

## Michael Bott - "A Society" Essay

"A Society" is unlike most other feminist short stories that have been written thus far. It doesn't advocate for the advancement for women's equality, nor does it point out English society's ill treatment of women. More often than not, "A Society" feels like a societal study. We see the women venture out into England in pursuit of knowledge and just behavior from men in order to learn whether or not they, as women, should continue their "duty" in having children. We see the women vivaciously and humorously intrude upon several male dominated English institutions, such as the Navy. The men treat the women with surprise and sometimes astonishment, but the story shows that the men try to treat the women with politeness as much as possible. It is shown that if a man were to break these institutions' rules like the women have, he would have faced much harsher consequences. Several women are amused by their own antics, and seem to take the mens' reactions as proof that women should not have any more children. However, the story quickly takes a turn. The women have taken the time to visit nearly every historic English institution, except one. The House of Commons. To summarize, they visited all of the places where knowledge is taught and turned into protocol, but they never thought to visit the one place where that knowledge is put to practical use. It is for this reason, that despite everything the women have learned, they are taken by surprise by the onset of World War One. In the end, the women have to learn that knowledge isn't something only found in books, and that knowledge taken to its most ambitious and extreme leads to war. One woman in particular bears a daughter, and the women soon declare that child president of their peculiar little society. That decision leaves the audience and myself with the most burning question of the entire piece. Is making the child the president show the women's hope for the future where she will learn from the previous women's mistakes and advance women's rights, equality, and knowledge

further than they were able to accomplish? Or was the decision born out of cynicism, and that the child, young and naive to the harsh realities of the world and without the need or desire to learn anything about it, is perhaps the wisest of all the women in England? I certainly don't know the answer, I will leave it to you to come to a decision yourself.