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**Comparative Study of Gender Roles:
Feminine Representation in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper***

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Dedication

To my tender-hearted parents and my precious siblings I dedicate this
dissertation,

To my greatest support, my best friend and my supportive girl-
friends,

To Uncle Ibrahim Mazri, his beloved wife Messaouda and amazing
mother Fatiha and his warm welcoming family without exception,

To the purest of them all, my aunts and uncles,

To my incredible companion, Malika,

To all who has been there for me, I dedicate this work.

Amal, Khellaoui

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my father and mother and especially to my

grandmother,

To my beloved and supportive uncles,

To my second family,

To my soul mate for his encouraging support,

To Amal with whom I spent unforgettable moments,

To my whole family, I dedicate this dissertation.

Malika, Mazri

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Abstract

It was Jawaharlal Nehro, the Indian prime minister, who said that the advancement of any civilization is measured according to the status of women there; however women in the nineteenth century America have faced challenges in terms of gender equality. This dissertation compares the perspectives of female authors in the nineteenth-century America who used literature as a medium to inflame changes in the unfair position of women in society. The paper's primary focus is on two women activist writers, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* exhibits the obstructions that women had to triumph in order to enjoy a certain degree of liberty of choice. In addition to Kate Chopin, whose heroine in *The Story of an Hour* experiences few moments of freedom once she receives the news of her husband's death which overtly suggests that his presence is only enchainment to her soul. The literature review, moreover, shows that the nineteenth-century American women were victims of discrimination regardless of their race and educational level. Thus, this dissertation indicates that women were sidelined when it comes to the decision-making of critical issues. By conducting a thorough analysis of the common themes that Chopin and Gilman put in paper, this research exposes the narrow-mindedness of the American patriarchal society from a feminist perspective. This dissertation examines the influence of gender inequality on female characters' behaviour and response to their male counterparts. Both literary works seem to assure the universality of women experiences throughout time. Hence, this paper serves to raise awareness to the oppression of women and help in the creation of a path towards female independence and gender equality.

Keywords: gender inequality, discrimination, patriarchal, feminist, universality, oppression.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Introduction

During the 19th century, women's rights became the most important topic that theorists, feminists, and writers argued about. This period had known lot of changes in terms of gender roles and women rights. There was lot of writers who wrote about those persecuted women. Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* unveil the role of men in the life of women but in different perspectives. Chopin and Gilman transfer their experience and wisdom from a mere feminine angle. Long before, men and women were seen as different individuals who possess divergent perspective. Both sexes fight to prove the differences between them more than proving the few similar aspects. Biologically, males and females could not be alike, but it wouldn't prevent women from contributing in social activities of any sort.

This dissertation serves to study the relationship between the two literary works written by American female authors. The focus in this work is not only on the view of Feminism but rather the universality of nineteenth century women's experience. Therefore, the motives behind choosing *The Story of an Hour* and *The Yellow Wallpaper* are:

1. To depict how female characters were introduced.
2. To compare and contrast the behaviors of the female protagonists.
3. To measure the extent to which men and women have had divergent roles.

Works of Chopin and Gilman exhibit the limitations of American women of the 1800s and contrarily the wide liberty given to the male counterpart. Hence, the primary objectives of the research are:

1. To compare the diverse female perspectives about gender roles.
2. To explain and demonstrate the basis on which these roles vary.

General Introduction

3. To accentuate the African female reader's apprehension of American literature.

Furthermore, women of the 19th Century had very little rights and were hardly ever considered in comparison to the way men were seen by society. Living in a patriarchal society, female writers fought for acceptance in the literary community. Thus, to achieve this primary objective, the research frames the following question:

1. How do Chopin and Gilman represent the role of women in both their works?
2. In which sense and to what extent does feminine gender evolve and change?

The researcher generated the hypotheses that a woman's life was restricted to marriage solely. It was regarded as a synonym to security however it chained women largely and forbid her from practising many possibilities. On the other hand, men were given much jurisdiction over women in the sense that they could make choices on their behalf. Secondly, feminine gender evolves in the sense that female's psyche changes in the presence and/or absence of a male. Woman's psyche shifts from weak, ungray and submissive to strong and independent.

This dissertation is comparative analytical. It is corpus –based sampling in which passages from the corpora; Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman' *The Yellow Wallpaper* that are analysed within a Feminist framework in order to detect the similarities and differences in gender representation which lay within the writings of both female authors. The analytical stage –in which one-third (1/3) of the corpus is selected- serves to extract the relationship between the female and male characters and the way they were presented by the female authors. Hence, the study would yield the angles in which gender prominently come across or split.

General Introduction

This dissertation is divided into three chief chapters to facilitate the achievement of the research. Following the general introduction, literature review and analysis of the corpora are presented. The first chapter outlines an overview of America, highlighting the historical, political, and religious backgrounds. The second chapter includes discussions of the emergence of Feminism. Additionally, it explores the evolution of gender roles within the American society. Chapter three analyses the traditional gender roles and male-female relations in a patriarchal society. It brings into perspective female characters' behaviour in the presence or absence of the male companion.

Having said this, we believe that the critical analysis of this thesis will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of gender. It will also bring out discussions and further research on women's contribution to world of literature.

Chapter One

**The 19th Century America: Definitions and General
Backgrounds**

Introduction

Literature is the art in which life is presented. It mirrors human beings' experiences in a life span. Literature is, in other words, the transmission of one's thoughts or feelings about life and the world. Hence, it asserts the universality of human experiences and shapes life from authors' various perceptions. Historically, American literature is relatively recent. As an overt literary characteristic of the nineteenth-century America, realism is a frank, authentic depiction of one's reality into a literary mold. Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the American history. This chapter reveals the challenges and movements that formed the American literature.

I.1. American Literature: Perspectives and Challenges

1.1. Political and Religious Challenges

From the era of exploration to the present day, politics and religion has been a defining feature of American culture. According to Fulton (2018), the contribution of religion to the development of American literature cannot be overstated, and it is natural that literary history and criticism have paid close attention to religious matters. Fulton claims from the first narratives of exploration, religious writing, broadly considered, was one of the most important types of literature. Deneen and Romance (2005) assert that through delving into the works of authors ranging from Mark Twain to William Faulkner to Octavia Butler, a close relationship between democracy and literature is found. They convey an understanding that the greatest American literary works are also works of profound philosophical insight.

According to High (1986); the story of American literature dates back to the early 1600s long before there were any “Americans”. The earliest writers were Englishmen describing the English exploration and colonization of the New World (America) (1986, p.5). In his work *The History of New England*, John Winthrop (1825) describes the New England coast when he arrived on June 7th, 1630. He said that: “We had now fair sunshine weather, and so pleasant a sweet air as did much refresh us, and there come a smell off shore like the smell of a garden” (1825, p.47)

Later in the mid-seventeenth-century, Puritans have come to the New World and settled in the south in 1620. In his book, High (1986) states that the most interesting works of New England Puritan literature were histories in the forms of sermons, biographies, poems, diaries and autobiographies. They tended to use a simple accessible writing style to unveil the happenings of their period. In addition, Christianity had a great influence on creating a sense of Puritans identity. They relied to a great extent on religion in their practices and hence they have used the Bible as a firm source of examples in their literature. An illustration to that is Michael Wigglesworth’s *The Day of Doom* in which he attempts to frighten readers with an image of the day of judgement; stating,

No heart so bold, but now grows cold and almost dead with fear

...Some hide themselves in Caves and Delves, in places underground

(1867, p.4)

Furthermore, American writers of the eighteenth-century were influenced by the European Age of Enlightenment; consequently they viewed man as an individual who could improve and prosper unlike Puritans who regarded man as a “sinful failure”

(High, 1986, p.15). Prevalent literatures of the 18th century are political books, pamphlets, documents and autobiographies. Despite his strong disagreement with the opinion of the Puritans, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) had created simple style literature which shows a return to Puritans plain style. The writings of Benjamin Franklin show the Enlightenment spirit of America at its finest stages. Franklin has written plenty of books including an autobiographical book in which he presents the wisdom he gained throughout his eventful life.

It was about this time that I conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection. I wish'd to live without committing any fault at any time; I would conquer all that either natural inclination, custom, or company might lead me into. (1793, p.38)

A quick glance at American books, in fact, makes it possible for a person to get an overview of how American authors of a certain period use the art of writing to express their sense of Americanism. As American literature grew and flourished, the greatest writers discovered a way to merge the best qualities of the literature of the Old and the New World. They also gave literature the universality of a great literature (High, 1986, p.27). So far, the aforementioned forms of American literature have either history or religion as the main scope of writing. In this vein, by the turn of the nineteenth-century, the focus has shifted towards a more realistic reflection of literature.

I.2. The Nineteenth-Century American Literature

By the outset of the 19th century, an actual American literature has emerged. Despite the fact that it was still derived from the British literary tradition, the short stories and

novels started to portray the American society in an unprecedented manner. Throughout the nineteenth-century, men of letters have expressed their thoughts and ideas with a clear propensity to either a romanticist or a realist nature.

Writers of the first half of the 19th century, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) cases in point, were parts of an international romantic trend in literature. Amongst the major characteristic of romanticism is the emphasis on individuality rather than the group. This feature is quite apparent in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and David Thoreau (1817-1862) which confirm the notion of self-reliance and independence. Despite the fact that Poe and Hawthorne are prominent figures of romanticism, their writings do not reflect the American romantic trend. Both the writers were dark and gothic in style whereas romanticists aimed at expressing beauty, purity, and intense emotions.

On the other hand, America is rather rich in terms of its textual productions of realist writings by the last quarter of the 19th century. Howells; the creator of the first theory of American realism; considered romanticism as a false view of life unlike realism which was the true-to-life description (High, 1986, p.85). One of the great pillars of this period is Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) who believed that the writer's true task is to state the real undertakings of his time. Dreiser's works are based on his own experiences, or are fictional re-creations of actual happenings, like his well-known novel, *An American Tragedy* (Curry, 1981, p.145).

It is noticeable that writers of the earlier American literary periods were mostly male which underlines the inferior role of female authors or women's contribution in society

per se. Bit by bit, women began to lay a finger on the world of literature and to voice their opinions overtly within an entirely patriarchal society.

I.2.1. Realism in American Literature

While the eighteenth-century romantic literary style focused on the inspection of feelings, emotions and imagination, the decades that followed the Civil War were marked by a shift from romanticism to realism (Grellet, 1999, p.116). Realism, according to Henry James, is a powerful impulse to mirror the unmitigated realities of life. In other words, people and events should be portrayed realistically aloofly from sentiments and imaginations. Realism began to appeal to readers and therefore the importance has shifted from plot to literary characters. Realist writers, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) and Kate Chopin (1850-1904) use setting, plot and character development to demonstrate the change taking place towards the end of the 19th century.

Moreover, realist authors, among which Gilman and Chopin, show their personal beliefs in society through their writings by stressing women's conflict in the American society. Both female authors broke from the tradition by using female protagonists in their works, as an illustration, *The Yellow Wallpaper* 1892 and *The Story of an Hour* 1894 are terrific examples of literary change. They captured the changing romantic ideas of women's role and realistically portrayed women's diminished state within the domestic pyramid. Since women were discriminated in the 19th century America it was difficult to detect a literary work that tells how women lived and were treated. Chopin and Gilman have attempted to expose the real happenings of their period through

putting to paper realistic literary pieces. Both the authors embedded a message which loudly states how miserable and dissatisfied they were with their previous status.

Over the span of their writings, Charlotte and Chopin were parts of the realistic literary movement. Their writings centred on realistic feelings and the isolation felt by the female protagonists while discovering their inner wants. Both the authors debated the notion of male dominance and female subordination and therefore they sought change alongside liberation. From first-hand experience, Chopin knew how difficult it was to survive in a patriarchal society. Charlotte, too, struggled with depression, purposelessness and male's oppression. Charlotte and Chopin's writings had significantly influenced the feminist movement that started in the late 19th century.

I.2.2. The Rise of the American Fiction

The short story has taken a quite long journey through the cultural consciousness of American society. Before the 19th century, the short story was not generally considered as a distinct literary form. Throughout history, readers had enjoyed diverse types of brief narratives; jests, anecdotes, short myths, and fairy tales (*Horan, No Date, pp.1-2*). It has a long history dating back to the ancient Greeks up to the present.

The earliest version of the American short story can be traced back to Germany where writers such Heinrich Von Kleist (1777-1811) have combined the sketch and the tale. Whilst a sketch is parallel to a piece of performing art, a tale is likened to a campfire story. The former is told in the present tense with little attention to plot, character and voice whereas the latter is told in the past simple with stress on plot, the

voice of the narrator. Another trait of sketches is the simplicity and brevity, while tales tend to be complicated and lengthy.

The modern short story emerged simultaneously in Germany, the United States, France and Russia. Early American short stories' writers such Washington Irving (1783-1859) and Herman Melville (1819-1891) drew from the works of German writers to create self-contained short narratives. Washington Irving is considered a seminal writer of short fiction in the United States with his collection of tales called the sketch book (1820) often described as a foundational text, including the outstanding pieces *Rip Van Winkle* (1819) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820). Many other authors have made great contribution to the world of literature. Edgar Allan Poe is known as the father of the American short story, for he has set up its first guidelines. Poe and Hawthorne have created two distinct strains of the short story which are art and entertainment respectively.

For years, literature of the Americans was restricted to the patronizing male-authors apart from the female counterpart. Since women's writing was seen as a disgrace to society, men did not allow the creative female mind neither to produce nor to publish any work of their own. Nonetheless, Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman have entered the world of literature with a strong fist challenging the patriarchal rules that were present in their time. Both of their writings present strong influential views about female subordination in the 19th century America. Through her writings, Chopin highlights women's rights and attempts to expose women's issues in her time period. This was definitely apparent in her remarkable tales *The Story of an Hour* (1894) and *The Awakening* (1899) in which she explicitly depicts the enslavement of women by the male in their lives. Gilman, with naught but her

pen, points out the oppression put upon women by men. Her tales present accurate happenings in her life and similarly other women's lives as well. Gilman's prominent short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) powerfully expresses the concerns and disquieting milieu that the 19th century women lived in.

The aforementioned authors, whether they are women or men, have contributed to the formation of the American fiction regardless of the sequence of their gender. Despite the fact that men were precedent to label literature as their own, women have also succeeded in creating literature of their own.

I.3. The 19th Century American Female Literature

The 19th century American Female Literature swung between blackness and whiteness; male dominance and female subordination; male voices and female voices and gender identities by mirroring the real facts in fictitious forms where the short story was the main frame of expression of the aforementioned issues.

I. 3.1. The Common Female Identity between Blackness and Whiteness

Although the nineteenth century was a time of great industrialization, and social development that affected Western beliefs and social hierarchy, women were still confined by men's hegemony; they could neither vote nor sue. The highest profession that women could occupy was that of a teacher. They were deprived from their rights and could not have property, whereas men enjoyed the freedom to decide what they want to do. The image is much more complicated when it comes to the status of Black

women who are not only oppressed by their black men-folk but also oppressed by a white community.

Nevertheless, female marginalization in the 19th century was rather evident. American women had their own sort of struggle against the unfair social norms and regulations set upon them by men. American society of the 19th century had no regard to women's wishes and ambitions. Men held the upper hand and controlled women's choices and even made decisions on their behalf. The American woman used to be seen as the OTHER¹ gender instead of being a perspective that contributes in society. This view is consistent with *Simone de Beauvoir* (1908-1986) who notes that:

Woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the other (1971, p.3).

America or the melting pot is a continent of a multitude of cultural variations. Therefore once we speak of an American woman we refer to the female existence in its broad sense, either in terms of nationality, religion or ethnicity.

Women in the American population fluctuate between white, Hispanic or Latino, and black women. This categorization, however, does not eliminate the other minorities such as, Asians. These women were greatly alienated by society in different forms. Despite the fact that American white women were seen only as housewives and child rearing models, they were at least treated with respect and allowed to get on the bus

¹ The term OTHER is capitalized to demonstrate the significance of the French feminist activist Simone de Beauvoir's notion on women's fragile status within the domestic context. It is, then, the equivalent of neglected, unnecessary part of the human social structure.

with common people. In contrast, American Black women have had a significantly inferior status than females per se. For, in the history of human race, no one has suffered more than the Black woman in a civilized country like America (Padhi, 2014). It was strictly banned for a black woman to share a space with a white flesh; man or woman that is. Social manifestations and even bus riding was restricted for this specific portion of society. Instead, black women were ought to occupy as domestic servants for a piddling wage and yet they were ill-treated by their masters. Thus, the life of American white women seemed liberate when compared to the double marginalization of black American women. In an article entitled *The Rise of Feminism and the Growth of Black American Women Literature*, Padhi (2014) points out that black woman was subjected to all the ideals of white womanhood as a model to which she should aspire. In support of his view, we deduce that the femininity of black women was not recognized unlike the white woman who was an absolute example of femininity. Additionally, it was illegal to teach African-Americans to read in many states of America; however Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784) was the first African female poet of the late 18th and the early 19th century. In a time where writing was prohibited for the black society, Wheatley has done a radical act for a black woman of that era. Padhi (2014) states that Whitley gave birth to the genre of essays and Harriet E. Wilson (1825-1900), another black woman, initiated the tradition of novel in the U.S. Wilson's novel *Our Nig: Or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* was the first novel by a black woman. It is also the first novel in Black American literature to examine the life of an ordinary black person in realistic detail.

Women's literature presents a unique view into the female American experience. Female authors were forging a place for themselves in the world of literature. Snyder, in

her *Women's Contribution to Early American Literature* (2018), states that the feminist movement called into question the role of women in society and hence female authors responded by creating works of their own presenting the image that truly depicts a WOMAN².

I.3.1.1. Female Authors

Women of the 19th Century had very little rights and were hardly ever considered in comparison to the way men were seen by society. Women were regarded as property of men. Their desires and wishes for true love were hardly ever considered, because marriage was about power and position. In North America in the 19th century, women and men were expected to fill separate spheres of society. Sailus explains this phenomenon by saying that “men were expected to live a public life, whether it was working in a factory or socializing with like-minded men in public places, such as clubs, meetings, or bars” (No date). On the other hand, women were usually expected to live their lives largely homebound, taking care of the cooking, cleaning, and child rearing. He adds free time for women was not supposed to be spent socializing but doing other things related to the maintenance of the family, from sewing socks to laundry. Thus, these gender ideologies led several female writers, amongst which Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, to seek a place alongside men in the public sphere, particularly in the world of literature so that they could portray a veritable image about the nineteenth century societies; and especially, the way people perceive the roles of men and women.

² WOMAN is capitalized to emphasize the feminine attributes in a female character, i.e., the characteristics of a woman in their broad sense including febleness, tenderness and tolerance.

Each author's writing is unique, some female authors tended to incorporate their feminist tendency through constructing characters that resist and reject patriarchy. They broke the male and female monopoly that restricts women and liberates men. Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins are both extraordinary writers of the late 19th Century America. Despite failure to receive positive critical response, the former became one of the most powerful and controversial writers of her time. She dared to write her thoughts on radical matters: the institution of marriage and women's longing for social, economic and political equality. With the focus on reality of relationship between men and women, Chopin, though she draws stunning and intelligent characters in a rich and bold writing style that was not accepted at the time, she did not present a strong female character that does not live by the social expectations of society in *The Story of an Hour*.

Unlike Chopin, Gilman was quite interested in the feminist movement. Her experience with marriage, and personal encounter with post-partum depression that thrilled her feminist beliefs have provided her with insights to write *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892). Her short story presents the repression of a patriarchal society through the threats of her husband and strict instructions of the psychological treatment. In other words, she was prescribed not to move or to touch a pen. Through her character, Gilman presents the issues facing women in society during this period while presenting a strong thematic and symbolic piece offering views into the intellect of the author.

Female authors mirrored the real situation of the oppressive society and exposed to the public the desires and attitudes most women felt and thought but did not have the courage to express them aloud. Mazul (2015) affirms that it was a general opinion that

female authors were devoid of innate ability to produce highly valued literary works of art. Fortunately, women were indeed persuasive in exposing complex political and social issues, as well as traps of domestic life and marriage through the literature, thus producing some of the best literary works of art, and most importantly, inciting society to make unavoidable changes towards the equality of the sexes.

I.3.1.2. Female Readers

No society in the world can claim to have a society exempt from discrimination against women (Al Qassim, Jazairy & Mohamed, 2017). On the other side of the world, the Arab woman and Arab culture have had an absolutely parallel view of female freedom to that of the Americans. Firstly, the term Arab is overtly associated with Muslim religion. In other words, the Muslim customs shape the Arabs thinking and hence their behaviour. Originating from an Algerian culture, we used to perceive American women as independent and free of all chains. The image we drew on Western women is that they were a sign of empowerment and liberty of choice but in fact both Western and Arab women are much alike in terms of historical gender inequality. The Arab woman nowadays is relatively self-determining for she has fought to gain a status in a mere patriarchal system. Nevertheless, the journey from a male-dependant woman to a relatively independent female is still continuous.

Since literature mirrors universal realities, it is only convenient to conduct analogical studies on female authors' literary works. In the world of Arab, it is assumed that women are never a match to men either in terms of physical strength, or mental skills. Of course no woman should agree to that sort of comparison or rather belittlement. Dalsimer points out:

...The ways in which men and women act toward one another are forged in families, and it is in families that they are replicated from one generation to the next. Sons learn to have a sense of entitlement and to be aggressive in pursuit of what they feel entitled to; daughters learn to be deferential. Daughters who give way to sons grow up to be wives who give way to husband: and for this reason these habits will take generations to alter... (2004)

That is, regardless of the freedom allegedly given to women all over the world in recent times, the Arabic woman is still considered an attachment to MAN³ whether he was her father, brother or husband by virtue of habit. Consequently, the Arab woman could not detach herself from the masculine ruling nor construct her independent personality for; her decisions were always male-based. This view is quite evident in the fictitious works of Arab authors per se. Determined to give women a voice and represent issues regarding feminism; Assia Djebar (1936-2015) and Ahlam Mosteghanemi (1953 until present) provide vital insights into the Algerian female mind from a female perspective. On the one hand, Djebar reflects the plight of Algerian women within a post-colonial context. The former brings women and their experiences of war in sharp focus. An illustration of her work is *Women of Algiers in their Apartment (1980)* which offers glimpses into the quotidian lives of women overlooked by mainstream authors. The latter, on the other hand, encourages women to radically liberate from the traditional social norms that limit woman. Ahlam Mosteghanemi, being the first female Algerian novelist to write in Arabic, shares her opinion on women rights explicitly and freely.

³ MAN is capitalized to highlight the cultural aspect which glorifies males' position in society and contrarily diminishes females'. When a man is entitled to occupy in certain fields or to go out any time of the day unlike his female counterpart, he is then given a biased leverage. It's not only in terms of gender that a MAN holds power and strength, but culturally as well.

Led by a frank principle and being at first-hand experience with gender inequalities, Mosteghanemi depicts the status quo of Algerian women. In spite of the significant attempt of both female authors to raise a society awareness of women's endurance and capacities, their voice could barely be heard due to the shortage of an Algerian reading population.

American women themselves have suffered from marginalization in earlier times. William Blackstone (1723-1780) defines a married couple as one person. He writes;

The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs everything (1765).

Blackstone in his statement seems to share the same angle along with Muslims. The irony is that American woman dared to demand more than she was given. She has only asked for her human right to gender equality, which was strictly forbidden. American women have been silenced for so long and decided eventually to revolt. They resorted to literature as a medium through which they tell realistic stories about their unjust lives. Surely, the very first literary pieces were not smoothly digested by the patronizing male authors. Later on, it became compulsory that the patriarchal society embraces the new change inserted in the social structure. Authors such Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman have had enough experiencing unpleasant situations. As a result, they have been quite fertile as far as their production of feminist literature which clearly shows the feelings that women grew towards their *jailor*. Throughout time, women have learnt to hate men and long for their absence in order to experience moments –if few- of freedom. Chopin has a symmetric view since her short story *The Story of an Hour*

reveals the profoundly embedded thoughts of the 19th century American woman who pictures her life as dull, lonely and joyless in the presence of her husband. Gilman agrees with Chopin's viewpoint for; her *The Yellow Wallpaper* in the optimal example of male' supremacy upon females. The depression that her heroine suffers from is mal-interpreted into an illusionary illness which ties woman up to her bed.

Basing on the core of the panel discussion held in Geneva some people lacking perceptiveness consider that Islam is incompatible with women's rights and gender equality, and that Islamic principles are hostile and discriminatory towards women. Indeed Islam's egalitarian spirit guides women in their efforts and commitments to advance their own rights. The fact that Islam has played an important role in redefining women's rights in modern societies is hardly given any recognition in mainstream media (2017).

Conclusion

The first chapter sheds light on key circumstances in the American history as well as feminist experiences such as White, Black, and Arab women. In this respect, women have been able to prove themselves worthy of sharing a space alongside their male counterparts through expressing their objection over the varied fields of life.

Chapter Two

Feminism in the 19th Century America

Introduction

Ever since antiquity, women have been fighting to earn their half of the total population of the world from male oppression. Whereas the emphasis was put on male in the previous eras, American literature has witnessed a move in terms of gender roles by the turn of the nineteenth century. Female realists have voiced their opinion through literature and therefore redefined their position in society. This chapter deals with factors that influenced the 19th century American writings with particular reference to feminine realists.

II.1. Feminist Premises

The feminist movement was influenced by the ideas hypothesized and popularized by thinkers and authors such as Alice Walker (1944-till present), Lillian Smith (1897-1966), Naomi Littlebear (1950-till present), Simone de Beauvoir (1908 – 1986), and others. It is a modern movement expressing objection of the male domination and call for change. Basically, the characteristics of feminist theory lean towards the construction of ways to set interpretations to women's experience and feminism (Halimi, 2014). Hence, the primary aim of feminists is to understand women's subjugation keeping in mind race, gender, class and sexual preference.

II.1.1. Feminist Literary Theory

It was Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the American author who once said that:

But I MUST say what I feel and think in some way — it is such a relief! But the effort is getting to be greater than relief. (1892, 651)

In an attempt to express their dissatisfaction with the present status, women have advocated for their presumed rights in the so-called patriarchal society. Questing to voice

their demands, women have founded the feminist movement. Feminism appears not to have a precise definition however it can be defined as the belief in social, economic and political equality of the sexes. Therefore, feminism does not concern the Western society; rather, it is a worldwide issue. On this basis, this paper reveals that women have historically been subordinate to men and demonstrate their importance.

Chaman Nahal (1927-2013) in his article *Feminism in English Fiction* defines feminism as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome. There is a dependence syndrome: whether it is the husband or the father or the community (1991). Some of the earlier forms of feminism have been criticized for taking into account only white, middleclass, educated perspectives. Hence, feminism is a philosophy that fights against such definitions of masculine and feminine, and aims at placing women in a just perspective and to understand gender inequality.

Once Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), the first Prime Minister of India said, “you can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.” This is perfectly true. Woman of any nation is the mirror to its civilization. If women enjoy good status, it shows that the society has reached a level of maturity and sense of responsibility. This is apparent in the American society whose women have successfully left an eminent trace in the various domains including the world of literature. After a long period of silence, feminism retained women’s right to utter and produce creative writings in order to express their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Friedan has the same view for she claims that women have been encouraged to confine themselves to the narrow roles of housewife and mother, forsaking education and career aspirations in the process. Betty Friedan (1921-2006) attempted to demystify this false feminine mystique in order to renew the women's fight for equal rights. She adds, “The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a

person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way” (2010, p.405). A realist reflection of women’s happenings helped to universalize female’s experience.

Oxford dictionary (2008) defines feminism as the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. The spearheads of the women’s movement were equality in education, labour and electoral rights. Therefore, feminism does not mean only an awareness of women’s plight but also a determination to change the situation. Feminism intended to prevent sexism in literary texts and to help women's writings gain a significant place in the world of men. Moreover, activists sought to widen the female tradition of writing and consider the perspective of a woman. The fight for women's suffrage began in the nineteenth century, but it took until the beginning of the twentieth century before it was officially introduced.

To conclude, the field of feminism is unquestionably huge as it is committed to bring about social change to end injustice against women. Feminist literary criticism has been very successful in reclaiming the lost literary women and in documenting the sources. In this respect, feminist criticism has successfully directed attention to the female intellectual tradition.

II.2. Types of Feminism

The term feminism first appeared in France and Netherlands in 1872, Great Britain in the 1890s and the United States in 1910. They were first used by a letter from the Dutch feminist pioneer Mina Kruseman (1839-1922) to the French writer Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) in 1872. Feminism has become an international school which sprang into many types among which, radical, social and liberal.

II.2.1. Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a perspective within feminism that calls for a radical reordering of society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts. It questions the ideology behind women's subjugation and seeks to abolish patriarchy by challenging existing social norms and views both patriarchy and sexism as the most fundamental factors in women's oppression. The term "radical" often refers to the women's movements emerging from the civil rights, peace and other liberation movements at a time when people increasingly were inquiring diverse forms of oppression and power. The main thrust of liberal feminism is that an individual woman should be able to determine her social role with as great freedom as does a man. Radical feminism therefore has required removing the historic structure of patriarchal law that denied women's civil rights.

II.2.2. Social Feminism

Socialist feminism, also known as Marxist or materialist feminism, is a branch of feminism that focuses upon both the public and private spheres of woman's lives. Marx's analysis of the social structure of capitalism was supposed to apply to people of any social characteristics. In her book *The Variety of Feminisms and their Contribution to Gender Equality* (1997), Lorber notes that married women in capitalist countries were not allowed to own property in their own name; their profits from any businesses they ran and their wages belonged to their husband. It was Marxist feminism that put housewives into the structure of capitalism. Women in the former communist countries had what liberal feminism in capitalist economies always wanted for women. But Marxist and socialist feminists claim that the welfare state can be paternalistic, substituting public patriarchy. Social feminists seek to

analyze the subordination of women as linked with other forms of oppression, and attempt to unite the fights for socialism with that for women's liberation.

II.2.3. Liberal Feminism

There have been a number of different types of feminism over the years, all varying in goals and strategies. One of the most extreme and controversial types of feminism for its time was liberal feminism. Lorber (1997) defines liberal feminism as movement that works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into it and make it more responsive to individual women's rights, but does not directly challenge the system itself or the ideology behind women's oppression. . Lorber asserts that, theoretically, liberal feminism claims that gender differences are not based in biology, and therefore that women and men are not all that different. According to Lorber, the main contribution of liberal feminism is showing how much modern society discriminates against women. But liberal feminism could not overcome the prevailing belief that women and men are intrinsically different. It was successful in proving that even if women are different from men, they are not inferior (ibid., 1997).

II.3. Feminist Issues

Traditionally, feminism was a mass movement in the sense that women clamoured for political equality, civil rights, job opportunities...etc. It appears in various forms such as radical, liberal, Marxist and so on but it is basically a concept concerned with the question of identity among women who share similar experiences in life. Today, the concept of gender has become a debatable issue in our society.

II.3.1. Sex and Gender

It is important to distinguish between “gender” and “sex,” with “gender” referring to the social elaboration of biological sex, and “sex” referring to the biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential (Ginet, n.d.). Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do (West and Zimmerman 1987). In fact, each succeeding generation has brought with it differing expectations for how men and women are to act within society. Despite these changes, the truth is that even today, society still has expectations for how men and women are to act. Although we may be more open to exceptions than were past generations, there still are expected norms of behavior for the way that women and men act in society (Wienclaw, 2011).

II.3.2 Gender Roles

Gender roles are the roles that men and women are expected to occupy based on their sex. Traditionally, many Western societies have believed that women are more nurturing than men (Amy Blackstone, 2003). Therefore, the traditional view of the feminine gender role prescribes that women should behave in ways that are nurturing. Simone de Beauvoir agrees with Blackstone and notes:

One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (2011)

This is perhaps the line most often quoted from Simone de Beauvoir’s groundbreaking work *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir, here, suggests that there is no biology that commits a person to either gender. Gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups,

and societies have of individuals based on their sex and based on each society's values and beliefs about gender. They are the product of the interactions between individuals and their environments, and they give individuals cues about what sort of behaviour is believed to be appropriate for what sex. As an illustration, the woman, as a member of the family, has been protected by the father when unmarried, by the husband after marriage and by her own when she is ill and old. At such family system makes a woman's life apparently safe and smooth, but in reality it makes her totally dependent and slavish. Women of today are assuming different roles besides the role within their homes. They have excelled in each and every field from social work to visiting space station. The changed social milieu along with the new wave of modernization has altered their roles and relationship.

II.3.3. Gender Development

Culture plays a large role in boys' and girls' gender development. Best (2005) states, Culture has profound effects on behaviour, prescribing how babies are delivered. When looking at the cultural role of gender development, it is important to consider the cultural variables involved. Gender needs to be examined according to culture, and also in the perspective of the economics and history of society (Best, 2005).

What one culture deems is appropriate female or male behaviour may be different than what another culture deems is appropriate female or male behaviour. For example, women in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to drive cars, while women in the United States are expected to drive cars. Manel Al-Sharif has written *Dared to Drive* (2017) as an inquiry into the actual reasons behind gender stereotyping and cultural limitation on women. Gender looks differently across different cultures and throughout different time periods. Today, women have been corperated in every field. Of late, women have been accepting many challenging tasks in many domains like engineering, architecture, aeronautical etc. In the present day

literary world, there are several great creative women writers. Many of these writers have taken up issues related to the stations of women. If a woman is capable of making a mark in her profession, she should be recognised and treated as an equal.

Wienclaw in her article *Gender & Domestic Responsibilities* (2011) suggests that such notions of sex and gender development can easily give rise to gender stereotypes, or culturally defined patterns of expected attitudes and behaviour that are considered appropriate for one gender but not the other. Gender stereotypes tend to be based not on the characteristics of the individual, but on over-generalized perceptions of one gender or the other. Wienclaw adds that although the traditional gender stereotype might be that women stay home and clean the house and raise the family while men go out and work, the fact that many women in today's society are successful physicians, scientists, and executives -among other jobs traditionally thought to be "male"- demonstrates that it is the abilities of the individual – not her/his gender or sex – that should determine the parameters in which s/he can work.

Conclusion

The second decade of the nineteenth-century America has witnessed shifts in terms of women's status. This chapter attempts to line out some fundamental points related to feminism as a concept and an ideology. It focuses on the historical background of feminism, its various types and issues. This chapter, moreover, serves to eliminate existing confusion upon the key terminology of sex and gender.

Chapter Three

Feminine Representation in Kate Chopin's *the Story of an Hour* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *the Yellow Wallpaper*

Introduction

The two authors who are the subject of this dissertation, Kate Chopin (1850-1904) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) were prolific and innovative short-story writers. Both authors have written realistic works that reflect the actual happenings of their time. Chopin and Gilman present the unjust treatment that woman of the nineteenth-century America has witnessed. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman dramatizes her own struggle with depression and writing within a male dominated society. Women status at that era was inferior to that of man in all the spheres; socially, economically and domestically. To assert this perspective, Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* deals with gender stereotype and depicts the opposites of dominance and weakness. Through characters' behaviour, both authors represent the relationship between the individuals and interaction; between the male character and the heroine of the American society.

III.1. Feminism in *The Yellow Wallpaper*

The feminist movement began as an attempt to underscore the repression of the patriarchal society which is reflected exceedingly in literature. It aimed to the equality between women and men. *The Yellow Wallpaper* is one of the pioneering feminist works of American literature (Mazari & Ghandeharion, 2016). It endeavours to depict the status of women during the mid-to late nineteenth century America. Women's roles during the 1800s were defined by a society which severely subjected women to strict codes of conduct, behaviour, ideologies and thoughts as well as a denial of self-expression not only in the outside function of societal roles, but also within the marriage itself (Alfadel, 2010).

As a feminist, Gilman searched to insert radical changes in her society. The social norms of the nineteenth century America confined women and hence they escaped to marriage to gain social security. Thinking that a husband is perhaps the absolute source of happiness and financial support, women had to consent every utterance; positive or negative.

The Yellow Wallpaper carries evidence of the narrator's interaction with her husband, John; "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage" (1892, p. 647). The narrator's expectation of marriage reveals how usual it is for her husband to belittle her. Through her narration, the reader discovers the wife's position in John's house. She is Gilman's protagonist who is presented as weak, inferior and highly obedient to her husband's commands. "I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least" (1892, p. 648). An image of an oppressive marriage is drawn to the reader's attention through the speech of John to his unnamed wife whom he considers as a property rather than a life partner. This is illustrated in the protagonist's narration; "John and myself" (1892, p. 647). Contrarily to what a nineteenth American woman has conceived in a marital life, the behaviour of John towards his wife reflects the unfair status of couples domestically; "John is practical in the extreme" (ibid, p. 647). In other words, a male often dictates what his wife is ought to do regardless of her disapproval.

"If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression -a slight hysterical tendency-

what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing". (ibid, p. 648).

This passage highlights man's role in marriage and hence society. It sheds light over the helplessness of the narrator towards her condition. The narrator has no authority over her situation just because she was prescribed with the rest cure by men (Dr. Weir Mitchel, John and her brother). John attempts to convince his wife that he is a caring and a loving husband while he really is just controlling her and imprisoning her upstairs to bed against her will. The narrator, thus, reveals the barrier set by her husband with the assistance of her own brother to prevent her from writing using the excuse of irrationality and depression.

III.2. Gender Representation in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Milner and Browitt (2002) define the term representation as, "The use of one thing to stand in for another in order to transmit meaning; the construction of meaning through the use of signs and concepts". Representation can no more be considered as providing fixed meaning, as representation depends upon a person's cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds which are subjected to historical changes (Dhanya, 2014). Gender representation is the male and female social practices transmitted in a literary work.

The Yellow Wallpaper reveals gender stereotypes of the nineteenth-century American society through the characters' behaviour towards one another. In her attempt to depict the prevailed gender role ideologies, the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* addresses her journals and says; "There comes John, and I must put this away, -he hates to have me write a word (1892, p. 649). Despite the fact that the narrator is diagnosed with depression and restricted neither to move nor to touch a pen, her attempts to write

in her journals are fairly admirable. Gilman's portrayal of the heroine reflects the status of the 19th century woman in the American society. The narrator obeys her husband's commands to the rest cure despite her obsession with writing. John's frequent disagreement with his wife's wishes clearly shows his dominant role on the domestic level and hence her submissiveness. The narrator or the female protagonist here expresses her physical fatigue and longing for writing, yet John –her husband- seems to show no affection or agreement to her mind. "John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious" (1892, p. 649). Gilman in this depiction unveils gender expectations of the 1800s America which lends men the advantage to work on a daily basis without a single complaint from their wives. The narrator is ought to remain at home, nailed to her bedroom whereas John is allowed to go out even at night leaving his depressed wife lonely. This mirrors the confinement and repression that most women experienced at the 1800s American society.

The heroine of *The Yellow Wallpaper* overtly points out –through a strong choice of words- her distaste for the pattern and the colour of the wallpaper of the room in which she stays: worse paper, sickly, dull, irritate, lame, lurid, repellent, and unclean (ibid.). Despite the fact that the narrator constantly expresses her annoyance with the yellow paper of the room, her husband John does not take her seriously enough to make a change in the wallpaper: But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things (ibid). When John disagrees with the speech of his wife, she is instantly convinced for she thinks of herself as inferior. Thus, she is obliged to reconsider her own opinion and believe that of her husband's which indicates the male dominance in the 1800's America.

III.2.1. Feminine Representation in *The Yellow Wallpaper*

In *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone De Beauvoir remarks that the woman is a social construct. Only those women who obey the norms of femininity are real 'women'. According to this, intellectual pursuit is considered unwomanly, and emotional sentimentalism is often attributed to women (Halimi, 2014). Gilman does not agree with this viewpoint since her *The Yellow Wallpaper* strongly suggests that women are not only entitled to house chores and dressing beautiful, rather they are able to aesthetically write and express their femininity in the process.

Through her protagonist, Gilman demonstrates that the primary tasks allotted to the 19th century American woman are restricted to housekeeping and husband pleasing. Though she does not totally consent the expectations of her society, she presents her female character as a writing addict who cannot write freely under her own roof; "She is a perfect and enthusiastic house keeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick! But I can write when she is out" (1892, p. 650). Gilman demonstrates the satisfaction of women in the 1800s with the role they were expected to fill. For them, the ideal woman loves her work as a housekeeper and does not aspire to do more (John's sister). However, the heroine emphasizes that writing has been assumed to sicken and corrupt women. Therefore, she had to conceal her writings away from them. *The Yellow Wallpaper* reflects the nineteenth century stereotypes of women.

Jasbir Jain (1937) comments that even in their boldest ventures, even when they acquire new roles and identities, they do not abandon the traditional moral values associated with feminine behaviour (Dhanya, 2014). The narrator of *The Yellow*

Wallpaper asserts her addiction and devotion for writing without detaching herself from femininity; “I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal” (1892, 648). Throughout her short story, John’s wife insists on the feminine traits such as weakness, subordination and powerlessness. She reveals her emotional weakness through shedding tears but only in the absence of others which suggests feminine pride; “I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time” (1892, p. 650). The narrator appears powerless and unable to accomplish the simple daily tasks such as putting on her clothes due to her physical and mental condition; “Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able, -to dress and entertain, and order things” (ibid., p.649). In addition, she shows her subordination to her husband and the impossibility of opposing his opinion even when it concerns crucial matters such as her health and comfort; “but what can I do? (ibid., p. 648)”. John is an example of the oppressive male who aims at repressing women of society through lauding his masculinity over the femininity of his wife (Stephens, 2011). He appears to be the only person caring for his helpless wife by the beginning of the story, yet it ends with him being an oppressive male. Ordering his wife not to write, John represents the 19th century expectation of a male.

III.3 Feminism in Kate Chopin *The Story of an Hour*

Feminism in *The Story of an Hour* is a major ingredient which is presented through the protagonist’s confinement and lack of freedom. The 1800s American woman has had fewer rights than their male counterparts. Marriage was seen as a resort that women turn to in order to get social and economic security; conversely men treat their wives as properties rather than human beings. This implies the subjugation of the female in the nineteenth century patriarchal society.

gender inequality of the 19th century American society through the depiction of Mrs. Mallard, her heroine. The female character presented in the short story suffers from a heart trouble which indicates the weakness of the female gender from the start. Chopin says, “Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with heart trouble”. Thus, the statement depicts the typical stereotypes of women throughout history. From the beginning of the story, she is introduced as Mrs. Mallard, and referred to as “she” mostly, thus indicating the patriarchy of the nineteenth century American society.

It is apparent that Mrs. Mallard resented her husband through her reaction when she found out about her his death: “The delicious breath of rain was in the air” (1894, p.2). The protagonist observes the beauty of nature for the very first time which indicates her happiness to be relieved from an oppressive man. She considers his death as a triumph, for she has been in a confined marriage where the husband expresses less affection towards his wife. Women were expected to play their roles in the patriarchal society which is to run home without complaining. They had to live for their husbands’ pleasure and satisfaction. Mrs. Mallard eventually regains the right to live her life. The narrator expresses that saying,

“She would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon their fellow creature” (1894, p.2)

She desires to make resolute choices outside the boundaries of the “they”, outside of social conditioning and is fully aware of the possibility of what waits for her in the near future (Wan, 2009). Mrs. Mallard is freed from her own repressive marriage and hence

In Chopin's short story, a conflict between male dominance and female subjection is shown. According to Schmid, women can be strong provided that the conditions they live in are human and right (2017). De Beauvoir, too, emphasizes the notion of radical feminism which asserts that women are generally biased due to their gender (1952). She claims that radical feminism is the key to make fundamental changes in the social structure and reach equality between males and females (ibid).

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her (Chopin, 1894, p.3). This statement makes it seem that Mrs. Mallard's pleasure with the death of her husband. Not only she receives the news of his death with relief, but also she begins to fancy a happy future for her without him. After she hears the news of her husband's death, she falls on a state of pure sadness, but then, after a moment of reflection, she realizes that a new, free and independent life for her has just started, and that's when the shift among her emotions begins in the story. Women were owned by their husbands during the 1800s and had no control of their own lives. Chopin illustrates that in her *The Story of an Hour*: Free! Body and soul free! (ibid. p.2) which refers to the misery she had suffered from in her marital life and the contentment she experiences now that she knows he departed her life for good. And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not (ibid. p. 2). Despite the aforementioned view of the significance of marriage, Mrs. Mallard - the protagonist- had no choice but to settle for an unhappy marriage which protects her from the unsympathetic judgment of the American society.

III.4. Gender Representation in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*

Like so many wives in late-nineteenth-century America, Louise would be master of herself only after her husband's death (A Feminist Reading, No Date). Chopin unveils

retrieves her right to enjoy life. She expresses her joy and point out gender role expectations in her society.

III.4.1. Feminine Representation in *The Story of an Hour*

Traditional gender roles dictate that men are supposed to be physically strong and emotionally stoic whereas women are the symbol of feebleness and delicateness. Kate Chopin introduces Louise Mallard as a woman with a health condition whom others need to deal carefully with; “Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death” (1894, p.1). The others worry that the news of Louise’s husband’s death could threaten her own life if not delivered gently (Kernaghan, No Date). This initial portrayal characterizes Louise as delicate and needing careful attention which is an evident indication of femininity.

According to Schmid (2017) men are not supposed to cry because crying is considered as a sign of weakness. Nevertheless, Chopin reveals the weakness of her heroine; Louise Mallard and says; “She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms” (1894, p.1). A crying woman is what one would expect if it is said that the husband is dead, hence the protagonist is overpowered by her emotions. Another instance of fragility lies within the following passage; “(...) as a child who has cried itself to sleep (1894, p. 1). In this simile, Louise is compared to a child that has exhausted itself from crying, yet cannot stop even in sleep. This simile reemphasizes Louise's fragility and vulnerability, which were introduced at the beginning of the story (Kernaghan, No Date).

The other trait of femininity expressed in *The Story of an Hour* is the physical exhaustion; “She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs” (ibid. p.3). Louise Mallard feels dreadfully tired due to her heart condition and the emotional damage of losing her husband.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the researchers denote the essence of the comparison conducted between the two short fictions written by two female American authors of the same era, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Kate Chopin. Despite the fact that both authors have had different childhoods and backgrounds, they appear to have a similar perspective about their society’s expectations of women’s role. Comparison does not necessarily concern the contrasts of two elements, rather the similarities as well. Gender has been a controversial subject in the late 1800s America in which male and female roles are predetermined. Gilman and Chopin show various inter-related issues of married women's lives. Therefore, the two married women in this dissertation can be called the same as they have much of resemblances in their experiences. Hence, there exist more similarities in the corpora than the differences which asserts the universality of women’s experiences.

General Conclusion

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General Conclusion

It is passive to think that women can only be prominent in society through marriage. In the establishment of marriage, women take a lower position. It was regarded as a synonym to security however it chained women largely and forbid her from practising many a possibility. It is important for each of us to know what it means to be a woman in our society, to know the historical and psychological thoughts that have shaped and are shaping our thoughts, which in turn determine the directions of our lives.

From a feminist point of view, marriage is seen as political contract where women are compared to second-degree citizen in society. Being emotionally and financially dependent on their husbands, married women are living the event of marriage as a myth since they basically relate their survival and persistence to their husbands who feed them. In this view, feminism is overlapping with Marxism to prove once again that the quest for freedom is nearly impossible under the institution of marriage. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *Women and Economics* (1898) emphasized the effect of the Victorian society on women in her era where patriarchal societies give the father the superior position and the only bread winner at home. Other few instances of women at work at that time guarantee their personal and psychological independence even though they could relatively reach financial autonomy. This is indeed true enough since women were not as paid as men and could not reach high position at work too. The same is true for Kate Chopin, though with less degree of overt expressing, who seeks freedom of expression and social practices.

As a result of the previous scene, one can deduce that change has to come from inside. I.e. women should change their condition and have their own voices. Both writers admit that change will be resisted and women; especially married once, would encounter some difficulties in establishing the identities by their own.

General Conclusion

The Yellow Wallpaper is perceived as prison-like a room that leads the protagonist to madness- after a long time of suffering from husband's confinement and oppression. The protagonist is a sexual stereotype reflecting subordinate married woman in a patriarchal society. In a way or another, Perkins wanted the reader to pity the female characters so that they can justify their trials of change and rebellion. Chopin, through her *The Story of an Hour* depicts woman's confinement in marriage and longing for freedom. Readers of Chopin's work note a sense of irony in the joy that killed the female character after one day of extreme happiness. More probably, female writers were addressing more female readers in this context to create empathy and to deliver an independent feminist and female voice.

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Le Résumé

C'était, Jawaharlal Nehro, le premier ministre indien, qui a dit que toute avancée d'une civilisation est mesurée en fonction de la condition de la femme ; Cependant, les femmes du dix-neuvième siècle en Amérique ont été confrontées à des difficultés en matière d'égalité des sexes. Ce document compare les perspectives de la femme. Cet article compare les points de vue de femmes auteurs féminins de l'Amérique du XIXe siècle qui utilisaient la littérature comme moyen d'attiser les changements dans la situation injuste des femmes dans la société. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, dont la nouvelle est *Le Papier Peint Jaune*, se concentre sur les obstacles que les femmes devaient vaincre pour pouvoir jouir d'un certain degré de liberté de choix. En plus de Kate Chopin; dont l'héroïne dans *L'histoire d'une heure* connaît des moments de liberté quand elle reçoit la nouvelle de la mort de son mari qui suggère ouvertement que son présence n'est qu'un enchaînement à son âme. La revue de la littérature montre en outre que les Américaines du XIXe siècle étaient sans distinction de race et de niveau d'éducation. Ainsi : cette thèse indique que les femmes ont été mises à l'écart en effectuant une analyse approfondie des thèmes communs du document de Chopin et Gilman. Cette recherche expose l'étroitesse d'esprit de la société patriarcale américaine sous un angle féministe. Cette thèse examine l'influence de l'inégalité des sexes sur le comportement des personnages féminins et la réaction de leurs homologues masculins. Les deux œuvres littéraires semblent assurer l'universalité des femmes expérimentent à travers le temps. Par conséquent, cet article sert à sensibiliser à l'oppression des femmes et aider à la création d'un chemin vers l'indépendance des femmes et l'égalité des sexes.

Mots-clés: Inégalité de genre, Discrimination, Patriarcat, Féministe, Universalité, Oppression

المخلص

لقد كان رئيس الوزراء الهندي جواهر لال نهرو هو صاحب مقولة: "إن تطور أي حضارة مرهون بمكانة المرأة هناك" و رغم ذلك فلقد واجهت النساء الأمريكيات في القرن التاسع عشر تحديات جمة من ناحية المساواة بين الجنسين. تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى مقارنة زوايا نظر المؤلفتين الأمريكيتين اللتين استخدمتا الأدب كوسيلة لإيلاج تعديلات في الوضع الجائر للمرأة في المجتمع. ينصب اهتمام المذكرة بشكل أساسي على كاتبتين نسويتين أولهما شارلوت بيركينز غيلمان *Charlotte Perkins Gilman* والتي تعرض في قصتها القصيرة "ورق الجدران الأصفر" *The Yellow Wallpaper* العوائق التي تتعرض لها النساء بهدف التمتع و لو بقدر قليل من حرية الاختيار. إضافة إلى كاتبتين *Kate Chopin* التي تتذوق بطلتها عملها الروائي "قصة ساعة" *The Story Of an Hour* طعم الحرية في لحظات وجيزة من تلقاها نبأ وفاة زوجها، مما يوحي للقراء بأن تواجد زوجها ما هو إلا تقييد لروحها. علاوة على ذلك، فإن الدراسات السابقة توضح أن النساء الأمريكيات قد كن ضحايا التمييز في القرن التاسع عشر بغض النظر عن عرقهن و مستوى تعليمهن. تشير هاته الأطروحة إلى أن رأي المرأة مهمش عندما يتعلق الأمر باتخاذ القرارات الحرجة. كما يكشف هذا العمل -من منظور نسوي- عن ضيق أفق المجتمع الأبوي الأمريكي و ذلك من خلال إجراء تحليل شامل للمواضيع المشتركة التي قامت كل من جيلمان و شوبين بنقلها عبر صفحات قصتها. إن هذه الأطروحة تبحث في تأثير عدم المساواة بين الجنسين على سلوك الشخصيات النسائية و استجاباتها لنظراتها من الذكور. يبدو أن كلا العملان الأدبيان أنفا الذكر يؤكدان عالمية تجارب النساء على مر الزمن. و بالتالي تعمل هذه الأطروحة على التنبؤ إلى اضطهاد المرأة و المساهمة في إنشاء مسار نحو استقلال المرأة و المساواة بين الجنسين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: عدم المساواة بين الجنسين، التمييز، الأبوي، نسوي، عالمية، اضطهاد.