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***Nancy Reagan's My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan (1989) and  
Hillary Clinton's Living History (2003): Two First Ladies in the Public  
and Private Spaces***

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## To:

- **My parents:** Brahim and Fariza who were there for me through my difficulties and to my wonderful sister Thin hinane and my little brothers Amazigh and Aghiles.
  - **My best friend:** Titem. Thank you for everything.
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## Abstract

This present work is a comparative study that explores the public and private spaces of two American First Ladies, Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton in their respective autobiographies *My Turn* (1989) and *Living History* (2003). For this purpose, we have borrowed two concepts: The ‘Public Sphere in the Political Domain’ and the ‘Public Sphere in the World Letters’, from the German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, which he discusses in his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962). This dissertation focuses mainly on the representation of First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton’s public and private spaces in their respective autobiographies. It discusses their implications in the public space as well as how they both portray it in their autobiographies. It also addresses their private spaces and explores their different relationships with their respective parents, husbands and children and how that shaped them to become the women they are today. Through the analysis of such interesting literary works and First Ladies, we have come to one major finding which is that both First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton had a significant impact on redefining the role of First Ladies from only wives and mothers to powerful women who can make a change and effectively impact the world.

Key words: Public/Private Spaces, First Ladies, Autobiography, Power, Motherhood.

## **I. Introduction**

From the beginning of human history, women in the United States and many different parts of the world have always suffered from gender inequality and discrimination. They have been taught to believe that their potential is restricted and that they do not possess the needed intelligence to hold powerful positions as men do. However, this did not weaken their determination. Instead, they fought fearlessly for their rights and sought to overcome the boundaries that were and still are to the present day enslaving them. The two First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton are among these fearless and strong-willed women who worked hard to elevate the status of women everywhere in the world.

First Ladies are generally believed to be associated with the role of a President's wife and the mother of his children, thus, limiting them to roles of homemakers and child-bearers. Furthermore, when they are under the public eye, they are often solely judged by how physically presentable they are. However, First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton are among the First Ladies who did not yield to the public's expectations. They have rather succeeded in redefining the role of First Ladies from that of women who are expected to preserve a perfect public image to women who are not afraid of making their voices heard. They have both demonstrated that they are capable of overcoming the various challenges and obstacles that they face, either in their public spaces as First Ladies or in their private spaces as mothers and wives. They have also shown that, regardless of how much pressure exercised on them to conform to society's expectation; they were able not only to find a balance between their public and private spaces but to continue the fight for what they believe in as well. They have also proved that they have enough intelligence and potential to make important political decisions and effectively affect their respective husbands both publicly and privately.

This piece of research is a comparative study that relies on Jürgen Habermas' concept of 'public' and 'private space' and attempts to explore both First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton's implications in their public spaces and their portrayals of their private spaces. They have both shown that they were active in their public spaces and were able to bring change through their positions as First Ladies. It also attempts to demonstrate that they have both made major contributions in reshaping the role of First Ladies and empowering women all around the world. Furthermore, it attempts to argue that despite the constant scrutiny and criticism these two First Ladies endured, they have both succeeded in making a name for themselves and proving that they were worthy of their position of power. Not as Presidents' wives, but as ambitious and determined women with enough confidence and potential to be part of the American history.

### **Review of the Literature:**

Both of First Lady Nancy Reagan's **My Turn (1989)** and First Lady Clinton's **Living History (2003)** have received a large amount of critical attention. Nancy Reagan's autobiography, **My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan (1989)** has been the subject of several pieces of criticism from various critics and different perspectives. To start with, David Lauter believes in his article for the **Los Angeles Times newspaper** entitled '**Nancy Settles a Few Scores' (1989)** that Nancy Reagan's autobiography is not a real memoir. He argues that apart from 'sometimes touching, chapter on her childhood', the First Lady leaves half of her life unmentioned. He also maintains that **My Turn** is a 'form of self-indictment', which probably makes her unlikeable and argues that her spiteful nature that is particularly shown in her autobiography earned her the title of the most controversial First Lady in history (Lauter, 1989).

Moreover, the critic also points out that there were several omissions in the autobiography. According to him, these omissions were not limited to Nancy Reagan's age alone but it included even the death of her adoptive father Dr. Loyal Davis as well as her anti-drug program. He says: "In fact, considering how insistent Reagan has been about the importance of her anti-drug campaigns, the topic receives barely a mention in this book, merely a few passing lines at the beginning and the end" (Lauter, 1989). At the end of his article, the critic Davis Lauter argues that readers who want information about the Reagans will be disappointed because instead of information, the readers will discover the "unvarnished Nancy Reagan, who has learned, she says, 'to just go on being myself'" (ibid).

Another critic Sally Quinn in her article in **The Washington Post newspaper** entitled '**Nancy Reagan Looks Back in Anger**' (1989) studied Nancy Reagan's autobiography **My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan** (1989) from a psychological perspective. She believes that Nancy Reagan's autobiographical work failed because she did not inform her readers about 'what it's like to live in the White House [or] what it's like to be a First Lady' (Quinn, 1989). Instead, she states, 'My Turn tells you what it's like to be Nancy Reagan' (ibid). She also argues that Nancy Reagan expresses anger and dissatisfaction towards 'everything and 'everybody', especially her daughter Patti.

The critic adds that as she compared this autobiography with other autobiographies by former First Ladies, she realizes that Nancy Reagan's work is different in terms of tone. She contends that **My Turn** is "about settling scores" and about "getting even" (ibid: 04). Nevertheless, the critic asserts that when Nancy Reagan is not preoccupied with 'getting even', her autobiography can sometimes be quite informative and interesting. She also acknowledges that Nancy Reagan was the First Lady who had gone through difficult times in the White House; starting from her husband's assassination to her bout with breast cancer. However, she maintains that:

My Turn was Nancy's chance to vindicate herself. To prove to her critics once and for all that she was not the cold, calculating and angry, vindictive person she appeared to be. Instead, sadly, the book has only served to confirm everyone's suspicions (Quinn, 1989).

From the above review, it is clear that the two critics have scrutinized First Lady Reagan's **My Turn (1989)** from the same perspective. They both deal with the autobiography from a psychological perspective, thus overlooking other perspectives like the feminist and sociological ones.

Similarly, critics have dealt with Hillary Clinton's **Living History (2003)** from various points of view. To begin with, John Homans reviewed the autobiography of First Lady Clinton from a political perspective in his **New York Magazine** article entitled '**Hill of Dreams**' (2003). Homans claims that "a memoir by a sitting public servant is inevitably a continuation of politics by other means – background-gilding, score-settling, a controlled forum in which to make one's points" (Homans, 2003). However, he points out that Hillary Clinton is not an ordinary politician since she has already been involved in the White House and 'has more scores to settle than most' (ibid). According to him, Hillary Clinton does not provide her readers with any gossip or details about her 'wronged-woman status'. He argues that aside from talking about her family and her upbringing, the autobiography becomes more rationalized and objective.

Furthermore, the same critic claims that as the First Lady who was betrayed by her husband and suffered a public scandal, "[her] decision to stay with Bill Clinton was a purely political calculation" (ibid). Nevertheless, he states that Hillary Clinton's love for her husband and her affectionate way of speaking about her husband is difficult to fake, but not impossible. He says: "After everything, she gets girlish over his handsomeness, his energy, and his long pianist's fingers" (ibid). He also argues that, "Hillary still comes from a place

called Denial” and contends that her husband’s constant infidelities were more evident to her than she admitted in **Living History**.

Another critic is Elaine Showalter who, in her article for **The Guardian newspaper** entitled ‘**The Throne behind the Power**’ (2003) examined First Lady Clinton’s **Living History (2003)** as well. She claims that thousands of people were eager to read First Lady Clinton’s autobiography and learn about her feelings regarding her husband’s sexual affair with the White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Nevertheless, the critic believes that her ‘avoidance of details has [instead] created new skepticism among American journalists and reviewers’ (Showalter, 2003). She says: “They are convinced that the marriage is a cynical façade and that Clinton is recycling pious platitudes with an eye to the sympathy vote in her next campaign” (ibid).

The critic also remarks that **Living History** is not about ‘gossip’ and that Hillary Clinton does not in any way insult or blame anyone in her autobiography. Moreover, the same critic states that the autobiography’s title indicates, “both that she has been a public figure, living through history; and that her life in the past decade has been a form of history, a representative and symbolic life (ibid). She explains that the biggest challenge for Hillary Clinton is her role as a First Lady; ‘a role she came to understand as both surrogate and symbolic’ (ibid). Furthermore, the same critic maintains that Hillary Clinton has undergone great difficulty during her husband’s terms, which made her question her role as First Lady. Yet, the critic believes that the First Lady has played a crucial role both in her country and abroad for she became one of the most popular political figures who advocate for women’s and children’s rights.

From the above review on Hillary Clinton’s **Living History (2003)**, it is evident that the autobiography has been studied from at least two points of view. The first perspective is a

political one, completely overlooking other angles. As for the second review, it studies **Living History (2003)** from a feminist and psychological perspective.

## **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

From the above review of the literature on Nancy Reagan's **My Turn (1989)** and Hillary Clinton's **Living History (2003)**, it is quite evident that both works and both First Ladies have been separately studied from diverse perspectives. However, to my best knowledge, no previous studies have attempted to compare these two autobiographies in terms of the two First Ladies' roles both in their public and private spheres. It is, therefore, my task to discuss the role these two First Ladies played in their public lives as First Ladies and in their private lives as wives. For this purpose, a number of assumptions are to be made. My first assumption centers on the two First Ladies' impact on reshaping the role of a First Lady. I assume that although the two First Ladies belong to two different times and had distinct experiences regarding political life, yet they both managed, in their own unique way, to redefine the role of a First Lady and to provide another image of them beyond that of beauty and fashion. My second assumption revolves around the two First Ladies' impact on the public sphere. I assume that although Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton had different ways through which they have influenced the world, they both share the same determination to make a change and positively affect the world. My third hypothesis is on the private sphere of both Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton. For this, I assume that even though the two First Ladies have some aspects of public life in common, they still differ in the private relationships they share with their respective husbands and with their male entourage. Last but not least, I assume that the two First Ladies have both proved to be more than devoted wives and fashionable women but are also role models and sources of inspiration for many people around the world.

## **C/ Methodological Outline**

This dissertation is divided into four sections. The first section is devoted to a ‘General Introduction’ that states the theme of this study. It includes a review of literature that deals with some criticism of the two selected autobiographies; Nancy Reagan’s **My Turn (1989)** and Hillary Clinton’s **Living History (2003)**. The second section is ‘Methods and Materials’ which provides an explanation of Jürgen Habermas’ theory of the Public Sphere as discussed in his 1962 work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. It focuses on two main concepts: the ‘Public Sphere in the Political Domain’ and the ‘Public Sphere in the World of Letters’. This section also includes two biographies of the two American authors and two summaries of their autobiographies. The third section is the ‘Results’ which reveals the findings that have been reached in this dissertation, as well as the ‘Discussion’ section which is divided into two chapters. The first chapter analyzes the two First Ladies’ implications in the Public Sphere. The second chapter, on the other hand, deals with the private lives of the two First Ladies focusing on their relationships with their husbands and other men of their entourage. At last, the ‘Conclusion’ section restates the main points of this research paper and sums up its findings. It also suggests some perspectives to further research on both First Ladies and their works.

## II. Method and Materials:

### A/ Method:

Since our piece of research deals with American First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton's roles in the public and private spaces, I am going to support my research work with Jürgen Habermas's theory of the 'Public Sphere'. Jürgen Habermas is a German sociologist, philosopher and a member of the Frankfurt School. He is best known for coining the term of the "Public Sphere" which he thoroughly explains in his work '**The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)**'. Originally written by Habermas in German and developed from an article entitled '**The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article**' (1964), the work was later translated into English by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence in 1989 and it is considered one of Habermas' major works both in Germany and in the English-speaking countries.

Habermas's major work, **The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)** is a socio-historical account of the emergence, transformation and disintegration of the Bourgeois Public Sphere in Western societies. It both describes a historical transformation of a new social space situated between the public and the private sphere and develops a theory of a democratic society. Through his work, Habermas aims to demonstrate the various understandings of the 'public' and how its meaning came to change from the Greek times through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance until present.

For Habermas, the word 'public' had different meanings over time but its first meaning goes back to Ancient Greece in which a distinction has been made between two different spheres of social life. The first sphere is the '**public sphere**' called '**Polis**' which "stands for open interactions between free citizens in the political area" (Habermas, 1989:04).

That is, it is a sphere open to all free citizens. The other sphere is the ‘**private sphere**’ called ‘**Oikos**’ or household which “consists of hidden interactions between free individuals” (Habermas, 1989:04). It is the sphere of labor, exchange and family; a sphere over which a citizen has authority and it is mainly occupied by women. However, Habermas argues that during the Middle Ages, particularly the time of Feudalism, there was no distinction between the public and private realms. Instead, there was what he terms ‘Representative Publicness’.

He explains:

There is no indication European society of the high middle ages possessed a public sphere as a unique realm distinct from the private sphere [...]. At that time there existed a public representation of power. The status of the feudal lord, at whatever level of the feudal pyramid, was oblivious to the categories "public" and "private," but the holder of the position represented it publicly” (Habermas, 1964:50).

Habermas maintains that at that time, there was no public sphere separate from state authority and there was no public space open to all in which people come together to debate and discuss issues of general interest, as it was the case during the Greek times. However, he asserts that it is not until the Renaissance that “the feudal authorities (church, princes and nobility), to which the representative public sphere was first linked, disintegrated during a long process of polarization” (ibid: 51). That is, by the end of the eighteenth century, they had broken apart into private elements on the one hand, and into public on the other (ibid). However, Habermas maintains that in the modern world the relationship between the two spheres changes as the state starts to intervene in the economy and integrates itself with these two realms, thus, making the distinction between them unclear. This is what Habermas terms as ‘Refeudalization’ which means the return of the feudal society of the Middle Ages in which the king controls everything. He says:

Representative publicity of the old type is not thereby revived; but it still lends certain traits to a refeudalized public sphere of civil society whose characteristic feature [...] is that the large-scale organizers in

state and society "manage the propagation of their positions.  
(Habermas, 1989:200)

According to Habermas, the public sphere is where the free exchange of ideas and debates occur. It is, he writes: "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state" (ibid: 176). It is also a domain of social life in which public opinion can be formed and in which all citizens can participate (Habermas, 1964: 49). The private sphere, on the other hand, is the realm of family and home. It "comprises civil society in the narrower sense, that is to say, the realm of commodity exchange and of social labor" (Habermas, 1989:30). Furthermore, the private sphere includes three sub-categories, which are **the 'Public Sphere in the Political Realm', the 'Public Sphere in the World of Letters' and 'Markets of Cultural Products'**.

Moreover, Habermas believes that all citizens should have access to the public sphere in which they can discuss matters of general interest in "an unrestricted fashion - that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions" (Habermas, 1964:49). Yet, he acknowledges the fact that women and people of color were excluded from participating in the public sphere, stating, "Both women and other groups were denied equal access to equal and active participation in the formation of political opinion and will". He also admits the fact that the "structural transformation of the political public sphere proceeds without affecting the patriarchal character of society as a whole" (Habermas, 1989: 428).

From this explanation of Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public and private spheres, this paper will focus on two main concepts taken from his work **The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)**. The first concept is **'The Public Sphere in the Political Domain'** and the second

concept is ‘**The Public Sphere in the World Letters**’ which I will use to discuss the autobiographies of First Ladies Nancy Reagan’s **My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan (1989)** and Hilary Clinton’s **Living History (2003)** .

## **B/ Materials**

### **B.1. Biography of Nancy Reagan**

Nancy Davis Reagan (July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1921 – March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016) was an American actress in the 1940s and 1950s and the wife of the 40<sup>th</sup> president of America, Ronald Reagan. She served as a First Lady of the United States during the two presidential terms of her husband from 1981 to 1989. She married Ronald Reagan and they had two children together: Patti and Ronald. Later in 1967, Ronald Reagan became governor of California and in 1981 he was elected U.S president, thus, making his wife the First Lady of the United States. While her husband was governor of California, Nancy Reagan spent many hours visiting the elderly and the handicapped and as a First Lady, she focused on the fight against drug and alcohol abuse, founding the “Just Say No” campaign, which was considered her major initiative as First Lady.

Early in her husband’s first term, Nancy Reagan also sought to renovate and redecorate the White House for which she was strongly criticized. She had also been scrutinized for consulting an astrologer after the attempt assassination of her husband. However, despite the harsh criticism, Nancy Reagan had a strong influence as well as played an effective role in both the life of her husband and that of many Americans. After leaving the White House, She and Ronald Reagan returned to their home in Los Angeles, California where she devoted all her time in taking care of her husband who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. She died of heart failure at the age of 94.

## **B.2. Biography of Hillary Clinton**

Hillary Diane Clinton (October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1947 – Present) is an American politician and lawyer. Considered as one of the most prominent American politicians of the 2000s, Hillary Clinton became the first American First Lady to win a Public Office Seat and in 2016, she became the first woman in U.S history to become the presidential nominee of a major political party. Her career in politics began through Law. She entered Yale Law School in 1969 where she met Bill Clinton. They were married in 1975 and five years later, they had their first and only child Chelsea Victoria Clinton. In Arkansas, Hillary and Bill Clinton soon became the most powerful political couple. Her husband was elected governor of Arkansas in 1978, she, therefore, became the First Lady of Arkansas. She worked on various political campaigns and as a lawyer in the Rose Law Firm where she was twice named one of “The 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America”.

In 1992, Bill Clinton was elected President of the United States and Hillary Clinton became a First Lady. As First Lady, she was very involved with White House policies and worked with her husband on several issues. In 1998, her marriage came under public scrutiny during the Lewinsky scandal. After her husband left office in 2000, Hillary Clinton decided to run for the Senate seat in New York in 2006, then for presidency in 2008. After losing the Democratic Nomination to former President Barack Obama, she served as Secretary of State from 2009 to 2013. Later, in 2016 she announced that she was running for presidency, which she lost to Donald Trump. However, despite the loss, Hillary Clinton was still considered the first woman to win the popular vote in an American Presidential Election.

### **B.3. A Summary of Nancy Reagan's My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan (1989)**

**My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan (1989)** is an autobiographical work written by former First Lady Nancy Reagan. It is divided into eighteen sections in which she offers an inside portrait of the Reagan administration, speaks about some important White House staff and discusses her husband's involvement in the Iran-Contra affair. She also talks about her relationship with her family members, her troubled relationship with her children as well as her struggle with cancer. In this autobiography, First Lady Reagan paints an intimate portrait of her time as a First Lady during her years in the White House during the presidency of her husband, Ronald Reagan. She eliminates rumors and clears the record in regards to her relationship with the Russian activist Mikhail Gorbachev, Donald Reagan and her husband, and the impact she had on Ronald Reagan's policy and politics. She also makes use of her autobiography to clear her image that was distorted by the media.

In this lengthy autobiography, Ronald Reagan is the most spoken about; discussing his life and entry into politics as well as Nancy Reagan's love for him and the great influence she has always had over him. She also talks about their relationship and shows how much she was scared of losing him especially after the 1981 attempt on his life. Nancy Reagan also talks about her children, highlighting her struggle with her daughter Patti; faulting her for being a difficult child. She also talks about her difficult relationship with her stepson Michael and her good relationship with her stepdaughter Maureen.

### **B.4. A Summary of Clinton's Living History (2003)**

**Living History (2003)** is a personal and political autobiography written by former First Lady Hillary Clinton in preparation for her presidential run. It is a revealing autobiography about the eight years she spent in the White House; sharing with the readers

what she lived, how she felt about her experiences there and why she made the choices she did. It also recalls the challenging process by which she came to define herself as a wife, a mother, and a politician. The autobiography is divided into thirty-eight sections; tracing Hillary Clinton's life from childhood in Chicago until her election as the junior senator from New York, going through her years in college; meeting Bill Clinton; her life as Arkansas' First Lady; her road to the White House and finally her election in New York in 2000.

In her autobiography, First Lady Clinton also talks about her family and her years in Yale University as well as her years with Bill Clinton, a thirty-year adventure in love and politics that survived years of public scrutiny and scandals. She also tries to clear many issues on which she has not been able to speak out such as the Monica Lewinsky scandal. It describes Hillary Clinton's reaction to her husband's affair; detailing the distance and anger she felt but it was mostly an explanation for how and why they reconciled. The autobiography mainly covers Hillary Clinton's principle areas of interest such as the welfare of children, the status of women internationally and social justice. It also shows her role in shaping domestic legislation; traveling around the country to champion health care, expand economic and educational opportunity and promote the needs of children and families. In a nutshell, **Living History (2003)** captures the essence of Hillary Clinton and the journey she went through to become a great figure in American politics.

### **III. Results and Discussion:**

This piece of research discusses the public and the private lives of two American First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton in their respective autobiographies **My Turn (1989)** and **Living History (2003)**. For this purpose, we have borrowed some concepts from Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public and private spheres developed in his work **The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)**. This led to some major and interesting findings concerning both authors and their works.

First and foremost, the study of First Lady Reagan's **My Turn** and First Lady Clinton's **Living History** through the lens of Jürgen Habermas's theory has revealed that the role of both First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton in the public sphere is not limited to mere Presidents' wives. They have rather demonstrated that they are capable of affecting the Presidents' political decisions as well. They have also proved to be powerful First Ladies who, despite the harsh criticism and the different challenges they had to face during their eight years in the White House, have not failed to show that they are worthy of their statuses as First Ladies. In a nutshell, both Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton have succeeded in redefining the role of a First Lady from women who are expected to be beautiful and elegant for the public eye to women willing to take part in the various affairs of the country. Thus, proving that their role goes beyond being spouses and extends to being the Presidents' advisors and, even at times, the decision makers.

The second major finding involves the two First Ladies' implications in the private sphere. From the second section of the discussion part of this research paper, which concerns the private lives of Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton, it is revealed that they have both been strongly influenced by their husbands and fathers and also by their upbringing. This

contributed in shaping them as mothers and wives, but most importantly as women. In addition, they both shared their personal experiences and their relationships with their husbands and children through their autobiographies. This led to the conclusion that the two First Ladies Reagan and Clinton are not only political figures and successful First Ladies but are also great mothers and supportive wives. They have also demonstrated that they are capable of balancing their lives under the public eye and their lives behind closed doors. Moreover, the two First Ladies do not only hold the position of wives and mothers but their opinions related to family matter as well, just as those of their respective husbands.

Finally yet importantly, the sections concerning the two First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton's duties inside and outside the White House do not necessarily revolve around women or feminist issues. They have rather demonstrated that they are concerned with matters of great importance to their country as well. Through discussing their various contributions, this piece of research has shown that both First Ladies are defenders of humans' rights. It is evident that the two First Ladies have contributed in their own way in helping their country by protecting its civil rights and democratic ideals. Moreover, it is clear they have both showed great determination in achieving their social and political objectives as well as an honest desire to make a difference.

## **Discussion**

This part of our research paper analyzes First Ladies Nancy Reagan's **My Turn (1989)** and Hillary Clinton's **Living History (2003)** using the already mentioned concepts from Jürgen Habermas' work **The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)**. This section is divided into two chapters. The first chapter analyzes both First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton's implications in the public sphere and demonstrates the different ways they used their title to influence the world. The second chapter, on the other hand, deals with the private sphere of the two First Ladies

and focuses on their relationships with their male entourage and with their children as part of their private spaces.

## **I. Chapter One: First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton in the Public Sphere:**

Our aim in this chapter is to shed light on First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton's representations of their public spheres in their respective autobiographies; **My Turn (1989)** and **Living History (2003)**. First of all, we begin by comparing and contrasting the two First Ladies in terms of their entry to politics and their view on being first ladies. Next, we move to demonstrate the different criticisms the two women faced during their years in the White House. Finally, we focus on their duties as First Ladies and on the different ways they exerted influence on the world.

### **A/ First Lady Nancy Reagan in the Public Space:**

#### **1- The State of California as First Lady Reagan's First Public Space in My Turn (1989):**

In her autobiography **My Turn**, First Lady Reagan speaks about her first encounter with politics and reveals that she was not introduced to this world until she met Ronald Reagan and became the First Lady of California. In fact, in the eighth chapter of her autobiography entitled '**I Thought I Married an Actor**', First Lady Reagan talks about her husband's entry to politics and admits that she did not expect him to run for governor and did not even know that he was interested in politics. She says: "Looking back now, I'm amazed at my own naïveté. But I honestly never expected that Ronald Reagan would go into politics" (Reagan; 1989:90). Indeed, First Lady Reagan was not interested in politics and admits in the same chapter that she felt extremely nervous and petrified of giving speeches in front of

millions of people. But she soon became accustomed to it and attended several political dinners with her husband (Reagan; 1989:96). Simply put, her husband's run for governor of California was what truly marked the beginning of First Lady Reagan's days as a political figure.

Still in the same part of her autobiography, First Lady Reagan deals with her first implication in the public space, which is 'California. As the First Lady of California, First Lady Reagan undertook various projects and had a keen interest in several different matters. For instance, she states in **My Turn** that she was involved in building a new mansion for the future governor of California for which she was criticized. This led to her first press conference. She writes in her autobiography: "I certainly wasn't prepared to be attacked for my efforts by Jesse Unruh [...]. When he accused me of collecting these items for my personal use, I got so mad that I decided to hold my first press conference" (ibid: 99). From this quote, it is evident that this press conference was the First Lady's way of defending herself against the accusations that were made against her. The First Lady also expresses in **My Turn** her interest in hospitals and talks about the 'Foster Grandparents program'; a program that she found very interesting. She explains:

What excited me most about this program was that both sides benefited. Older people, who often feel lonely, unneeded, and unloved, have so much to give—especially to children, who need more love and attention than any institution can provide. When you bring these two groups together, each one provides what the other one needs, and everyone is better off. (ibid).

This quote proves that the First Lady was very interested in the Foster Grandparents program and was eager to help children and older people. This, as she explains in her autobiography, is due to having a father who was a neurosurgeon. She was also quite excited

about it and shared her thoughts with her husband who assisted her in expanding it to include other hospitals as well (Reagan; 1989: 100).

Furthermore, First Lady Reagan also mentions in **My Turn** her deep involvement in the issue of prisoners of war and explains that she organized two dinners for those who returned from the war. She has also talked with their mothers and wives on the phone to reassure them. She says: “As they came into the house, I gave each one of them a hug. When Commander Charles Southwick presented me with the tin spoon he had eaten with during his seven years of captivity, I was in tears again” (ibid: 101). Clearly, the First Lady was profoundly touched by these men, not only by them and the stories of torture they told her but also by the friendships they shared during that time.

## **2- The White House as First Lady Reagan’s Second Public Space in My Turn (1989):**

In her autobiography **My Turn**, First Lady Reagan acknowledges that “once upon a time, the president’s wife was seen and not heard” (Reagan; 1989: 44). That is to say, First Lady Reagan is aware of the difficulty of being a First Lady especially since the role of the president’s wife is not defined. In fact, “the constitution mentions no assignments for the chief executive’s spouse” (Caroli; 2010:18). Nevertheless, in her autobiography, she acknowledges the fact that the role of a First Lady has come to change since Eleanor Roosevelt. She explains that the role of First Ladies came to represent not only the President’s spouse and the mother of his children, but a woman who influences him and who has an active role (Reagan; 1989: 44). She states in **My Turn**: “When we arrived in Washington, in January of 1981, I honestly thought I understood the demands and pressures of being the first lady” (ibid: 20). However, she soon realized that her eight years at the White House would be quite difficult and challenging as she explains in her autobiography:

In 1981, when Ronnie and I moved to Washington, I never dreamed that our eight years there would be a time of so much emotion. But life in the White House is magnified: The highs were higher than I expected, and the lows were much lower. While I loved being first lady, my eight years with that title were the most difficult years of my life (Reagan; 1989: 04).

Still with the White House as her second public space, the First Lady explains in **My Turn**, that she has been the victim of endless criticisms and speculations especially about how much influence she exercises on her husband. She also expresses her understanding of the necessity to share with the public important information about the President but asserts that some boundaries must not be crossed. Furthermore, she does not attempt to hide her dissatisfaction with being constantly scrutinized and analyzed (ibid: 43). She says:

It was hard not to take it personally that our privacy was invaded so constantly. I repeatedly had to remind myself that this is an age of enormous curiosity about famous people, and that the president and his wife are celebrities. But I don't believe that the privacy of any other president has been invaded to this extent. I wondered—and still do: Is there something about Ronnie and me that prompts this endless curiosity? (ibid: 46).

The First Lady has also been accused on several occasions of interfering with her husband's political matters and has received a bulk of criticism on different topics. In her autobiography, she explains that from her first day at the White House, the media criticized her for everything she said and did. For instance, she was criticized for renovating the White House and was met with anger for wanting to make the White House more presentable. She says: "While I had no desire to turn the White House into an imperial palace, I did want to reclaim some of the stature and dignity of the building. I've always felt that the White House should represent this country at its best" (ibid: 21).

Moreover, the First Lady states in **My Turn** that she was also criticized for her taste in fashion, which started from her very first day as a First Lady. She explains that she was criticized for every outfit she wore and was accused of being obsessed with clothes. However,

in her autobiography, the First Lady defends herself and explains that she has always been interested in fashion but that does not mean she is obsessed or that “[...] when a woman dresses well, it means she’s not doing much else” (Reagan; 1989: 26). In addition, she describes how she was portrayed as a woman who constantly wears expensive clothes. This is another of many speculations the First Lady refuted in her autobiography. She explains that it is a part of her role as a First Lady to dress well and maintains that despite what most people think, she dresses casually when she is not exposed to the public. She explains:

First ladies have different styles. But if you look back at some of my predecessors, you’ll see that after a few months, even the first ladies who seemed not to care very much about fashion and appearance began to pay more attention to their hair and their clothing [...] And it’s only natural—once you find yourself representing the nation, on display and photographed all the time, not only throughout the United States but all over the world, you begin to dress more carefully. (ibid).

Additionally, the First Lady explains that the criticism she faced during her time in the White House was not only limited to her sense of fashion but it also included the way she sits and behaves. She says: “My biggest fault, it seems, was that I was too polite, too much a lady” (ibid: 29). She also claims that she was portrayed several times as a First Lady who only throws parties and enjoys a luxurious life at the White House with her rich friends. She says: “[...] there was already a fixed image of me in the press. Then, during my first year in Washington, the White House renovation, the new china, and my wardrobe all were seen as confirming that image” (ibid: 30). The First Lady understood where all the criticism was coming from because of her previous job as a Hollywood actress.

Based on Habermas’s definition of the Public Space which he believes is a domain of social life in which public opinion can be formed and which is open to all citizens to participate in (Habermas, 1964: 49), we realize that in the First Lady’s public space, she was

the center of its attention and was scrutinized from almost every aspect of her life. We also understand that she uses her work to defend herself for she believes that she was not as the media and the public perceived her.

### **3- First Lady Reagan's other Public Spaces in My Turn (1989):**

In her autobiography **My Turn**, First Lady Reagan talks about her implication in her role as a First Lady. In the fourth chapter of her autobiography entitled '**First Lady, Dragon Lady**', the First Lady states: "Every first lady makes her own choices, and mine was to become very involved in planning White House events, right down to the details: the menu, table settings, flowers, and entertainment" (Reagan;1989:45). That is to say, First Lady Reagan chose a traditional role and was actively involved in the White House's events and ceremonies. For example, during her eight years as a First Lady, she has organized several meetings and parties in the White House, as she writes in her autobiography: "In eight years, I hosted close to a hundred Christmas parties" (ibid: 44). She adds: "Then there were the mostly invisible parts of the first lady's job: meeting with my staff, working with my press secretary, answering the mail, signing autographs [...]" (ibid: 44). She, additionally, asserts that even though her years at the White House were difficult, she loved being the First Lady (ibid). This shows the extent to which First Lady Reagan cared about the White House and understood its significance as a symbol that represents her country. It also proves that she had an honest desire to fulfill her duties as a First Lady and to properly serve her country and its citizens.

In addition to renovating the White House and hosting parties, First Lady Reagan asserts, in **My Turn**, that she has also attended several events and meetings outside the White House on behalf of her husband as well. For instance, she speaks about attending a concert

given by the Boston Pops, in celebration of the orchestra's one-hundredth anniversary about the diplomatic corps on the South Lawn. She says: "Ronnie was supposed to give the remarks, and he insisted that I go in his place." (Reagan; 1989: 236). She also talks about hosting a return dinner at Spaso House; a project that she, as she writes in her autobiography, considered the most complicated project she has ever been involved in. Furthermore, the First Lady mentions a few trips she made outside the United States, among them was her trip to the Soviet Union where she visited a children's school in Moscow. In **My Turn**, she expresses how profound she was touched by the boys and girls she encountered there. From what has been said above, it is quite evident that First Lady Reagan was not only concerned with the White House, that is hosting parties and dinners, but she had an effective role in serving her country as well.

Furthermore, in a chapter entitled '**First Lady, Dragon Lady**' of **My Turn**, First Lady Reagan states that she was aware that she would be the center of attention of many people and explains that she wanted to direct that attention towards a very important issue to her which is 'drug abuse'. For this reason, the First Lady states in her autobiography that she chose to undertake a personal project concerning the problem of drug abuse among young people through the Nancy Reagan Foundation. This project took most of her time and came at a period in the United States when drugs had dangerously affected American society (Truman; 1995:160). By starting an anti-drug program and raising awareness on the harmful effects of drugs, First Lady Reagan played a significant role in reducing the number of young people who use drugs, especially in high school and college (ibid). She has also met with First Ladies from other countries to talk about this problem. In addition, she "attended an endless parade of antidrug conferences and narrated a documentary, *The Chemical People*, for PBS" (ibid: 161).

The 'Just Say No' campaign which was launched by the First Lady was aimed at raising awareness among young people and encouraging them to say 'no' to drugs. She traveled to several places in the country and appeared on television several times to popularize the program and to talk about its importance. She has also used the expertise of very qualified people to help her organize the campaign. Besides, she was the first First Lady to tackle the issue of drug abuse and to address the United Nations about this problem (Schneider; 2010: 337). In **My Turn**, the First Lady explains that she was deeply involved in ending the drug problem not only through the 'Just Say No campaign', but she was also interested in other programs such as the 'Youth-to-Youth program'. In fact, in the fourteenth chapter of **My Turn** entitled '**Landslide**' she mentions her travel to Columbus, Ohio to take part in this program as well as her visit to a local elementary school to watch a satire about drugs and to discuss the matter on live TV with the members of the press who were present with her (Reagan; 1989: 274).

What has been abovementioned reveals that this project was of an undeniable importance to the First Lady and indicates that she devoted most of her time to it and tried to give it as much attention as she could. Indeed, she explains in the last chapter of her autobiography entitled '**Coming Home**', that even after her eight years at the White House ended, she continued working on the project. She writes: "And so as one door closes and another opens, we enter another phase of our lives [...] I'm still involved with the drug program through the Nancy Reagan Foundation and the Just Say No clubs" (ibid: 301). It also shows that she cared about the program and had a keen interest in it mainly because of, as she writes in **My Turn**, "the values that [her] mother had embodied" (ibid: 59).

As far as women's rights are concerned, First Lady Reagan shows in **My Turn** a few instances of concern and care for women. For example, in the sixteenth chapter of her

autobiography entitled '**Showdown (Donald Regan and Iran-Contra)**' she expresses her dissatisfaction with what her husband's chief of staff once said about African women. She recounts:

On the subject of economic sanctions against South Africa, Don said that American women might not be eager to give up their diamonds, platinum, and gold. I thought that remark was insensitive and demeaning to women, and I resented it. (Reagan; 1989: 263).

Another instance from the autobiography is when the First Lady was diagnosed with the breast cancer disease and her doctor offered her two options for removing the tumor. The First Lady explains in the fifteenth chapter of her work entitled '**A Terrible Month**' that she was asked to choose between lumpectomy, which "involved removing only the tumor itself and a small amount of tissue", and a radical mastectomy, which "means removing the entire breast" (ibid: 244). When the First Lady chose mastectomy, she was criticized for it. However, in **My Turn**, she defends her choice and women's right to decide for themselves, asserting that it was "a very personal decision, one that each woman must make for herself" (ibid). In the same chapter of her work, First Lady Reagan explains how important it is for women to get yearly mammograms and urges them to receive early consultations mainly due to her own experience with cancer. She says:

I wish that people would understand that I was making this decision only for myself. I would never presume to make it for other women. The only thing I would presume to tell other women is that every woman over forty—and perhaps even earlier—should have a yearly mammogram. Right now, more than 60 percent of women over forty have never had one (ibid: 245).

From our discussion of women's rights as a public sphere of First Lady Reagan, we note that at a first glance First Lady Reagan may seem to be dispassionate about women and unbothered by their struggles. We also notice from our reading of her autobiography that the First Lady does not dedicate any chapters of her work to women. In other terms, defending women and their rights as well as discussing their issues are not considered one of the main

purposes of the First Lady's autobiography. However, it cannot be ignored the fact that there are a few instances where she sympathizes with them and cares about matters that they care about too. This reveals that although First Lady Reagan does not openly express any concern or affection to women's cause, yet she uses a few lines in her autobiography to sensitize women and to help them.

## **B/ First Lady Hillary Clinton in the Public Space:**

### **1- The State of Arkansas as First Lady Clinton's First Public Space in Living History (2003):**

In the seventh chapter of her autobiography, **Living History** entitled '**Little Rock**', First Lady Clinton speaks about her time in the state of Arkansas and explains that her years as the First Lady of Arkansas were the hardest years of her life. She says: "I could get away with being considered a little unconventional as the wife of the Attorney General, but as First Lady of Arkansas, I was thrown into an unblinking spotlight (Clinton; 2003:112). This demonstrates that, similar to First Lady Reagan, First Lady Clinton's entry to politics was met with difficulties and intense scrutiny from the public as well, thus, affirming Habermas' theory of the public space, which he defines as a domain of social life in which public opinion can be, formed (Habermas, 1964: 49). That is, being under the public eye comes with constant criticism and speculations by the public. This explains the reason for First Lady Clinton's description of her public space in **Living History** as being difficult and demanding.

Moreover, First Lady Clinton shares, in the same chapter, her experience in the Rose Law Firm; a firm she believes is "the most venerable firm in Arkansas" (Clinton; 2003: 96). She also reveals in **Living History** that she was interested in education. She talks about a very important project she was involved in that seeks to suggest new educational reforms and

explains that, as the head of an Education Standards Committee, she worked very hard to improve America's educational standards for curriculum and classroom size. She says:

Years later, when I chaired the Arkansas Education Standards Committee, I realized how fortunate I had been to attend fully equipped schools with highly trained teachers and a full range of academic and extracurricular offerings" (Clinton; 2003:22).

From our analysis of the state of Arkansas as First Lady Clinton's public space, we notice that although the First Lady was continuously criticized and pressured to be a certain way, it did not prevent her from fulfilling her duties towards the people of Arkansas as their First Lady. Moreover, from the different issues already mentioned above in which she was interested and worked to improve such as education and children's health, we deduce that the First Lady was deeply devoted to make a change in her country and to improve the different areas that would make such change possible.

## **2- The White House as First Lady Clinton's Second Public Space in Living History (2003):**

In the eighth and ninth chapters of **Living History (2003)**, First Lady Clinton talks about her eight years as the First Lady of America and shares her experience in the White House, as well as the different challenges and difficulties she encountered during that time. In the last part of the eighth chapter of her autobiography, the First Lady admits that despite being involved in politics from an early age and working as a political figure almost her entire life, she believes that she was not sufficiently prepared for the hardships that followed politics. She says: "Despite all the good advice we had received and all the time Bill and I had spent in the political arena, we were unprepared for the hardball politics and relentless scrutiny that comes with a run for the Presidency" (Clinton; 2003: 124). Moreover, it became more challenging once she became the First Lady of the United States, as she writes in **Living**

**History:** “There is no training manual for First Ladies” (Clinton; 2003: 144). Similarly to First Lady Reagan, First Lady Clinton believes that the role of a First Lady is not defined or clear. Nevertheless, she recognizes that like the former Ladies who preceded her; she ought to use the opportunities that were offered to her to effectively serve her country.

In **The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere**, Jürgen Habermas states that the public sphere is a domain of social life in which public opinion can be formed. With reference to **Living History**, First Lady Clinton talks about the positive and the negative sides of that period in her life when she was under the public eye. She asserts: “It seemed that people could perceive me only as one thing or the other—either a hardworking professional woman or a conscientious and caring hostess” (ibid: 169). Moreover, she explains that she never thought the way she characterized her job as First Lady would create so much debate and disarray (ibid: 170). She believes that she was “traditional in some ways and not in others” and acknowledges that she was living in an age where women in power were met with ambivalence. For this, she reaches the conclusion that “in this era of changing gender roles, [she] was America’s Exhibit A” (ibid).

Indeed, the First Lady was a subject to several criticisms and speculations even before she became the First Lady. For instance, she was wrongly accused by one of her husband’s enemies who claimed that Bill Clinton raised her income during her time as a lawyer in the Rose Law Firm. However, in her autobiography, the First Lady claims that this accusation was not only wrong but also ‘pathetic’ and ‘desperate’. She “also thought it was interesting because this is the sort of thing that happens to women who have their own careers and their own lives” (ibid: 132). This is considered one of the greatest challenges the First Lady had faced since she became First Lady. It shows that as a woman with an autonomous and

ambitious nature, she feels more pressured and judged, confirming once again her description of the public space as being a difficult and stressful one.

Similarly to First Lady Reagan, First Lady Clinton shares in her autobiography the different matters she was criticized for. For instance, she speaks about being accused of having no involvement in her East Wing duties. However, in **Living History**, she rejects those accusations and maintains that she found great joy in fulfilling her duties and hosting dinners and events in the White House. Furthermore, she maintains that she had always followed one rule: “Take criticism seriously, but not personally. If there is truth or merit in the criticism, try to learn from it. Otherwise, let it roll right off you” (Clinton; 2003: 134). She is aware that due to her being a highly opinionated and outspoken woman with a powerful position, she would be criticized for everything she does or says, and even the way she dresses and behaves. For this reason, she tries to look at the criticism from a positive and constructive perspective instead of allowing it to affect her negatively. Furthermore, this proves that First Lady Clinton is someone courageous and strong-willed who cannot be easily forced to surrender and stop fighting for change and for what she truly believes in.

### **3- First Lady Clinton’s other Public Spaces in Living History (2003):**

In **Living History**, First Lady Clinton deals with another issue in the public space, which is women’s rights. Since she became First Lady of the United States in 1993, First Lady Clinton was an advocate for women’s rights everywhere in the world, which made her the most appreciated woman on earth (Blumenthal; 2016:11). In a chapter of **Living History** entitled ‘**Oklahoma City**’, First Lady Clinton talks about a newspaper column she created called “Talking It Over” following the footsteps of former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. In this chapter, the First Lady explains that ‘Talking It Over’ addresses several topics she

considers of vital importance to women such as breast cancer prevention. Drawing from her experience with breast cancer because of her mother-in-law who died of the same disease, First Lady Clinton explains that she uses the column to reach women and to sensitize them about the importance of protecting themselves. She says: “I met frequently with breast cancer survivors at the White House. Through the experiences of my mother-in-law and so many others, I understood the fear and uncertainty that accompanies a cancer diagnosis” (Clinton; 2003:347). Indeed, throughout the autobiography, we notice that First Lady Clinton was extremely committed to women’s issues and through ‘Talking It Over’; she sought to encourage women and make them aware of the importance and necessity of taking care of themselves and their health.

Moreover, in a chapter entitled ‘**Second Term**’ of her autobiography **Living History**, First Lady Clinton explains that she understands how exhausting it is to be mothers, wives, and workers and acknowledges that a large number of women around the world do not have the same privilege she had while raising her daughter Chelsea. She says: “While raising Chelsea, I had relied on friends, family, and a series of caregivers who came into our home when Bill and I were at work. Most parents are not so fortunate” (ibid: 451). As a working woman who raised her only daughter while fulfilling her duties as a First Lady, Hillary Clinton identifies herself with working women who struggle to maintain a balance between their jobs and their families. For this cause, the First Lady conducted a survey in 1994 which was considered, as she states in **Living History**, the biggest survey of working women that the U.S. Department of Labor has ever conducted” (ibid).

Another issue that was of immense interest to First Lady Clinton is women trafficking. In the same chapter of **Living History**, the First Lady talks about her first visit to Chiang Rai; a town in Thailand widely known for trafficking women and girls, particularly her visit to the

‘New Life Center’ which offers a safe place to girls sold into prostitution and allows them to improve their lives (Clinton; 2003: 461). In the center, First Lady Clinton says that she learned that a considerable number of girls, especially those who have not yet reached puberty, were given to prostitution mostly by their own families. Touched by the brutality of what she has seen and learned in the town of Chiang Rai, the First Lady explains in her autobiography that she tackled the issue of women’s trafficking with “the representatives of the Thai government and women’s groups” to permanently stop such practices. She explains:

In a meeting with representatives of the Thai government and women’s groups, I discussed the government’s plan to crack down on the trafficking of women, particularly young girls, into Bangkok’s sex trade by toughening the enforcement of its anti-prostitution laws and imposing serious jail terms for brothel owners, clients and families that sell their children into prostitution (ibid: 462).

Furthermore, in the twenty-second chapter of **Living History** entitled ‘**Women’s Rights are Human Rights**’; First Lady Clinton speaks about the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in September 1995 where she was invited to represent her country and to give a speech about women’s rights. Because the conference coincided with the arrest of Harry Wu, a Chinese human rights activist accused of espionage, First Lady Clinton explains that this made US presence in the conference a critical matter. For this reason, the First Lady expresses in her autobiography her dissatisfaction with the situation as she says: “I sympathized with their cause, but it disappointed me that, once again, the crucial concerns of women might be sacrificed” (ibid: 354). However, she says that regardless of the many people who advised her not to attend, she decided to participate. That is, being an advocate for women’s rights for twenty-five years, she could not refuse to go because she acknowledges the significance of such a conference, especially for women outside the United States. She says:

The U.N. women's conference was expected to provide an important forum for nations to address issues such as maternal and child health care, microfinance, domestic violence, girls' education, family planning, women's suffrage, property and legal rights. It would also offer a rare opportunity for women from around the world to share stories, information and strategies for future action in their own countries (Clinton; 2003:354)

In addition, the First Lady knew that her presence and the speech would attract serious attention to women's cause, therefore, she asserts in her autobiography that she dedicated a considerable amount of her time to the speech and worked with her staff "on remarks that would forcefully defend the U.S. position on human rights and expand conventional notions of women's rights" (ibid: 358). The conference was of crucial importance to women; consequently, it was highly significant for the First Lady as well who states in **Living History** that she felt nervous when the time came for her speech. Several people were counting on her to represent her country and for this particular reason; she did not want to disappoint them. More importantly, she did not want to disappoint the women whose cause she has long been fighting for (Blumenthal; 2016: 181).

First Lady Clinton admits in the same chapter that she was too emotional while delivering her speech entitled 'Women's Rights are Human rights' which she tried to control for she knows that "[...] like it or not, women are always subject to criticism if they show too much feeling in public" (Clinton; 2003: 360). Instead, she made sure her feelings would not interfere with the message she was hoping to deliver to the world as she writes in her autobiography: "I wanted the speech to be simple, accessible and unambiguous in its message that women's rights are not separate from, or a subsidiary of, human rights and to convey how important it is for women to make choices for themselves in their lives' (ibid: 361). In this speech, the First Lady "offered an unnerving litany of ways women and girls are abused around the world" (Blumenthal; 2016: 181). She drew from her own experiences with the

various women she met during her overseas trips to shed light on the brutality that they faced and the injustices committed against them. In **Living History**, she asserts that the speech had been one of the best moments in her public space. This demonstrates the extent to which women's issues are of great significance to First Lady Clinton and it proves that she is indeed one of the most powerful advocates for women's rights.

In addition to women's rights, First Lady Clinton also speaks in the part of **Living History** entitled '**Health Care**' about her implication in another public space, which is 'Health'. Throughout her autobiography, we notice that First Lady Clinton was not only an advocate for women's rights but was also known for her keen interest in issues concerning health care for families and children. In fact, she expresses in her autobiography her strong belief in a health care reform that would provide access to health care for all Americans, as well as her deep understanding of its significance mainly due to her own experience in the Arkansas Children's Hospital. She says: "As the wife of a Governor and now President, I didn't have to worry about my family's access to health care. And I didn't think anyone else should have to, either" (Clinton; 2003: 177). Nevertheless, she acknowledges how difficult and challenging it would be. Therefore, to ensure that the reform receives the attention and the acceptance it deserves, the First Lady states in **Living History** that she traveled around the country and met with many people who shared her belief in the importance of solving the problems that their current health care system is suffering from. She says:

I had been traveling around the country listening to Americans talk about the hardships of coping with the rising medical costs, inequitable treatment and bureaucratic quagmires they encountered every day. [...] my travels reinforced my belief that the existing health system could be more efficient and less costly while ensuring that every American who needed medical attention received it (ibid: 218).

In the autobiography and during her travels, First Lady Clinton narrates how she met many men and women from different ages who shared with her their own struggles concerning the country's current health system and other people who encouraged her to continue fighting for the cause. In the fourteenth chapter of **Living History** entitled '**The Delivery Room**', First Lady Clinton explains that she testified before Congress to explain the health care plan and to persuade them of its necessity. She says: "The experience was fascinating, challenging and exhausting. I was happy to have had the chance to speak publicly about our plan and pleased that the reviews were generally positive" (Clinton; 2003:226). However, the plan was eventually defeated, which disappointed the First Lady. Undeniably, the First Lady was devoted to this project and although it received more rejection than praise, she did not surrender and continued her endeavor to achieve the health care reform.

Despite the failure of the health care reform, First Lady Clinton was able to help her country in many other different ways. For instance, in the eighteenth chapter of her autobiography entitled '**Midterm Break**', the First Lady talks about her collaboration with two senators to create the 'Children's Health Insurance Program' which she describes to be a program that ensures laborers would not lose their insurance in case they decided to alter their jobs. It also represented, as she writes in her autobiography, "the largest expansion of public health insurance coverage since the passage of Medicaid in 1965, and it helped reduce the number of Americans without health insurance for the first time in twelve years" (ibid). In addition to the 'Children's Health Insurance Program', the First Lady also speaks about being interested in adoption which originated from her years at Yale Law School and was reinforced when she became the First Lady. As a result, she sought to help foster children through the 'Adoption and Safe Families Act' which she explains in **Living History** as an act that "provided financial incentives for states to move children from foster care to permanent adoptive homes" (ibid: 513). Moreover, a few years after the signing of this act, the First Lady

explains in her autobiography that she realized that the majority of the children living in foster houses who reached eighteen years old often become homeless. As a result, she and two senators signed the 'Foster Care Independence Act' in 1999, which provided those children with human rights such as health care and education.

From our analysis of First Lady Reagan and First Lady Clinton's public spaces using Jürgen Habermas' concept of '**The Public Sphere in the Political Domain**', we conclude that both First Ladies are quite different publically. That is, they both have used their status as First Ladies differently in their public spaces and have both been interested in different issues and involved with various projects. First Lady Reagan was less active in her public space than First Lady Clinton. While the former focused solely on ending the drug problem in America, the latter worked on several issues such as health care and women's rights. However, despite how different they are, the two First Ladies are also similar in that they have both been role models for many people, notably women, and have shown incredible ambition and determination to make a change in the world and to help their country prosper in different areas of life.

## **II. Chapter Two: First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton in the Private Sphere:**

Women, regardless of their age, education or their financial situations, are generally seen as being dependent on the men around them. These men can be their fathers, brothers and husbands who are meant to protect them and to provide for them. In this second chapter of our work, our aim is to analyze both First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton's Private Spaces in their respective autobiographies **My Turn (1989)** and **Living History (2003)** relying on Jürgen Habermas' second concept '**The Public Sphere in the World Letters**'. In this chapter, we focus on how the two First Ladies portray their relationships with their respective husbands and their male entourage in their works and how similar or different they are in their private spaces.

### **A/ First Lady Reagan in the Private Sphere:**

#### **1- First Lady Reagan and her male entourage:**

When it comes to her relationship with her male entourage, First Lady Reagan talks about two of the most important men in her life, her adoptive father Doctor Loyal Edward Davis and her husband Ronald Reagan. In **My Turn**, First Lady Reagan explains that she had two fathers. On the one hand was her biological father Kenneth Seymour Robbins, who divorced her mother shortly after First Lady Reagan was born. On the other hand was her stepfather Loyal Edward Davis, who adopted her in 1938. Her autobiography **My Turn** reveals that the First Lady had an affectionate relationship with her adoptive father, but a distant one with her real father. Unlike her biological father, First Lady Reagan's adoptive father was the most important man and prominent influence in First Lady Reagan's life. She enjoyed a close relationship with him, and always considered him her father. He, in return, loved her and treated her as if she was his own daughter. In **My Turn**, the First Lady asserts

in that they had a distant relationship at the beginning, but claims that he did not force her to accept him. She asserts that he explained to her that he wanted to adopt her and that he wished they could learn to love each other so that they could “become one happy family” (Reagan; 1989: 57). Eventually, the First Lady came to accept him and maintains in her autobiography that she became proud of having him in her life. She says: ‘I was so proud of him. Here was this wonderful, handsome, accomplished man—and he was my father!’ (ibid: 58). It is clear that the First Lady shared a deep connection with her adoptive father and that she considered him to be her real father more than her biological one.

In her autobiography, First Lady Reagan talks about another person who is considered the most important man in her life, her husband Ronald Reagan. In the seventh chapter of her autobiography **My Turn**, First Lady Reagan writes: “When I first signed up at Metro, I was asked to fill out a questionnaire for the publicity department. Under “Ambition,” I wrote, “to have a successful marriage.” (ibid: 88). In **My Turn**, the First Lady admits that her life started when she met Ronald Reagan and states that: “For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to belong to somebody and to have somebody belong to me” (ibid: 28). Furthermore, she reveals through **My Turn** that she shared an extremely affectionate relationship with her husband and was never afraid or ashamed of showing it in public. Moreover, she talks about when her husband almost lost his life and explains that she was petrified of losing him. Even after his recovery, she explains that her concern and fear for him continued to the extent that she could not utter the word ‘shooting’ for years. Besides, every time her husband left the White House or the country, she writes: “it was as if my heart stopped until he got back” (ibid: 18). She says:

Once we were home and I was able to reflect on what had happened to Ronnie, I began to realize just how close we had come to losing him. Hinckley had fired six shots in less than two seconds, and four people had been injured.

In those two seconds, Ronnie came within an inch of death, and I came within an inch of losing the man I love. I now understood that each new day was a gift to be treasured, and that I had to be more involved in seeing that my husband was protected in every possible way (Reagan; 1989: 16).

Additionally, the First Lady maintains in **My Turn** that even though the President is surrounded by advisers who counsel him on political matters, she condenses that only the President's wife can "look after him as an individual with human needs, a man of flesh and blood who must deal with the pressures of holding the most powerful position on earth" (ibid: 49). Therefore, she believes that "It would be far better, and more realistic, if the president's men included the first lady as part of their team" (ibid). Indeed, throughout our reading of the autobiography, we realize that First Lady Reagan had always been protective of her husband even before the assassination attempt on his life. She cared deeply about his well-being, which was mostly seen when he made his speeches. The attention she paid to him as she listened to his speeches reflected "her concern for his health, happiness, and success" (Schneider; 2010: 332).

Moreover, First Lady Reagan has also protected her husband from anything that may endanger his reputation or his presidency as she states in her autobiography: "One of the hardest things for a political wife—or for any wife—to take is criticism of her husband" (Reagan; 1989: 84). In fact, in the part entitled '**Ronald Reagan**' of her autobiography **My Turn**, the First Lady admits that she was never pleased when the public or the media criticized her husband especially if, as she writes: "the criticism is unfair, dishonest, or simply wrong" (ibid). She says: "To this day I am annoyed by a handful of misconceptions about Ronnie which have been repeated incessantly over the years" (ibid). As a result, she uses her autobiography to clear some of these misconceptions. Furthermore, she asserts in **My Turn** that her husband was exactly as he seemed and that the world of politics never changed him. "Of course he has his moods and his disappointments", she writes, "but on the whole, Ronnie

is the most upbeat man I've ever known" (Reagan; 1989: 76). Moreover, she maintains that she was very different from him and admits that there were times when she found it very hard to live with someone who is constantly 'upbeat'. However, she acknowledges that every marriage has its own balance and that in their marriage, she was the realistic one. She says:

Ronnie is not impervious to events, but he is very resilient. In difficult times, the people around him, including me—all right, especially me— may become nervous and impatient. Ronnie stays calm, and it usually turns out that he was right. Looking back, I see that I have spent a lot of time worrying when I really did not need to (ibid: 79).

Still in the analysis of the 'Private Space' of First Lady Reagan in her autobiography **My Turn**, the First Lady states that in spite of her close relationship with her husband, they did not share everything and did not see each other all the time. She maintains that her job as a First Lady and his job as President kept them busy and separated. "But when we could grab an evening alone", she writes, "we did so gladly" (ibid: 198). As far as the way they handled their disagreements is concerned, the First Lady claims that she rarely fought with her husband, and in case it happened, their fight never lasted long. Furthermore, she asserts that: "Whoever said that marriage was a fifty-fifty proposition didn't know what he was talking about" (ibid: 88). The First Lady is fully aware that the reason behind her marriage's success with the President is due to their willingness to work hard for it. She even abandoned her career when she married him and chose to stay at home in order to take care of her family. She says:

Times are different now, and I am certainly not advising young women to give up their careers. But I had seen too many movie marriages founder, and I did not think I could handle both a career and a husband. I believed that something would suffer, and I was afraid it would be the marriage—especially in Hollywood, where everybody is always telling you how dear and darling you are (ibid)

In the eighth chapter of **My Turn** entitled '**I Thought I Married an Actor**', First Lady Reagan talks about her husband's entry to politics. In this chapter, she confesses that she did

not expect him to run for governor or President and did not even know that he was interested in politics. She says: “Looking back now, I’m amazed at my own naïveté. But I honestly never expected that Ronald Reagan would go into politics” (Reagan; 1989: 90). After his days as the Governor of California ended, the First Lady says that she thought it was the end of politics for them. She explains: “True, some of Ronnie’s advisers were talking about Ronnie’s running for president in 1976, but I didn’t really expect that to happen” (ibid: 140). Then against her better judgment, her husband was elected President of the United States. However, in her autobiography, she states that she hoped to return with him to California where they could build a family and enjoy their own privacy and that she was worried about his safety.

The First Lady and her husband Ronald Reagan shared a very remarkable connection. This is seen, for instance, when his doctors informed her that he might have cancer. The First Lady explains in her autobiography that she was shattered, yet managed to tell him without worrying him. She says: “Now that we knew about the polyp, I couldn’t stand the prospect of letting it stay inside Ronnie any longer than we had to” (ibid: 212). When the operation succeeded, the First Lady says that she could not hold her tears and prayed to God to protect him. In 1987, the President faced the same fear of losing his beloved one when the First Lady was diagnosed with breast cancer. In her autobiography, the First Lady maintains that: “Ronnie has always been there for me, even during the years when the world was on his shoulders” (ibid: 88). For instance, she explains that he was very caring and gentle with her when she had her mastectomy. That is, First Lady Reagan’s husband cared about his wife as well and shared the same love and concern for her even though he was not as open about his feelings as she was. Furthermore, the First Lady claims that he used to send her mother flowers on her birthday to thank her for giving birth to his wife. She also talks about her most memorable moment when she accompanied him to a radio broadcast where he talked about her. She narrates:

Then Ronnie began to thank me for all I had done and what I meant to him. He said: “I’d like to indulge myself for a moment here. There’s something I want to say, and I wanted to say it with Nancy at my side, as she is right now, as she always has been. First ladies aren’t elected and they don’t receive a salary. They’ve mostly been private persons forced to live public lives. [...] Nancy Reagan is my everything. “When I look back on these days, Nancy, I’ll remember your radiance and your strength, your support, and you are taking part in the business of this nation. I say for myself, but also on behalf of the nation, thank you, partner, thanks for everything (Reagan; 1989: 238).

In addition to being present for him emotionally, First Lady Reagan asserts in her autobiography that she was always willing to advise her husband every time she believed he needed it. She says that she was never reluctant to offer her opinion and to advise him on political matters, and claims that her husband listened to her and valued her opinion but did not necessarily always take it. She says: “So yes, I gave Ronnie my best advice—whenever he asked for it, and sometimes when he didn’t. But that doesn’t mean he always took it. Ronald Reagan has a mind of his own” (ibid: 46). Furthermore, she asserts that unlike her husband, she was a ‘good judge of character’. She believes that some people in the White House were “motivated not by loyalty to their boss or to his policies but by their own agendas and personal ambitions” (ibid). Therefore, she felt it was her duty to shelter her husband from harm. That is, when it comes to his well-being, the First Lady becomes overprotective and even merciless at times. This sometimes leads to disagreements between the couple. Nonetheless, it never prevented her from caring for her husband or expressing her opinions. She says in **My Turn**: “There were also times when I felt that people who had known Ronnie for years were taking advantage of his friendship to pursue their own agendas. Here too, if I thought so, I said so” (ibid: 48). This really demonstrates the special place her husband occupies in her life. Actually, her love and devotion to him continued even after the end of their days in the White House.

## **2 - First Lady Reagan as Mother in My Turn (1989):**

In her autobiography **My Turn (1989)**, First Lady Reagan devotes a chapter she entitled '**Our Children**' to talk about her own children Patti and Ronald and her stepchildren, Maureen and Michael. In the autobiography, the First Lady states: "What I wanted most in all the world was to be a good wife and mother. As things turned out, I guess I've been more successful at the first than at the second" (Reagan; 1989: 105). At the beginning of the chapter, the First Lady explains how difficult it was for her to write about her problems with her children, but maintains that it was a subject she could not avoid (ibid). Throughout **My Turn (1989)**, we realize that First Lady Reagan's relationship with her children was characterized by aloofness and misunderstanding, especially at their beginnings. However, she asserts in **My Turn** that their relationships were not as the media and the public perceived it. She believes that by the time her husband became President; her children had already their own lives and maintains that: "As they become adults, it's up to them to determine how much closeness there should be". She elaborates further in **My Turn**:

This wasn't always easy for us, and there were times when I wished they would call more often. But for better or worse, we wanted to give them their independence. That's not to say that Ronnie and I were ideal parents, or that our children were angels. Ronnie's work was always demanding, and we faced the difficulties of a blended family without much communication between us and Jane Wyman. In addition, each of the children has a strong and independent personality. But we did the best we could, and we never stopped trying (ibid: 106).

Furthermore, the First Lady acknowledges that her relationship with her children became more difficult due to the public scrutiny. She says: "a dispute or a harsh word that might easily be resolved in private gets blown out of all proportion when you're facing an audience" (ibid: 106). She believes that it is difficult to be the child of famous people and that was something she came to understand about her daughter Patti. She believes that "it is hard to work out your identity while the whole country is watching" (ibid: 119). In **My Turn**, the

First Lady explains that her relationship with Patti was the most troubling but says that she had a better relationship with her son Ronald. This, she claims in her autobiography, was partly because she was less scared with him than she was with Patti. She says: “I had been there before, and I wasn’t nearly as nervous. With Patti, I had always been terrified of making a mistake” (Reagan; 1989: 121). In addition, unlike her daughter Patti, her son Ronald was present for his mother when his father was shot and when his grandmother died. This is what made the First Lady appreciate her son more. Nonetheless, they did not always agree with each other but they still had a good relationship. They even came to be good friends.

As far as her stepchildren are concerned, the First Lady expresses in **My Turn** her regrets for not doing enough to help them and to be present in their lives. She says: “If I had been more confident in myself as a mother, I think I would have. It’s too bad that the most important job we have in life—parenting—is the one we have no training for” (ibid: 108). She also recognizes that her distant relationship with their biological mother Jane Wyman is what complicated the matter. Furthermore, she admits that when it comes to her children, her marriage was difficult from the start. She says: “I became a parent the day I married Ronnie, and I learned that it’s not easy to marry a man who already has children” (ibid: 107).

From our analysis of the private space of First Lady Reagan in her autobiography **My Turn** relying on Habermas’ private space which he defines as the realm of family and home and which “consists of hidden interactions between free individuals” (Habermas, 1989: 04), we understand that the First Lady had a very loving relationship with her mother and adoptive father, as well as with her husband, but a difficult one with her children, especially with her daughter Patti.

## **B/ First Lady Clinton in the Private Sphere:**

### **1- First Lady Clinton and her male entourage:**

As far as First Lady Clinton is concerned, she was not, as she states in her autobiography **Living History**, born an advocate for human rights. Instead, she was shaped and influenced by the various people she encountered in her life. For example, in **Living History**, First Lady Clinton talks about her most significant influence, which was her father Hugh Ellsworth Rodham. First Lady Clinton says that he was very strict and difficult to please as she writes in her autobiography: “My father was always strict with his kids, but he was much harder on the boys than on me” (Clinton; 2003: 13). She also asserts that he was ‘tight-fisted’ with money and very fearful of becoming poor due to his upbringing during the Great Depression. However, she acknowledges that he loved his children and cared about them, and similarly to her mother, he taught his children to be strong and to defend themselves.

Additionally, the First Lady claims in **Living History** that her father was also a man who is certain about his beliefs and strongly expresses his ideas especially when it comes to politics in their family's 'sometimes heated, discussions around the kitchen table, usually about politics or sports' (ibid). She also maintains that her father was also strict when it comes to the type of men that are appropriate for his daughter. She states: “Both my parents had met him [Bill Clinton] the previous summer, but I was nervous because my dad was so uninhibited in his criticism of my boyfriends” (ibid: 70). After his death, the First Lady says in **Living History** that she was broken and devastated and kept thinking about her happy days with him. She says: “I couldn't help but think how my relationship with my father had evolved over time”. (ibid: 193). That is, the relationship that First Lady Clinton had with her

father has changed through the years but not the love and the affection they shared for each other.

Still in the part concerned with her father, First Lady Clinton adds that her relationship with her father began to take a different turn due to their upbringing in a distinct time and place, and also because he changed (Clinton; 2003: 193). She writes in her autobiography: “Our relationship increasingly was defined either by silence, as I searched for something to say to him, or by arguments, which I often provoked, because I knew he would always engage with me over politics and culture” (ibid: 194). Nevertheless, despite their dissimilarities, the First Lady recognizes that her father admired her and was extremely proud of her achievements and autonomy. In fact, he has always been an effective source of advice and support for her, has always motivated, and encouraged her to excel in everything she does.

Another man she admires and considers an essential part of her life was her husband Bill Clinton. In the fifth chapter of **Living History** entitled ‘**Bill Clinton**’, First Lady Clinton reveals that she met her husband when she was at Yale Law School, and that he instantly caught her attention. She says: ‘Bill Clinton was hard to miss in the autumn of 1970’ (ibid: 65). She admits that when her husband became governor of Arkansas, she felt immense pressure on her to conform and additionally came to understand the huge impact of her personal decisions on her husband (ibid: 112). For instance, when she decided to keep using her original family name, she explains in her autobiography that people in Arkansas were not entirely pleased. Nevertheless, she did not change her mind. In her autobiography, she explains the reason behind her decision as she says:

It was a personal decision, a small (I thought) gesture to acknowledge that while I was committed to our union, I was still me. I was also being practical. By the time we married, I was teaching, trying cases, publishing and speaking as Hillary Rodham. I kept my name after Bill was elected to state office partly because I thought it would help avoid the appearance of conflict of interest (ibid: 112).

Furthermore, the First Lady says that when her husband was considering running for the Presidency; she completely supported him, although, in the beginning, she admits that she did not believe it was the right time. However, when he eventually decided to run, she claims that she encouraged him and believed in him and his potential. She says: “I could not have predicted all that would happen, but I believed Bill was prepared on the substance of what needed to be done for the country and how to run a winning political campaign” (Clinton; 2003: 122). The First Lady and her husband shared a relationship that was beyond a matrimonial one. They were also, as she writes in her autobiography: “each other's biggest cheerleaders, toughest critics and best friends” (ibid: 145).

Still in the part concerned with First Lady Clinton’s relationship with her husband, she also speaks in her autobiography about the former First Ladies who helped their husbands, thus, concludes that: “Bill and I were not the first couple who relied on each other as partners in life and politics” (ibid: 144). Nonetheless, their relationship was subsequently put to different challenging and dangerous tests as rumors about Bill Clinton's affairs with other women surfaced. For instance, a story emerged which claimed that Bill Clinton was having an affair with a woman named Gennifer Flowers, as a result, making “Hillary worried far more about the potential political impact than her husband did” (Gerth & Van Natta; 2010: 89). Their relationship, she writes in **Living History**, was later put to further challenging and difficult tests when her husband became the President of the United States, and she became the First Lady. As she faced yet another ugly story about her husband, she explains in her autobiography that for the first time in her life she pondered on whether her husband’s presidency was worth the humiliation they were suffering from (Clinton; 2003: 247). She acknowledges that they had their problems, but maintains in **Living History** that: “We still made each other laugh. That, I was certain, would get us through another four years in the

White House” (Clinton; 2003: 466). Undoubtedly, the First Lady was devastated and upset to watch her husband undergo such humiliation, which clearly shows how deep, her love and care for him are.

Moreover, in the chapter of her autobiography entitled ‘**Soldiering On**’, First Lady Clinton talks about the beginning of the worst period in her life when rumors about her husband's affair with an intern called Monica Lewinsky appeared. In **Living History**, the First Lady maintains that her husband told her that Monica Lewinsky was only an intern he knew and who misunderstood his intentions. She says: “I believed my husband when he told me there was no truth to the charges” (ibid: 523). This demonstrates the blind trust the First Lady had in her husband and subsequently explains the reason she thought it was just another conspiracy to damage his reputation. As the rumor was spreading, the First Lady admits in her autobiography that she was not pleased to hear the awful comments people were making about her husband. However, when he eventually admitted the affair, the First Lady says that she felt “dumbfounded, heartbroken and outraged” for believing him. She writes: “I didn't know whether our marriage could—or should—survive such a stinging betrayal, but I knew I had to work through my feelings carefully, on my own timetable” (ibid: 551). Additionally, she maintains in **Living History** that: 'this was the most devastating, shocking and hurtful experience of my life. I could not figure out what to do, but I knew I had to find a calm place in my heart and mind to sort out my feelings' (ibid).

One of the most interesting questions in First Lady Clinton's private space is to what extent did Lady Clinton's Private Space resist to the ‘Monica Gate? Though First Lady Clinton remained publicly strong to most critics, Hillary Clinton dwells on the affair in her autobiography **Living History** but remains cautious as for the details on her private space.

According to Jürgen Habermas, the ‘private sphere’ called ‘Oikos’ or household “consists of hidden interactions between free individuals” (Habermas, 1989:04). It is the sphere of labor, exchange and the family; a sphere over which a citizen has authority and it is mainly occupied by women (ibid). With reference to **Living History**, we conclude that First Lady Clinton is the partner who forgives and who makes sacrifices for the happiness of her family, thus, asserting Habermas’ definition of the private space as a sphere mainly occupied by women. This demonstrates that First Lady Clinton is not as strong and resilient in her private space as she is in her public space.

## **2- First Lady Clinton as Mother as in Living History (2003):**

As far as her relationship with her daughter is concerned, First Lady Clinton had a very special relationship with her. In **Living History**, she says: “our daughter's birth was the most miraculous and awe-inspiring event in my life” (Clinton; 2003: 104). First Lady Clinton was indeed delighted the day of her daughter’s birth due to the joy she brought to her life and the President's, especially since she was their first child. In the autobiography under study, the First Lady additionally asserts that she was nervous too for it was a new experience for her. However, through **Living History**, we notice that as her daughter became older, the two became extremely close, and the First Lady became very protective of her, especially when her husband was President. In her autobiography, the First Lady maintains that being a mother is her most important job; as a result, she takes it very seriously. That is why she worked hard to protect her daughter from the media and to ensure that it would not invade her privacy, which she believes “is essential for any child to develop and explore her own choices in life.” (ibid: 136). She says:

So Bill and I established guidelines: When Chelsea was with us as part of our family, attending an event with Bill or me, the press would naturally cover her. But I would not agree to more articles or interviews that included her.

This was one of the best decisions Bill and I made, and we stuck with it through the next eight years (Clinton; 2003: 136).

Furthermore, the First Lady understands how difficult it is for her daughter, especially as a teenager, to adjust to life under the public eye. Therefore, she says in **Living History** that she made sure to give her daughter a healthy and normal life (ibid: 143). She also explains that she turned to former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy for advice on how to protect her daughter from the media, and mentions one of the most valuable pieces of advice she gave her which is to shelter her daughter from the press. This, the First Lady asserts in her autobiography, was something she and the President had already considered especially when they sent their daughter to a private school instead of a public school.

Moreover, the relationship between the First Lady and her daughter Chelsea strengthened when she accompanied her to her trips overseas, where they were able to reconnect. In **Living History**, First Lady Clinton states that she was glad to have taken her daughter with her. She says: “I wanted to share some of the last adventures of her childhood, and I wanted to watch her react to the extraordinary world we were about to enter, to see it through her eyes as well as my own” (ibid: 319). During one of those trips to India, First Lady Clinton recounts that her daughter made an interesting comment about the beauty of the Taj Mahal that caught the attention of the media, which later asked the First Lady's permission to quote her. However, due to her protective nature over her daughter, the First Lady says that she refused and reminded them that her daughter is 'off-limits'. Eventually, however, the First Lady ceased being excessively protective and gave her daughter the freedom she needed to live her life and test her independence.

Through our reading of First Lady Reagan's **My Turn (1989)** and First Lady Clinton's **Living History (2003)** and our analysis of their private spaces using Jürgen Habermas second

concept '**The Public Sphere in the World Letters**', we conclude that First Lady Reagan had a relationship with her parents that has not always been the best but throughout her autobiography, we realize that they were both people she deeply appreciated in her life. Likewise, First Lady Clinton who shared a good relationship with her parents as well despite their differences. As for their spouses, we notice that First Lady Clinton's relationship with her husband was more complicated and less settled than that of First Lady Reagan. While First Lady Reagan's relationship with her husband was solid, that of First Lady Clinton was quite unstable. However, as far as their children are concerned, we realize that when it comes to motherhood, First Lady Reagan was not as successful as a mother as she was as a wife, contrary to First Lady Clinton who shared a very affectionate relationship with her only daughter Chelsea.

## VI. Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, we have attempted to examine the public and private spaces of two First Ladies: Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton in their respective autobiographies **My Turn (1989)** and **Living History (2003)**. For this purpose, we have relied on Jürgen Habermas' theory of the 'Public Space' as it is explained in his work **The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)**. We have particularly focused on two concepts, which are 'The Public Sphere in the Political Domain' and 'The Public Sphere in the World Letters'. Using these concepts, we have explored how the two American First Ladies Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton portray their public and private lives in their autobiographies.

Through our reading of **My Turn** and **Living History**, we have concluded that First Lady Reagan was more involved in her duties in the White House than she was in politics. Contrary to First Lady Clinton who was interested in various issues concerning women and children and was deeply involved in the world of politics from an early age. However, we have also proved that despite being less involved in politics, First Lady Reagan's campaign 'Just Say No' has positively affected her country and her citizens. In the second chapter, we have discussed the private spaces of the two First Ladies using Habermas' concept of the private space, 'The Public Sphere in the World Letters'. In this chapter, we have analyzed the two First Ladies' relationships with other free individuals, starting from their relationships with their spouses and fathers, and then finishing with their relationships with their children. From our analysis of the private space in **My Turn** and **Living History**, we suggest that First Lady Reagan was more successful as a wife and daughter than she was as a mother unlike First Lady Clinton who shared a close connection with her only daughter but an unstable one with her husband.

As a final conclusion, Nancy Reagan and Hillary Clinton were two different women in different circumstances and different times, but similar at the same time in that they both broke gender norms and proved that women are capable and strong enough to make a change and to influence politics in their own way.

Our comparative study allowed us to study First Ladies Nancy Reagan's **My Turn** and Hillary Clinton's **Living History** using Jürgen Habermas' concepts of the public and private space. However, we believe that these two First Ladies and their autobiographies are very interesting and that other researchers can investigate them as well. For instance, they can focus on how the two First Ladies portray their country in their autobiographies while other researchers can deal with the two First Ladies separately. That is, they can compare them with other powerful First Ladies who changed the world as well such as Eleanor Roosevelt.

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