

PEOPLES'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Tlemcen



Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English

A Comparative Study about Subjected Women in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892)

Dissertation submitted to the department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Literature and Civilization

Presented by

Ms. Nor el houda ABDELMALEK

Supervised by

Prof. Faiza SENOUCI

BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Dr. Fatiha BELMERABET

Chairperson

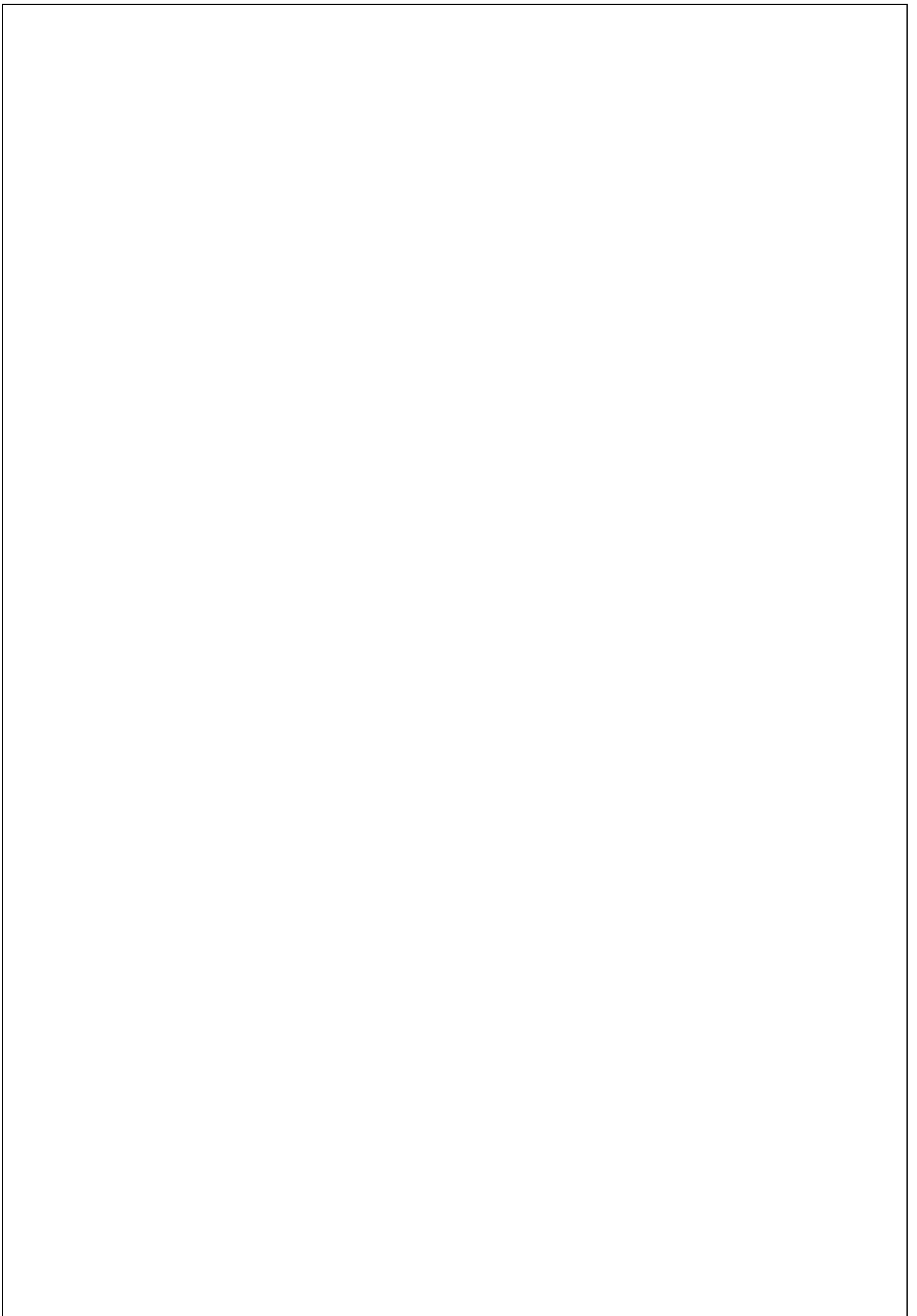
Prof. Faiza SENOUCI

Supervisor

Dr. Bedra MENOUAR

Examiner

Academic Year: 2018-2019



Dedications

I dedicate this work:

To those who believed in me

To those who helped me and were always with me

To my dear Parents,

My family and my friends

Special thanks to my dear best friend Nihel, I love you sweetheart.

Another thank to my dear Zineb for helping me. I love you sweetie.

Acknowledgements

*First, I thank the Almighty ALLAH for the accomplishment of this work. Special thanks belong to Prof. **Senouci** Faiza for her kind help, this work could have never come to existence without your guidance, encouragements, and priceless pieces of advice. I would also like to thank all the members of the jury including Mrs. **Menouar** Bedra as an examiner and Dr. **Belmerabet** Fatiha as a chairwoman for reading and evaluating my work. A special thank to Mr. **Mostefaoui** Youcef Zineddine for his kind help.*

Abstract

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861) by Harriet Jacobs and *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman are two well known works in the American literature in the nineteenth century. In fact, the primary purpose of this research is to dive into both stories in order to examine the situation of both black and white women in the America at that time. In addition, it is about analysing the way the two protagonists lived including their sufferings under slavery concerning the black woman and patriarchy concerning the white woman and the way they resist and get their freedom. The study of the two works shows how Jacobs illustrated the sufferings of a slave woman through her autobiography and how she had overcome all the difficulties in her life and succeeded also how Gilman expressed herself despite her illness and the fact that she could free herself from what her husband and people around her imposed on her. By the end of this work, a comparative study is done in which all the common points and the differences between the two stories concerning the status of women are going to be analysed.

Table of Contents

Dedications.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: The Lives of Women in the Nineteenth Century America.....	4
1.1 Introduction	5
1.1.2African American Community in the Nineteenth Century.....	5
1.2.1 African American women in the nineteenth century.....	7
1.2.2 Sexual Harassment.....	8
1.2.3 Physical Violence.....	10
1.2.4 Emotional and Psychological Abuse.....	12
1.2.5Jealousy of the Mistresses	14
1.3White American Community in the Nineteenth Century.....	15
1.3.1White American Women in the Nineteenth Century.....	17
1.3.2The Will for Freedom.....	19
1.3.3 The Wish to Work.....	20
1.3.4Psychological Depression.....	22
1.4 Conclusion.....	24

Chapter Two: A Comparative Study between <i>Incidents</i> and <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i>	25
2.1 Introduction.....	26
2.2 Harriet Jacobs in <i>Incidents</i>	26
2.2.1 Biography and Summary of the Novel	26
2.2.2 Sexual Harassment and Physical Violence.....	33
2.2.3 Emotional and Psychological Violence.....	35
2.2.4 Jealousy of the Mistresses	37
2.3 Charlotte Perkins Gilman in <i>The yellow wallpaper</i>	39
2.3.1 Biography and Summary of the Short Story.....	39
2.3.2 The Will for Freedom.....	43
2.3.3 The Wish to Work.....	44
2.3.4 Psychological Depression.....	45
2.4 Comparative Study	47
2.5 Conclusion	50
General Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography	55

General Introduction

General Introduction

Writing has always been a way through which people who do not dare to express themselves because of a cocktail of reasons pour their ideas, thoughts, way of thinking and also their lives on those white papers. When they wrote, they transform them from blank sheets to stories, events, incidents and strong messages. It was and it is the easiest and the most helpful method that reflects the writer's way of seeing things, it also mentions what the writer wants to share with people and what he wants them to grasp from what he writes. It may also be what he lived and wanted people to know for a reason or another.

Talking about all of this, Harriet Jacobs and Charlotte Perkins Gilman in their autobiographies succeeded to make the American literature rich with two different works: a novel and a short story in which the two writers mention the way they lived and witnessed the change in their lives. Moreover, writing was their solution and it became later on their weapon against the aspects of their societies.

Since feminism did not appear in America till 1919, white women who were considered as second class citizens and black women who were slaves of their owners resisted their status through the abolitionist movement that started before and continues during the American Civil War in order to end slavery and overcome the marginalization they faced.

The aim of this research work is to present the two literary works by Harriet Jacobs and Charlotte Perkins Gilman as examples of the lives of two women in two different communities in the same country through the following question: to what extent did the two writers break their silence in a society dominated by men?

General Introduction

Consequently, this research question can be answered if the following sub-questions are raised:

- What are the conditions that affected black woman in the African American community of the nineteenth century?
- What are the conditions that affected high middle class woman in White American community in the nineteenth century?
- What are the similarities and the differences concerning the status of women in both stories?

This dissertation includes two chapters; the first one is theoretical entitled the lives of women in the nineteenth century America where the lives of both black and white women within the African American and White American communities are studied. Each woman, within her group, was subjected to a number of conditions. Black woman faced sexual harassment of the master, physical, emotional and psychological abuse of her owner and his wife and the struggles she resisted to win her freedom. White woman, who belonged to one of classes that her society was divided to, was subjected to what man decided for her in a patriarchal community. She wanted freedom to express herself and to work.

The second chapter applied all the aspects mentioned in the first one on the two stories *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs where the protagonist lived under the sexual and physical abuse of her master and the jealousy of her mistress and *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in which the protagonist was a victim of the misunderstanding of both husband and people around her within a patriarchal society which pushed her to be mentally sick and drove her to madness. The last part of the second chapter presents a comparison between the two stories concerning the lives of women and their status within their societies.

Chapter One:

The Lives of Women

in the Nineteenth

Century America

1.1. Introduction

The United States of America witnessed many events and circumstances starting from the day it was discovered and especially after The American War of Independence (1775-1783), the conflict that allowed the 13 original colonies to remain independent from Great Britain. The nineteenth century was a special era since it was a period of development, change and war.

America gathered different groups of people among them The Native Americans or American Indians, The African Americans, White Americans and The Immigrants who were mainly Irish. Women as an important member in the society lived within these communities; each woman had a different way of living according to each group.

Among these women, White American women and more precisely higher middle class women i.e. women who stayed home and did not work and African American women who were slaves, those women are different in the skin colour and the way of living but something is common between them which is the fact that they were deprived of their rights, forced to depend on males and marginalized by the society.

1.2. African American Community in the Nineteenth Century

Slavery was the beginning of the history of the African Americans since the European settlers brought Africans in the early seventeenth century in order to serve them in the new continent (America). Most of the deported Africans were between 15 and 30 years which meant that the majority of those who boarded the slave ships were married and had children; they were either leaving their families behind or seeing them embark on another ship. At that time (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) slaves were important to serve the settlers especially in agriculture in order to improve the economy but their working circumstances were really miserable. They usually worked from early in the morning until late at night.

When their children reached the age of seven or eight, they started working as well, they used to take care of the owner's young children, fanning flags from the owner's table, taking lunch to owners' children at school and working with adults in tobacco, corn, cotton, or rice fields.

In her autobiographical narrative, *Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (1868), Elizabeth Keckley mentioned "Mrs. Burwell gave birth to a daughter, a sweet, black-eyed baby, my earliest and fondest pet. To take care of this baby was my first duty. True I was but a child myself – only four years old – but I had been taught to rely upon myself and to prepare myself to render assistance to others" (8). Speaking about the circumstances that the slaves were working under, Elizabeth Abbott said that:

working conditions[for both black men and women] were almost as punishing as punishment itself, as slaves toiled from dawn to sunset, naked under the boiling sun of midday or barely covered by rags. They were rewarded by miserable food in tiny quantities, and often forced to prepare it themselves after their fieldwork was done. It was usually very late at night before they free to return to their huts, where they fell onto mud floors for brief hours of respite. (11)

After the American Revolution, slavery was unimportant to the economy but it still existed since slaves were serving their masters in other fields. Slavery is the situation in which a person is a subject to the will of another person who controls where he lives and at what he works so he takes his freedom and makes him under his mercy, it is the fact of controlling and exploiting one human being by another one. UNESCO states that slavery is "identified by an element of ownership or control over another's life, coercion and the restriction of movement and by the fact that someone is not free to leave". It functions as a system of gender and ethnic supremacy that entailed the dominance of men over women as well as whites over blacks.

In this context Abraham Lincoln said “I am naturally anti slavery” he adds “If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong” he also said “whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to s it tried on him personally” (cited in letter to A. G. Hodges 1864).

Slaves were treated neither as human beings nor as American citizens, they were the lower class in the American society and they suffered a lot. All the American colonies and states made marriage illegal for the enslaved people because under laws they are considered as a property and commodities and not normal human beings therefore, their unions were not protected by the state laws.

Slaves were sold to the person that bit the most money for them and sometimes the bidder decided not to buy the whole family and this is why some families found themselves divided in which the father had a different owner than the mother and the children, but in other cases the children lived with their parents .

1.2.1. African American Women in the Nineteenth Century

The African American women were mostly enslaved in the nineteenth century; they were mainly working in the houses of their masters, doing housework and being nannies for their masters’ children. When they finished working for their masters, the female slaves went back to their slaves’ quarters or homes to do the housework there. Only few of them were lucky to have their family members together because masters were able to separate women from their husbands and children because of the slave trade.

The majority of the slaves were not able to read and write because they did not have the right to study or learn however, some good mistresses used to teach their slave girls to read and write and this was the reason of finding some letters written by slaves to their masters. Enslaved women were subjected to many conditions under

slavery, among those aspects Sexual Harassment, Physical Violence, and Emotional and Psychological Abuse.

1.2. 2. Sexual Harassment

The female slaves were spending a long time under their masters' roofs or living with them in some cases, those women or girls were facing what is called sexual harassment or abuse and it was the cruellest hardships they endured by their holders. It was the fact of taking away the woman's worth, privacy, intimacy, confidence and her own voice.

Masters used to treat female slaves and especially young single girls as objects which meant that slaves were not seen as their individual selves but as properties. Female slaves were suffering of being slaves and being women. "Slave-owners could kill or rape their slaves without having to go to jail, simply because slaves were considered 'stock', thus they were not subject to human laws (Bay 131). Enslaved females had no legal rights to their person or protection from sexual violence in the United States, approximately 1 in 5 black women had been raped in their lifetime.

The word rape was defined by colour and sex in which many Americans assumed that black males sexually abused white females and that white males were solely responsible for the sexual violation of black females, the result is that black males faced legal and illegal execution for abusing white females but white males went unpunished for the violation of black females.

Maria W. Stewart, a pioneer black abolitionist and women's rights advocate, insisted on sexual justice as a natural right and called for women's rights. She was the first African American woman to lecture in public on political issues; she said "It is useless for us any longer to sit with our hands folded, reproaching the whites; for that will never elevate us" (Maria W. Stewart speech, April 28, 1832).

African American women faced sexual assault and violence under the space of discrimination and abuse based on both race and gender. They were less likely to be

believed when reporting crimes of sexual assault or violence than their white counterparts. “Some African American women’s decisions not to report their sexual assaults may be influenced by the criminal justice system’s history of treating European-American perpetrators and victims differently than perpetrators and victims of colour” (MCASA,2001). “African Americans reported substantial rates of criminal victimization, including domestic violence, assault, and robbery” (Truman & Planty, 2012).

In addition, sexual violence can affect the women’s long-term mental health functioning negatively. They could sustain emotional or psychological injuries as a result of rape, they were vulnerable to depression, suicidal ideation, and pain related to health problems including fatigue.

The majority of the stories that were written and that mentioned the lives of women under slavery spoke about sexual harassment as a point that women or young girls were subjected to by their masters and other white men. In this context, editors Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris in the sixth chapter of *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas* (2018) mentioned what happened to a slave female called Henrietta Butler who was a victim of sexual violence in which her owner Emily Haidee sanctioned an enslaved man to have sex with Henrietta against her will, they also mentioned what Henrietta said about her mistress; Henrietta used to say:

“Damn old missis was mean as hell... She made me have a baby by one of dem mens on de plantation. De old devil! I gets mad every time I think about it” (109).

Sexual harassment used to be one of the struggles in the lives of female slaves; it was a point that led to other forms of punishment by the masters. A slave female who resisted against the will of her master would be punished and most of time it used to be physical.

1.2.3. Physical Violence

Physical violence is the act of causing severe physical pain or suffering in order to persuade someone to do or to give something but when it comes to enslaved people, the owners punish them for resisting slavery, not working hard enough, talking too much or using their native language, stealing from their masters or trying to run away.

Slave women were forced to comply with sexual advances on a very regular basis and consequences of resistance mostly came in the form of physical beating, so masters did punish not only men but also women. Moreover, life for them was brutal since they were subject to repression and harsh punishment.

The masters often made the other slaves watch the way of punishing a disobedient slave in order to prevent them from slacking at work or trying to run away. The plight of the African American women's situation can be traced back to the beginning of slavery, when their lives were controlled by slave masters.

As Bell Hooks noted, African American women were treated inhumanely starting on the slave ship. In his words: "African females received the brunt of this mass brutalization and terrorization not only because they could be victimized via their sexuality but also because they were more likely to work intimately with the white family than black male" (20), this means that enslaved women were working inside the masters' and the mistresses' houses.

In this context, the two editors Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris mentioned that Henrietta Butler, a slave female in their book, said "My damn old missis was mean as hell. You see dis finger here? Dere is were she bit it de day us was set free" (123), enslaved females' suffering inside the homes was more difficult than in the fields, their owners were punishing them for any mistake they did even if it is a small one. Not only white men, even white women were involved in acts of physical violence against black women.

The owners used to punish their slaves severely, for minor offenses, whipping, mutilation, and even death were employed which means that the slaves' treatment was characterised by degradation and brutality not only masters but also mistresses. In his book *Once a Slave: the Slaves' View of Slavery* (1971), Stanley Feldstein mentioned what happened to an enslaved young girl named Maria by her mistress who punished her for her husband's wrong-doings because women (white women/ mistresses) were quite powerless due to the option of divorce that was not readily available, so they used to take out their aggressions on the slaves rather than the guilty masters.

Maria was a thirteen-year-old house servant. One day, receiving no response to her call, the mistress began searching the house for her. Finally, she opened the parlor door, and there was the child with her master. The master ran out of the room, mounted his horse and rode off to escape, 'though well he knew that [his wife's] full fury would fall upon the young head of his victim. 'The mistress beat the child and locked her up in a smokehouse.

For two weeks the girl was constantly whipped. Some of the elderly servants attempted to plead with the mistress on Maria's behalf, and even hinted that 'it was mass'r that was to blame. 'The mistress's reply was typical: 'she'll never do the like again, through ignorance (132).

Black women were three to four times more likely to experience a pregnancy-related death than white women because they were working hard even before giving birth in a few minutes and were punished also. Black women, who did not die after giving birth, faced many health problems; furthermore they experienced physical weathering which means that their bodies' age faster due to exposure to chronic stress linked to socioeconomic disadvantage and discrimination over the life course, thus making pregnancy riskier in an earlier age.

What is worse than this is the fact that they should return to work in a short period which pushed them to leave their babies with other slaves. Despite the fact that black women were more likely to experience domestic violence by their masters, their access to advocacy was very limited because they were marginalized by the state.

1.2.4. Emotional and Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse is an attempt to control. The emotional abuser does not use physical hitting, kicking, pushing, or other physical forms of harm. He/she uses emotion as his/ her weapon. African American women were victims of the emotional abuse which started when they were separated from their families and lived with strange white people who were different in the skin colour, way of thinking, way of living and especially the way they treat them.

Masters and mistresses were always saying bad things that hurt the black women's or girls' emotions, they were mostly insulting them and using words that grieve them. The insulting words that the slaveholders used to say played a central role in asserting and attempting to perpetuate the dominance of slave-owners over slaves in which using insulting language served as a substitute for personal violence.

In confronting the black women as adversary in a sexual context, the master would be subjecting her to the most dangerous form of terrorism distinctively suited for the female: rape which makes her feel unguarded especially when the master contrived a ransom system of sorts, forcing her to pay with her body for food or for the safety of her children.

One of the words that were used against enslaved women is *jezebels* that means a woman or a girl who will do anything and will use anyone to get what she wants, such kind of words used to break the black women's hearts. In this context, W.E.B. Du Bois cries in his literary work *Darkwater; Voices from within the veil* (1920).

I shall forgive the white South much in its final judgement day: I shall forgive its slavery, for slavery is a world-old habit; I shall forgive its fighting for a well-lost cause, and remembering that struggle with tender tears; I shall forgive its so-called 'pride of race', the passion of its hot blood, and even its dear, old, laughable, strutting and posing; but one thing I shall never forgive, neither in this world nor the world to come: its wanton and continued and persistent insulting of the black womanhood which it sought and seeks to prostitute to its lust. (172)

In regard of the psychological side, enslaved women lived under some circumstances which caused them some psychological problems that affected their mental health. Among the bad things that happened to them: insulting them all the time, punishing them for whatever they did, abusing them sexually, emotionally and physically, separating them from their families and children, and living under fear, tears and bad feelings. In her novel *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison examined how the slavery legacy chronicles the life of a black woman named Sethe in the novel and Margaret Garner in reality since the novel is based on a true story.

Margaret escaped with her husband and children from a Kentucky plantation and before being captured; she killed her young daughter to save her from slavery. She then, tried to kill the other children to keep them away from slavery because of the abusive owner who was known as "schoolteacher". This owner believed that she is crazy so he decided not to take her back after her escape. In chapter 21 of the novel, Sethe's daughter named Denver stated that what happened to her sister by her mother could happen again. Denver said "All the time, I'm afraid the thing that happened that made it all right for my mother to kill my sister could happen again. I don't know what it is, I don't know who it is, but maybe there is something else terrible enough to make her do it again" (205).

Sethe's situation is a clear and real example of what slavery made slave women do and most importantly what made their mental health be like. Moreover, African American women were not the only victims of slavery, their mistresses also used to suffer from this oppressive system.

1.2.5. Jealousy of Mistresses

Jealousy is a complex emotion that gathers anger or bitterness with fear which someone has when he/she thinks that another person is trying to take a person or a possession away from them. The relationships that existed between white mistresses and their female slaves were shaped by the mores of the nineteenth century in America, including the ideology of domesticity that was imposed on the mistresses and the white men who had the absolute control over both black and white women.

Another important point that affected the relationship between a female slave and her mistress is the sexual relationship between the master and the slave; this caused the mistress to live under a damaged psychology and jealousy. Mistresses and their enslaved women used to live and work in a close proximity to one another since white women were obliged to stay at home and the female slaves were supposed to work in the white peoples' houses so they had to interact with each other within that society and men decided for them.

Although divided by race, black and white women were joined by common female experiences and expectations of behaviour. Slave women were required to be completely submissive to their masters and mistresses, this obedience subjected those women to the master unwanted sexual relations. Mistresses were aware of the relationships between their husbands and the female slaves, but since they were at the mercy of the white master, just like the slave women, they could not change things or face their husbands with reality instead they took out their anger, hurt, and aggression on their female slaves.

The sexual relationship between the master and the female slaves caused the mistresses to live with deep psychological effects. They found themselves fighting in silence their betrayed husbands and their injustice society that forced them to accept such life with sufferings every day.

The way the mistresses treated their female slaves and especially young girls was a reaction to their jealousy, they could not punish their husbands but they could apply whatever they wanted on the slaves. Some mistresses used to mistreat their female slaves horribly. Jealousy played a big role in the relationship between a mistress and her female slave(s). They would be jealous due to the fact that they knew their husbands were raping and having sex with the slave women. Knowing this, mistresses often lashed out on the slaves, forcing their husbands to whip the slaves and beat them senseless.

In his book *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853) Solomon Northup presented an example of how the mistress would mistreat the slave women. He mentioned how mistress Epps mistreated Patsey. Patsey was a twenty-three-year-old, beautiful slave girl who belonged to Edwin Epps. She was rapped regularly by her master, making her the object of mistress Epps' jealousy and hatred. Stuck between her master and mistress, Patsey was constantly beaten and punished. She was beaten nearly to death by Epps.

“Yet Patsey wept oftener, and suffered more, than any of her companions. She had been literally excoriated. Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes; not because she was backward in her work, nor because she was of an unmindful and rebellious spirit, but of a licentious master and jealous mistress” (Northup, 189).

Mistresses used to be the reason of punishing the enslaved women because of their jealousy. Although they were victims of slavery, the system that caused them too much pain when seeing their husbands living a sexual relation with slaves, they used to oppress those slaves who were also victims and who were not able to protect themselves.

1.3. White American Society in the Nineteenth Century

White Americans' history started with the pilgrims who were a group of English people who came to America to seek religious freedom during the reign of King James I. They came to America in their ship named *Mayflower* in September 1620 and faced many struggles and hardships to establish their colony in Plymouth since they arrived as winter was settling in.

The nineteenth century was characterized by vast territorial expansions, many changes, and also the national agony. All those points happened because of the Civil War (1861-1865) that was fought between America and the Confederate States because of slavery. It was the century that made America. White Americans played an important role in all this. They considered themselves the main inhabitants of the country; they established industries and America started to grow. They even witnessed the Civil War; the biggest result of this war was the end of slavery. This century was a century of changes in many fields, agriculture, art, business and finance, clothing, communications, education, labour, health, and science.

Society in America during the nineteenth century was divided into six classes: the upper class, new money, middle class, working class, working poor, and poverty level. Each class gathered a group of people who lived differently than the groups of the other classes, and each group was characterized by a number of rules that people followed. Among those classes, there were three that are the main ones in America: upper, middle, and poor classes. (Katz, 579-605)

The upper class consisted of people with vast inherited wealth; they may have a recognizable family name, some of them worked but their salaries were not their primary sources of income. The middle class was composed of people who earn their money by working in what was called professional or higher paid jobs; they were managers, doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers, dentists, physicians, architects and teachers, and others who were working in minimum or low wage jobs like electricians,

carpenters, factory workers, truck drivers and police officers since this class was itself divided to upper middle class and lower middle class.

There were some differences between these two classes in terms of their values, behaviours, and even their voting records. The standards of living of upper and lower classes were often similar, but not identical. The last level was Poverty level in which people were living under bad conditions, they were simply poor. In all these American classes, women were present and the way they lived was not the same since each class had its own way of living and its own way of treating women.

1.3.1. White American Women in the Nineteenth Century

The white American women were divided to more than one group since the society was divided into many classes. In the nineteenth century, the roles and place of women in the American society were value judgements. Actually, there were lower middle class women, higher middle class women, upper class women and others like the poverty level.

Women of the nineteenth century appreciated the change that happened because they wanted their way of living to change as well. The spread of industries in this century, paved the way for lower middle class or what was known as working class's women to work since it was a need to survive.

Lower class women were mostly poor farmers' daughters who were working in order to support themselves, simply because their fathers or even their husbands were not making enough money to support the family. Those women were working as seamstresses, nurses, laundresses or maids in higher class families, doing household duties such as cleaning or cooking and then they started to work in the industries.

In addition, those women were not working only outside their homes; they also had all the responsibilities of their household. They used to clean, cook, take care of children, make clothes and so on. White lower middle class women were often tired and sick since a lot was expected from them inside and outside their houses.

Higher middle class women were faced by men in their society until they became equal to them. They were treated as “something” not as “someone” since their fathers or husbands used to decide about everything instead of them even about their health’s condition and lives. They were supposed to stay home and follow what their fathers or husbands said. They were expected to be obedient and submissive in a patriarchal society in which the role of the male is central to social organization.

Upper class women were pampered and used to live in luxury; this was only before getting married. Once those girls married, the way they used to live changed. They became ladies with their own household and plantation to run. Those women used to have young slave girls and they were nurses to those slaves, they were also responsible of running a slave plantation. They were in charge of making the slaves’ clothes, overseeing the food preparation and supervising the work plans. Those women were the mistresses of the slaves. Thomas Nelson in his book *Social Life in Old Virginia before the War* (1897) explained the role of the mistress and what she used to do to her slaves:

Who knew of the visits she paid to the cabins of her sick and suffering servants! Often, at the dead of night, “slipping down” the last thing... with her own hands administering medicines or food; ever by her cheeriness inspiring new hope, by her strength giving courage, by her presence awaking faith... What poor person was there, however inaccessible the cabin, that was sick or destitute and knew not her charity! Who that was bereaved that had not her sympathy” (155)

Mary Norcott Bryan in one of her letters explained that for the mistress “such a busy life was hers, the care of many slaves, the responsibility of their souls, teaching them truth and honesty, watching over the sick, entertaining strangers.” (Weiner80). There were many difficulties that white women of the nineteenth century faced during their lives in America. Single or not, women’s options were greatly dictated by their social class.

All those women lived under different situations but when speaking about women of the higher middle and upper classes and since they were under the rules that their fathers, husbands, and society applied, those women were subjected to many aspects that are: dependency, jobless (employment), psychological depression.

1.3.2. The Will for Freedom

The American society of the nineteenth century used to make men a mover and a doer which means that he was the actor in life. Women, therefore, were to be passive bystanders and submitting to men because men never supposed to be submissive. Society used to see and to make women feel that they were weak and needed men to protect them, George Washington Burnap in his work *The Sphere and Duties of Women: A Course of Lectures (1848)* said that:

She feels herself weak and timid. She needs a protector. She is in a measure of her affection. She asks for wisdom, constancy, firmness, and she is willing to repay it all by the surrender of the full treasure of her affection. Women despise in men everything like themselves except a tender heart. It is enough that she is effeminate and weak; she does not want another like herself (70).

Men and society made woman a prisoner of their thoughts and beliefs. Women were applying what men and society dictated for them but they never felt that they could express their opinions or share their ideas, they used to hide their emotions and ideas because no one gave them the right or the opportunity to express themselves. Some women used to write secretly to feel that they had the right to do something they like by their own will and not something they were forced to do.

The place that women were supposed to belong to was the home, busy about her tasks of wifely duties and childcare, keeping it a cheerful, peaceful place which would attract men away from the evils of the outer world. This, for women was a prison because she was supposed to do the same activities each day.

Moreover, the white woman was surrounded by people who did not allow her to be herself or act freely since she was expected to uphold the values of stability and morality by transforming the home to a special place where her husband could escape from the highly competitive, unstable, immoral world of business and industry.

In a society where the world of work was defined as male and the world of the home was defined as female. Women felt that they were useless like objects since the characteristics of true manhood and womanhood were related to biological basis not to their ways of thinking. Women wanted freedom from all what they did live and what they did hear and most importantly what people used to think about them. They simply wanted to change their status in the society.

In order to change their status in the society, women needed freedom to express themselves. By being free, they could do things that they were not allowed to do like working.

1.3.3. The Wish to Work

The nineteenth century higher- middle class families did not have to make what it was needed in order to survive so men used to work in jobs that produced goods or services while their wives stayed at home. By going to work, men helped to create the view that man alone should support the family and that the world of work and the public sphere was a rough world that was full of temptations, violence, and trouble. Society at that time considered that women were weak and delicate creatures so if they ventured out into such a world, they could easily fall prey to it. A woman's place was therefore in the private sphere, at home, where she took charge of all what happen inside it.

Women of higher middle and upper classes were not happy because they were educated enough to have a professional job. They felt that working is one of their rights that were taken from them simply because society and men considered them weak creatures.

Women were victims of social and economic discrimination. Upper and higher middle class women's choices were limited to marriage and motherhood, or spinsterhood. All the choices resulted in domestic dependency. While they could find jobs because they were educated enough, women were discouraged to work by the belief that women who earned wages were unnatural. Women found themselves forced to be dependent upon their husbands for financial support.

In her book *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1976), Barbara Walter explained that a "True Woman" was designated as the symbolic keeper of morality and decency within the home, being regarded as innately superior to men when it came to virtue. In his words: "[P]iety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity were thought to be natural to women" (Welter 21). People at that time used to relate work with men and used to put the physical differences between men and women as an argument to prove that women were too weak to work outside their houses.

In *All American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (1989), Cogan, Frances B when speaking about the physical activity of women, he mentioned that they were considered to have "much more delicate nervous system[s] than... men because of the particular function of their reproductive organs.... [T]heir fragile nervous systems were likely to be over stimulated or irritated, with disastrous results" (Cogan 29), wanted to prove that women were not able to work like men did.

The Civil War used to be a reason that helped women to work. Necessity forced women to go out and work in order to fill positions left by men who had gone off to fight. Women took on the roles of teachers, office workers, government workers and more. It was a turning point in their lives especially with the spread of the movements that defended women's rights.

1.3.4. Psychological Depression

White women of the nineteenth century lived under some circumstances that pushed them to face some psychological drives. Many women were driven to illness by the lifestyle thrust upon them in the form of oppression and societal expectations.

The popular consensus at that time was that women were more prone to diseases of the mind; made more vulnerable by their reproductive system and delicate sensibilities. They were victims of a set of conditions and it is important to take into account the way they lived and the roles that they were expected to fill. A woman was supposed to be the dutiful wife, not to look for equality with man.

Later on, when women started to think about their freedom, the scientific and medical establishment that specialised in nervous and mental illness faced them with a powerful opposition “The medical warnings against any activity that might change women’s domestic status, seen as a fact of God and nature, were deafening” (Appignanesi, 120).

Women were placed in mental institutions for behaving in ways that male society did not agree with and since they had minimal rights even concerning their own mental health, men decided instead of them.

The symptoms and diagnoses presented in the nineteenth century showed that the labelling of women as insane was influenced by social attitudes towards women. In many places a woman could be committed to an asylum or a state hospital because her husband or father demanded it and this rarely required proof of her actual mental instability.

Admission files showed that many women were admitted under questionable circumstances for reasons such as suppressed menstruation, depression after the loss of a loved one, and even abusive language (Pouba and Tianen, 95).

Elaine Showalter in her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1998) mentioned that some women of the nineteenth century who suffered from bad health and were treated at home or in private care could express themselves in writings and it was only late in the century that these writings take place. According to Showalter, these writings include Elizabeth Packard's books, Emily Dickinson's letters and poetry, Alice James's letters and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Showalter, 41). All these women were educated enough and had the opportunity to write, they did not represent a diverse group of mentally ill women but they did speak about some cases.

Strong woman with a vivid imagination could never accept such way of living and at the same time they could not confront their society by their own way of thinking, they were struggling between their unhappiness under those circumstances, their will to change their lives and their weakness for their society. Thinking of all this too much pushed them to some mental complexities. Women at that time lacked solidarity to stand up for themselves and each other.

1.4. Conclusion

This chapter tackled the way women of the nineteenth century both black and white used to live in America, focusing on the main aspects that they were subjected to. Both black and white women were victims to men and society since they used to only obey what people around them obliged them to do. As a matter of fact, the situation was not the same for all women in America at that time, there were women who lived differently but still they were deprived of their rights. Women who were facing the hardest conditions in their lives were slave women and higher middle class women for they were under the man's and society's orders and they had no right to self-determination.

Chapter One: The Lives of Women in Nineteenth Century America

The next chapter is going to be a study of all these theoretical aspects within two well know stories that were written in the nineteenth century by two American writers titled *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) by Harriet Jacobs and *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Chapter Two:

A Comparative Study between *Incidents* and *The Yellow Wallpaper*

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is designed to examine both Harriet Ann Jacobs' book titled *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story named *The Yellow Wall-Paper* (1892). The study is going to be about the main conditions that the protagonists, who differ in the way of living and the situation in their societies, suffered from and faced during their lives or in a specific period of their lives. Moreover, it mentioned the differences and the similarities between the stories of the two writers and the way they resist to get out of the miserable circumstances they lived under.

2.2. Harriet Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

In her book Harriet Jacobs mentioned the story of her life where she spoke about the incidents that happened to her and made her life different from the lives of many girls at her age and in her society. She also used the name of Linda Brent in order to hide her personality as she was a slave who escaped to the north.

2.2.1. Biography and Summary of the Book

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is an autobiography of Harriet Jacobs, the author, who decided to write it under the name of Linda Brent. In her book, Jacobs mentioned all the events and the incidents she witnessed in her life from childhood to womanhood and she ended it by speaking about her freedom.

2.2.1.1. Biography

Harriet Ann Jacobs was born in Edenton, Chowan County, North Carolina, on February 11, 1813. She is the daughter of Delilah Horniblow (the slave of Margaret Horniblow) and Daniel Jacobs (named Elijah Knox, the slave of Andrew Knox).

Harriet lived under slavery since she came into life but she did not recognize she was a slave until she turned her sixth spring “I was born a slave; but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away” (Jacobs 11), “When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned, by the talk around me, that I was a slave” (Jacobs 14). She was with her parents during that period then she lost her mother who passed away and left her to her mistress Margaret Horniblow who took care of the little Harriet as she promised her mother and taught her writing and reading which helped her to become a writer later and also an abolitionist who demands the rights of people who lived a life like hers.

Margaret Horniblow was kind to Harriet but her greatest mistake was that she bequeathed Harriet at the age of eleven to her five-year-old niece Mary Matilda Norcom rather than freeing her. Since the new mistress of Harriet was young, she became the slave of Mary’s father, Dr. James Norcom, a physician in Edenton who had also brought Harriet’s brother John, who was two years younger than her, for his son. Harriet’s most difficult moments in life was in the period that she spent in Dr. Norcom’s home where her life was affected negatively by the mistreatment of both her master and mistress Mr and Mrs Norcom.

In order not to obey her master who was cruel and wanted to abuse her sexually and was insisting on her to have a sexual relationship with him, and since she was not able to marry her love who was a free black man because her master did not allow her and said that if that black man would come to see Harriet again, he would “shoot him as soon as I would a dog”(Jacobs 63), Harriet decided to have a sexual relationship with a local lawyer white man named Samuel Treadwell Sawyer who was her master’s friend and when Sawyer wanted to buy her, Dr. Norcom rejected his offer.

Harriet gave birth to two children a boy named Joseph and after few years a girl named Louisa by Sawyer. Her master used to remind her that her children belonged to him which pushed her to look for a solution in order not to lose her children if her master decided to sell them. As a solution she thought escape is the best way to solve this problem wishing that her children would be sold to their father, which was exactly what happened.

After succeeding to escape, Harriet hid in the house of her grandmother, Molly Horniblow a free black woman, for seven years watching her children from far. In 1842, Harriet decided to go to the north and she did it by boat. She worked as a nanny in Nathaniel Parker Willis's house in New York but still she was a fugitive slave. Fortunately, Harriet found her daughter Louisa there because her father took her to the north and called for her son Joseph.

Harriet life's marked a radical change in 1852 because she finally became free when her friend and employer Cornelia Grinnell Willis bought her from Norcom's heirs after his death. "When she became legally free, Jacobs supported herself and her children through domestic employment and did very little to attract attention to herself" (McKay and Smith xi).

Harriet lived with her friend Amy Post who encouraged her to write publicly the story of her life and she began to write about what she lived in the *New York Tribune* in 1853. She found an abolitionist named Lydia Maria Child who decided to give her serious help and edited her book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and she also wrote its preface. After the fact that Harriet faced some problems with publishers, she could finally see the story of her life written by herself published.

Harriet Jacobs went back to her birthplace on the spring of 1867 after being engaged in many works against slavery and further in relief work among freed people who were refugees of the war, she went there for promoting the welfare of the former slaves but the racist violence drove her back to Massachusetts. Harriet Ann Jacobs died on March 7, 1897.

2.2.1.2. Summary

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl as a book started with an introduction where the author, Harriet Jacobs, mentioned the reasons behind writing the autobiography. For her safety, Harriet Jacobs put Linda Brent instead of her real name and changed the names of all persons in her life in the narrative.

As the narrative opens, Harriet mentioned Linda's childhood and the fact that she did not recognize she was slave until she reached the sixth year of her life when she was happy with her parents despite they were slaves. The next years, when she was with the mistress of her dying mother, were good till her mistress bequeathed her a new mistress of five years named Emily Flint. Being a mistress with only five years was something weird so Emily's father became Linda's master. Her new master was cruel and neglectful; he used to persuade her to have a sexual relationship with him when she became a girl of fifteen years old. He pressured and threatened her so that she struggled with Flint's overtures for many years.

When he recognised that Linda would never accept the fact of being involved with him in a sexual affair despite his threats of violence or hid good treats, her master decided to bring her closer and took her as a servant of his four-year-old daughter to his apartment. There, he brought his daughter to sleep with him in his room which requires her to sleep in his room too. This action made Mrs. Flint furious and she decided to make Linda swear on her bible that she did not sleep with her husband. Lind did so and her mistress demanded that she would sleep in another room near her room and decided to protect her but Linda recognised later on that she could not because she was totally at the mercy of her husband.

Being complained about what happened to her granddaughter in Dr. Flint's house, Linda's grandmother offered to buy her but Dr. Flint refused and said that he could not sell her since she is his daughter's property. Linda then, falls in love with a free black man but her master refused the relationship between them and promised to kill him if

he would see Linda again. Fearing that her lover would die, Linda demanded him to go to the Free State and he did.

Mr. Flint offered to build a house and made Linda a lady in exchange of submitting to him, Linda came up with the idea that if she would have sex with someone, it is at least not going to be Dr. Flint but rather an unmarried white man named Mr. Sands.

Her idea was that she would be pregnant which would push Dr. Flint to sell her to Mr. Sands. What happened later on was that Dr. Flint accepted the fact that she was pregnant and decided to make her child a slave for him; he was uninterested in selling Linda off as he was crueller than she used to think.

After that Linda became a mother of two children Ellen and Benny by Mr. Sands, and the fact that Dr. Flint did not change his way of thinking and still wanting a sexual relationship with her, he gave her two options, the first one was that she succumbed to his demand and he would set her free with her children, the second one was that she would refuse and went to work on his son's plantation and Linda decided not to submit to his will and she preferred to go and work in the plantation. Linda lived in the plantation with her daughter and she left her son with her grandmother since he was ill. After understanding that the hard work in the plantation would not allow her to take care of her daughter, she sent her back to live with her grandmother.

Linda planned to escape from young Mr. Flint's plantation, she first went to a friend's house then she moved to a white woman's house, this woman was her grandmother's friend who hid Linda in a small room above her sleeping apartment, Dr. Flint thought she escaped to New York so he went there to look for her, he then came back and Linda knew she were not safe so they moved to her grandmother's house where she was hidden in a small space between the roof and the eaves of shed, in a triangular section.

Linda remained hidden in that place for many years despite she was in an uncomfortable situation where she could not fully stand and there were not much air and light so she could not breathe well in addition to all this, there were rats and insects that used to bite her. She experienced there heat, cold, rain and more than this she could not tell her children that she was there but at least she could see them from the small hole she made in the roof.

Linda during that period wrote a letter dated from New York to make Dr. Flint think she was there, she then found a way to speak to Mr. Sands since she knew he married a white woman and she worried about her children's future because they had not been emancipated yet. As a consequence of that meeting, Mr. Sands sent Ellen to Brooklyn with one of his relatives.

Linda finally could escape by ship with another runaway woman to Philadelphia and after they moved to New York. Linda visited her daughter in Brooklyn in Mr. Hobbs' house, and then she went to work as a nurse in Mrs. Bruce's house who was an English woman with less prejudice against colour than the Americans. Being there, Linda continued to receive letters to go back to Dr. Flint's house with promises that she would be treated well, for her; the most important thing was that her son was sent to the north and taken by her brother William. After a period of time, Mrs. Hobbs decided to give her Ellen because Linda told her story and Mrs. Hobbs promised to help her, Linda and her daughter escaped to Boston and there they met Benny where they lived with a friend of Linda.

After a short period, Linda heard that Mrs. Bruce passed away therefore Mr. Bruce asked her to go with his daughter Mary to England, Linda left her children with her friend and travel to England. When she returned she found that Benny experienced discrimination and shipped out on a whaling voyage. She lived with her daughter in Boston for two years and then she returned to Mr. Bruce household where there was a

new Mrs. Bruce and a new baby to care for. In this period, the Fugitive Slave Law of the 1850 that provided the return of runaway slaves who escaped, passed and Linda was afraid she would be captured therefore she was rarely ventured out the house.

Linda heard that Dr. Flint knew she was in New York and he was about to come there, she took the Bruce baby as a protection with the permission of Mrs. Bruce and travelled to England and she returned after a period of time when the search was dropped.

Word arrived that Dr. Flint died, Linda felt nothing for him but she worried about what his daughter Miss Flint, the wife of Mr. Dodge, would do concerning her situation. Mrs. Bruce sent Linda and the baby again when she learned that Mr and Mrs. Dodge were in New York, and then she wrote a letter to Linda and asked her that she wanted to buy her from Mr. Dodge and she did since Mr. Dodge needed money. Refusing to be a property again, Linda decided to join William and Benny who were in California.

Mrs. Bruce freed Linda and when she learned that she went back to live with her, a short time later, Linda heard that her grandmother died and after her, Linda's uncle Phillip's death. The free Linda now, despite all the pain she faced in her life, she was happy with the good memories of her grandmother who helped her to survive , wishing she could buy a house and live with her two children.

Linda Brent during her life under slavery was subjected to many kinds of abusing. She faced sexual and physical abuse by her master that made her emotionally and psychologically unwell.

2.2.2. Sexual Harassment and Physical Violence

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is a story that mentioned real events lived by the author herself. Being a slave woman, Harriet Jacobs witnessed sufferings and struggles among them sexual harassment and physical violence under the control of American white master and mistress “No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death” (Jacobs 45). The autobiography is considered as a mirror that reflects the miserable life of slave women in the nineteenth century where the author mentioned the dehumanization, sexual exploitation and violence that black women experienced by masters. In his work *American Slavery: 1619-1877* Peter Kolchin mentioned that “no slave woman was safe from unwanted sexual advances” he added about white men that they used “casual, emotionless sex or demand” which “caused anguish to black women” (124-125).

Linda a girl of fifteen years old started to receive dirty notes and whispers by her master “But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear” (Jacobs, 44). She was living with her master under the same roof which caused her to see him in every moment where he used to remind her each time that she belonged to him “He told me I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things” (Jacobs, 45)

Moreover, Linda said that her master’s sexual abuse advanced every day, and her situation went from bad to worse. As a slave girl, Linda like all the other slave women had no claim to her own body and there were no laws or persons that protected her “My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection?” (Jacobs, 45)

Her master’s actions used to cause her an immense pain because female slaves had no right of protection in the South which makes them an easy target for their masters. Not only female, even male slaves were suffering from the masters’ sexual abuse to their wives, daughters, lovers or relatives since they could not protect or help them,

they used to step away and let the total access for the masters. Jacobs mentioned this in her story when she said “There are some who strive to protect wives and daughters from the insults of their masters” she added “Some poor creatures have been so brutalized by the lash that they will sneak out of the way to give their masters free access to their wives and daughters”(Jacobs, 68).

Sexual harassment was a common problem that all or the majority of female slaves suffered from. The masters used to enjoy the female slaves bodies whether they accept it or not and as a result of resisting their masters used to punish them. Physical violence was the useful way of punishing the female slaves. The narrator described the physically beatings at the hands of her evil master:

When Dr. Flint learned that I was again to be a mother, he was exasperated beyond measure. He rushed from the house, and returned with a pair of shears. I had a fine head of hair; and he often railed about my pride of arranging it nicely. He cut every hair close to my head, storming and swearing all the time. I replied to some of his abuse, and he struck me. Some months before, he had pitched me down stairs in a fit of passion; and the injury I received was so serious that I was unable to turn myself in bed for many days. He then said, “Linda, I swear by God I will never raise my hand against you again;” but I knew that he would forget his promise. (118)

Sexual and physical abuses were the main themes in Jacobs’ autobiography since she faced them in their real life. After escaping and being free, she decided to write and focus on them in order to help their sisters in bondage.

2.2.3. Emotional and Psychological Violence

Linda was a girl that lived many bad events in her life which caused her to experience emotional and psychological violence. She was a girl who lost her parents at a young age which was her first disappointment in life. After that, she was separated from the rest of her family members joined only by one brother to a place where she knew no one. An evil master and a jealous mistress who used to make her suffer a lot during the period she spent in their home as a slave from childhood to womanhood, the

way both master and mistress and especially her master used to treat her caused her sorrow and fear. This treatment was insulting, punishing, and abusing her sexually most of time which caused her to feel animal like.

Harriet Jacobs in her *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* focussed on the emotional and psychological sides when she spoke about the fact that female slaves could not love or marry someone they choose as her case, she used to love a black free man but marrying him was something impossible for there is no permission for that. The blame was put not only on the master in this case but also on the state because the laws did not permit slaves to marry, Jacobs mentioned:

There was in the neighbourhood a young colored carpenter; a free born man. We had been well acquainted in childhood, and frequently met together afterward. We became mutually attached, and he proposed to marry me. I loved him with all the ardor of a young girl's first love. But when I reflected that I was a slave and that the laws gave no sanction to the marriage of such, my heart sank within me. My lover wanted to buy me; but I knew that Dr. Flint was too wilful and arbitrary a man to consent to that arrangement. (58-59)

Moreover, female slaves were forced to have a sexual relationship with their masters or other white men which was the worst thing women suffered from. Linda lived under her master's abusing to a sexual relation that pushed her to think of another solution which was sleeping with another white man who is not her master in a form of resistance and at the same time, she did it hoping that her master would sell her after he knew that. The fact that her master used to insist on making a relation with her destroyed her emotionally and psychologically to the point that she accepted to have an affair with another white man but at least not her master.

For years, my master had done his utmost to pollute my mind with foul images, and to destroy the pure principles inculcated by my grandmother, and the good mistress of my childhood. The influences of slavery had had the same effect on me that they had on other young girls; they had made me prematurely knowing, concerning the evil ways of the world. I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation" (83)

Linda knew that she would lose her virginity by force; therefore she decided to undermine the dominance of her master by giving it away rather than letting him take it. For her, giving one's self seems less degrading than submitting to compulsion.

Practices of slavery in America drove the slaves to psychological depression. There was a cocktail of reasons that pushed slaves under slavery to be psychologically abused. Black males and females were powerless; they used to submit to the white masters and mistresses who removed their rights and split them from their families with the fact that they could not own properties. All those aspects with physical violence to both genders and sexual abuse especially to women would undoubtedly cause a psychological depression. Linda in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* experienced what Nell Irvin Painter named "soul murdered" (Painter, 175) in her book *Soul Murder and Slavery* 1995. For Painter, soul murdered is described as "sexual abuse, emotional deprivation, and physical and mental torture (Painter, 175)

In this context, Painter explained that slaves who were abused were at a higher risk of experiencing many psychological problems like depression, anxiety, suicide and attempts. Linda, as a slave girl, endured seven years in a small place just to run away and be free which an example of a soul murder is. Moreover, Linda was subjected to the jealousy of her mistress Mrs. Flint which made life difficult for her in Mr. Flint's house.

2.2.4. Jealousy of the Mistress

Harriet wrote a whole chapter titled "The jealous Mistress"; it is the sixth chapter of her book, where she mentioned detailed facts about her relation with her mistress "I would rather drudge out my life on a cotton plantation, till the grave opened to give me rest, than to live with an unprincipled master and a jealous mistress" (Jacobs, 49)

It is clear that a relationship between a slave and her master would provoke the mistress to be harsh with that slave. When Dr. Flint recognized that Linda could read, he started writing her letters to demand a sexual relationship with her. His wife Mrs. Flint realized that something is happening between her husband and her slave Linda

and started to make her suffer “I had entered my sixteenth year, and every day it became more apparent that my presence was intolerable to Mrs. Flint” (Jacobs, 51), especially that Linda told her everything her master did, hoping that she would protect her from her husband. The jealous mistress would wait to see Linda sleep to make sure her husband was not going to seduce her at night. She even tried to find proof of the affair.

She now took me to sleep in a room adjoining her own. There I was an object of her especial care, though not to her especial comfort, for she spent many a sleepless night to watch over me. Sometimes I woke up, and found her bending over me. At other times she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer. If she startled me, on such occasions, she would glide stealthily away; and the next morning she would tell me I had been talking in my sleep, and asked who

I was talking to. At last, I began to be fearful for my life. It had been often threatened; and you can imagine, better than I can describe, what an unpleasant sensation it must produce to wake up in the dead of night and find a jealous woman bending over you. Terrible as this experience was, I had fears that it would give place to one more terrible. (Jacobs, 53-54)

Mrs. Flint used to hate and blame Linda for her husband’s infidelity “The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage.” (Jacobs, 45) because she could not put the blame on her husband as he was a famous doctor, moreover, being involved in sexual affairs with slaves was something her husband and many slave holders used to do for they would enjoy a sexual relation and getting, in some cases, another property for them that is babies by the slaves.

Despite the fact that Mrs. Flint caused Linda sufferings, Linda did neither hate her nor blame her because she believed that Mrs. Flint was also a victim of what slavery made. It made both jealousy and hatred enter the white families’ houses. Jacobs said:

But my experiences in slavery had filled me with distrust. She was not a very refined woman, and had not much control over her passions. I was an object of her jealousy, and, consequently, of her hatred; and I knew I could not expect kindness or confidence from her under the circumstances in which I was placed. I could not blame her. Slaveholders' wives feel as other women would under similar circumstances. The fire of her temper kindled from small-sparks, and now the flame became so intense that the doctor was obliged to give up his intended arrangement." (53)

2.3. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the *Yellow Wallpaper*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was the writer and the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a short story that was her diary when she was a patient of postpartum. It is a well known work in the American literature.

2.3.1. Biography and Summary of the short story

The Yellow Wallpaper is a story about an American lady, who suffered from a postpartum depression after giving birth to her first child, this lady, became mad by the end of the short story because of the treatment of her loving husband.

2.3.1.1. Biography

Charlotte Anna Perkins Gilman was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in the third of July in 1860. Her parents Frederick Beecher Perkins and Mary Fitch Westcott had four children but only Charlotte and Thomas Adie, a year older than her, who survived. A short period after Charlotte's birth her father abandoned the family, she lived with her brother and her mother who raised them alone by working in many jobs since her father deserted them with only few money left.

Charlotte's education was neglected because the fact that they were poor, she taught herself to write at the age of 5 and entered many public schools. At the age of eighteen, Charlotte entered to a school of design in Rhode Island where she learned painting and drawing. Charlotte, then, worked as an art teacher and a designer of

greeting cards and also a governess in order to help and support her family. Charlotte married at the age of 24 with an artist named Charles Walter Stetson in 1884.

They had a daughter called Katharine Beecher Stetson who was born in 1885. Charlotte started to suffer from post-partum depression which is a temporary nervous depression caused by profound hormonal changes after giving birth, that threatened her life after her delivery, she got mad and went to the asylum to be cured.

Charlotte used to write a diary about what happen to her each day, before being mad, once she was out of the asylum, she took her diary and adapted it in a short story titled *The Yellow Wallpaper* without touching the essential events and details .She and her husband then agreed to stop their marriage and they divorced. After their divorce, Charlotte moved to Pasadena, California with her daughter in 1888. During the period she spent in California, Charlotte wrote many short articles, poems and child verses. She left California in 1895.

Charlotte became involved in an affair with her cousin Houghton Gilman and then they married in 1900, she described her relationship with him as pleasurable. They lived in New York then moved to Norwich, Connecticut in 1922 and they stayed together till Houghton's death in 1934.

In 1932 Charlotte knew that she was sick and diagnosed with terminal breast cancer therefore she decided to end her life believing that dying with an overdose of chloroform, a colourless sweet smelling organic that can daze or knock people out even when they consumed it in small doses, is better than dying with cancer. Two years after her husband's death, Charlotte went back to Pasadena, California to stay close to her daughter. She committed suicide on 17 August 1935, the same year that she completed her autobiography *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* in.

2.3.1.2. Summary

The Yellow Wallpaper as a short story tackled what happened to a woman who suffered from post-partum depression. As the beginning of the story, the narrator described the large home she, her husband, and their new born baby went to for a vacation. This idea came because the narrator's husband John was a physician believed that going to a vacation would help his wife since she suffered from a temporary nervous depression after her delivery but she believed it was more than a temporary depression.

John wanted his wife to feel better that is the reason for going and renting that house in the calm country. He then decided to choose a room for his wife, for him, a room in the upstairs with bars on the windows and scratches on the floor and yellow wallpaper was the best room for her, the nursery room as she believed, for him she needed it to absorb the restorative air. The narrator did not agree with her husband about the room but she then accepted to stay in it. She started to feel alone since her husband spent his days away although she had a baby, but she could not spend her time with her child since she was nervous so they leave the baby with a nurse named Mary.

John as her husband and her doctor at the same time told her that she should not write which is something she really loves to do, he also dictated her that she had to do nothing and follow his strict regimen in order to be better and that she should only rest herself but she disagreed and wrote her journal secretly.

In her writings, the narrator described the house and suspected that there was something mysterious about it but her husband did not accept her ideas, then she moved to speak about what she imagined concerning things happened nearby and the fact that she felt oppressive because of her husband's ideas and that he would not listen to her worries about her conditions. She then, described the room she was in and specifically the wallpaper in it which she found ugly and then scary. The narrator believed that the wallpaper had a force which threatened the whole house.

In the fourth of July, the American Independence day, some family members visited the house then they left when the festivities ended. She was tired and depressed to the point that she cried most of the time when she stayed alone and stopped when John came. She tried then, to convince him to let her visit her cousins but he disagreed and she cried again therefore he carried her upstairs in his arms and told her that she must control herself because he loved her too much and did not want to see her unwell.

When the protagonist of the story found a chance to escape the attention of both her husband and his sister Jennie, she studied the wallpaper and imagined that it contained designs and tried to know its patterns till she came with the result that there was a figure behind the top pattern and she decided that she saw a woman in front of bars. When she tried to convince her husband to leave the house, but he did not accept insisting that she would be better there.

The narrator's madness started to be clear; she was obsessed with the woman in the paper to the point that she envisioned her stooping around when she was let out in the day and shaking the bars when she was locked up at night. She kept the existence of that woman a secret from John and Jennie and insisted to let her free.

In order to help her, the narrator spent the day peeling off the wallpaper to free the woman inside it and when they removed all the furniture except the bed since it was the last day there, she locked the door and threw the keys onto the front path, and then she started crawling on all fours around the room because she believed she herself was the woman trapped in the wallpaper. John unlocked and entered the room, he was surprised when he saw what she was doing but she continued and went over his prone body.

2.3.2. The Will for Freedom

Charlotte Perkins Gilman expressed clearly freedom and the free will in her story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Charlotte embodied the two themes by speaking about the experiences of the protagonist in the nursery where the yellow wallpaper was, including the limitation of freedom since she spent all the time in the room that her husband isolated her in.

Since the caring husband and the protagonist's brother were both physicians, they used to tell her that she was fine and needed only to rest her body while she was sure she was mentally sick. Her freedom was not allowed even when it comes to her health, she was obliged to accept what her husband said and this was clear when the question "What can one do?" was raised more than once in the short story. "You see he does not believe I am sick! 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." (Gilman, 1)

The protagonist disagreed with what they used to do because she did not believe that what they dictated on her is going to help her. "Personally, I disagree with their ideas." (Gilman, 1), "Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good." (Gilman, 2), the disagreement of the narrator with both her husband and brother expressed her free will.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper* man's oppression over woman is clear in which the freedom of the protagonist is linked to John's will "John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious." (Gilman, 4) the absence of John during the day coincided with the protagonist's freedom since she could write freely when he was not there and she hid her writings when she saw him, moreover, the presence of John

synchronized with the imprisonment of the woman figure in the wallpaper “At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all in the moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be” (Gilman, 12), “I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I’ll tell you why—privately I’ve seen her!” (Gilman, 15)

After mentioning the fact that the protagonist suffered because she was not free, Charlotte by the end of the short story mentioned that the protagonist witnessed her freedom “I’ve get out at last” she added “In spite of you and Jane. And I’ve pulled off most of paper, so you can’t put me back!” (Gilman, 19), this explained that both women (the narrator and the figure in the wallpaper) became free in the end of the story.

2.3.3. The Wish to Work

Women of the upper middle class in the nineteenth century in America were not allowed to work, in *The Yellow Wallpaper* the protagonist of the story who suffered from a postpartum depression was supposed to spend her time in the house, resting herself in the bed in order to feel better than before.

John, the husband, who was a physician forbade her to work, for him, resting herself was the best treatment for she suffered from a slight hysterical tendency. “So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to “work” until I am well again.”(Gilman, 1)

The narrator disagreed with her husband for she believed that working would help her more than resting and spending her time doing nothing. “Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.” (Gilman, 2)

Writing was the only thing that helped the narrator although it tired her, she was not allowed to do it but she decided to write when her husband was not there, she even hid what she wrote when she saw her husband and his sister. “I did write for a while in spite of them; but it DOES exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.” (Gilman, 2) Her husband believed that her talent of writing is something helpless in her condition “He said that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.” (Gilman, 5)

As all women in her society, the protagonist was considered mentally weak to work; therefore her place was in the private sphere although it was something that increased her condition but she was forced to apply it since upper middle class women’s choices were limited to marriage and motherhood.

In addition, both her husband and brother were physicians of high standing and since they both agreed on the fact that she should do nothing except resting herself, she used not to contradict them openly for she knew people around her would listen to them not to her simply because they were both men and doctors which made her frustrated and discouraged “It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work” (Gilman, 5)

2.3.4. Psychological Depression

The protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a woman who suffered from a postpartum depression, for the protagonist’s husband it is a slight hysterical depression, locking her up for bed rest and preventing her from going out to help relieving her nervous condition were the reasons that pushed her situation to be worse than before.

Chapter Two: A Comparative Study between Incidents and The Yellow Wallpaper

The fact that the protagonist saw a woman in the wallpaper showed up that the physical treatment did nothing except leading her to madness; John, as a doctor, used to help his wife physically rather than helping her mentally and emotionally. In addition, keeping her isolated from everyone else was something helpless to her condition.

Since depression is not something that can be seen, John used to give his wife a wrong treatment and dismissed her needs and requests which pushed her to be “sly” by doing what she wanted secretly. The thing that she did secretly is writing and when she wrote she described things around her, her description was normal but when it comes to the wallpaper she used words that show the reader that the narrator was mentally sick “It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide – plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.” (Gilman, 3)

Staying in that room with that wallpaper was something that made her uneasy and at the same time it depressed her more and more but her husband believed she would stay in it which changed her attitude towards him as the progression of the story.

When the last day of their stay in that house came, the narrator expressed that she got rid of people in that house (servants and her sister in law), so she closed the door of the room and said “I don’t want to go out, and I don’t want to have anybody come in, till John comes. I want to astonish him” (Gilman, 17) she wanted to show him that she finally found the truth of that place and that she could free herself and the woman in the wallpaper so when he came she said “I’ve got out at last in spite of you and Jane. And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back!” (Gilman, 19) she felt that she was free despite John’s restrictions because she realized that he would not listen to her concerns.

2.4. Comparative Study

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl and *The Yellow Wallpaper* are two different stories that embodied the real life of two women who lived in the nineteenth century in America. The two stories include many similarities and differences concerning what the two protagonists were subjected to during their lives in that period.

Linda Brent in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and the unnamed protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper* were two women of different cultures and skin colours since the first one was a slave black African American woman who lived in the south where she faced the most oppressive period in her life. The second one was a white high middle class American lady who lived a difficult period of her life after giving birth to her first child and being a post-partum patient.

First of all, the slave women were not allowed to study or to learn how to read and write but needed to work while white women were allowed to read and write but not to work. In the two stories, the two protagonists were able to read and write. The white woman was able because she lived in a white high middle class society where women were educated but had to stay home and care for their husbands even if their educative level allowed them to work.

Concerning the black slave woman, she was taught by her kind first mistress when she was young which was not something common for all the slaves who were obliged to work in the plantation or in the masters' houses, in her case Linda was a slave in the master's house then in his son's plantation later on.

Second of all, as Linda Brent was a slave girl, she was abused sexually, physically, emotionally and psychologically as it is mentioned in the beginning of this chapter because of her master's demands of a sexual relationship and her mistress's way of treating because of jealousy while the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* used to suffer from a post-partum depression which pushed her to be only psychologically abused although she was treated perfectly with love by her husband.

When writing the two stories, Jacobs and Gilman focussed on the emotional and psychological sides since all what happened in their lives caused them pain, fear and sorrow. In the case of Linda Brent, the first thing that made her unhappy in her life is losing the members of her family or kind people around her whether because of death or because of slavery, the death of her mother “When I was six years old, my mother died” (Jacobs, 14), the death of her kind mistress “When I was nearly twelve years old, my kind mistress sickened and died” Jacobs added “She died, and they buried her in the little churchyard, where, day after day, my tears fell upon her grave” (Jacobs, 15), the death of her father “She led me apart from the people, and then said, “My child, your father is dead.” Dead! How could I believe it?” (Jacobs, 18)

Moreover, she was obliged to stay away from her children when she worked in the plantation of her master’s son and even when she was hiding in her grandmother’s house, she even lost the man she loved “with all the ardor of a young girl’s first love” (Jacobs, 58) and for her “This love-dream had been my support through many trials; I could not bear to run the risk of having it suddenly dissipated.” (Jacobs, 60) she even lost her grandmother by the end of the story.

Linda’s sufferings were not only because she lost many relatives but also because she was insulted many times by her master and mistress. Insulting words used to cause her pain “He came every day; and I was subjected to such insults as no pen can describe” (Jacobs, 118) which was emotionally hurting her.

Concerning Gilman, the lifestyle thrust upon the protagonist of her story and the fact that she was a postpartum patient used to drive her to madness. Psychologically, she was unhappy under the circumstances she lived in, she needed to change the way she was treated but she could not since she was considered as a weak member in her society. Omitting her from doing things she liked and dictating her to rest herself all the time used to harm her instead of relaxing her especially that her husband, the person who loved and cared about her, did not understand her case and his love turned to something that weakened her rather than strengthened her.

Chapter Two: A Comparative Study between Incidents and The Yellow Wallpaper

As it was mentioned in the first chapter, marriage was something not recognized by the state. Harriet Jacobs, in the seventh chapter of her book titled *The Lover*, mentioned the fact that she was not allowed to marry the person she loved just because she was a slave and the state would not consider her marriage as legal “But when I reflected that I was a slave, and that the laws gave no sanction to the marriage of such, my heart sank within me.” (Jacobs, 58) On the other hand, the protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper* is represented as a married lady who had a baby, just because she was a white high middle class woman and marriage was legal and recognized for this community.

Despite the fact that the two women had two different lives, they were both trapped by men. The fact that men decided about everything in their lives used to break them emotionally down. In Linda’s case, her master’s way of treating her including what she faced by her jealous mistress pushed her to put her morals, ideals and beliefs aside and went to Mr. Sands, had an affair with him and gave birth to two children by him only because she was oppressed by her master.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the way the loving husband used to treat his wife believing that there was nothing wrong with her only a temporary depression drove her to madness because he left her with no physical or creative outlet.

In the stories, the main characters were locked in a place and from that place they escaped and found their freedom. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Linda was hidden in a small triangular section between the roof and the eaves where her master could not find her, from that place she escaped to the north by boat.

Concerning *The Yellow Wallpaper*’s protagonist, she was locked in a room staring at the wallpaper most of the time which affected her psychological condition and pushed her to escape her controlling husband by being insane.

Harriet Jacobs and Charlotte Perkins Gilman showed the theme of resistance in the two stories where the two protagonists used writing as weapon against their situation, they both wrote secretly and succeeded in telling the world their stories they even succeeded in changing their lives and situations among their societies.

Besides, the two writers raised two important questions in their writings, the two questions clarify the real meaning of the disability of the two protagonists. The first question by Harriet Jacobs “But where could I turn for protection?” (Jacobs, 45) the second question by Charlotte Perkins Gilman “And what can one do?” (Gilman, 1) The two questions make the reader feel that the two women were unable to either protect themselves or to express themselves.

All in all, the two works of two different writers are two well known works in the American literature, they were studied by many people and they include a group of similarities and differences as already mentioned.

2.5. Conclusion

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by Harriet Jacobs and *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman are two well known stories of the nineteenth century in America in which the two writers succeeded to express themselves despite the restrictions imposed on them by both male and society. On one hand, Harriet Jacobs, the black slave woman who suffered of sexual harassment, physical violence, emotional and psychological abuse by her master and jealous mistress and that she could resist and free herself by the end, on the other hand, Charlotte Perkins Gilman the upper middle class woman who was mentally sick and was a victim of the wrong treatment and the misunderstanding of her husband and society, she- by the end- found a solution to free herself although it was a negative solution.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

For many reasons, American and African American women turned to literature, the suitable solution that helped them to change their status in the nineteenth century. Harriet Jacobs and Charlotte Perkins Gilman are two examples of women who used writing as a way of resistance.

On one hand, Harriet Jacobs, one of the prominent figures in African American literature, chose slave narrative as a weapon against slavery. Mostly, presenting the female slave struggles under slavery was the major point that she focussed on in her book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).

In her work, she mentioned the female sufferings under slavery, sexual harassment of the master, physical, psychological and emotional abuse of both the master and the mistress, the willing of freedom and the struggles to win it. In this research paper, the focus was on the circumstances that affected black women in America from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Civil War in which Jacobs' work presented graphic descriptions about how sexual abuse more than any other kind of abuse made slavery oppressive for black women.

On the other hand, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a famous American writer who used writing as a solution and a way of expressing her thoughts and ideas in a patriarchal society. She focussed in her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) on the psychological side that was neglected by men who used to impose the way women lived on them. Although the man in the story was caring and loving, he did not give his wife the free will to express herself, he only took care of her physical side rather than her emotional and psychological one.

General Conclusion

All in all, the two stories attract the reader's feelings and make him/ her compare between the two protagonists who suffered in their societies. The two works of the same period could show the way two women of two different societies resist against all what they were subjected to in their lives. Moreover, the two stories contain similarities and differences concerning woman's status, way of living, way of resisting and reaching freedom by the end.

Eventually, through *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), the reader may notice women's strength and ability to get out of the bad conditions they were under. Personally, I believe that writing was the solution and the weapon that women in the nineteenth century used. Gilman and Jacobs are examples of women who resisted, others resisted with their own way

Bibliography

Bibliography

1. Primary Sources:

- Gilman, Charlotte P. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. London: Global Grey, 2008.
- Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Boston: The Arthur and Elizabeth SCHLESINGER LIBRARY on the History of Women, 1861.

2. Secondary Sources:

- Abbott, Elizabeth. *Haiti: A Shattered Nation*. New York: Overlook, 2011. Print.
- Appignanesi, Lisa. *Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and The Mind Doctors from 1800 to The Present*. London: Virago Press Print, 2008.
- Bay, Mia. *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925*. New York City: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Berry, Daina R, & Harris, Leslie .M (Ed). *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2018.
- Burnap, George Washington. *The Sphere and Duties of Women: A Course of Lectures*. Boston: Baltimore, Md.:J. Murphy; Pittsburg, Pa.:G. Quigley, 1848.
- Cogan, Frances B. *All- American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989.
- Du Bois, William E B. *Darkwater; Voices from Within the Veil*. New York: Harcourt, BRACE AND HOME, 1920.
- Feldstein, Stanley. *Once a Slave: The Slaves' View of Slavery*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971.

Bibliography

- Hooks, Bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press, 1981. Print.
- Katz, Michael B. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981.
- Keckley, Elizabeth. *Behind the Scenes: Or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House*. New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., Publishers, 1868.
- Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.
- Lincoln, Abraham. "To Albert. G. Hodges". 24 April. 1864.
- MCASA. *Women's Institute for Leadership Development for Human Rights, "The Treatment of Women of Color Under U.S. Law: Violence"*, 2011.
- McKay, Nellie Y and Foster, Frances S, editors. *Harriet Jacobs: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. United States: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.
- Nelson, Thomas. *Social Life in Old Virginia before the War*. New York: Scribner's, 1897.
- Northup, Solomon. *Twelve Years a Slave*. New York: Derby & Miller, Auburn, 1853.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. *Soul Murder and Slavery*. Texas: Baylor UP, 1995.
- Pouba Katherine and Tianen Ashley. *Lunacy in the 19th Century: Women's Admission to Asylum in United States of America*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, 2006.
- Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1998.
- Stewart, Maria. A. "Advocates Education for African American Women". Franklin Hall, Boston. 24 April 1832.

- Truman. J. L, & Planty. M. *Criminal Victimization*: Retrieved from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2012.

-Weiner, Marli F. *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

- Welter, Barbara. *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1976.

The Summary

This dissertation examines the lives of both black and white women in the nineteenth century America and the conditions they were subjected to. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* 1861 written by Harriet Ann Jacobs is an example about the way black women used to live. In *Incidents*, the protagonist faced sexual and physical abuse of her master and the jealousy of her mistress. Concerning white women, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* 1892 is an example about white women's situation in which the protagonist was a victim of the misunderstanding of both husband and society. Moreover, comparison between the two literary works is the aim of this research paper.

Le Résumé

Cette thèse examine la vie des femmes noires et blanches en Amérique du XIXe siècle et les conditions auxquelles elles ont été soumises. *Incidents dans la Vie d'une Esclave* 1861 écrit par Harriet Ann Jacobs est un exemple sur la façon dont les femmes noires vivaient. Dans *Incidents*, la protagoniste a été victime d'abus sexuel et physiques de son maître et de la jalousie de sa maîtresse. En ce qui est concerné les femmes blanches, la nouvelle de Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Le Papier Peint Jaune* 1892, est un exemple de la situation des femmes blanches dans laquelle la protagoniste a été victime du malentendu du mari et de la société. De plus, la comparaison entre les deux œuvres littéraires est l'objet de cet article de recherche.

المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة حياة النساء البيض و السود في أمريكا في القرن التاسع عشر و الظروف التي تعرضن لها. حوادث في حياة فتاة الرقيق 1861 الذي كتب من طرف هارييت أن جايبوس يعتبر مثال على الطريقة التي اعتادت النساء السود على العيش بها. في حوادث البطلة واجهت الاعتداء الجنسي و الجسدي من قبل سيدها و غيرة سيدتها. في ما يخص النساء البيض قصة شارلوت بيركنز جيلمان القصيرة خلفية صفراء 1892 تعتبر مثال على وضع المرأة البيضاء حيث أن البطلة كانت ضحية لسوء فهم كل من الزوج و المجتمع. علاوة على ذلك المقارنة بين العملين الأدبيين هي الهدف من هذه الورقة البحثية.