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Confinement

People encounter many restrictions and restraints on a daily basis. The most common ones range from allowing us to perform a few of our daily tasks, but imagine living a life where every aspect is controlled by another individual. During the 1800's women were not taken seriously. They were often told what to do every single day and that was a way of life for them. They were always oppressed which ultimately resulted in a feeling of being trapped. There are two short stories in literature that display the idea of female confinement in a very bold way. "*The Yellow Wallpaper*" by Charlotte Perkins Gillman and "*The Story of an Hour*" by Kate Chopin are two great examples. These two stories display the idea of confinement and the scarce amount of freedom given to women because of the time period they were in and the social norms.

When you take a look at "*The Yellow Wallpaper*" we are able to see that the woman is being restrained by her husband. The story illustrates a female who has been diagnosed with nervous depression and has been given the treatment of bed rest by her husband. Her husband also happens to be a doctor. In this moment, the husband thinks that this is the best cure for his wife when in reality it is the complete opposite. Forcing his wife to stay in her room all day is

just another way for the husband to feel superior over his wife. His wife never once tries to fight with her husband over his treatment idea and takes it as it is. This right here is the first display of confinement. It also shows that females were so used to the idea of being told what to do. As the story progresses we begin to see that staying inside a bedroom for the entire day is beginning to take a toll on her. She begins to go from doing one thing to another. She eventually becomes infatuated with the wallpaper in her bedroom. Soon after she begins to believe that there is a woman trapped behind the wallpaper and makes it her responsibility to get her out. She begins to rip off all the wallpaper in her room in the hopes of allowing the woman to be free.

Here we see a clear idea of her trying to free herself. The person she sees behind the wallpaper is actually herself. This is showing that her being trapped has left toll on her mindset and sees no way out. For example, the woman says, "I've got out at last," said I, " in spite of you and Jane? And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back." (Gilman) In this line we are able to see that she is telling her husband that she has freed the woman who was behind the wallpaper which actually happens to be her. She also says that she has ripped off most of the paper so she can't be put back there. This is another display of confinement and her being trapped because the woman she saw behind the wallpaper was trapped. Her saying that she can't be put back there is her saying that she is finally free.

When the idea of confinement is brought up, it necessarily doesn't mean being locked up in a room or cell. Being confined can actually be related to many different things. For example, "*The Story of an Hour*" is a short story about a wife who goes by the name of Louise Mallard. She is currently dealing with heart trouble and we come to find out that her

husband, Brently Mallard has recently died to a railroad accident. Louise's sister is very timid to inform her sister because of her heart issues. When Louise does find out she begins to cry and runs up to her room. While she's sitting in her room she begins to chant the word "free". As stated in the story "When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body" (Chopin). Here we see that Louise is finally feeling free. After all these years of being married she now realizes that she is her own woman and can do whatever she wants. She no longer has to live under her husband. Looking out the window and staring at the sky she is able to realize that the world is full of endless possibilities for her and she must take advantage of that.

Meanwhile Louise's sister is outside her bedroom pleading for her to come out with fear of what she might do to herself. Louise finally opens the door and walks down. Suddenly they seem to notice that someone is trying to open the door with a key and a few seconds later they realize that it's Louise's husband. Louise already having planned a life without her husband cannot believe what she has just seen and dies. We are able to notice that Louise realized that since her husband is alive, all the freedom she had just acquired was quickly snatched from her and she had to go back into confinement. This resulted in a shock which led to her death or in other words "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills" (Chopin).

Some may say that issues like these no longer exist and they only happened due to the time period these individuals lived in. Whether you believe it or not females are still confined when it comes to expressing their feelings and saying that they want. For example Samantha Paige Posen is an author who published “*Women in the U.S. Are Still Second-Class Citizens: Not Interested? You Should Be*” on Huffington Post and she states that “The language used to identify women and their “issues” in the U.S. promotes these stereotypes. If a woman has an opinion, she’s called *bossy* or *overbearing*. If a man *is* bossy, he’s just taking care of business. If a woman speaks loudly and confidently, she’s *shrill*. If a man does the same, he’s authoritative. These subtle identifiers — used by both men and women — undermine women, whether those who utter them intend to or not. They are ways of taking women down a peg when they step out of place.” Here we see Samantha saying that women are always looked down upon and are meant to be suppressed by society. Because of being judged like this many women have stopped expressing their ideas and hold back what they want to say. This is another form of confinement. Suppressing females and not allowing them to speak is taking their freedom of speech away from them.

Even though many countries no longer treat their women in these type of ways, it is definitely something that will always be around. Females have spent many years living in a world of confinement. They are often times told what to do and when to speak. In “*The Yellow Wallpaper*” and “*The Story of an Hour*” we see two very different forms of confinement. First,

we happen to see a woman trapped inside her home because her husband told her so, to the point where she believes she must set a woman free from behind the wallpaper. In “*The Story of an Hour*” the form of confinement is the idea of not being able to live her life freely. She has been confined to live the life her husband has chosen for her. Even though these two short stories may embody different forms, they both discuss the idea of female confinement in the world.

Works Cited Page

- 1) Booth, Alison, and Kelly J, Mays. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2010.
- 2) Rosen, Samantha Paige. "Women in the U.S. Are Still Second-Class Citizens: Not Interested? You Should Be." *The Huffington Post*, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 5 Aug. 2014, www.huffingtonpost.com/samantha-paige-rosen/women-in-the-us-are-still-wage-gap_b_5018490.html.