

Discuss the view of marriage presented in kate chopin's the story of an hour and ...

[Literature](#)



Louise Mallard and Minnie Wright: the Repression of Marriage. Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," and Susan Glaspell's "Trifles," deal with the theme of marriage. The two narratives appear to be very different on the surface: Louise Mallard is an apparently grieving widow, while Minnie Wright is obviously the murderer of her husband. However, a deeper reading reveals that a similar thread runs through both the stories. Kate Chopin and Susan Glaspell present a common view of marriage as an oppressive relationship for the woman. The protagonists, Louise Mallard and Minnie Wright, in spite of the differences in the circumstances of their marriages, and their strong personalities, are both victims of the oppression of marriage.

Louise Mallard is in a marriage which is happy on the surface. She acknowledges Brently Mallard's kindness, and the fact that he "had never looked save with love upon her" (Chopin, 11). She reacts with a "storm of grief" (Chopin, 3) to the news of her husband's death. She loves Brently to some extent: "And yet she had loved him—sometimes" (Chopin, 13). On the other hand, Minnie Wright is trapped in an evidently unhappy marriage, and a cheerless home. Mrs. Hale says, "But I don't think a place be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it" (Glaspell, 5). John Wright is a miser: "Wright was close" (Glaspell, 7). Mrs. Hale also goes on to say, "But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him--(\_shivers\_) Like a raw wind that gets to the bone" (Glaspell, 10).

Louise Mallard is content to conform to the conventions of the 'weaker sex,' physically and intellectually: she is "afflicted with a heart trouble," and is considered so fragile that she has to be told the news of her husband's death "as gently as possible" (Chopin, 1). Initially, she reacts "as a child" (Chopin,

7) and is fearful of change. However, this façade of helpless feminism is belied by her true personality, which is suggested by the controlled lines of her face and “ even a certain strength” (Chopin, 8). Minnie Wright is also depicted as very feminine: “ she was kind of like a bird herself--real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery” (Glaspell, 11). Like Louise, Minnie also reacts with fear and confusion: “ as if she didnt know what she was going to do next” (Glaspell, 3). Her untidy quilting exposes her fear and nervousness. However, like Louise, Minnie exhibits the underlying strength of her personality by the murder of her husband and her brazen declaration of innocence when questioned, “ I dont know, she says” (Glaspell, 4).

Louise Mallard’s happy marriage and Minnie Wright’s unhappy one are both forms of oppression. Louise’s marriage is marked by the loss of her freedom as an individual. It is not the love she bears for her husband, but her “ self-assertion,” which is “ the strongest impulse of her being!” (Chopin, 13).

Brently Mallard’s kindness to his wife does not justify his “ right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature” (Chopin, 12). Chopin unequivocally terms Mallard’s repression of Louise’s freedom to be a “ crime” (12). The greatest evidence of the oppressive nature of Louise’s marriage is seen by her embrace of her widowhood with an exultant: “ free, free, free!” (Chopin, 10). Minnie Wright’s marriage is more overtly oppressive. This is best seen in the change in her personality: “ How--she--did—change” (Glaspell, 11). Marriage changes the Minnie Forster, who “ used to wear pretty clothes and be lively” (Glaspell, 7), into the lonesome, joyless Minnie Wright. Her obvious love for music is shown by her being a part of the town choir. John Wright’s greatest act of repression is his killing of her singing. Glaspell symbolically uses the

bird to demonstrate this: “ No, Wright wouldnt like the bird--a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too” (12).

Kate Chopin and Susan Glaspell both use their narratives to demonstrate that marriage is an oppressive relationship in which the woman is a victim. Louise Mallard and Minnie Wright have their wills subjugated by their husbands. Louise dies rather than give up her newly found freedom, while Minnie kills her husband to escape the oppression of her marriage.

Works Cited.

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