

2. EVELYN HUGO'S DEFIANCE AND HER AGENCY

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways Evelyn Hugo uses to defy the virtues mentioned in the Cult of True Womanhood and find out the reasons she defies the virtues. The setting of *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* takes place in America during the 1950s. The period was after World War II, when the role of women, especially the white middle-class, was dictated by qualities of True Womanhood. *True Womanhood* is a set of rules that determine the behavior of feminine women during that time which has been explained in the previous chapter.

I found Evelyn's defiance interesting due to her mindset which is different from the majority of young women during her time. In the 1950s, most American women longed to be the ideal feminine women. They happily follow the virtues of True Womanhood to be exemplary wives and mothers. On the contrary, Evelyn refuses to follow the rules of being an ideal women. Using Welter's theory, I will find out Evelyn Hugo's ways of defying the virtues of True Womanhood. I will search for her behaviors that are in contrast with the virtues of True Womanhood which are described in the text. I will also further discuss the motives that drive her to defy the values. After I find out her defiance and motives, I will further discuss her underlying reasons for having those motives to defy the virtues of The Cult of True Womanhood.

2.1. Evelyn Hugo's Defiance Against the Three Virtues of True Womanhood

In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss the ways Evelyn Hugo defies the virtues of *True Womanhood*. According to Welter (1966), society believes there are four virtues women must honor and behave according to:

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife-woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement, or wealth, all were ashes. With them, she was promised happiness and power. (p. 152)

The four virtues that make a woman worthy in the eyes of society are piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. If a woman fails to meet even one of the virtues, she will be deemed as unworthy despite all her accomplishments and wealth. On the other hand, if she

successfully follows the four virtues, a woman will be rewarded contentment and fulfillment, also making her the perfect exemplar of true womanhood during the time.

As a woman who lives in the 1950s, Evelyn Hugo is expected to conduct herself accordingly with the four virtues mentioned in the Cult of True Womanhood. However, she refuses to comply with the virtues for several reasons. Despite the four virtues provided by Welter, the chosen text only mentions Evelyn's act of defiance against three of the virtues: purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Hence, this study will only discuss Evelyn's defiance against the three virtues of *True Womanhood* and her reasons.

2.1.1. Taking Ownership Over Her Own Body

As explained in the previous chapter, to follow purity virtue, women should not be physically too close to men, should be reserved, and should maintain chastity until marriage. In the text, Evelyn has shown behaviors that defy all these aspects of maintaining her purity in the sense that she sees her body as an asset. This contrasts the purity virtue that requires women to keep their bodies as pure as possible to be regarded as ideal women.

Evelyn Hugo sees her body as a commodity that helps her in obtaining her goal. In this case, her body does not merely serve as the source of labor power, but “a more comprehensive form of physical capital; a possessor of power, status, and distinctive symbolic forms” (Shilling, 2003, p. 111). In other words, Evelyn is not using her body to work for money, but her body itself has become valuable as a form of physical capital. Since a very young age, Evelyn has seen her body as an item that can be sold in exchange for items and services she desires. She realized her attractiveness in terms of physicality is considered a valuable good in society, especially men. Her realization of the value of her body happens gradually.

The first stage of her realization is that she starts to understand her physical attractiveness which she gains from the point of view of a man. Below is an excerpt that shows her realization of her body:

By the time I was thirteen, I was five foot eight, with dark, shiny brown hair, long legs, light bronze skin, and a chest that pulled at the buttons of my dresses. Grown men were watching me walk down the street, and some of the girls in my building didn't want to hang out with me anymore.... Motherless with an abusive father, no friends, and a sexuality in my body that my mind wasn't ready for (Reid, 2017, p. 56-57).

The way Evelyn describes herself by highly sexualizing her appearance as a teenager suggests that she learns about her attractiveness from the point of view of a man. She starts to become aware of her appearance which is more attractive compared to her female peers due to the attention she gets from men and the hostility she receives from the young girls. However, due to her age and the absence of her parents' figure, Evelyn does not understand how to deal with her body and men's attention towards her body which can be seen in the line "...a sexuality in my body that my mind wasn't ready for". According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), adolescence is a period where one establishes identities and becomes more focused on friends. During this period, thirteen-year-olds started to develop a sense of identity. Without guidance from parental figures, Evelyn starts to find her identity on her own by evaluating men's reactions towards her. Hence, she starts to identify herself with her physical attractiveness.

Her realization of her physical attractiveness later escalated to the realization of her body as an asset. She quickly figures that she can obtain anything she wants by using her body to bring pleasure toward the opposite sex and uses it to her advantage until her adulthood. Below is an excerpt that shows the process of Evelyn who regards her body as an asset:

The cashier at the five-and-dime on the corner was this boy named Billy.... One day, I went down to the five-and-dime to buy a piece of candy, and he kissed me. I didn't want him to kiss me. I pushed him away. But he held on to my arm.... And In that moment, I knew he was going to get what he wanted from me whether I let him or not. So I had two choices. I could do it for free. Or I could do it for free candy. For the next three months, I took anything I wanted from that five-and-dime. And in exchange, I saw him every Saturday night and let him take my shirt off.... To be perfectly blunt, I'd started to figure my body out quickly.... So I wasn't interested in anyone sexually. But I did want *something* (Reid, 2017, p. 56-57).

Through the excerpt above, it can be inferred that Evelyn does not understand how others appraise her body as a commodity until the boy tells her that she can assert her power by using her body. Although she does not welcome the boy's advances, she quickly learns that she can also benefit from it. She can use her body as her asset to get what she wants. The emotionless way Evelyn describes the incident shows her detachment from her body. She does not recognize the importance of protecting her purity by protecting her body.

She starts to use her body as a tradeable item to get insignificant things such as candy and progressively increases to obtain more significant items or services. It is also followed by an increase in how she offers her body. As previously explained, at the age of thirteen, Evelyn offers

to satisfy a boy's desire by visually pleasing him by showing an adolescent body without any actual contact with her body. However, the offer escalates when she turns fifteen. She sells her virginity in exchange for Hollywood. The excerpts below will show how Evelyn uses her body on purpose to get what she wants.

So I put on my favorite green dress, the one I had just about grown out of. And I knocked on the door of the guy I heard was headed to Hollywood. I could tell just by the look on his face that Ernie Diaz was glad to see me. And that's what I traded my virginity for. A ride to Hollywood. Ernie and I got married on February 14, 1953.... I was just fifteen by that point, but my father signed the papers (Reid, 2017, p. 58).

The excerpts narrate Evelyn's procedure in exchanging her virginity with her first husband for a ride to Hollywood. She uses her body as a form of commodity in exchange for being an actress in Hollywood. In this case, she has no other means for an exchange except her body. This suggests that at this point, Evelyn already understands her body's value from the point of view of a man. She confidently believes that by offering her body, the man will grant her wish. She approaches a young man who has a small job in Hollywood so she can get easy access to Hollywood. Based on the excerpt above, the word "traded my virginity" shows that she regards her virginity as a tradable item that has monetary value. According to Welter (1966), loss of purity is often associated with guilt of crime and madness or death. In contrast, Evelyn's behavior that willingly losing her "innocence" at the age of fifteen for the sake of her goal shows her unawareness of the value of ideal women. Her lack of emotion and inner conflicts when she describes the incidents, aside from the fact that she sees her body as an asset, also shows her ignorance of the values of purity as dictated by True Womanhood.

After realizing that her body can be used as an asset through these two incidents, Evelyn continues to use it to obtain higher goals. When a situation turns unbeneficial for her, she starts to use her body to twist it into a beneficial situation for her. One of them is using sex as a tradeable item between her and a producer to get her desired role in a film. This excerpt below shows Evelyn's effort to negotiate with her manager to get a certain role will further help the explanation:

So I did something that not many other actresses at my level would have had the guts to do. I knocked on Harry Cameron's door.... "I want the Caroline part," I said. "*In Love Isn't All.*" ... "I'm not going to bullshit you, Evelyn. Ari Sullivan is never going to approve you for that part.... Having lost the battle, I resolved to win the war. So the next time Ari Sullivan was at the studio dining hall, I dropped my purse in front of him and

“accidentally” gave him an eyeful as I bent down to pick it up.... I was seventeen. He was forty-eight. That night after his secretary left for the day, I was laid across his desk, with my skirt around my hips... (Reid, 2017, p. 59-64).

The excerpt above narrates Evelyn’s method of seducing and having sex with her producer. At first, she tries to negotiate with her manager to obtain her goal which is getting a role she wants. When it does not work, she resorts to seducing her producer, Ari Sullivan. When she fails to negotiate with her manager, she states “Having lost the battle, I resolved to win the war” which is followed by her action in seducing her producer. This suggests that Evelyn sees her body as a weapon while having sex with her producer is a good strategy for “winning the war”. She simply sees it as a good opportunity to obtain her objective which is getting her desired role. She actively offers the producer a chance to have sex with her in exchange for a role. Her action is against the idea that a woman should keep her purity by being reserved and chaste. She executes her plan without showing any shame in approaching and making a sex offer with her producer, further implying her ignorance towards the rules of True Womanhood.

Evelyn knows exactly what men desire from her. She is confident that her action of having sex with the producer will bring her to her goal. Her mindset is not by purity virtue of *True Womanhood* that believes sex is a sacred gift from a husband to wife. Evelyn regards sex as an instrument of exchange, something that has monetary value that can be exchanged with an object of desire—getting her dream role. Evelyn’s state of mind is that does not possess any regret or guilt despite behaving against their virtue which is regarded as a crime. Thomas Branagan (as cited in Welter, 1966) further reinforces that a woman must not succumb to men’s indecorous acts if she does not want to lament over her gullibility and stupidity. On the contrary, Evelyn does not regard her action as something gullible and stupid because she considers it as a calculated move to achieve her career goals. She further justifies her decision as a brave move by mentioning that other actresses on her level will not be as courageous as her to have sex with the producer. By taking this risk, she believes that she is one step ahead compared to her cowardly peers. Moreover, she indicates her action as a strategic decision, she acknowledges the rejection from her manager, Cameron, and is determined to find another way to get what she wants. This implies that she evaluates her action as the result of strategic thinking rather than an impulsive action. Her way of thinking as well as her takes toward her body suggest that Evelyn does not have the urge to maintain the purity of her body at all which can be seen from her detachment towards it and the nonexistent feeling of shame that, according to True

Womanhood, women should experience when they fail to maintain the purity of their body. She simply sees it as a valuable good that will help her in executing her strategic plan.

Evelyn maximizes her only asset, her body, to gain back her fame. Due to her suggestive roles, Evelyn is often portrayed by the male gaze by society. This can be seen from the excerpt of her conversation with a French producer, who never worked with her before, who expects her to do nudity for a movie. The excerpt tells the narration of when Evelyn's fame is going downhill. However, a French producer offered her to act on his newest film project to gain her fame back which required her to do nudity on screen. The French producer who never worked with her perceived her as someone who would willingly show nudity on screen despite that she did nudity during her career before. However, Evelyn's reaction does not show disgust or contempt towards the offer. Instead, she sees it as an opportunity to gain back her fame.

"Of course. You have done nudity before, yes?" "No," I said. "I think you should be topless. In the film." If I was going to be asked to show my breasts, wouldn't it be for a French film? And if the French were going to ask anyone, shouldn't it be me? I knew what got me famous the first time. I knew what it could do a second time.... I closed my eyes and breathed in deeply, considering both how beneath me this opportunity was and how lucky I was to be given it.... I was fully willing to take my top off and show my assets if that was what it took to get my name back out there (Reid, 2017, p. 199-201).

The excerpt above suggests that Evelyn fully realizes that she is a sensual woman and does not hesitate to show her body. The producer's notion that Evelyn has done nudity before, although she has not, shows that she has created an image of herself that goes against the purity virtue mentioned in the *Cult of True Womanhood*. The act of showing one's body is in contrast with the purity virtue because based on the four virtues of *True Womanhood*, the absence of purity is something to be mourned. Yet, Evelyn does not show contempt towards the offer. Evelyn does not show any moral conflict when deciding whether she should be naked for the film because she has a very pragmatic view of her body. She understands what nudity and sexual appeal have played and can continue to play in her career. She simply views her body as an asset that can be used to achieve her success.

Interestingly, her confidence in using nudity as a strategy to gain back her fame is successful. The proof is stated by her narration "Six months after we finished shooting *Boute-en-Train*, I was an international sensation." (Reid, 2017, p. 201). An article that was issued about her nudity also showed that she successfully regained her fame. Below is the excerpt from the

article about a famous singer who becomes smitten with Evelyn due to her appearance in the French film:

SINGER MICK RIVA SWEET FOR EVELYN HUGO

The former Mrs. Don Adler has proven to be a very hot commodity these days. Her appearance in French director Max Girard's newest film, *Boute-en-Train*, has spent the summer selling out movie houses all over Europe, and now it's taking the good ol' US of A by storm. "I've seen *Boute-en-Train* three times now," Mick told us. "And I'll see it a fourth. I just can't get enough of her coming out of that lake" (Reid, 2017, p. 202-203).

Her statement as well as the article shows that she understands her body's worth and how society perceives it, especially men. Her line states "It was my chest that kept men's interest. And women admired my face" (Reid, 2017, p. 66) reinforcing the fact that she knows exactly what sells. Hence, she is confident that nudity will help her gain back her fame.

Simultaneously, the act of nudity is in contrast with the purity virtue of *True Womanhood* that believes women should treat their bodies like a "temple". As mentioned previously, Evelyn defies the virtue of achieving fame. As mentioned previously, Evelyn consciously sees her body as an asset to obtain her goal. She knows how the industry works and what her nudity can do to her career. She realizes that her body is considered desirable by men and uses it as an asset that benefits her. Her view of her body as an asset is further reinforced by this line:

Harry was one of the only men on the lot who didn't stare directly at my chest. It bothered me as if I'd been doing something wrong to not get his attention. It just goes to show that if you tell a woman her only skill is to be desirable, she will believe you. I was believing it before I was even eighteen (Reid, 2017, p. 62).

When Evelyn fails to gain a man's attention with her body, it frustrates her as if she has done a one-sided transaction. She believes that her tradeable item is not valuable enough for her to obtain her goal.

From the explanation above, it can be assessed that Evelyn has defied the purity virtue of *True Womanhood* from a very young age. She simply does not see her body as a "temple" in which purity needs to be reserved due to her environment. Her environment drives her to think of her body as an asset for getting what she wants. Due to her background, she is not educated and exposed to the importance of maintaining purity as a woman at a young age; thus, it is irrelevant to her. For her it is just a business transaction. Due to this, she continues to act

according to her mind which sees her body as an asset. Her outlook on this is in contrast with the purity value of *True Womanhood*. Because of this, she defies the purity value without any guilt or inner conflict that baffles her.

2.1.2. Rejecting the Societal Norms

In contrast to the expectation of women's submissiveness in *True Womanhood*, Evelyn defies the norm through her assertiveness in important matters, her ambition, and her involvement in scandals. Based on the concept of submissiveness, women are expected to be conscious of their inferiority which leads them to be dependent, obedient, weak, and timid. These characteristics lead them to be grateful to men's support who are related to, especially their husbands; hence, forbid them from retorting to men's abusive behavior. Women are also expected to "work only for pure affection, without thought of money or ambition" (Welter, 1966, p. 160) due to her pure-hearted nature. Welter (1966) further added that women should not advise on important matters unless asked by her because women should also busy themselves with domestic affairs. Avoiding controversies is also important in maintaining submissiveness because controversies mean she fails to submit to common values. In Evelyn's case, she defies those characteristics by showing assertiveness, showing her ambition, and her involvement in scandals that will be further explored in this subchapter.

2.1.2.1. Showing Assertiveness

Evelyn Hugo is described as an assertive woman who stands on her ground even against her husband. Below are some excerpts of Evelyn's conversation with her second husband, Don Adler, about who is the dominant in their relationship.

"People around town are asking why you're still going by Evelyn Hugo."

"I changed my name legally. What do you mean?"

"On the marquee. It should say 'Don and Evelyn Adler.' That's what people are saying."

"Who is saying that?"

"People."

"What people?"

"They think you wear the pants."

My head fell into my hands. “Don, you’re being silly.”... “I think you have gotten the wrong impression here, Evelyn,” Don said... “We are not equals, love. And I’m sorry if I’ve been so kind that you’ve forgotten that.” (Reid, 2017, p. 89-104)

Despite Evelyn having changed her family name legally to her husband’s, the media still regards Evelyn as Evelyn Hugo instead of Evelyn Adler which irritates her husband due to people’s perception that Evelyn Hugo is the “leader” in their marriage. Evelyn refuses to change her last name publicly because her last name *Hugo* is more selling and is the one helping her towards her success. Evelyn’s mindset annoys and humiliates Don because society thinks Evelyn is the dominant one in their marriage.

Her action contrasts the submissive virtue of True Womanhood stating that “a really sensible woman feels her dependence. She does what she can, but she is conscious of an inferiority, and therefore grateful for support” (Welter, 1996, p. 159). Evelyn’s action in refusing to change her last name is against the statement that women should be dependent and grateful for men’s support. By refusing to publicly announced her last name as ‘Adler’, she has stood her ground and showing independency. The husband’s demand is also based on submissive virtue. He believes that Evelyn’s position in their marriage is lower than his and expects her to silently obey him. His reminder about their inequality suggests that Evelyn is not aware of her inferiority. On the other hand, her husband, Don, sees Evelyn’s action as something unacceptable due to the norm.

As a woman, Evelyn is also expected to show inferiority towards her husband. However, the line “I was speechless” after she receives abuse from her husband shows that she regards herself as equal to her husband. Her speechlessness shows that Evelyn is not aware of the virtues expected from her. His reminder of their inequality suggests that despite her achievement, she is still considered the second sex that should do everything with the permission of men.

When Evelyn receives verbal abuse from her husband, she fights back by correcting him. The excerpt below will show the mentioned event: He says, “Yeah, but your parents are trash from Long Island. No one expects anything from you.” You know you shouldn’t, but you say, “I’m from Hell’s Kitchen, you asshole” (Reid, 2017, p. 104). In this conversation, her husband, Don, insults her background, and Evelyn retorts by correcting him that she is from “Hell’s Kitchen” and calling him an “asshole”. Her action contrasts the submissive virtue that a woman should never retort to any form of abuse. Yet, the line “You know you shouldn’t, but you say” suggests that Evelyn has a moment of inner conflict because she is well aware that retorting to him will not be a good idea. Her inner conflict is not the effect of the submissive virtue of *True*

Womanhood, but her experience of enduring abuse from her father. An excerpt of her memory of receiving abuse will further explain the statement: “So that’s what I did. The way I’d done it when my father hit me” (Reid, 2017, p. 99). This line suggests that based on her abusive experience in the past, she knows how to deal with the abuser and how to react to the abuse. Hence, when she experiences a moment of internal conflict, it is because she knows what will come next after she retorts the abuse.

2.1.2.2. Other Act That Challenges Societal Norms

Other than voicing her opinion, Evelyn also does other acts of defiance against the submissive virtue such as pursuing her ambition and creating scandals. Since both acts of defiance are only mentioned briefly in the text, I decided to compile them and discuss them under one subtitle.

Pursuing ambition is one of the acts that defy the submissive virtue. During her time, a woman should not think of any ambition and be fulfilled by her husband’s achievement instead. Yet, Evelyn believes that her dream is important and insists on chasing it. The excerpts below will help this study to provide further explanation:

I had come to Hollywood to do one thing, and I was going to do it.... I went home and told Ernie that I was shocked that anyone at Sunset Studios would be interested in little old me. I said that being an actress would just be a fun lark, a thing to do to pass the time until my real job of being a mother began. Grade-A bullshit.... “Sure,” he said. “I think it’s a smart thing to do. You’ll get better, and who knows, you might even star in a picture one day.” I *would* start. I wanted to punch his lights out (Reid, 2017, p. 59-61).

Evelyn's ambition to be a Hollywood actress is evident in her determination and the length she goes to pursue it which has been explained in the previous subchapter. Her strong reaction towards her husband’s response which seemingly belittles her also suggests that she is very passionate about pursuing her ambition of being an actress. The way she devalues her goal to be an actress to her husband, Ernie, claiming that acting is just a “fun lark” until she starts her “real job” of being a mother to deceive him shows the conflict between her ambition and the expectation that a woman should not have ambition but devoting her life for her family. Evelyn’s determination to be an actress defies the value that women should not pursue selfish ambitions outside their traditional roles. Nevertheless, she defies it for her personal gain and not to challenge society.

Staying away from any form of scandal is also one of the aspects of cultivating submissiveness according to the quality of *True Womanhood*. On the contrary, Evelyn, as an actress, deliberately created a scandal to maintain her fame. The following excerpt will show Evelyn's attempt to create scandals: ""I'm going out on a date with Mick Riva." ... "We don't have a choice." ... "Not if you want to keep your job. Not if you want to keep this house" You want a scandal. He wants the world to know he screwed you" (Reid, 2017, p. 212-219). Evelyn wants to create a scandal with Mick Riva to shut down the gossip about her being a lesbian. During that period, a lesbian is seen as an ailment that can destroy her career and take everything from her. Aside from destroying careers, being a lesbian is also seen as a crime that might involve the authorities. Evelyn's statement "Not to mention that the police could come after us" (Reid, 2017, p. 212-213) after she reasons with her lesbian partner about the danger of being known as a lesbian further reinforces the fact that having a romantic relationship with the same gender is considered as a crime. Due to this, Evelyn decides that a scandal with a male singer is better than being a famous criminal because of her sexual orientation.

The scandal that she makes is successful because it is noticed by the media. The media even issued two articles that discussed Evelyn's scandal with Mick Riva. Below are the excerpts of the articles:

RIVA AND HUGO LOSE THEIR MINDS

Bombshell Evelyn Hugo was spotted in the lap of none other than her biggest fan Mick Riva last Friday night in the heart of Las Vegas.

EVELYN HUGO'S HEARTBREAK

Mick may get a little too eager with the drink, but those in the know say Evelyn was in full control that night. And desperately wanted to get married (Reid, 2017, p. 228-229).

From the title of the first article, it can be inferred that Evelyn has successfully created a scandal that makes the media interested. Despite being portrayed negatively in the second article, which can be seen from the line "Evelyn was in full control that night. And desperately wanted to get married", Evelyn still thinks that a scandal will bring more benefit for her than being known as a lesbian. She states "For two months, I was living in near bliss" (Reid, 2017, p. 230) right after the second article is issued. This shows that she feels calmer in being known as an unvirtuous woman who is eager for a man's touch instead of showing her queer side.

From the explanation above it can be inferred that Evelyn behaves accordingly to obtain comfort and pride. She believes that by acting against her husband's abuse, she can extort power

that saves her last pride. By pursuing her ambition, she believes that she can obtain freedom which leads her to a comfortable life. Moreover, Evelyn's behavior in creating a scandal is contrary of submissive virtue. She is defying the value because she wants to make a change. She defies the value by creating a scandal for her gain which is to maintain her fame.

2.1.3. Claiming Her Personal Autonomy

In order for women to be able to fulfill their domestic roles they are expected to fulfill some aspects. A few of them can do housework, get married but not for money, and experience motherhood willingly. However, Evelyn is described as a woman who defies the domesticity virtue throughout the text.

2.1.3.1. Refusing to do Housework

Despite being an upper-class American woman, Evelyn refuses to do her obligation as a wife which is doing housework. Although she has a great career, she is not exempt from the responsibility of taking care of the house. This can be seen from the responses she gets from the media when they know she refuses to do housework.

COLD, COLD EVELYN

Evelyn doesn't even attempt to keep a clean house or mind her husband's simple requests...(Reid, 2017, p. 126).

This excerpt suggests that despite Evelyn's already becoming a part of an affluent family through her marriage with her husband, society still expects her to fulfill her role as an ideal feminine wife by doing her housework although she can provide maids to do it. It shows that the norm that women should fulfill their domestic roles is enforced to all women despite of their fame and wealth. In society's eyes, a woman must look after her husband and comply with his request. Despite that, Evelyn refuses to do her housework because she sees it as a form of imprisonment. Her refusal of this obligation implies that she defies the domesticity virtue. The following excerpt will show Evelyn's unwillingness to do housework:

Don and I woke up in our rented bungalow, and he told me to make him breakfast. Mind you, he did not ask me to make him breakfast. He barked at the order. Regardless, I ignored his tone and called down to the maid (Reid, 2017, p. 96).

The excerpt above suggests that as a wife, Evelyn is expected by her husband to do her domestic duties, in this context cooking. Evelyn does not accept the concept of cooking for her husband as a wife's obligation. Instead, she presumes it is a non-obligatory that her husband needs to ask. The way she expects her husband to ask her politely to do her obligation shows that she

perceives herself as her husband's equal. This also shows her defiance towards the submissive virtue. Her second husband, Don, is also aware of her defiance towards domesticity. Don expects a wife to act according to the norm women are supposed to follow by catering to their husbands' needs. At the same time, Don knows that Evelyn is not following the quality of *True Womanhood* in terms of domesticity, yet he still believes that a woman's job is to tend to her husband. He believes that the least Evelyn can do as his wife is to know his preference. Her husband's reaction reinforces the 1950s expectation of women's behavior that they should provide cheer and comfort at home. To provide cheer at home, women should provide comfort first. To provide comfort, she should know her family's, in this case her husband's, preferences and give them to him. By not knowing what her husband wants, Evelyn has failed to provide comfort for her husband, which makes him unhappy.

Therefore, her actions and the consequences they bring is in contrast with the value of domesticity that a woman should provide comfort for her family at home by serving them. Evelyn's defies the norm as a way to criticize the True Womanhood. It does not cross her mind that as a wife, she should fulfill her domestic role by tending to her husband because she does not associate herself with the norm. For her, her husband simply asks her to do a "chore" she is not obliged to do.

2.1.3.2. Other Act That Shows Her Personal Autonomy

Evelyn also defies domestic virtue by refusing to be a mother and marrying for her own benefit despite love. One of the key aspects that women must follow to follow the domesticity virtue is experiencing motherhood willingly and wholeheartedly. Women who refuse motherhood or are forced into it cannot be regarded as ideal women. When Evelyn is forced to be a mother by his husband, she refuses it due to her career. Below is the excerpt of the event where Evelyn refuses to experience motherhood:

"I think this should be the last movie you do," he said. "I think it's time for us to have children." His career wasn't turning out the way he wanted. And if he wasn't going to be the most famous person in his family, he surely wasn't going to allow that person to be me.

I looked right at him and said, "Absolutely. Positively. Not" (Reid, 2017, p. 99).

Evelyn considered becoming a mother an obstacle in her career. She has a highly negative take on motherhood even as far as considering it as a "weapon" Don uses to stop her from being famous. She believes that having children will make her less famous because childbirth will

change the public's perspective about her. She knows that after giving birth, the previously known as seductive and naïve Evelyn Hugo who can play any role will be devalued to Evelyn "the mother" who can only play motherly figure on screen. Her refusal to experience motherhood is due to a negative understanding of the experience itself. Evelyn's view of motherhood stems from witnessing her mother's suffering while she was growing up. She sees her mother giving up her dream to be an actress after marrying her father. She views her mother's life as devalued to doing household chores and nurturing her as well as her father.

Her reluctance to experience motherhood is also due to her belief that an actress cannot be a mother and vice versa. This can be seen from her line of thought during her dialogue with Harry, her fifth husband, in discussing childbirth when she thinks that a baby is needed to avoid people's suspicion:

My career was going to take a hit. There was no avoiding it. I'd go from being a woman to being a mother—and somehow those things appeared mutually exclusive in Hollywood. My body would change. I'd have months where I couldn't work (Reid, 2017, p. 298).

Evelyn views childbirth as a burden because it will hinder her career and personal goals. She knows that becoming a mother will affect her personal life. She believes that being a mother and having a successful career in Hollywood does not come hand-in-hand because her change to her body due to motherhood which can rob her of her sensuality and the time off work for childbirth will slow down her career. She believes that a woman should show sensuality instead of femininity which is in contrast with the quality of True Womanhood where motherhood is expected in a feminine woman. By prioritizing her career and showing contempt towards motherhood, Evelyn has defied the domesticity virtue that required women to nurture family members.

Evelyn also defies the domesticity virtue by marrying men for various purposes except love. During that time, a woman should marry in the name of true love and not for the value of material. This idea contrasts with Evelyn's purposes of marriage which are for fame that leads her to wealth. She married seven men in total, each serving a different purpose with the ultimate goal which is to gain and maintain her fame. Here are some excerpts that show her getting married for fame:

There's no reason a man like Don Adler should have a different effect on me from the rest of the men in the world. He was no more handsome than Brick Thomas, no more

earnest than Ernie Diaz, and he could offer me stardom whether I loved him or not (Reid, 2017, p. 79).

Evelyn considers marriage as a tool to advance her career due to her view of it as a strategic move rather than a romantic one. She sees Don Adler as the same as other males she has encountered in her life previously. In Evelyn's eyes, the only thing that differentiates Don from the rest is his ability to offer her stardom. She already calculated that his fame could benefit her if she married him. This shows that Evelyn regards her marriage to Don Adler as a means to further her career. She understands how the industry works and the power Don has in the industry. To put it simply, Evelyn does not regard marriage as something that should be based on love but as a tool that brings her closer to her goal. Her pragmatic view towards marriage is not in line with the characteristics of an ideal woman who should see marriage as a love symbol and personal fulfillment.

Another excerpt that shows Evelyn's regard towards marriage can be seen in this excerpt when she explains that her marriage with an actor is entirely based on beneficial purpose instead of love: "Rex and I had a relationship built entirely on box office. It was tacky and fake and manipulative. But it was the beginning of my millions." (Reid, 2017, p. 243). Despite getting into a strategic marriage, she acknowledges how tacky, fake, and manipulative her marriage is, indicating the lack of emotional or romantic connection. This suggests that she knows that her action is against the virtue of *True Womanhood*, yet she still insists on doing it because she understands that this marriage is crucial for her financial success. She insists on using her marriage as a means to achieve her goal because she sees it as an effective tool to gain fame and wealth. She knows that associating herself with influential and popular figures, such as Rex, the new rising star in Hollywood, can significantly boost her career. She believes that by marrying Rex, she will improve her public image and box office success. Her marriage to Rex further shows her practical view towards marriage as a tool which is against the value of domesticity. She defies the value because her goal is not to change the norm that a woman should view marriage as an emotional connection with her partner but simply to obtain her goal of becoming and maintaining her fame in the film industry.

From her adolescent years, Evelyn has defied the idea of *True Womanhood* to get what she wants. She defies the value of purity more often than other values because she believes that it is the most effective way to bring her toward her goal. She regards her body merely as a tool to get what she wants. The way she emotionlessly describes her body shows her detachment from her body. She does not see the importance of keeping the purity of her body by protecting

it. This happens because of her background, a motherless poor immigrant girl, which never exposes her to the value of *True Womanhood* that dictates women regard their bodies as a temple. She learns from society's, especially men's, reaction towards her body and what she can get from it, and slowly understands the value of her body. Evelyn also defies the value of submissiveness and domesticity because of her ignorance towards *True Womanhood*. She acts according to what she believes is right and defies the values. For instance, according to the ideal mentioned in the *Cult of True Womanhood*, women should not have any ambitions, yet Evelyn has them and insists on chasing them. This is because she wants to get out of her current living situation which is haunted by abuse and poverty. She also avoids being a mother, which is also against *True Womanhood*, because she is afraid that her life will be back to what it used to be. For Evelyn, being a mother means she will no longer be desirable as an actress. She believes that being a mother is not womanly because she will be stuck at home doing domestic housework like her mother. She defies this due to her fear of ending up like her mother who has to give up everything and bear with her father's abuse. To conclude, Evelyn's deviances can be seen as her rebellion to obtain her freedom.

2.2. Evelyn Hugo's Agency

By defying the qualities of *True Womanhood*, Evelyn has shown her agency. The qualities that are defied are the structure that constrains Evelyn in doing certain things, but by defying it she has shown the autonomy that she has which later influences her course of life. Evelyn's agency helps her to choose her course of life, which can be seen by her ability to get out of her poverty and abusive environment.

2.2.1. Obtaining Financial Independence

Evelyn's first and foremost agency is her ability to get out of her poverty. She consciously makes decisions that can bring her out of her poverty. Growing up in a poor household, Evelyn grows to understand the value of money and slowly becomes obsessed with it. She hates her past life and even compares her environment with hell by calling it *Hell's Kitchen* which she desperately tries to escape. Her desperation to escape her poor household can be seen in this excerpt when she realizes that she can use her body as an asset:

I wanted to get far away from Hell's kitchen. I wanted out of my apartment, away from my father's stale tequila breath and heavy hand.... I wanted a nice house and money. I wanted to run, far away from my life (Reid, 2017, p. 57).

There is a hint of desperation in the way Evelyn describes her living conditions. Her tone in describing her living condition is in contrast with the way she describes her body which seems emotionless. Her desire to get out of poverty and obtain wealth is so big that she is willing to do anything to make it happen. Since agency means having the ability to act intentionally and with awareness, then Evelyn has shown her agency in escaping poverty. First, she consciously uses and offers her body to men to get what she wants. As explained in 2.1.1, Evelyn is forced to comply with a boy's demand to show her body first. Nevertheless, she gradually learns that she can choose by utilizing her body. From that realization, Evelyn starts to consciously use her body to obtain her goals. Second, Evelyn consciously made a scandal about herself to save her career. As discussed in 2.1.2, Evelyn understands how the film industry works and she intentionally makes a choice to create a scandal. She tried to save her career from the issues that said that she was a lesbian, which was seen as taboo at that time. She creates a scandal with Mick Riva and is successful in making headlines. After that, the issues of her being a lesbian are gone in an instant. This shows Evelyn's agency that she consciously makes choices that can alter her course of life. Without Evelyn's agency, there is a possibility that the issue of her being a lesbian will end her career. Yet, through her conscious action in creating a scandal, she successfully influences her own life as well as her partner's life. This is in accordance with Giddens' agency that an individual is said to have agency if she holds a considerable amount of power that might be able to change her own life. Giddens also stated that as an agent, individuals can explain their motivation when asked. In the excerpt above, it is apparent that Evelyn can state her motivation clearly. She can retell her reasons of her behaviors that defies the norm which is her desire to obtain wealth. Hence, Evelyn can be considered as an agent that has her agency.

Evelyn's strong desire to escape her destiny and take control of her own life shows her agency. Her clear goals of having a nice house and money as well as her determination to run far away from her current life show her motivation to change her situation. This is in line with Giddens' statement that an agent, an individual must have motivations that drive them to do the following action. Evelyn also clearly stated the reason behind the motivation to obtain wealth, which is to get away from her abusive father and poverty.

Growing up without money, Evelyn's desire to obtain money slowly grows into an obsession with wealth. Her way of seeing money and wealth can be seen in the excerpt below when she explains to a journalist about her poverty:

When I was a child, trying to find something to eat for dinner besides the old rice and dry beans in the kitchen, I would tell myself that if I could just have a good meal every

night, I'd be happy. When I was at Sunset Studios, I told myself all I wanted was a mansion. When I got to the mansion, I told myself all I wanted was two houses and a team of help. Here I was, just turned twenty-five, already realizing that no amount would ever really be enough (Reid, 2017, p. 252-253).

The excerpt shows Evelyn's agency. She is aware of what drives her to have that ambition, which is to get out of poverty. She knows how to achieve her goal and is successful in doing it. If having power means doing things to achieve what one wants, then Evelyn has shown her power. She keeps achieving one after another goal that she has kept in her mind, which affects her course of life. She keeps aiming for higher goals because that is her way of assuring herself that she will not fall back into poverty. She is aware of her actions and the consequences.

Evelyn's agency can also be seen from the following excerpts that happen during her conversation with the journalist about her justification for her action "I was going to lose everything I had built my life on. Everything except the money. I still had the money. And that was something" (Reid, 2017, p. 173). Despite facing the possibility of losing everything she had worked for, she recognized that she still had money. By focusing on this, Evelyn shows her ability to find the good side and maintain a sense of control. By acknowledging that she has almost lost everything, she is determined to use the resources she has left to rebuild her life once again. From here, it can be seen that Evelyn is indeed an agent within social structures. She has a motivation that drives her towards her actions that defy True Womanhood, which is to maintain her wealth, and at the same time, she can explain her motivations behind her actions when asked by the journalist.

Evelyn also shows her agency by deciding to enter strategic marriage to escape poverty. She views marriage as a tool to help her obtain wealth because she sees real marriage as a prison which can be seen from the excerpt below:

"And I know what it feels like to see your future ahead of you—the husband who's just a new version of your father, surrendering to him in bed when it's the last thing you want to do, making only biscuits and canned corn for dinner because you don't have money for meat" (Reid, 2017, p. 57-58).

Evelyn is aware of the structure that prioritizes patriarchy. A marriage only makes a woman a prisoner of her own house stripped of her autonomy and can only obey her husband. It is implied that her belief in marriage is obtained from her witnessing the marriage of her abusive father and deceased mother. While this structure originally caused limitations for her, Evelyn cleverly sees an opportunity in this to exert her agency. She knows that as a woman, she has limited

resources to obtain wealth. Evelyn believes that the most effective way for her to climb the ladder is by associating herself with men who have connections and resources that can help her achieve her goal. She consciously uses marriage as a tool to achieve fame. She strategically calculated the benefits she would get from each husband, careful so she would not end up restrained like her mother. As mentioned in the previous subchapter 2.1.3.1, Evelyn sees all men as the same, the tool to get what she wants. She then makes an informed choice to use marriage to further enhance her career. This perspective allows her to see herself as an active agent in her marriage, rather than a victim or someone being taken advantage of. The excerpt can also explain Evelyn's ability in describing her motivation in entering strategic marriages as she wants to avoid a bleak future.

If an individual is said to have an agency if they have a certain power that influences or changes her own life, then Evelyn has an agency. Evelyn succeeds in achieving her goal that changes her course of life which is to get out of poverty. At the beginning of the book, it is explained from the point of view of a journalist that Evelyn Hugo is known as one of the richest celebrities, "It's no secret that Evelyn has more money than God" (Reid, 2017, p. 27). Evelyn's success in getting rich shows that she is successful in changing her course of life. She is aware and consciously chooses her actions which lead her to the wealthy life she has now.

Evelyn's agency in changing her course of life can also be seen in her decision to be an actress. Despite having other options to escape poverty and an abusive environment, Evelyn has the autonomy to decide to become an actress, following her mother's dream. Evelyn believes that her mother's dream to be a celebrity is the most effective way to get out of poverty. This can be seen from the excerpt below when Evelyn is reminiscing about her mother:

"My mother was a saint. I really mean it. Stunningly beautiful, an incredible singer, with a heart of gold. For years before she died, she would always tell me that we we're gonna get out of Hell's Kitchen and go straight to Hollywood. She said she was going to be the most famous woman in the world and get us a mansion on the beach" (Reid, 2017, p. 40).

Evelyn adores her mother to the extent she believes that she cannot do any wrongdoing. From a very young age, she believed that her mother was always right, which can be seen from her way of equating her mother to a saint. This also shapes her way of thinking that her mother has the best idea of getting out of poverty. This mindset never leaves her head even until she grows older. She does not consider any other method of getting out of poverty other than making it to Hollywood. Evelyn's decision to pursue her mother's dream of becoming an actress in

Hollywood shows her exercise of agency, which is the ability to make autonomous choices that shape her life. Despite the social norms that dictate women's ideal behavior, Evelyn chooses to prioritize her ambition to escape poverty and fame in Hollywood.

Evelyn also shows agency in challenging societal judgment surrounding women's bodies. Her acceptance of her mother's rumored background as a chorus girl or prostitute shows, and even following her show it. This excerpt will help to explain the way she sees her mother as a prostitute:

"My mother had been a chorus girl off Broadway.... When I got older, I found out that *chorus girl* was also a euphemism for a prostitute...I'd like to think she wasn't—not because there's any shame in it but because I know a little bit about what it is to give your body to someone when you don't want to" (Reid, 2017, p. 47).

After Evelyn finds out about a rumor of her mother's old profession as a prostitute, she does not feel any shame towards the nature of the job. Instead, she feels bad about her mother because she is forced to give her body to strangers. This shows that Evelyn has bias towards how she sees her body as a woman. She does not believe that using one's body to obtain something is a negative action. Hence, this value drives her to defy the purity virtue to be a Hollywood actress.

From the discussion above, it is clear that Evelyn is aware of every decision that she makes to get what she wants. She fully understands the benefits and the consequences of her actions in defying True Womanhood. She knows how the patriarchal structure limits her movement as a woman, but cleverly finds a way to exert her agency. She has a clear motivation in every action that she takes which is to get out of poverty. Evelyn's actions defy True Womanhood because she simply acts for the sake of her goal which is driven by her past. This shows how Evelyn is making her own path in life by using her agency. Evelyn as an individual can defy society's expectations, showing that she can make her own choices despite the expectation.

2.2.2. Obtaining Self-reliance

Evelyn's next agency is her ability to get away from her abuser. Growing up in an abusive household, Evelyn believes that the only way to escape the abusive situation is by making her own decisions despite going against the norm. Trying to escape her current situation itself is already a form of defiance towards the quality of submissiveness which forces women to accept their destiny. Her defiance is due to her desire to get out of it, to survive and to have a better life. Yet, agency is defined to be the capability of doing things rather than the intention. Hence, by doing the defiance, Evelyn has shown her agency.

Her defiance in getting out of her abusive environment is due to her mindset which makes her believe that going against what people expect is the only way to be free. This matches Giddens' theory about people being able to make their own choices and change their lives. The excerpt below will explain Evelyn's take on her abusive father during her conversation with a journalist:

But I also know how badly I'd needed to leave Hell's Kitchen. I know what it feels like to not want your father to look at you too closely, lest he decides he hates you and hits you or decides he loves you a little too much. And I know what it feels like to see your future ahead of you—the husband who's really just a new version of your father, surrendering to him in bed when it's the last thing you want to do (Reid, 2017, p. 57).

Evelyn exerts her agency by taking decisive action to escape her abuser and abusive environment. She understands the urgency to leave Hell's Kitchen and avoid the harmful relationship with her. She also recognizes the bleak future that awaits her if she stays and lives a life with a husband who resembles her father whom she would submit against her will. Her realization of these dangers motivates her to change her situation. By deciding to leave and actively seeking a better life, Evelyn shows her power to shape her own destiny and break free from the cycle of abuse. Evelyn shows her agency by showing her determination to avoid a life of submission and suffering, demonstrating her ability to take control of her future.

Evelyn is aware of the patriarchal structure in society that restrained her as a woman. This awareness helps her to see the pattern of male dominance in her life and use it to her advantage. For instance, the idea of real marriage, which is supposed to be a safe thing for women, seems dangerous to her. To her, real marriage is another way of going back into an abusive household with different abusers. She believes that by getting married, her life will end up being just as bad as her childhood. Evelyn shows her agency by going against what the structure dictates her to do, using marriage to get money and freedom. However, it needs to be noted that Evelyn is being ignorant to the existence of the qualities of True Woman which is geared towards the middle-upper-class white woman because she is a lower-class immigrant woman. Evelyn's oblivion towards the qualities of True Womanhood is what gives her agency. By not getting exposed to the quality during her adolescence, she does not feel guilty about defying it and choosing her own course of life.

Evelyn shows her agency to change her life, which can be seen in her ability to act and change her course of life. As stated previously, Giddens' concept of power means that individuals can change their own lives and the lives of others by doing or not doing certain acts. When Evelyn

was fourteen years old, she realized that she could show her body to a boy in exchange for anything she wanted that was sold in his store. This is conveyed by the boy when he says, “You have this power over me” (Reid, 2017, p. 66) which makes her think “*Look what I do to these poor boys...Here is my value, my power*: so, when he dumped me—I felt...a very real sense of failure” (Reid, 2017, p. 66). The way she can affect the boy’s behavior in giving her anything she wants from his store shows Evelyn’s power in controlling the boy. At the same time, her body also affects her own course of life. She, who previously could not afford to buy anything she wanted due to her poor circumstances, now can get anything she wants just by showing her body. When Evelyn states that she feels a sense of failure when the boy dumps her, it shows that she is afraid of losing her agency. It is in line with Giddens’ statement that individuals are no longer considered agents if they no longer have power and cannot make any difference. The boys dumping her shows that she no longer has any effect on the boys. Hence, she could not control him to change the course of her life. However, her loss of power does not last long. Throughout her career, she has shown an exceptional ability to exert her power by using her body. When she went to Hollywood, she had sex with her producers and got her desired part in the movie due to this action. This shows that Evelyn has the agency to do the things she wants to do while changing her course of life and the people around her. As an individual, Evelyn can also states her motivation in defying the norm when asked by the journalist. Her main motivations in behaving against the True Womanhood are escaping poverty and abuse.