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Between Being and Becoming: A Gynocritical Reading of Selected Narratives

A B S T R A C T

Feminism since its emergence is based, in essence, on the principle of equality not only between men and woman, but even between women themselves. As such, feminism is concerned with how women are engaged in the process of being and becoming—a process that diminishes labeling womenfolk as the "Inferior Other Sex". The study argues that narratives written by feminist writers like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Virginia Woolf, and Kate Chopin are Gynocritical feminists writing back to an androcentric culture and the patriarchal system whose sole aim is to silence women, treat them as an inferior sex, and confine them to the roles of nursering and nurturing. The following study reflects on a literary mosaic composed of denouncing voices that provide more insights into the nature of women's existence. Elucidated under the umbrella of feminism, the examined narratives, namely **The Yellow Wallpaper**, **The New Dress**, and **A Story of an Hour**, shed the light on different aspects related to women's being and becoming including hysteria, the objectified angel, the invisible being, women's authentication, and so on. The study draws heavily on feminist critics who present different discussions about masculine subjugation of women and feminist's avenue towards self-actualization. The study falls into four sections and a conclusion. **Section one** is an introduction illustrating the core of feminism with reference to its main concepts. **Section two** tackles the concept of hysteria as it is represented in Gilman's "**The Yellow Wallpaper**". **Section three** examines Kate Chopin's "**A Story of an Hour**" through the lenses of Simon de Beauvoir's existentialist perspectives. **Section four** reflects on Virginia Woolf's treatment of women's attempts to transcend passivity as it is represented in "**The New Dress**". The Conclusion highlights the findings of the study.

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بين الوجود والتحول: دراسة النقد النسوي في نصوص مختارة

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الخلاصة:

يعنى النقد النسوي بدراسة الفروق والاختلافات لا بين الجنسين فقط وإنما بين معشر النساء انفسهم. ولهذا

نجد ان النسوية معنية بتحليل عملية الوجود الاجتماعي المتوارث والتي ادرجت وصنفت النساء تحت مسمى الجنس الاخر الادنى. تتناول الدراسة ثلاثة نصوص نسوية لكاتبات رائدات في حقل النظرية النسوية الا وهن شارلوت بيركن كلمان, فيرجينيا وولف, وكيت شوبان. تعالج الدراسة فرضية ان النصوص الادبية المطروحة للدراسة هي رد ادبي للثقافة الذكورية المسيطرة على المجتمع, تعالج الدراسة الفرضية من خلال مصطلحات تناولتها النظرية النسوية كالوجود المخفي والخطاب الهستيري وغيرها من المصطلحات.

Section One: Introduction

Feminism, by its very nature, is an interdisciplinary revisionist movement that is mainly concerned with how women are socially defined and how this definition affects their being and becoming. This may take the readers directly to the difference between gender and sex. While sex indicates the biological difference between a male and female, gender refers to the construction of the social identity according to the social and cultural role and behavior of each sex within one particular society. Judith Butler's theory of Performativity elaborates on this difference when she underscores that:

One is not born, but 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. (Butler, 1994, 32)

The difference between man and woman labels the latter as the inferior "Other" sex. This inferiority, in fact, dates back to Aristotle's time. In his *Politics*, Aristotle examines women and children's through the premise of irrationality and thus they should be excluded from public life to be under the full responsibility of men.

Antifeminist discourses have identified women as the "blank page" that should be written upon by man. Contradicting such discourse, French feminists like Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray link the female body with an inventive text full of symptomatic words. In her "The Laugh of the Medusa" Cixous suggests:

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their

bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement (Cixous, 1976, 875)

Cixous underscores that woman has to challenge to the oppressing masculine discourse that dominated literature so as to establish a new genre of creative and indicative writing called *l'écriture féminine* or feminine. Women have to write for themselves and about themselves using their own experiences and thus to assure their being into the androcentric cultural, social text, and literary text. Luce Irigaray, a French feminist, believes that binary thinking plays a crucial role in affirming androcentric culture. Such binary thinking prevents the readers from comprehending differences in such a nuanced way that does not identify the masculine subject as a source of valuable power.

According to Luce Irigaray's perspective, women are not only "Othered", they are also absented. This seeps into one of the main images by which suppressed women are identified; it is the image of "The Angel in the House". The image of the "Angel", derived from a poem by Coventry Patmore, represents the devoted and submissive woman/wife. Virginia Woolf describes the Angel in the House as follows:

She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly selfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of the family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (quoted in Showalter, 1992, 14)

Woolf significantly underscores that "Killing the Angel in the House" was part of the occupation of a woman writer." This takes the readers directly to the term of gynocriticism.

The term, gynocriticism, is presented by Elaine Showalter, an American literary critic and writer of cultural and social issues related to feminism. Gynocriticism identified woman as a writer who is responsible for reflecting on female experiences so as to replace the masculine literary criticism by a female one. Gynocriticism also fosters the female's struggle to improve her self-actualization within the performative social system of gender. It is by fostering such struggle, that gynocriticism is challenging what Freud identifies as female's envious feeling of inadequacy. In *Toward a Feminist Poetics* Showalter traces the history of women's literature, suggesting that it can be divided into three phases: Feminine, Feminist, and female. In the last phase, woman reaches the level of self-discovery in which she draws heavily on females' experiences as a source of inspiration; she significantly presents

females' experiences within new forms and techniques. (Showalter, 1986, 125) Within the context of Showalter's concept of gynocriticism, writing and reading a text by a woman is an act of revision—an act defined by Adrian Rich in her essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as a Re-Vision," as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival." This act leads women to self-knowledge and thus refusal of the male dominated society. Such refusal cannot be fulfilled without a hysteric discourse that confronts the organization of patriarchal capitalism. (Rich, 1971, <https://rivervates.blogspot.com/2010/09/reflection-when-we-dead-awaken-writing.html>)

Section Two: Hysteria in "The Yellow Wallpaper"

According to the ancient Greek belief, "hysteria" indicates the wondered wombs through women's bodies. Transcending such imaginary connotation, though affirming its exclusive relatedness to women, the nineteenth century ushered a new understandings of hysteria that are feminine sexual frustration and emotional eruption. It is during the nineteenth century that Silas Weir Mitchell suggests the "rest cure" as an avenue towards regaining psychological recovery. This particular cure is reflected, fictionally, through Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." Gilman, however, utilizes hysteria as a means by which the unnamed heroine fights back and crosses over the patriarchal confinement and obstacles represented, symbolically, by her husband, the nailed bed, the nursery room, and the yellow wallpaper.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was an American novelist, poetess, a social reform lecturer, and interestingly enough, an active feminist. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a semi-autobiographical narrative in a sense that Gilman suffered from hysteria and deep depression after the birth of her only daughter. Like her heroine, she was obliged to respond to the "rest cure" prescribed by Silas Weir Mitchell, her doctor. Her fictional and non-fictional writings tackle the concept of utopian feminism that is depending on "mother's instincts" in teaching the whole human race: For the sake of my child I must hasten to save/All the children on earth from the jail and the grave. Gilman did not mean to write "The Yellow Wallpaper" to be a feminist narrative like *Moving the Mountain* (1911) and *Herland* (1915); she wrote it instead as a means of verbalizing her suffering and thus having possible recovery.

Feminist aspects, however, can be recognized in the "confinement and rebellion, forbidden desire and 'irrational' fear" (Johnson 522). Confinement and rebellion, in particular, fall into two dimensions: literal and symbolic. While literal confinement is incarnated in the way she is obliged to take a rest cure in her room, writing can be seen as a rebellious act and a "great relief" that fight back the patriarchal order represented by her husband/physician who "hates to have [her] write a word [...and] hardly lets [her] stir without special direction."

Symbolically, confinement is represented in the narrator's limited roles of nursering and nurturing. Her rejection to these limited roles is embodied in a "slight hysterical tendency" which can be read as an angry refusal to such limited roles.

To start with, the genre of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a gothic feminism. Broadly speaking, the events of gothic fiction are set in a far location that motivates feelings of fear and suspense; it is also by the use of the uncanny and irrational that these feelings appeal on the recipient such response. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is set in a "haunted house...[that] is quiet alone, standing well back from the road, quiet three miles from the village...[with] hedges and walls and gates that lock,..."(647-8) Feelings of fear and terror are materialized in the way the heroine responds to the house; she is "afraid [for] there is something strange about the house—[she] can feel it." (648) Grotesque aspects are embodied in the yellow wallpaper of the heroine's room where she has to spend most of her time. At the very beginning she describes the color of the wallpaper as "repellant," "smouldering," "dull," and "lurid." Her hateful feeling is confirmed when she says: "I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long." (649) The mystery of the wallpaper is embodied in the pattern she recognizes as "a recurrent spot [that] looks like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at [her] upside down." (ibid)

Aspects of gothic feminism are coincided with portraying the heroine as an object thingified at the hand of gender politics. She is the "little goose" and the "little girl" who must take care of herself not for her sake, but rather for his sake. Diane Hoeveler's *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* refers to the portrayal of women as passive and silenced victims. However, these two forces, namely silence and passivity, are feminist avenue towards fighting back the patriarchal system. (Hoeveler, 1998, xiii) They are, quoting Hoeveler, "literary masquerades...that would allow female characters...a fictitious mastery over what they consider an oppressive political and social system...gothic feminism is a veiled critique of all those public institutions that have been erected to displace, contain, or commodify women." (Ibid) The oppression of the patriarchal system is embodied in the husband's refusal to let his wife (unnamed narrator) work through her hysteria by means of writing. While "he hates to have [her] write a word, she knows that writing is the space that "would relieve the press of ideas and rest [her]." His oppressiveness is also coincided with the nurse he employs to watch her. Like John, the nurse tries to prevent the narrator from writing. However, the narrator writes when her nurse is out. Even her bedroom is not the one she wants; instead, it's a room that once had been a "playroom"—a matter that has the symbolic connotation of her return to infancy. It is not only the room that enhances her equalization with children, it is also how her husband treats her as a feeble child: "dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sit by me and read to me till it tired my

head." In such situation, she is a receiver of power rather than an agent who speaks out her suffering: "John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him."

It is not only writing that she is not allowed to, she is also denied the right to fancy: "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." The narrator's considerable fancy is embodied in the pattern she recognizes on the wallpaper: "it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern... [it] seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out. The creeping woman on the wall can be symbolically perceived from two angles. First, she is victimized by the patriarchal and social "bars." Second, she resists these bars when she strongly shakes them to step out. Meanings of imprisonment, entrapment, and restriction are enhanced from the very beginning of the story when the narrator describes the house as a "colonial mansion." Foreshadowing the coming events, the house represents all the social norms that mentally colonize and limit her roles to nurturing and nursering. It is against these confinements that the narrator, by means of hysterical creeping, will revolt at the end of the story.

The creeping woman is not the only one on the wall; there are other creeping women behind her who try to step out. Identifying herself with her sisters/creeping women, the narrator daily locks the door of her room and start creeping. Not only that, she begins to tear the wallpaper—an act that implies her radical decision to free all women from the bars of customs and traditions. Her radical decision is coincided with hysterical behavior that speaks up and speaks for the rights of her existence. In this sense, the narrator's hysteria can be perceived as Gilman's feminist discourse by which she gives voice to the silenced subaltern. Juliet Mitchel confirms: "The women novelist must be hysteric. Hysteric is the woman's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organization and sexuality under patriarchal capitalism. It is simultaneous what a woman can do both to be feminine and to refuse femininity, within patriarchal discourse, and I think that is exactly what the novel is; I do not believe that there is such a thing as a female writing, "a woman voice" " (Michel, 1984, 290). The narrator's hysteric reaction, in this sense, is a means that voices the collective suffering of women experiences within the patriarchal order and domestic sphere.

The conflict between the narrator and the patriarchal order, represented by her husband, starts in the nursery room. In fact, the climax of the conflict is situated within this room, particularly when she locks the door and starts tearing the yellow wallpaper in such a hysterical way. Though she does not choose the room, she chooses to start her revolution from the same room in which she is obliged to follow the strict masculine rules. The nursery room encapsulates two antithetical forces, namely the yellow wallpaper and the pattern of the creeping women whom the narrator mimics and identified herself with. As two

antithetical symbols, the yellow wallpaper stands for all customs, traditions, and norms that she used to live with. The act of creeping, on the other hand, stands for women's quiet and slow struggle against the patriarchal system. The secrecy of this act is confirmed by the fact that the narrator is the only one who can see the pattern of the creeping woman on the wallpaper, particularly at night. John falls unconscious when he sees her hysterical shape and her creeping body on the ground. The moment that declares her triumph upon the patriarchal system is that one when she creeps over his body: "Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!" when she removes the nailed bedstead and creeps upon his body, she shows her ability to remove the burden of tradition that restrains and marginalize her existence. The final scene of the story emphasizes on the rough and ominous path that women have to take in order to reach equality in society, and this path is the process of seeking women's own identity and their courage to defy tradition.

Section Three: Artificial Being in Virginia Woolf's "The New Dress"

Believing in one's potentialities rather than appearance is what Virginia Woolf usually reflects on throughout her literary works. Her short narrative "The New Dress," published in 1924, elaborates on this theme through Mabel whose "new dress" motivates the question of "why not be original? Why not be herself?" It is through the feminist existential perspective of being and becoming, that Woolf tries to free her heroine from the limits of being for others to be instead for herself; she symbolically uses the trope of the "new dress" to evoke Mabel's radical sense against the strategy of social control that enhance her desire to embrace alienation.

Intended to be part of Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, "The New Dress" share with the aforementioned work (*Mrs. Dalloway*) certain characters, events, and feminine feelings of subordination and power relations. As a case in point, the two characters in both narratives, Clarrisa and Mabel, share the same feelings of inferior Otherness—a matter that may induce the idea that each of the two is the foil of the other. Furthermore, mentioning the name of Clarrisa Dalloway at the very beginning of "The New Dress" enables the reader to recognize that Mabel attends Mrs. Dalloway's party in which she feels suspicious about her inappropriate dress. It is that particular dress that fills her with feelings of "profound dissatisfaction" and enhances "the misery...of being inferior to other people." Her escapist tendency is materialized when she finds herself goes "straight to the far end of the room, to a shaded corner" so as to avoid gossip remarks about her "hideous new dress!" She is constrained by her need for social approval in an aristocratic community and by her fear at the hands of other people in the party who would see her as inferior or different.

Interestingly enough, Mabel's personality is marked by its deviation from the avenue towards self-actualization. Her self-esteem is thawed by her

inability to embrace her mother's history represented by the "Paris fashion book of the time of the Empire." Instead, she identified herself as a standing "dummy" with many pins stuck into. More than that, she sees herself nothing but a fly trying hard to "crawl out of the saucer." While she compares herself to a fly, she compares others to a butterfly, dragonfly, and any other "beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, and skimming."

The stream of consciousness technique is the form that encapsulates Mabel's fragmented narrative. This finds its echo in the term "psychological realism" which is identified by modern writers including Virginia Woolf herself. Woolf does not see in writing a mere tool to show reality. She regarded writing to break through the shallow appearance of reality to go inside at a more profound real meaning of truth thrashing beneath. (Silver, 1983, 19) Woolf focuses, in "The New Dress" in particular and in other works in general, on the spirituality of the character. In other words, she focuses on Mabel's inner self to reflect on her anxiety; Woolf significantly focuses upon Mabel's internal response to people's fantasized opinions about her new dress. As such, the reader is randomly taken from one character to another inside Mabel's mind. Her random transformation from one character to another crystalizes how her disturbed consciousness responds to their remarks about her dress:

Miss Milan said that the skirt could not well be longer; if anything the skirt, said Miss Milan, puckering her forehead, considering with all her wits about her, must be shorter; and she felt, suddenly, honestly, full of love for Miss Milan, much, much fonder of Miss Milan than of any one in the whole world... Charles said nothing of the kind, of course. He was malice itself. He always saw through one, especially if one were feeling particularly mean, paltry, or feeble-minded. "Mabel's got a new dress!" he said, and the poor fly was absolutely shoved into the middle of the saucer. Really, he would like her to drown, she believed. He had no heart, no fundamental kindness, only a veneer of friendliness. Miss Milan was much more real, much kinder.

Mabel is mentally colonized within her anxiety and her colonizer is a fantasy of her own invention. She fantasizes that everybody in the party makes fun of her dress: "Oh these men, oh these women, all were thinking— 'What's Mabel wearing? What a fright she looks! What a hideous new dress!'" (Woolf, 1927: 4) She absorbs this fantasy to the extent that she cannot comprehend her own isolation and complicity.

The imprisonment within the borders of her inner self and feelings of estrangement are reflected on the limited space of dialogue within the narrative. In fact, all the short dialogues do not take place in an actual confrontation within a public time; but rather within the private time of her inner self. This is why the

events as well as the dialogues do not follow a logical and smooth consequence but rather a fragmented one.

Mabel's "vacillating" character leads an interior conflict against her appearance which is misshapen by her "yellow dress". Her anxiety springs from her feelings that her body as well as out appearance depart from the idealized norms of beauty and attractiveness. The new dress, in this sense, is viewed in opposition to her true Self, mind, and spirit. It is because of that particular dress, Mabel "is aligned against reason and against spiritual salvation." (Denmark and others (eds.), 2005, 83) However, the end of the story is the turning point which takes the conflict towards its resolution. The politics of "The new dress" is confronted by Mabel's decision to go to "the London Library to-morrow. She would find some wonderful, helpful, astonishing book, quite by chance." This decision is the act of re-visioning her true self; it is an act of awakening which by its very nature, quoting Adrian Rich, is "an act of survival."

Section Four: Finding the Self

In her story "The Story of an Hour", the American feminist writer Kate Chopin (1851-1904) depicts a stereotypical woman from the nineteenth century when women were subjugated objects. Chopin's protagonist, Louise Mallard, faces an existentialist conflict of being between prison and freedom, and between life and death. She has a self-awareness regarding her existence but with less living space—a space whose limits are determined by the social norms of that period. Angelyn Mitchell states that "Patriarchy's social conditioning, [discussed since the time of Aristotle,] creates codes of social behavior to ensure the suppression of feminine desires." (1993, 60) This is depicted by Chopin who portrays the nineteenth century society through the family of Mallard which is ruled by Mr. Mallard, the symbolic representative of the patriarchal system—a system that entails the dominance of masculinity over its counterpart, namely femininity.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), the French feminist writer and social theorist, has an essential influence on both feminist existentialism and feminist theory. In her *The Second Sex*, she depicts women's deprived position in society. De Beauvoir traces the ways ancient societies mistreated women and sustained their inferiority. As far as marriage is concerned, de Beauvoir states that "The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage" (2011, 480). She mentions that "In truth woman has not been socially emancipated through man's need, sexual desire and the desire for offspring, which makes the male dependent for satisfaction upon the female" (1961, 12). Although a male needs a woman to be a servant, sex object, mother for his children, and even an assistant in agricultural societies; yet, the male does not appreciate that. For him, a "woman integrated as slave or vassal into the family group dominated by fathers and brothers, has always been given in marriage to males by other males" (2011, 481). Chopin's feminist narrative echoes de Beauvoir's

perspectives in a sense that she reflects on the same ideas through Louise Mallard who is depicted as an invisible woman in a superior manish society. Being the bird in the cage is implicitly enhanced by her house which represents the confinements of the patriarchal system.

Mrs. Mallard, like many others in her society, has unsatisfied marriage. Apparently, she lives with two paradoxical selves. While her outward feminine self seems to be satisfied, her feminist inward-self rejects everything. The congruity of the two “Selves” increases the conflict between her conscious and subconscious life. Moreover, since she is living in a manish community controlled by patriarchal rules, then Mrs. Mallard is enslaved, silenced, and Othered by her colonizer/ master, namely Mr. Mallard. Thus, she has to accept blindly the way she is led by masculine norms. Death, however is her alley. The moment she receives the news of Mr. Mallard’s death is not a moment of “grief” as it seems to be; it is rather the moment of release that enables her to see the world, for the first time, with fresh eyes. “When the storm of grief had spent itself”, she goes to her room alone and locks the door. She stands in her room “facing the open window”. Through that “open square”, and for the first time, she starts to notice “the tops of trees... with the new spring life.” She smells rain in the air and hears “the notes of a distant song..., and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves”. The scene makes her believe that her previous life has been veiled and it is only now she can remove the veil away.

The narrator continues to describe the scene outside the open window. “There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds”. The blue sky symbolizes Louise’s life and body. The “patches of blue sky” represent the blank spaces in her body that are not written upon yet with unwanted things and desires, or even coloured with gloominess. Bates, et al., in describing the body as a text, state:

Feminist scholars have looked at the body as a possible source of female creativity. The conceptualization of woman as body has meant that women traditionally been consigned to the role of object of male artistic representation and not as a subject capable of acting creatively in the world. The female body has been seen as the instigator of male desire, spurring male creativity: woman is a muse but cannot be an active creator of art herself. (2005, 93)

This is obvious in the case of Mrs. Mallard. She is objectified by Mr. Mallard. Her body is a blank page to be written upon. Though woman’s body represents her creative source of power, the norms of the society underrate it and treat it as no more than a tool for man’s pleasure to do whatever he wishes in order to satisfy his needs.

She continues to look at the sky and she feels that “There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully.” In the beginning she does not recognize it, “But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the colour that filled the air”. Finally, she discovers it and whispers slightly “free, free, free!”. It is her first time to sense that wonderful and amazing feeling. Her heart beats fast; she significantly celebrates her authentic “Self”. But Louise has another conflict between her subconscious who feels happy with discovering her “Self” and freedom, and with her consciousness who suffers from the guilt of her happiness while her husband has just died. “She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her”. However, that conflict does not last long because “A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial”. What matters now is that she is free from the strings of marriage, obligations, and above all from the husband whom “she had loved... sometimes [and] often she had not”. He has been her jailer who locked her in a cage. Now she is “Free! Body and soul free!” She whispers with a feverish triumph in her voice. She will live for herself with all the years to come and “there would be no one to live for.” No one is going to impose his will upon her. She will have her own will and space. In an hour, Mrs. Mallard finds out that her faded love for her husband is nothing in comparison with “this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being”.

Ironically, the doctor and every other character believe that Mrs. Mallard's death at the end of the story is out of a “heart disease” caused by the “joy” of seeing her husband alive after the news of his absolute death in a “railroad disaster”. Yet, readers know that what kills her is something else. Readers, in reading and analyzing a story, are like investigators who bring together the threads of a case that they are working on. Thus, they see the whole image and look at the text from a perspective that is different from what the characters see or believe in. Her naïve sister, Josephine, thinks that Louise is like those women who hurt themselves after the death of their husbands. Thus, she begs her to open the door. On the other side of that same door, Louise is “drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window,” her gate to life and liberty. She senses and tastes life differently for the first time and thus has “triumph in her eyes”(33). She becomes “a goddess of Victory”(40). At that moment she realizes that she cannot accept the idea of being a slave or an object again or even a doll in a cage. She decides to live all the “years to come” for herself only. When she sees her husband enters the house, alive, she is shocked and died. She could not bear the idea of being a prisoner again under the mercy of her jailer who underestimates her abilities, creativity, and sacrifices. Therefore, death becomes her gate to free her soul and body from humiliation, abuse, and torture. She rebels against all the patriarchal norms which make her as “young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression ...”(42). She could not trade her liberty for life itself. Obviously, death, in one way or another, is her salvation, her sealed emancipation from a contracted marriage.

CONCLUSION

The examined narratives are hysteric voices that write and fight back the patriarchal system. Though the three writers of the three examined narratives adopt different symbolic images, they fulfill the same aim that is to project the feminist refusal to the confinements of a system that constantly tries to emasculate women. The three characters in the three examined narratives are engaged in a process of being and becoming by which they transcend the masculine boundaries. As Such, the end of each story is marked by the birth of a new "Self"—a self that refuses to be objectified, thingified, and Othered.

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