

## The Joy That Kills: A Comparative Feminist Study of Fleeting Freedom in Gilman and Chopin

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### ABSTRACT

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" introduce two heroines, Louise Mallard and Gilman's unnamed narrator, who struggle against the suppressive nature of the societies around them. The denial of their desires which causes them extreme mental and physical anguish is the traditional norm of a society. By exercising control over their bodies and minds, a patriarchal society pushes these two heroines to put up an ultimate fight for their autonomy. The two short stories also elaborate on the suffocating experience of confinement and repression that women faced in the Victorian era. It also involves the demonstration of the acutely distinguished gender roles, where a woman's role as a wife and mother plays an important role in maintaining her status quo in society. The rigidity of these roles puts a certain pressure on a woman as they are expected to always maintain a comfortable, entertaining, and harmonious environment in the house. This paper aims to unfold the idea of freedom for a woman from patriarchal constraints by elucidating the psychological suffering of the heroines. Moreover, the comparative study will also extend what ephemeral female autonomy achieves for these two women and the meaning behind this fragile as well as treacherous road to psychological awakening.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Self-assertion, Psychological suppression, Female autonomy, Individuality.

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