

Exploring Feminine Subjugation and Liberation: A Comparative Analysis of Gender Roles and Patriarchal Constraints in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

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Received: 17/01/2024

Accepted: 28/03/2024

Published: 01/05/2024

Volume: 5 Issue: 3

How to cite this paper: Monisha, V., & Pandey, P. S. (2024). Exploring Feminine Subjugation and Liberation: A Comparative Analysis of Gender Roles and Patriarchal Constraints in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour". *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, 5(3), 30-34

DOI:

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Abstract

The major problem of how women live in a society devoid of freedom, where they are repressed, subordinated, and denied rights. Women are still treated unfairly in modern culture, despite the fact that their views are heard. Similarly, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" illustrates the struggles women face to assert personal identity. And in "The Story of an Hour," the heroine is dominated by her husband. Sadly, the predominance of men in practically every sector of society, including Politics, Economics, Education, and even Psychology, significantly restricts their freedom. The aim is to elevate women to equal status with men in society. Women have made a variety of attempts to express their desires. The goal is to challenge men's domination or at the very least, elevate women to a status where they are on par with males in society, as patriarchal culture has kept women at the bottom of the social hierarchy. This article focuses on women's role, loss of identity, their unhappy married lives, and the search for individuality in the face of social norms.

Keywords: Gender, Women's Identity, liberation, patriarchal society, Education

1. Introduction

The comparative study of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," explore the theme of looking at women's perspectives through oppression and freedom. They express a desire to examine Kate Chopin's gender roles. Focusing on two seminal works, "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The Story of an Hour," this article scrutinises the portrayal of women's roles and the oppressive forces of patriarchy. The story's gender prism presents the woman and the man from a variety of angles. In the story, it is expected that the male will be in charge and rule over the lady. For thousands of years, patriarchy and male prejudice have been reducing women's rights and liberties in society.

Men oppress women in numerous societies throughout the world by abusing the authority bestowed upon them by their patriarchal societal structures. The plot, ideas, and imagery of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" are comparable, and they both discuss women's roles in society in somewhat similar ways. Gilman and Chopin employ certain literary strategies, such as to highlight the primary topics of female independence, patriarchal tyranny, and female identity. While the first wave of feminism emerged in the 19th century, women now face new opportunities and challenges in the digital age as they work to assert their agency and promote significant societal change. We can better understand the lasting significance of gender dynamics and the changing character of feminist discourse across various historical contexts by looking at works like "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The Story of an Hour." The use of social media, digital technologies, and online forums to promote gender equality, question patriarchal standards, and elevate the voices of women is known as "digital feminism." It makes use of internet resources to create support networks for women worldwide, mobilize communities, and increase public awareness of feminist problems. Feminist activism is still relevant in the digital age, as seen by problems like cyberbullying, online harassment, and the spread of sexist information. Digital feminism has given women in the modern period an opportunity to share their stories and promote gender equality. Even with great advancements, women still confront a variety of obstacles, such as unequal pay, underrepresentation in leadership positions, and widespread discrimination based on gender. The issues of identity, autonomy, and mental health in these stories help us understand the difficulties experienced by women who want to be independent and self-discover in a society that tries to fit them into preconceived roles.

2. Literature Review

Fahimeh Q. Berenji in *Time and Gender in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper and Kate Chopin's The Story of an Hour* examines female characters who battle patriarchal domination in marriage and their attempts to overthrow it. In the process of women's liberation, women writers purposefully incorporate historical narrative devices into their works to challenge or compromise patriarchy. It also presents the efforts of women to free themselves from this system of oppression. And its main purpose is to describe how the gender of the author or protagonist of the story can affect the time of the story. It also illustrates how the female authors use time in the story to resist patriarchy or engage in discourse.

Negin Karami, Esmaeil Zohdi in "*The Story of an Hour*": A Feminist Interpretation explores women's identity, women's freedom, and how women face struggles. Describe false cultural assumptions and attributes about women's gender equality. The research also looks at how women deal with societal norms that aren't appropriate for them and the tension that exists between social inclusion and basic liberation. In today's world, women work greatly to achieve their goals. The main aim is to effect an important change.

Panji Ari Kusuma in *Liberal Feminist Values in Kate Chopin's Story of an Hour* examines the values of liberal feminism. Also, analyse three women's problems. It explores the problems faced by a weak woman and a modest woman whose mood is affected after the loss of her husband. Also the story's portrayal of two different forms of vulnerability—that of a lowly widow and a weak woman who has suffered—is its primary flaw. Trying to think against oneself is the first, and being against one's surroundings is the second. It also looks at how society perceives a woman's mental health following her husband's death.

Kristin M. Distel in *Free! Body and Soul Free!: The Docile Female Body in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"* explores the way patriarchy regulates and controls the female body's experience as a patriarchal power system and the mindset of women. The fundamental issue with it is how a man's authority functions in the home and how a woman experiences a patriarchal power structure. In this tale, she believes in living a long life free from her husband's demands. The research also poses a number of queries. Was her freedom truly taken away from her? Or their whole way of thinking is focused on exploring the free world. Unfortunately, though, it was restricted.

Meeyoung Kang in *Aesthetics and Politics of Feminist Tragic Narratives at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century into the Twentieth* examines the unfortunate experiences that women have in patriarchal cultures. How reading about women's suffering in feminist loss novels raises readers' awareness of social justice issues. Numerous problems confront women in a patriarchal culture. Its primary issue is that women's terrible stories are not allowed to be read in an aesthetic or logical sense by the male-dominated American literary tradition, despite the fact that these novels project gender rights voices through their writing as well as over the patriarchal society in which they are set. The first is the way that women's primary suicide vulnerability functions to achieve ethical liberation as opposed to emotional emancipation. Depression plays a part in the second issue. The issue between women's desires and societal oppression is demonstrated by this study.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper: An Assertion of Gender Equality and Liberation* describes the living conditions of women. Women's Subjugation describes women's emancipation and equal rights when women are confined to the home. And also men make women their slaves. A woman cannot work outside the home due to their life. This is a serious issue. It also looks at cooking, childcare, and housework. In addition to keeping women in restrictive households, women's social roles also crush their dreams.

Fardhillah Hasanuddin in *The Portrait of Women in Chopin's Short Story, The Story of an Hour* describe the image of a woman and show how the image of an American woman can be reflected. Also, the analysis examines the portrayal of women in American society and describes the unhappy state of women. Its primary goals are to analyse the perception of women in American society and explain how the image of the American woman is mirrored in many contexts. Women's contented way of living highlights how restricted their life choices are.

Halit Alkan in *A Liberal Feminist Approach to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper* analyses the contribution of women in a patriarchal society. This short story shows the problems of the female character and how the woman can free herself from her oppression. Due to patriarchal society, which grants men both legal and economic power, women are imprisoned in the private realm before men. The largest issue facing modern society is this one. Legal rights and freedom are denied to women. This study reveals a woman's perspective and how society views her after having a child. Her fantasy is dashed when she finds herself restricted and alone at home. In an atheist culture, women's contributions to the public and intellectual stage are restricted by masculine science.

Zarin Tasnim Promee in *The Evolution of Feminism in English Literature from the 19th to the 20th Century* investigates the development of feminism in English literature from the 19th to the 20th centuries will be the topic of this paper. Additionally, society changed regarding women's standing and roles in literature. Examine how women have been portrayed in literature and culture over the ages, as well as how their positions have changed. And the development of feminism receives a lot of attention. defined gender equality in terms of sociopolitical and economic factors. Equal rights and opportunities should be provided for the exploration of the perspectives that men and women should have in all domains. The rights and interests of women in having organised work are also covered in this study.

Xiaoxian Tang in *Analysis of the Awakening of the Heroine's Female Consciousness in The Yellow Wallpaper* examines the heroine's issues from three perspectives. and seeks to investigate the causes of her animosity. The heroine of Rebellion gains the ability to resist masculine domination in the face of injustice. In the face of oppression, women are working to develop the ability to challenge patriarchy. The limitations imposed by her family, patriarchal society, and modern civilization keep her from pursuing her passion. Women aren't able to leave the oppressive system of moderate patriarchy because of all these issues.

Not only are women oppressed and denied freedom in a patriarchal culture, but the fundamental issue is the denial of women's rights. In a patriarchal culture, where their voices are suppressed, women's voices ought to be opposed. Additionally, they ought to be unrestricted at home and able to travel the globe.

3. Discussion

"The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The Story of an Hour" explore the complex lifestyles of women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The feminist perspective explores the cultural traditions imposed on women by comparing these two short stories to the context of women's lives in society through oppression and liberation. Exemplifies the struggle for liberation and self-expression. The wives were shown as inferior to their husbands in both tales. Written in bygone days, the two tales depict women as frail and helpless, deserving of their husband's guardianship. Husbands had to work hard to maintain their families, and these women were solely allowed to undertake household tasks. The moment Mrs. Mallard finds out about her spouse's death, her path towards realizing her dream in "The Story of an Hour" commences. In Chopin's portrayal of Mrs. Mallard, the oppressed woman is more mentally than physically. Similarly, it suggests that Jane feels confined and imprisoned around her controlling husband. Jane decides to alter her mind about leaving the house and writes, life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. Indicating that it is time to begin releasing the lady behind the paper, she is determined. "There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will" (Gilman, 1892). She is unable to express her own thoughts. Her spouse claims that Jane is driven insane, but she feels as though she has finally been freed from his control. Although Jane and Mrs. Mallard both suffer from psychiatric illnesses, it appears that Jane's husband imposed this diagnosis on her. Also, there are differences in the appearance of their mental illnesses. If Jane suffers from depression, for Mrs. Mallard, her husband's physical absence exacerbates her feelings. Both "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "The Story of an Hour" highlight the similarities and differences in the lives of two women in a society ruled by men. Gilman tells the story of a depressed person in "The Yellow Wallpaper," a woman who is slowly heading towards her terrible fate. Not only is Jane miserable, but she also experiences neglect, is unable to work, and is constantly afraid to write honestly. Despite being ill, the narrator breaks her husband's orders and writes when no one else is present. Women are not afforded the same opportunities as men.: "She felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents and the color that engulfed the air" (Chopin, 1894). At this juncture, Mrs. Mallard realizes how powerful her husband is over her. The short narrative illustrates the hardships that many women faced in the nineteenth century. Jane, a woman from the upper middle class, is the storyteller of "The Yellow Wallpaper." The first-person narrative of the story is based on her own experiences. The narrator is going through postpartum depression symptoms, like thoughts of emptiness and hopelessness. The patient receives this treatment by being put in an environment free from distractions. However, her isolation proved to be more detrimental than the sickness issue. Jane is not allowed to travel, exercise, or work of any type, per her doctor's orders. Jane refutes the claim made by her spouse that she is by herself.

According to Kate Chopin, women in patriarchal societies face obstacles to their freedom and sense of self. "escaped" or "free" (432). On her lips, indicating that she views marriage as a surrender of her independence. Chopin portrays the destructive force of men, and this fear instills in the women of that century a sense of worthlessness. Louise seeks independence and self-admiration from the outset of the narrative, but patriarchal influences stifle her femininity in the context of morality and society. She will be stifled since she is a woman; hence, she cannot achieve. "She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves" (Chopin, 1894). With all the natural objects above representing a specific season and serving as symbols of rebirth, the reader is offered hope for Mrs. Mallard's new existence. Louise is anxious to be free and

realize her perfect dream, despite her fear of independence, self-hood, and freedom in a democracy of men. Louise, in particular, surmounts her obstacles, tries to pursue her goals, and tries to express her intense happiness at her newly discovered appreciation for the beauty of life. At first, this Charlotte Perkins Gilman tale didn't garner much attention, but as women's rights gained traction, it rose to fame. To sum it all up, it could be claimed that women in the past did not receive the respect they truly deserved. Gilman illustrates, from her own experience, how injustice was meted out to women. Other women supported this, and by using the tale as a guide, we have also found a number of factors that have improved recently but that had problems with gender discrimination in the past. From this story, we can observe the woman's feelings and how they deviate from what society expects of her. The woman feels powerful and free once she passes away, free from the constraints of society.

In "The Story of an Hour," the male lead is expected to take the lead and provide guidelines for the female lead. For various reasons, the two women in the short story were held as slaves. Because of the negative perceptions of women in society, Louise is unable to work; therefore, her husband works and accumulates riches and power in her stead. Because social conventions forbid it, she is unable to express her feelings or who she is to others or to society. "Due to her unhappiness in marriage, she ends up getting a heart disease that weakens her immune system" (Chopin, 1894). This makes her feelings about the marriage clear, as does the way society's gender stereotypes keep her from speaking up or confiding in anybody. The freedom that Mrs. Mallard and the narrator of Gilman's narrative were unable to enjoy ultimately causes them pain and transforms them. While Mrs. Mallard briefly has a sense of independence before it is completely taken away, in order to heal her mental illness, Gilman's narrator is taken from her freedoms and put in a room. The author uses theme, symbolism, and male representation to build the plot lines, which make it difficult for both women to figure out who they are. The men in the short stories are portrayed in a particular way, despite the fact that the two women experience varied degrees of oppression from their husbands. In this scene, Louise Mallard's character comes to see that, although her husband's death was tragic, it also served to break her formerly strong marital ties. "free! Free! Free!" (Chopin, 1894). Because of her grieving crises, Mrs. Mallard has been able to see the world with new eyes and understand how her marriage has limited her freedom and independence. The central theme of the story, recurrent among Chopin's heroines, is the question of feminine autonomy and desire. Although Louise Mallard may not have been aware of it beforehand, her intense sense of superiority shows that she is suppressed by the patriarchy of modern society. Being under John's authority, he is not free to express his views. She is not entitled to say anything, though, because she is a woman. Mothers, caretakers, and spouses of domestic workers are all considered categories of women. She doesn't get anything expected of her as a girl. Women don't want to waste their lives. They faced opposition in the community because they wanted to work outside the home. These stories serve as examples of how women's independence is growing and how women's oppression is dying. The two women express their weariness of the controlling unions.

4. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" highlights the complexity of patriarchal limitations and gender roles that were common in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both pieces emphasize the limiting effects of cultural expectations on women through unique points of view. "The Story of an Hour" and "The Yellow Wallpaper" can be compared to understand the intricate dynamics of female freedom and subjugation. A multifaceted strategy that includes legislative changes, cultural transformations, and education is the key to resolving these problems. The only way society can truly enable gender equality and women's liberation is by working together to confront and eliminate patriarchal barriers.

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