarchal norms. Taking this into consideration, relationality is shown to be both the cause and the solution to vulnerability for the main character, Lena. Further, Lena's collaborative engagement with her friends demonstrates to the viewer how ethical awareness in relationships may cure the vulnerable. According to Jan-Olav Henriksen (2020), the grounds for vulnerability foster a reciprocal relationship in the representations of interconnectivity and reliance, since these concepts also demonstrate how humanity is very tied to one another and to the good inside itself (p.273). Henriksen makes the following statement:

[r]elationality implies that we are influenced by the way others live and act, or that we influence others by our actions and behaviors. Exposure to asymmetry, regardless of its form, requires us to continually examine how to cope with our own or others' vulnerability. (2020, p.273)

In this respect, the novel's relationality has been utilized to imply that when it comes to human ties, ethical interactions are the most important understanding that

relationality should be based on. Moreover, it can be stated that one of the reasons Lena becomes silent and perplexed in her ways is due to her violent relationship, which creates her vulnerability because of Victor. To intensify the ideas above, an example can be given in terms of their abusive relationship. For example, one of these severe attacks took place during their college years, when they were both lovers and active marching students. When she awoke the next morning, she had no recollection of what had occurred in the basement. To illustrate, Novey describes how she was under the effect of violent abuse in her portrayal by stating,

It was not until she boarded a bus home that she had touched the painful spots on her throat where he'd dug in his fingers the hardest. She still felt stunned at the number of minutes she had remained there, listening to him, before making her way up the basement stairs and on through his family's kitchen to the front door, still disturbed at the full day it had taken her to recognize. (Novey, 2018, p. 158)

It is clear that Lena's vulnerability has increased dramatically as a result of her violent relationship. Without a doubt, what she went through demonstrated that she had been mistreated and subjected to a sort of assault that included the threat of death, which is unquestionable. This sexual abuse has also indicated why she has kept quiet for all these years, since victims of sexual abuse are subjected to much more than physical assault when they are abused sexually. Suzanne Egan (2020) explains that it is an assault on the self. However, despite the fact that sexual assault is physical in origin, the following list of effects is mostly psychological and relational in character. In addition to having an impact on victims' relationships with their family and with themselves, it also has an impact on their "concept of self" and their "place in the world" (p. 101). In light of this impact of victimization on Lena's nature, Lena's vulnerability "is experienced as in itself threatening the result is domination. [As a result of this], [t]he perception of threat precipitates anxiety and fear" (Gilson, 2018, p.230). That's why, Lena has started to feel that "she would never place herself in a room with Victor again (Novey, 2018, p. 158). Gilson (2018) explains that it is critical to consider the mechanisms via which vulnerability is actualized, or more accurately, the processes that define vulnerability as a relational capacity. By examining vulnerability as a spatial experience manifested in a number of ways via distinct patterns of structural organization and interpersonal interaction, vulnerability is treated as a process rather than a quasi-fixed characteristic of places and people. Vulnerability, like safety and security, is understood in terms of relationships. In this sense, this kind

of vulnerability analysis might attempt to challenge a reductively negative perception of it (p.232). Specifically, despite being severely harmed by Victor's aggression, Lena demonstrates a helpful and authentic connection with other vulnerable persons by stopping Sara, Victor's secretary, from being assaulted by Victor. As a consequence of her sensitivity as a result of her violent relationship with Victor, Lena develops a good connection with her friends, which mitigates the effects of vulnerability. While her silence and insecurity make her a negative symbol of openness, the same openness transforms into a supporting feminist move in the vulnerable friendship. This also demonstrates to the reader how, with the aid of feminist ethical knowledge, the negative structure of vulnerability in abusive relationships may be changed into a good one.

In the same context, Victor's verbal abuse weakens and predisposes Lena, which is why her "family values" (Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000, p.48) have been repeatedly accused of backing the Cato dictatorship and "remind us as feminists of the hazards of allowing any relationship, including those we most cherish, to be entirely insulated from the critical reflection of all their participants" (p.48). Lena's behaviors and thoughts grow unsettling as a consequence of Victor's abuses. The "mental anguish" (Gilson, 2014, p.48) impairs Lena's perspective and attitude. As a result, Lena begins to doubt her actions. This interrogation shows the reader that Lena's understanding of "relational conception of the self to a view of the self as separate and autonomous, thereby reinforcing the perception that one sees oneself either as related or as autonomous" (Keller, 1997, p.153). In this way, Lena's sense of self was harmed as a result of the development of her immoral connection with Victor, and in addition to this she becomes a figure of weaknesses and passivity in negative meaning as her vulnerability heightens. Similarly, her vulnerability, which stems from unethical relationality, may be evaluated in terms of how, along with verbal and physical abuse, her self-doubt demonstrates that she "redefines [her] autonomy in terms of [her] relationality" (Butler, 2004, p.24). As a consequence of the trauma she has endured in her relationship with Victor, Lena's sovereignty becomes impossible, and her impossible autonomy may be judged in terms of relational autonomy. Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) explain that relational autonomy, in the sense in which we use the term, does not relate to a single coherent idea of autonomy, but rather to a collection of interconnected perspectives on autonomy. Most people believe that individuals are socially embedded, and that the social factors that determine their identities include

factors such as race, class, gender, and ethnic origin, among others. This assumption serves as the foundation for these strategies. It is the purpose of relational techniques to examine the intersubjective and social components of one's sense of self and one's identity, as well as the consequences of these notions for views on human autonomy, morality, and political activity (p.4). In light of this immoral relationship, it is understandable that Lena has begun to have doubts about herself.

Novey's story begins with the sad and mysterious death of Maria P., which acts as a metaphor for patriarchal relationship dynamics throughout the narrative. The young girl's death is essential to the novel's plotline because it enables the reader to better understand the connection between the protagonist and antagonist. Novey initiates a feminist deed in the book via Maria P. against Victor, the figure of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity who puts all women vulnerable to wounds. As Novey said in an interview about her book, she felt compelled to write it because she wanted to be the voice of the vulnerable who had been exposed to violence and were therefore silenced. Novey states,

The power dynamic between Lena and Victor starts in college when he is the charismatic leader in the student movement. And she recognizes that her family puts her in a vulnerable position in the resistance among the students. And Victor leverages her shame. And he leverages her sense of complicity to silence her when he loses control in an argument that they have in the basement. (NPR Cookie Consent and Choices, 2018)

Therefore, the tragic death of Maria P. is widely regarded as having been caused by Victor, who is portrayed as the embodiment of 21st century masculinity and who is also depicted as the source of the dominant reason for women's vulnerability through his relationships because he is perceived to be harsh and abusive in his demeanor. Victor's hostility against women may be explained by the fact that "the traditional gender norms that dictate activity and domination for males and passivity and submission for women plainly render women open to damage in a variety of ways" and make women "prone to harm in a variety of ways" (Gilson, 2014, p. 90). In a nutshell, this contextualizes the patriarchal worldview that has persisted in relationships for a very long time, rendering women vulnerable the majority of the time in both the book and real life.

Throughout the book, Novey emphasizes how femininity is seen as a figure of otherness in the patriarchal system via Lena and Olga. For example, in response to political repression by the Cato administration, Olga's susceptibility resulted in her

becoming disillusioned with her romantic relationship with Sara. In fact, even ten years after Sara's death, Olga is still suffering the consequences of Sara's grief in her life: "When she needed to relieve herself, she forced her reluctant knees to deliver her out the back door of the bookstore and down the crumbling stairwell to her abode in the row of homes below" (p.13). As a result, this, coupled with Olga's continuous sorrow, is consistent with Nussbaum's (2001) assertion regarding the propensity to become more susceptible as a result of the repercussions of a love connection (p.343) that has been deemed outside of patriarchal standards. Olga and Sara become the others under the fascist rule, *The Cato*, because to their lesbian friendship. In other words, Olga's susceptibility led in disappointment in her love connection with Sara as a consequence of political persecution by the Cato government, which increased Olga's fragility. However, the loss of Sara—lover—has been shown from a different point of view in the example of the second Sara, who is also the cousin of the lost Sara, who is also the girlfriend of Olga. Novey depicts Victor's secretary, Sara, as a victim-warrior figure, since she bears the same name as her vanished aunt Sara and is also on the edge of being a victim of Victor due to her intimate association with him. Olga and Lena's efforts to inform her of Victor's reality demonstrate Novey's characters' desire to protect her from Victor's impending violence. This form of connection is compatible with Nussbaum's (2001) idea that all human actions and humanity should be relational (p.343) in the quest of goodness, since vulnerable female characters feel protected. The unity of Lena and Olga in defending Sara against Victor demonstrates to the reader that vulnerable individuals understand the significance of solidarity and interdependency. Their assistance to Sara may be understood in terms of "assumption of duty for care" (Gilson, 2016, p.16), and their cooperation in seeking assistance illustrates that ethical relationality must find a home in vulnerability. The next paragraph describes how Olga and Lena devise a strategy to warn Sara, as follows:

Olga explained that she had already written to Sara herself. But it will be more powerful for her to hear it from you directly, Olga went on in her email, adding that she had a plan in mind already, both to get Sara out of his office and to get that bastard. Tell her about Maria P., Olga ordered; tell her about him nearly killing you. (Novey, 2018. p.157)

As shown above, Novey portrays her characters' struggle to survive as a woman in the face of a male threat. What Lena and Olga are fighting for is to get their cause acknowledged as an all-female movement. In light of this, the characters' ethical obligations stemming from their vulnerable parts can be viewed in the context of

feminine power opposing the hegemonic, corrupt politician Victor; additionally, Lena, Olga, Sara, and Simon band together to expose the pig farm scandal, which "certainly tarnished Victor's reputation" (p.191) and had a negative impact on his life, as stated below;

what had really impeded him from attempting any kind of comeback yet was the end of his marriage, the likelihood of the elder senator loathing Victor enough to prevent him from running for a position with the TJP anywhere on the island. (p. 191)

In *In Time and the Other*, Levinas suggests that, in the feminine, "the alterity of the other appears in its purity" because here alterity is "borne by a being in a positive sense, as essence" (Chanter, 2001, p. 31). In this light, it is apparent that Novey develops her misogynist antagonist, Victor, through his relationships with many women and the majority of the characters in the novel in order to demonstrate that "[a]s oppressive relations, the dominant forms of relationality rendered individuals and groups vulnerable in certain negative ways" (p.90). Nevertheless, Gilson (2014) states that it is common for people to link the phrase "vulnerability" with negative connotations such as reliance, helplessness, inadequateness, apathy, and other negative connotations. In terms of ethical responsiveness to vulnerability, it is this reductively negative attitude that has a variety of unpleasant effects for many aspects of the individual's ethical responsiveness to vulnerability. In a culture where invulnerability is prized, being vulnerable is seen as a flaw, and vice versa. When other people are in danger, it may be difficult to maintain awareness of one's own vulnerability while yet acting in an ethical manner (para.1). In the same vein, by directing the reader's attention to Victor, Novey makes the reader argue about how a powerful politician who is well-known for being harsh and abusive in nature can be a rising figure in his party and a possible presidential candidate, whereas Lena maintains her silence and troubled demeanor in her life. With regard to this, Novey says,

I think this happens with many victims of assault. They wonder what their silence will mean for others. And I think often, when someone who has been pushed into silence about assault, as in Lena's case because of the sense of shame she feels and her fear of retaliation, that she finally feels this strong urge to speak up to protect somebody else. (NPR Cookie Consent and Choices, 2018)

For this reason, in her work, Novey constructs a plotline where the characters are shown in ethical and supportive relationships in order to scream out or to emphasize

the necessity of solidarity and ethics in the face of patriarchal violence. Oliver Kelly (2001) supports that violence obliterates ethical relationship, and she adds,

Relations will be hostile. Hostile relations will lead to hostile actions, and the result will be war, domination, and torture. All of this is to say that our conceptions of ourselves determine our conceptions of others and our conceptions of our relationships with others. Moreover, our conceptions of our relationships determine how we behave toward others and ourselves. There is an intimate and necessary correspondence between how we conceive of others and how we treat them. (Oliver, 2001, p. 3)

Victor, thereby, serves as the primary motivator for Lena and her friends' teamwork in the hope that they would be able to prove and demonstrate who he is because "Like Maria P. That's another woman with ties to Victor. She's eventually found dead, hit by a bus. And that's when Lena begins to suspect murder and has to weigh the pros and the cons of finally speaking out about her violent past with Victor" (NPR Cookie Consent and Choices, 2018). In this sense, on the one hand, the death of Maria P., a young student, stimulates Lena's memories and reveals her fragility indirectly. On the other hand, it may be argued that this is the fundamental motivation for cooperating against Victor, which can be also regarded as a feminist solidarity that is a "part of an ethical responsibility... [in terms of] dilemmas that women face" (Butler 2004, p.49) in the name of all women victims. Being vulnerable becomes more humanist as a result of Lena and her friends' ethical obligations to Maria P. and all women, which is explained in the following:

More precisely, vulnerability refers to the fact that experience contains a degree of passivity. Our senses are always open, even when we sleep, which means that we are always receiving sensations, stimuli and feelings. We can say that, instead of autonomy, vulnerability makes us persons. If vulnerability defines personhood, then to be a person is to be open to violence. This violence requires an ethical response. (Lawlor, 2018, p. 217)

Throughout this chapter, Victor's ties with the women who have previously been highlighted are the most apparent manifestations of his immoral relationship with the women. Beyond his connection with Lena, Victor uses marriage as a tool to obtain political influence via Cristina, whom he has decided to get married. In that way, the link between Victor and Cristina in terms of their ethical conscience, for example, serves as another indication of how unethical interconnections may make individuals more exposed to risk by increasing their vulnerability to danger. In the novel, Cristina, the daughter of a prominent senator in the JTP, is an excellent match for Victor due to the fact that she is completely oblivious to and uninterested in political and social

affairs; for example, "she wasn't going to inquire about Maria P." despite knowing about certain rumors (Novey, 2018, p.13). Additionally, Cristina's strong family ties provide him with a number of advantages in his political endeavors. As a result, Victor is depicted not only as a specific example of a corrupt politician, but also as a crooked individual who takes advantage of women in order to further his political ambitions in an unethical manner. As Novey demonstrates in the following sentences, he pretends to be in love with Cristina in order to gain political influence from her father:

Marriage hadn't occurred to him as a potential solution until this morning... He preferred women who had more ideas of their own, ideas that they were eager to hear and respond to—but he'd been careful not to close the door with a woman this connected. (p.9)

Through Victor's abusive relationships with women, Novey "reveals the nature of toxic masculinity and its effects on the world" (Eisenbraun, 2021). As a result of his "toxic masculinity"(Eisenbraun, 2021), Victor is thrust into the center of many different women's vulnerabilities, particularly with love affairs. However, when peering into Victor's soul, Novey declares, "One of the images I kept revisiting with each draft of the novel was the one of Victor and Freddy as children in the kitchen when the father warns them not to cry, even as their father himself is crying" (Mengiste, 2019). This demonstrates to the reader that Victor was raised in accordance with patriarchal notions about males, which implies that men should be strong and powerful even when faced with a terrible circumstance. Furthermore, the issue of responsibility in his relationship is one of the most important considerations to make. Indeed, Victor's lack of responsibility in his relationships with women makes his relationships with women vulnerable. As a result, the subjects are exposed to potentially dangerous situations. Kelly Oliver expresses the following sentiments about the connection between love and responsibility:

It is love as working-through that demands constant vigilance toward responsibility in relationships. The loving eye is a critical eye, always on the lookout for the blind spots that close off the possibility of response-ability and openness to otherness and difference. Love is an ethics of differences that thrives on the adventure of otherness. This means that love is an ethical and social responsibility to open personal and public space in which otherness and difference can be articulated. Love requires a commitment to the advent and
nurturing of difference. (Oliver, 2001, p.20)

Specifically, Victor's lack of accountability in terms of his views toward the other women puts the women at risk by placing them in an immoral connection with Victor.

According to the feminist viewpoint discussed above, Victor's unethical interactions are the result of his lack of responsibility and ethical standards. This concept demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity breeds dominating, violent, and abusive men, instilling in them the impression that this is the kind of man that they should strive to be in their own lives.

Regarding ethical responsibility in *Those Who Knew*, the activists on the island who "[took] part in the marches to get rid of Cato" (Novey, 2018, p.15) are an example of relational accountability in terms of ethical understanding. Standing up to the dictatorship may be viewed through the lens of Goodin's shared responsibility for the pursuit of joyful living conditions, particularly in light of the islanders' brutal repression. Fighting for democracy is not just for oneself, but also for others in a world where people are kidnapped, exiled, and murdered. This shows the reader that in an environment that is full of vulnerable people, an ethical understanding in terms of relationality is required. Lena, for example, marches against Cato despite the fact that her family is a supporter of the organization. Because of this, Novey describes the purpose of activists in terms of this notion, which is the ethical connection between oneself and another in order to live peacefully with one another.

One of the novel's tangible illustrations of unethical relationality is Lena's son, Cosmo, and his school life on the island, in terms of the concept of alterity or otherness. Due to Cosmo's American citizenship, his classmates refer to him as "tourist face" (Novey, 2018, p.189). This nickname, which casts Cosmo in an immoral light, raises the following discussion: why "it is ... necessary to articulate what precludes ethical response, how the sense of responsibility that might grow out of awareness of common vulnerability is truncated, how the actions and attitudes that might fulfill responsibility are inhibited... (Gilson, 2014, p. 61). As a response, the otherness created by this nickname can be understood via Butler's (2004) humanized and dehumanized categorization (p.146). Butler puts forth the idea that this type of thinking makes relationality problematic in terms of the self and the other, as well as introduces vulnerability into a non-ethical framework. For example, Cosmo is forced to put up with his friends' barbaric attitudes; he becomes the other when he is subjected to "certain hostility" (Novey, 2018, p.191). The following phrases describe the environment in which Cosmo finds himself.

Cosmo had confronted at the municipal school, where a group of boys kept pushing him around at recess and calling him Tourist Face. After one boy hit him repeatedly on the

head with a stick and no teacher stepped in to stop it, Lena had switched him to the only private academy in the valley considered liberal. (p.191)

Thus, Lena transferred Cosmo to a new school, where he met a new friend named Edgar, who, like Cosmo, despised being addressed by his father's name. Cosmo and Edgar have a vulnerable side with their father, and it is this weakness that connects them. While Novey highlights Cosmo and Edgar's exposure to immoral ideas via non-ethical relationality with their classmates, she also underlines their vulnerability, which in terms of vulnerability's role in relationality, they are connected. The solidarity of these two youngsters also demonstrates to the reader that weak individuals can communicate easily with one another and that vulnerability in a supportive environment makes vulnerable people more secure, which can be seen in the following,

Nobody had hit Cosmo yet, though the kids were just as vicious in their haughty academy way, asking why he had dots on his face and where his father was and why he had a dog's name. How'd it go today? Olga glanced back at her small passenger in the backseat. A little better, I guess. Cosmo shrugged, talking to the grime on the window. Why's that? Edgar was my partner in reading. He doesn't like anyone asking about his dad either. (p.191)

Another way to think about relationality is to consider the function of interdependence in the vulnerability of wounded people, because "vulnerability designates an openness and relationality to others" (Petherbridge, 2016, p.603). Novey utilizes Olga's fear of "her mother's Jewish last name" (Novey, 2018, p.191) to argue for the critical role of women's relationality in supporting one another. When describing Olga's vulnerability, it is crucial to underline how her political ideas, which she vigorously maintains, directly led to her lover's murder during the dictatorship, again because of her Jewish surname. In this way, her scars, which include the death of her girlfriend and the hiding of her political beliefs, which is a figure of "blurring the distinction between self and other through the representation of their interdependence" (Gilligan, 2016, p.132), keep her sensitivity warm and passionate. Sara's proposal that Olga join a municipal council in their collective name indicates that Olga needed something in order to admit her fragility and proceed, and Sara proposes:

Why don't you run for municipal council here? Sara said. Even if you don't win, you'd shake up the conversation. And who knows, there are more liberal, educated people moving out from the capital all the time. They'd vote for you, a detainee and former

bookstore owner. Why not just put your name on the ballot and see what happens?
(Novey, 2018, p.191)

As previously proven, Novey seeks to underline the fragile subject's capability to persist. The following statement expresses Olga's reluctance: "Olga did not want to expose herself, or Lena and Cosmo, to public scrutiny in the valley. They were too eccentric a household, too new to the area, to take that kind of risk" (p.19). Sara's counsel is straightforward in that it will aid Olga in changing her vulnerability into one that is acknowledged, as Gilligan (2016) notes that caring creates a correlation (p.16). Thus, in terms of the self-and-other pattern, ethical relationality may be seen as a remedy for vulnerable women's character.

Emma, Beatriz, and Raquel are the three female characters in *Ways to Disappear*, and they are the ones who most obviously illustrate the novel's female interdependence. However, this solidarity is offered from a distance, but in a meaningful way nonetheless. The fact that Emma does not know who Beatriz is does not prevent her from holding a particular place in her heart as a colleague and author, to whom she feels a strong sense of devotion. Similarly, in their mother-daughter relationship, Beatriz and Raquel are distant, detached, uninterested, and alienated from one another. Emma, on the other hand, is trapped in her own life and is unsure of what she wants. Novey focuses on three fragile female characters who are in desperate need of assistance in order to be understood. Novey begins her novel with the inexplicable disappearance of a female character, and the other female characters are willing to assist her in her quest to locate her. Therefore, in the wake of learning of Beatriz's sudden and unusual disappearance, Emma decides that she must find her friend in Brazil immediately:

That evening, an email finally arrived from Brazil but it was not from Beatriz. The sender said his name was Flamenguinho. Was Senhora Neufeld aware, the man inquired, that her author had recently climbed into an almond tree with a suitcase and had not been seen in the five days since then? (p.5)

As Novey underscores the importance of sisterhood throughout the book, highlighting the need for trust and empathy, as women's emotional vulnerability allows them to understand one another because of their shared experience, which means "[r]elational satisfaction increases with relational need fulfillment" (Umphrey & Sherblom, 2001, p. 325). It is clear from the story that once Beatriz departs her life, Emma goes to pursue her American ambitions, which include marriage, in the United States. In the same way, Novey portrays all of the male characters in the novel as antagonistic,

emphasizing to the reader that Novey places a strong emphasis on the sisterhood by relegating them to secondary roles. In addition, the novel's primary female characters are used by Novey to make the argument that these women have been ringed by masculinity via submissive roles, resulting in the corporeal and metaphorical disappearance of women. The novel's protagonist, Novey, uses female interdependence to resist hegemonic masculinity in the process of writing it.

A further example of how Novey demonstrates patriarchal relationship patterns through mafiotic relationships—the representation of otherness—is the "or else" rhetoric used by the Brazilian gambling mafia as a means of exhibiting their aggressive voice—the fear of death—as a means of connecting individuals in *Ways to Disappear*. It is Novey's argument that the violent structure of Brazil has a mutual link with both the people who live there and those who visit there, transforming them into 'the other,' under the sway of a patriarchal masculinity that makes life unbearable for the people. The fear of death can be analyzed in terms of violence and relationality in the case of Emma and Raquel, who are on the search for Beatriz, because they become passive and vulnerable as a result of their fears of death, which "signifies primordially in the proximity of the other [person] itself or in sociality," as in the case of the relationship between mafia members and the main characters in the novel (Levinas 1999, p. 25). By placing them in the "passive object position" (Oliver, 2001, p. 119), the patriarchal structure of the Brazilian mafia has rendered these two women powerless by preventing their independence or autonomy as well as makes them open to any kind of threats. This results in a vulnerability as a result of passiveness and openness. Additionally, this kind of relationality exacerbates the protagonists' vulnerability because of the patriarchal and hegemonic relationships. Emma's arrival in Brazil serves as an illustration of how violent patriarchal relationality may be intensified in a patriarchal society. Every time she needs to call someone linked with the mafia in order to find Beatriz, she is filled with anxiety, which is exacerbated by the awareness that she has weak sides that she does not exhibit or even recognize in herself. For example, as soon as she arrives in Brazil, she is confronted with the threat presented by Flamenguinho, whose "image of the bulging gun in [his] jacket" is etched into her mind (Novey, 2016, p.41), and which makes her passive as he has been exposed to his abuse. On this kind of passiveness, Levinas (1999) states,

This passivity is, to be sure, an exposedness of the subject to another, but the passivity of the subject is more passive still than that which the oppressed one determined to struggle

undergoes. The most passive, unassumable, passivity, the subjectivity or the very subjection of the subject, is due to my being obsessed with responsibility for the oppressed who is other than myself. (p.55)

Emma's passivity, in this perspective, renders her susceptible to another. However, Levinas argues that the feeling of this passivity is much more passive than Flamenguinho's repressive attitude. Additionally, she questions how Beatriz could have such a close friend as Flamenguinho and if she is acquainted with Beatriz. Emma is obviously taken aback by the prospect of being murdered, demonstrating that her feeling of exposedness "comes to pass as a passivity more passive than all passivity" (Levinas, 1999, p. 14). As a result of her fear, she starts to inquire about Beatriz, to which she ultimately gets a response. At this point, it is crucial to focus on a person's absence and the vulnerability caused as a consequence of this mysterious disappearance, since the characters have experienced this in their own lives as a result of Beatriz's disappearance. Furthermore, Neil Vallelly (2019) asserts in relation to disappearance and vulnerability,

Importantly, disappearance ... does not mean simply the killing of unknown others. It also includes those others who do not appear in my life, but whose existence enables me to live the life I do. I am thinking here of the subaltern, the precariat, the migrant worker, whose existence I might be aware of but whose life I do not experience as a co-presence - they are the *living disappeared*. (p.39)

Even with all of the negative consequences of her passiveness, Emma has remained determined in her search for Beatriz, and the reader understands that Emma gives "[t]he response that is responsibility, [her sense of responsibility for her friend], comes out in this passivity, this disinterestedness of subjectivity, and this sense [of responsibility for her friend]" (p.15). This demonstrates that, despite the negative repercussions for the protagonist, the negative connotation of passivity may be transformed into a meaningful attitude via the exercise of responsibility. In addition to this, Emma's "creative passivity unfolds as creatures are gifted with the capacity to respond to the excess of love and grace overflowing" for Beatriz in terms of their friendship (Springhart et al., 2017, p.80). The factors arising from or resulting from the concept of relationality, such as passiveness, vanishing, and otherness, can be given positive interpretations.

Novey offers the context for illustrating openness through the concept of love. Emma, who was on the verge of marrying a man named Miles in Pittsburgh, falls in love with Marcus, the missing author's son, despite the fact that she has been in the

midst of a hazardous environment due to the Brazilian gambling mafia. At first, the story portrays Emma as someone who is more concerned with her romanticized author, Beatriz Yagoda, than with her partner, Miles, and she is characterized as being reluctant and uncertain about marriage. This conclusion may be drawn from her immediate travel to Brazil from Pittsburgh, where she was on the point of marrying Miles. Despite being shown as uninterested and apprehensive about marriage; Emma is given voice as a figure more preoccupied with another guy in Brazil. As a result, Novey underlines how vulnerability and love are entwined throughout the narrative by depicting Emma in a state of perplexity as a result of her fragility. In this sense, Novey teaches Emma, the novel's heroine, that love and connection are necessary for her to understand her vulnerability, because "[b]eing vulnerable makes it possible for us to suffer, to fall prey to violence and be harmed, but also to fall in love, to learn, to take pleasure and find comfort in the presence of others" (Gilson, 2011, p. 310). In this sense, Emma's position in Brazil can be evaluated in terms of what Gilson underlines about being vulnerable, open, and other. Emma's fall in love with Marcus in the middle of a stressful and violent atmosphere is a sign of openness, as "vulnerability is a condition of openness" (p.310), which is shown in the following:

Here at Radio Globo we like to get the morning rolling with some news about love, and Rio's new heartthrob, Marcus Yagoda, has found it, my friends, in the arms of his mother's translator. The still-missing author was a sizzler once herself and we've got the photos to prove it at globo.com. (Novey, 206, p.25)

Emma's flight to Brazil is clearly intended not only to locate Beatriz Yagoda but also to provide her with an escape from her life in Pittsburgh. What Emma has not realized for a long time is that her true inner voice, which rejects her life in Pittsburgh, has been speaking for her all along. According to Gilson's statements about love, which are intertwined in the affair between Emma and Miles, it can be concluded that, later on, this kind of love brings out a secure but boring space where one of them begins to look for adventure or some other personal desire.

Emma was too exhilarated to rest. She sat down at the end of the long bench where Marcus was sleeping so she could keep watch over his bag. Pittsburgh, Miles, her job—all of it felt like a skin she'd shed on the plane. (p.24)

Gilson (2014) proposes that empathy should act as "an act of imagination, of extending yourself beyond yourself" (p.1) and care should act as a way of "attentiveness" (p.1) to the self and also to the other, or "to avert the dangers of insensibility" (p.1). Vulnerability, according to her understanding, is the practice of knowing in terms of

feeling ultimate empathy and concern for both the individual and the other (p.1). Based on these explanations, it can be determined that Miles is completely ignorant to Emma's feelings and ideas since he is only concerned with what he wants at the moment. Miles is described by Novey in the terms that follow:

In her absence, Miles didn't know what to do. He thought of the slightly tilted porch in front of their house. Of their mailman, Alton, arriving each day and slipping their catalogs and bills through the slot in their door. Of their cats, restless and lonely, tracking over the growing mound of mail, Emma couldn't mean it. If he could just persuade her to leave here, she would recognize that immediately. (Novey, 2016, p.112)

Although she has not yet found it, Emma encounters another version of herself who wants what she wants in terms of her desires, which she has discovered someplace inside herself at this time. Her voyage across Brazil comes to an end with her settling in the city of Rio de Janeiro, where she will work as a professor at a university in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It is conceivable to understand her sensitive self as a person who eventually decides what she wants in life. In spite of having gone through many unpleasant situations and having been subjected to several instances of severe abuse, she finally discovers what she desires.

In addition, Novey utilizes Beatriz's disappearance as a metaphor for the disappearance of dispossessed women, or the vulnerable, who are recognized as having gone from the community because "dispossession implies imposed injuries, painful interpellations, occlusions, and fore closures, modes of subjugation that call to be addressed and redressed" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p.2), as shown in the disappearance of Beatriz. By choosing to disappear, Beatriz decides to leave many questions unsolved behind her. Novey, on the other hand, exploits Beatriz's magical disappearance to draw attention to a deeply underlying issue that women face: burdens. An interview with her revealed that she had considered vanishing in the past for women who have been burdened by an excessive amount of responsibility. In her words, "I think when you have a lot of demands on you, a tree starts to look like an increasingly appealing escape route" (Brown, 2015), referring to Beatriz's climbing on an almond tree and her vanishing. In the sample sentence, Novey explains Beatriz's exhausted self through the inner voice of Raquel, who is attempting to connect with her mother: "Raquel would see her mother looking away and would want more, much more, and who could blame her? Didn't he want more from Beatriz? Didn't everyone?" (Novey, 2016, p. 141). On the one hand, this picture of disappearance demonstrates

how tough it is to be a woman in a patriarchal culture, and on the other hand, Novey declares, "there aren't as many visible [women] writers" (Britt, 2019), like Beatriz Yagoda, who "has kicked the bunda of Brazilian literature" (Novey, 2016, p. 121). Namely, the number of female authors is becoming more important in women's writing, especially in vulnerable writing, since the feminist viewpoint examines the wounds and suffering of the vulnerable in modern terms by providing them with a platform to express themselves. Other factors, such as their visibility and capacity to be heard, are key considerations in vulnerability studies, apart from the sheer quantity of people involved. After reaching the conclusion of the book, the narrator receives news of Beatriz's death, who had prepared her dying scenario, which shows the reader that Beatriz had planned her death:

Whether you're listening or not, my friends, whether a beautiful sentence moves you or leaves you cold, Brazilian literature has lost a piece of its soul today. Beatriz Yagoda may have gambled too much and hid from her own children, but she wrote like the room was on fire, and so it went down. At nine this morning she burned to death in a hotel on Boipeba. The flames, my friends, were started by a cigar left burning in her room. Smokers, take heed. (p.156)

Beatriz's disappearance and death serve as a vehicle for Novey's argument about how a woman living in a patriarchal environment bears a variety of burdens, including social, economic, and psychological burdens, and how she has felt isolated and unknown in her relationships with her family members and colleagues and makes her open to all kind of danger. In view of this fact, rather than declaring inviolable sovereignty, *Ways to Disappear* is an American contemporary masterwork that argues for the freedom to gaze on the basis of the individual's fragility and relationality in a patriarchal setting. Novey depicts her heroine in fading and unknown themes in order to emphasize her fragility. Similarly, Novey employs the idea of vanishing to illustrate Beatriz's responsiveness for the reason that "we have repressed our vulnerability and labeled it as "bad," because of fear and discomfort. That fear has limited so many of us, and created a culture of people who run away from their feelings, struggle and meaning" (Kushnir, 2020). Further, Beatriz's excursion through the almond tree is symbolic of imaginative journeys. Beatriz's fictitious character disappears after climbing into an almond tree, too. Beatriz imitates this occurrence to indicate her departure from her life. By rising up the tree, she figuratively destroys her body and imagination, which serve as the wellspring of her creativity. As a result, she expresses her wish to escape her life. Therefore, Novey wishes to emphasize the backstory of

how relationships are built in the unknown by developing a mysterious plot via Beatriz as well as to bring out how silence and vulnerability has a place in relationships. This view strengthens the feminist understanding of vulnerability by explaining that Beatriz's "vulnerability in terms of the human conditions of corporeality and sociality that necessitate interdependency" (Moore, 2016, p.15). Novey conveys her thoughts regarding relationships, particularly about being unknown even to one's closest friends and relatives, in the following way:

I think it's a knowing that's as fluid as it is in any relationship. I think you can know someone in one moment and not know them in the next. It happens with friends. It happens with partners. You can know exactly what they're going to say next, but then in another conversation, you'll have no idea what's going to come out of their mouths. I think that's just the nature of human relationships. You can't know anybody all the time. You may know them profoundly one minute and then that evening be like "have we met?" [Laughs] It's very much a book about how you may not know your parents. We all have huge influential figures in our imaginations who we only know them in partial ways. The limited knowledge that we assume a translator is working with is true of anyone in any kind of relationship. We assume it's more extreme with a translator and author. But, I don't think it's any more extreme than it is between parents and children, between editors and writers, between friends, between people who've been living together for years. (Britt, 2019)

Another thing that can be said about Novey's portrayal of vanishing is that she emphasizes the importance of ethical considerations and responsibility when it comes to the manner in which Beatriz's vanishing has been communicated to the public. This also demonstrates a common, but neglected, understanding of those who are most vulnerable. In his idea of "face," Levinas (1980) offers a hypothesis in which people are exposed to each other through faces. The ethical nature of relationality in this regard is determined by what the self and the other understand from the face (p.297), as in the example of Beatriz's vanishing. The face, according to Levinas, is more than just a human face; it is "a source from which all meaning emerges" (Levinas, 1980, p.297). Specifically, the face is "a live presence"(p.66) as well as a picture of a vanished person. At the same time, it is Beatriz's disappearance that is causing her books to be more popular among readers. Following her disappearance in a park, Beatriz's image was exploited in an unethical manner by a number of different media outlets, including the news media. Beatriz Yagoda is a common instrument when it comes to attracting attention to a particular cause or goal that is being pursued. In this example, Beatriz's face is employed as an image rather than as a "living presence"

(Levinas, 1980, p.66) as is customary in the genre. As Butler (2004) explains in her book, 'face', there seem to be limits between humanization and dehumanization in the construction of relationality, resulting in subject liability (p.24). Butler (2004) uses the word "face" to characterize this phenomenon. Butler is on the lookout for an ethical attitude toward oneself and others within the framework of relationality in this respect (p.24). The following excerpt from the book exemplifies this concept:

Have You Tasted the Butterflies by the still-missing Beatriz Yagoda joins her other titles on the best-seller list this week—and here is some other wild news for you Yagoda fans. Radio Globo has just received a report that a second writer has taken refuge in the trees of Rio. A young novelist named Vicente Tourinho was last seen scaling a banyan tree in the lovely Jardim de Alá. What's going on with our writers, Brazil? What's sending them into our city parks and up into the trees? (Novey, 2016, p.61)

As a result, when it comes to a person's suffering, the ethical concept of the vulnerable demonstrates how ruthless and immoral patriarchal society is, and Novey stresses the importance of relationality in order to highlight how the protagonists are exposed to anti-humanitarian violence and discrimination, as well as how the hegemonic authority exploits relationality in order to repress them. Thus, it is possible to conclude that Novey considers relationality to be a vital concept for coping with the characters' frailty in the novel. Throughout the narrative, relationality reveals itself in the ways in which it shapes the characters' liability for violence, suppression, and immoral viewpoints, among other things because what the characters have endured demonstrates that relationality without an ethical understanding or manner results in vulnerability.

Raquel's bond with her mother, Beatriz, the absent author, makes her more receptive and a figure of the other in terms of relational vulnerability. The reader is witness to Raquel's delicate experience by her representations of her connection with her mother, especially when Beatriz vanishes. In terms of interpersonal relationships, negative feelings such as grief, sorrow, pain, and grieving are depicted in Raquel's relationship with her mother. However, her mother's connection with her is not just the source of her fragility; she is also receptive to loss, sorrow, and the fear of the unknown as a result of her vulnerability, which also shows that she has been exposed her to violent patriarchal mafia abuse. This increased susceptibility should be considered as "the vulnerability of relationality, which is often brought about by the disappearance of a specific relational tie and exposed through expressions of grief, mourning, rage, denial, and so on" (Vallely, 2019, p. 40). She is not as taken aback by her mother's

departure as Emma and Marcus are, maybe because she has always been more aware of her mother's oddities than the others are. For example, while they were watching television together, Raquel was unable to obtain the information or to form the bond that she desired because her mother used figurative language and metaphors; for example, her inner voice is conveyed in the following sentence: "She would have preferred to speak with her mother just once about what was actually happening" (Novey, 2016, p.20). Raquel's example, Novey reveals to the reader, illustrates that she has never had a genuine and joyous connection with her mother, one in which she feels entire and safe. Furthermore, despite her celebrity and success as an author, Raquel is in desperate need of a mother, not an author-mother, to care for her children. Her internal dialogues make this quite clear.

When people asked what it was like to be the daughter of someone who came up with such peculiar stories, Raquel told them the truth. She'd never read her mother's books. She had no patience for the illusion that you could know someone because you knew her novels. What about knowing what a writer had never written down—wasn't that the real knowledge of who she was. (Novey, 2016, p.19)

As a result of her failed relationship with her mother, Raquel has developed a sense of resentment, which has increased her "unrecognized" vulnerability (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p.89) and caused her to become enraged towards others who have relationships with Beatriz, such as Emma. One instance is Emma's unexpected arrival in Brazil while searching for her mother, which prompts Raquel to get irritated. The conclusion is that Raquel's vulnerability is a consequence of her mother's connection with her or that Raquel's vulnerability is exacerbated as a result of the mother-daughter relationship between her and her mother. When it comes to vulnerable relationships, like in the instance of Raquel, unidentified vulnerability may result in vulnerability as a result of the relationship being stressed. Considering unacknowledged vulnerability, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) point out that dispossession is related to relationality and connection with individuals in the context of social fear and wrath, on which we are forced to depend whether we want it or not (p.92). The authors (2013) point out that "possession entails a different and differential manner of (p.92) as in the example of Raquel's vulnerability stemmed from her relationality with her mother. As well as Raquel's unrecognized vulnerability, she suffers from feelings of loss, grief, and melancholy as a result of her mother's absence and disappearance. These feelings play a large role in her life, especially in the aftermath of her mother's disappearance. In

losing her mother, Beatriz, Raquel is "dispossessed from" (Butler, 2004, p.21) her mother, and a time of grieving is followed by a period of uncertainty. Despite this, Raquel's muddled process, which is filled with uncertainty and sadness, helps Raquel transition into a tough but progressive way of being. Raquel is determined to locate her mother over the course of her search for her, despite the fact that she has grown resentful of her. This shows that "when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us" (p.21). Raquel, as seen through Butler's eyes, goes through the stages of grief following a tragic loss. The fact that they are mourning turns out to be a new ethical relationality as they begin their search for Raquel's mother, despite all the negative dangers they face, thanks to Emma's assistance. "Grief displays, in contrast, is the thrall in which [their] relations with others hold [them together] (p.23). This means that grief or mourning has a positive connotation in this context, as opposed to its negative connotation in the traditional sense.

In respect to the theoretical notions that have been explored and demonstrated by the two novels covered in this chapter, the concept of vulnerability provides a means of establishing context for the characters' wounds that have arisen as a result of their interactions with one another. This demonstrates the necessity for more investigation into the structure of the relationships. In light of the fact that these relationships have been formed on the basis of patriarchal patterns and mindsets, feminist perspectives bring to light the vulnerable relationships in the novels by focusing on specific concepts that feminist ideas emphasize in order to overcome the negative associations that are associated with vulnerability. The relationships between the characters in the novels demonstrate to the reader that feminist perspectives delve into the details of these concepts in the formation of vulnerable relationalities and transform them into positive ones, using the concepts of openness, passivity, interdependence, dispossession, and ethical understanding as a starting point for their investigation. Each work has a cast of people who must deal with their own frailties as well as their sensitive relationships with one another in environments that have been ruled by hegemonic masculinity. Thereby, the feminist perspective on vulnerable relationality provides explanatory angles for the causes for these types of relationalities as well as remedies for these kinds of relationalities.

CONCLUSION

Idra Novey is a pioneer in contemporary American literature, having written about vulnerable and patriarchal relationships in her works. She is widely regarded as one of the most important writers of her generation. Novey's artwork is informed by horrific real-life abuse situations, and she uses her art to bring attention to those who have been marginalized by society. In a way, her works, which are largely portrayals of modern social, economic, political, and cultural realities, create dystopic contemporary settings by showing how a patriarchal society has continued to generate vulnerable individuals in the twenty-first century. To address the toxic masculine environment, Idra Novey places a strong focus on ethical understanding in all human interactions, particularly in the settings of her novels. In this way, Idra Novey creates a new type of language based on the patriarchal writings of underprivileged and oppressed people, which she then applies to her own work.

A vulnerability, according to its most popular definition, is a state of being unable, liable, or exposed to any kind of danger. Through the course of history, it has been the topic of investigation in a wide range of areas for a number of reasons, including sociological, economic, psychological, and cultural factors. From a theoretical aspect, it introduces fresh ideas that open the door to new dialogues in a variety of different settings. As a result of the many traumatic events that have occurred in our century, it has become not only fashionable but also a vital phenomenon to investigate. Further, studying vulnerability is necessary in order to comprehend our time period. By this token, in order to better understand people, vulnerability research investigates the scenarios in which they may be injured. The topic of vulnerability research has risen to prominence in contemporary culture, both in terms of understanding people and assessing the current state of our society. When we take a more in-depth look at subjects such as violence, alterity, the self, relationality, and vulnerability, it becomes easier to comprehend and handle. According to academics who study vulnerability, the causes and effects of susceptibility are carefully explored for each issue under research. Thus, by throwing light on the individual's vulnerability in the twenty-first century, the vulnerability hypothesis sets the individual's vulnerability in this era in a theoretical arena. According to the findings of the research into their sensitivity, individuals were

sensitive not only to their impairments but also to a variety of environmental and interpersonal variables as well. As part of their vulnerability studies, feminists have examined and evaluated the ideas of passivity, openness, possession, otherness, ethical perspective, and relationality, resulting in a plethora of positive connotations for the word "vulnerability." When the vulnerable are exposed to this transformative power of vulnerability, they are able to rise to a level of strength and support that allows them to bear the difficulties and abuses to which they have been subjected while still being able to flourish. In part as a result of the limited chances women, LGBT people, and minorities have had to challenge patriarchy's restrictive system, patriarchy has embraced the concept of being continually vulnerable and open to wounds as its core organizing principle. Therefore, a substantial component of this thesis's appraisal of vulnerability is focused on the likelihood of negative repercussions for the individual in terms of violence, subjectivity, and relationality.

A feminist transformative perspective on vulnerability is applied to Idra Novey's novels *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* in Chapter 1, with particular attention paid to the causes and consequences of vulnerability resulting from violence, as well as the consequences of vulnerability on the self and corporeality of the characters. For the protagonists and the characters in both novels, the author portrays a violent environment in which they have been subjected to many patriarchal violent assaults that have caused them to become vulnerable. With the protagonists weak and frail in these violent circumstances, the author paints them as susceptible, with the majority of them being vulnerable. However, Novey also provides the reader with one of the key topics of the book, which is ethical approaches to people, particularly women, lesbian, gay, and transgender (LGBT) people, children, activists, and minorities. In this light, this thesis investigates why the characters in Idra Novey's novels become vulnerable, as well as how the motivation of these vulnerable people is underpinned by their subjectivity and corporeality in the pursuit of a happy life. Therefore, the character's subjective nature in terms of vulnerability is examined in terms of the transformative effect of the feminist perspective on vulnerability on the character's vulnerability. The reason for this is that the transformative feminist perspective promotes self-maturity, which is a widened and heightened perception of self. This transforms the immature self into a mature self by highlighting the need for responsibility and an ethical outlook. The two central themes of the plots in Novey's two works are, on one hand, how the immoral viewpoints of our current society have

an impact on one's own self-perception and, on the other hand, how one's own self-perception is an unavoidable necessity. Novey achieves this through her characters' arduous journeys, where they ultimately attain a positive and resolute sense of self.

A feminist viewpoint is given to the novels *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* by Novey in the second chapter, which examines relationality in the works in terms of openness, passivity, responsibility, dispossession, and ethical knowledge from a feminist perspective. Through the use of concrete examples from the books, the chapter examines how vulnerability develops in relationships that are governed by patriarchal tendencies and hegemonic violence. Novey establishes the masculine setting through the social and political relationships that the characters are subjected to, both individually and collectively, throughout the novels. It also reveals how the weak associations of openness, passivity, and dispossession manifest themselves in the novels, particularly in the formation of vulnerable relationships between the characters. Furthermore, the chapter's study incorporates the requirement of responsibility into the construction of an ethical viewpoint for vulnerable relationships, and it illustrates how the self is dependent on the other in every element of one's existence. Characters' obligatory and spontaneous interactions are studied in order to demonstrate how patriarchal views play a part in vulnerable relationships in their connections. This is accomplished through discovering the characters own vulnerable selves as well as their relationships with others. Openness, passivity, dispossession, and loss are all illustrations of how feminist ideas are applied to examples from the novels. All of the negative consequences of the keywords on relationships are transformed by establishing ethical attitudes and ways with the support of responsibility.

As a result, this study shows that the novels *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* by Idra Novey are portraits of vulnerability that belong in the American literary canon. Due to the lack of vulnerability studies in American literature, it is crucial to interpret literary works from both a theoretical and a contemporary point of view. At some point in their lives, all fictional and real characters find themselves in a metaphorical state of flux and must learn to cope with their vulnerability. Consequently, the plots and characters in these works emphasize the significance of being vulnerable. It is the author's work that both exposes and depicts victimhood as it exists in the twenty-first century. The major goal of this research is to dismantle the stereotypical notions of vulnerability that are shaped by patriarchy. In this thesis,

feminist language is examined in order to demonstrate how conceptions of vulnerability may be transformed in order to get a new understanding of the subject matter. As a result of this study, the novels *Those Who Knew* and *Ways to Disappear* are excellent examples of vulnerable writing that both exhibit and encourage the reader to analyze the current topic of vulnerability from a feminist viewpoint, respectively.

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