

REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE INDIVIDUALIST IN *THE AWAKENING* AND *THE YELLOW WALLPAPER*

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The quintessential American individual was deemed one formed on the frontier. It was supposed to be masculine and driven by individualism and was built upon ideas such as the importance of the individual, self-reliance and personal independence. The frontier mentality and the myth of individualism frequently associated with the males in American literature need to be problematized in order to understand multiple individualisms that exist in different American contexts. Hence the idea of female individualism of which the culminating point is the emergence of a creative woman could be regarded as a *rupture* in the conception of American identity itself. This study refers to a category of women that explored possibilities of *creativity* outside the domesticity and procreating function, traditionally ascribed to them by the powerful decision makers in their respective contexts. The creative American woman in fiction is portrayed as someone who finds unique ways of exploring the possibilities of resistance and rebellion in creating new forms of art and challenges contemporary conception of individualism. Two works in which such women make an appearance are *The Awakening* and *The Yellow Wallpaper* in which the two female protagonists—either consciously or in their state of “madness”—use artistic/aesthetic production as a form of resistance to the dominant patriarchal discourse and labour. ‘Art’ or ‘creativity’ is being deployed in the two texts as the foundation of resistance/liberation of the imaginative woman. *The Yellow Paper*’s anonymous female narrator has an imagination that is inextricably linked with her descent into insanity. Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* explores her creative faculties; the independence that she exhibits in engaging with this labour is perceived as ‘madness’ by the males around her. This comparative study examines the ways in which Chopin and Gilman’s female protagonists emerge as “creative female individualists” who seek a life of freedom and individuality through creative imagination which is deemed and trivialized as “madness” by the males in their vicinity. It also examines to what extent the creative imagination of Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* and the anonymous narrator and *The Yellow Wallpaper* serves as an agency for them to emerge as female individualists. The study proposes that these two female figures emerge as models of a new form of resistance through creativity, though their attempt at self-fashioning is constricted by dominant structures of power.

Keywords: Female, Creativity, Liberation