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**Blurring the Lines between Reality and Distorted Perceptions in Relation to
Identity in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for a
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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Dedications

The journey of any academic research is undoubtedly long and exhausting, and ours is not an exception, emotional support and inspiration were much needed in the process of making this work. Therefore, this work is dedicated to those beautiful souls and kind hearts that fulfilled those needs and provided us with lots of positive energy. To our dearest families who's unlimited support and love have been our guiding light, to our friends, who's presence always brought joy and comfort to us in our most stressful days, to every person who was a pillar of strength and motivation that have carried us through our journey and made this research possible, it would have been impossible without all of you.

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Epigraph

“Only as we live, think, feel and work outside the home, do we become humanly developed, civilized, socialized”

-Charlotte Perkins Gilman-

Abstract

It is impossible to be alive without having the sense of identity, since it is what represents the values, mindsets and people's personalities, and to lose identity is to lose one's self. There are plenty of factors that can cause identity loss, such as distorted perceptions and illusions as well as the society and its doctrines. Throughout history, women were the ones who got more affected by this phenomenon that restricted them from expressing their ideas and being who they really want to be. Therefore, this thesis investigates the issue of identity loss and its representation in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. It also explores how social expectations and gender norms lead to the protagonist's loss of self by focusing on her mental degeneration and fascination with the wallpaper. Drawing on psychoanalytic ideas and feminist critique, the study contends that the protagonist's captivity and isolation result in a fractured sense of identity. By diving into the complexity of the protagonist's mind, this thesis provides light on how patriarchal institutions harm women's sense of self and agency. Finally, this study aims to emphasize the necessity of recognizing and reclaiming one's individuality in the face of repressive cultural standards. Studying the text in details helped in examining the author's use of language, ideas, and symbols to depict the protagonist's loss of identity. In addition, a psychological analysis approach is used to investigate the protagonist's failing sense of self by using psychological ideas such as those connected to mental health and the impacts of solitude. It is also predicted that the outcomes of this thesis will aid in better understanding the formation of the individual identity specifically female one, and the elements that influence it.

Keywords: Identity-women-oppression-madness-Perception-Psychoanalytical analyses

-feminism- Victorian era-Isolation.

Résumé

Il est impossible d'être vivant sans avoir le sentiment d'identité, puisque c'est ce qui représente les valeurs, les mentalités et les caractères, et perdre l'identité, c'est se perdre soi-même. De nombreux facteurs peuvent entraîner une perte d'identité, tels que les perceptions et les illusions déformées, ainsi que la société et ses doctrines. Tout au long de l'histoire, les femmes ont été les plus touchées par ce phénomène qui les empêchait d'exprimer leurs idées et d'être ce qu'elles voulaient vraiment être. Par conséquent, cette thèse étudie la question de la perte d'identité et sa représentation dans *The Yellow Wallpaper* de Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Il explore également comment les attentes sociales et les normes de genre conduisent à la perte de soi du protagoniste en se concentrant sur sa dégénérescence mentale et sa fascination pour le papier peint. S'appuyant sur des idées psychanalytiques et une critique féministe, l'étude soutient que la captivité et l'isolement du protagoniste entraînent un sentiment d'identité fracturé. En plongeant dans la complexité de l'esprit du protagoniste, cette thèse met en lumière la façon dont les institutions patriarcales nuisent au sens de soi et de l'action des femmes. Enfin, cette étude vise à souligner la nécessité de reconnaître et de se réapproprier son individualité face à des normes culturelles répressives. L'étude détaillée du texte a permis d'examiner l'utilisation par l'auteur du langage, des idées et des symboles pour décrire la perte d'identité du protagoniste. De plus, une approche d'analyse psychologique est utilisée pour étudier le sentiment de soi défaillant du protagoniste en utilisant des idées psychologiques telles que celles liées à la santé mentale et aux impacts de la solitude. Il est également prévu que les résultats de cette thèse aideront à mieux comprendre la formation de l'identité individuelle spécifiquement féminine et les éléments qui l'influencent.

خلاصة

من المستحيل أن تكون على قيد الحياة دون أن يكون لديك الإحساس بالهوية، لأنها هي التي تمثل القيم والعقليات والشخصيات، وفقدان الهوية هو فقدان الذات. هناك الكثير من العوامل التي يمكن أن تسبب فقدان الهوية، مثل التصورات والأوهام المشوهة، وكذلك المجتمع ومعتقداته. على مر التاريخ، كانت النساء هم الأكثر تأثراً بهذه الظاهرة التي منعتهم من التعبير عن أفكارهم وأن يكونوا كما يريدون حقاً. لذلك، تبحث هذه الأطروحة في مسألة فقدان الهوية وتمثيلها في رواية الخلفية الصفراء لشارلوت بيركنز جيلمان. يستكشف أيضاً كيف تؤدي التوقعات الاجتماعية والأعراف الجنسانية إلى فقدان بطل الرواية لذاته من خلال التركيز على انحطاطها العقلي وانبهارها بورق الحائط. بالاعتماد على أفكار التحليل النفسي والنقد النسوي، تؤكد الدراسة أن أسر بطل الرواية وعزلته يؤدي إلى شعور مكسور بالهوية. من خلال الغوص في تعقيد عقل بطل الرواية، تلقي هذه الأطروحة الضوء على كيفية قيام المؤسسات الأبوية بإيذاء إحساس المرأة بذاتها وقدرتها على التصرف. وأخيراً، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التأكيد على ضرورة الاعتراف بفردية الفرد واستعادتها في مواجهة المعايير الثقافية القمعية. ساعدت دراسة النص بالتفصيل في فحص استخدام المؤلف للغة والأفكار والرموز لتصوير فقدان بطل الرواية لهويته. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يتم استخدام نهج التحليل النفسي للتحقيق في ضعف إحساس بطل الرواية بالذات باستخدام أفكار نفسية مثل تلك المرتبطة بالصحة العقلية وتأثيرات العزلة. ومن المتوقع أيضاً أن تساعد نتائج هذه الأطروحة في فهم أفضل لتكوين الهوية الفردية وتحديدًا الهوية الأنثوية، والعناصر التي تؤثر عليها

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General Introduction

"There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind" (Woolf, 1929, 76). This passage from Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" illustrates the concept that no external influence can constrain or limit the freedom of one's own thoughts and imagination. Woolf emphasizes the importance of autonomous thought and creativity, implying that even if a person is physically constrained or imprisoned in some manner, their mind is free to travel and explore new ideas. The phrase implies that genuine freedom stems from inside and cannot be controlled or constrained by external influences. Oppression of women is a tragic situation, but when women are repressed, it is considered tradition.

Women have historically avoided writing due to fear, subjugation, and unfamiliarity with themselves, in addition to misrepresentation. Initially, as previously developed, they required male authorization, lacked self-consciousness, and needed to understand their position and power to overcome the misconception that they were useless in logic.

During the 19th century, the United States experienced significant changes in its residents' household and social life. In addition to the civil war, the market revolution, and the social class structure, this era was notable for the fact that men's and women's duties were more clearly defined than ever before. Despite their importance in society, women were prohibited basic rights such as working, learning, determining who to marry, and expressing themselves, and due to these reasons female authors used literature to advocate for their rights in the face of tyranny.

Identity is one of the main subjects that women sought to fight for. Feminist philosophy recognises that identity is not a single construct, but rather a dynamic interaction of numerous social categories and oppressive institutions. Intersectionality, a term established by feminist researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasises how many dimensions of identity, such as gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability, overlap and impact one another. This point of view emphasises that people face different types of oppression and privilege at the same time, and these intersections influence their identities and experiences.

Even in novels with female protagonists, masculine voices often influence their actions, leading to competitiveness or self-loathing. The self has long been an important issue in feminist philosophy and literature since it is central to problems concerning personal identity,

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the body, sociality, and agency, all of which feminism must address. Simone de Beauvoir's controversial assertion, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the other," (2) emphasizes the centrality of the self in feminism. To be the other means to be a non-subject, a non-agent, or just an object. Law, customary practice, and cultural stereotypes have all worked to subordinate or even deny women's selfhood. Throughout history, women have been classified as lesser copies of males or as their exact opposite, defined by perceived differences from men; in both situations, women have been denigrated as a result of these beliefs. Because women have been portrayed as inferior versions of the male human, the self-concept that has gained traction in Western philosophy and popular culture in the United States is based on a masculine template. Feminists argue that the experiences of primarily white and heterosexual, mostly economically privileged males who controlled social, economic, and political power and dominated the arts, literature, journalism, and academics have been viewed as universal and ideal. As a result, feminists have argued that the self is not simply a metaphysical issue in philosophy, but also an ethical, epistemological, social, and political one.

Charlottes Perkins Gilman is one of the literary figures to deal with the topic of female identity. In one of her most famous works, her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which follows a lady suffering from what appears to be postpartum depression, as she is confined to a chamber in an ancient house with yellow wallpaper. As she grows more fixated with the wallpaper, she sees a lady trapped behind it, which reflects her own emotions of captivity and confinement.

The narrative is often seen as a feminist literature since it criticizes societal demands imposed on women in the nineteenth century, notably in terms of mental and emotional health. The narrator's spouse, who is also her doctor, rejects her fears and insists on her seclusion and inactivity as a way of curing her. This power and lack of agency over her own body and thoughts reflect the difficulties many women faced at the time.

The Yellow Wallpaper might be interpreted as a metaphor for patriarchal society's oppressive consequences on women's identity and autonomy. The narrator's decline into madness might be seen as the suppression of her voice and agency, as she is confined to a chamber with no control over her own body or mind. The narrative in whole emphasises the value of women's agency and empowerment, as well as the repercussions of denying them

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autonomy and voice. It emphasises the necessity for women's freedom and equality in society.

The narrator in *The Yellow Wallpaper* attempts to forge an identity outside of the ideals of Victorian society. Women in late nineteenth-century American culture discovered their identity in their roles as wives and mothers. Gilman believed that women needed to have a more purposeful and intellectual connection to the public sphere (Bauer 9). She argued early on that a woman should be able to combine marriage and motherhood with a profession and do her work in the world (Hedge 127). But, at the same time, she saw that patriarchal dogma was powerful and that it was difficult for women to view themselves as anything other than the ideal wife and mother, and she hoped to enlighten them via her literature. Gilman once concluded that American males "have bred a race of women weak enough to be handed about like invalids; or mentally weak enough to pretend they are [...]" (Ehrenreich 93). Her comment demonstrates that both men and women contributed to the perpetuation of the idea, and that not all women want to improve their circumstances. According to King and Morris, the identification of a wife and mother guarantees the safeguarding of masculine love. Because the narrator in the short tale fails to live up to her role, she fears the loss of her husband's affection and so "avoids the imposition of culpability in her 'sickness'." If she is ill, she cannot be held accountable for her failure (King 28). The narrator, on the other hand, struggles to find her place in society in every aspect and strives to develop an identity of her own in two separate ways: by writing and by believing in herself when she exhibits confidence in realising what is best for her.

Many researchers studied *The Yellow Wallpaper* but mostly focusing on the feminist aspect and forgetting about other things. Therefore the aim of this extended essay and from choosing this story specifically, is to go beyond the usual and to shed more light on one of the most important elements of human life which is identity, the element that women of the past and even some of today are denied because of social and cultural oppression and expectation, gender roles as well as lack of self-expression. The only way to better know and understand this aspect is by finding answers to the following research questions:

1-How does Gilman use symbolism in "The Yellow Wallpaper" to represent the protagonist's unconscious mind? And what's the connection between the narrator and the protagonist?

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2-How does the protagonist's sense of identity relate to her distorted perception of reality?

In an attempt to answer the primary questions of this research paper, it is hypothesized that, the yellow wallpaper symbolizes the protagonist's fragmented identity, distorted by patriarchal society. She tries to express her desires, creativity, and autonomy by tracing the chaotic pattern and interacting with the woman behind it, in addition to that, and via psychoanalytical and feminist studies, it is suggested that the story's protagonist is a reflection or a representation of the author's self, life and struggles as a woman living in an oppressive community as they both endured the same hardships. Moreover, *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman follows a protagonist with a nervous condition who becomes obsessed with a yellow wallpaper. She sees a woman trapped behind it, reflecting her oppression in a patriarchal society. As the story progresses, she identifies with the woman, ultimately tearing down the wallpaper to free her, but also alienating herself from reality. Finally, the narrator feels trapped and oppressed by her country estate setting, which isolates her from society and culture, affecting her identity and agency negatively. This represents the restrictive nature of patriarchal society, denying her freedom and creativity. She is cut off from cultural and knowledge sources.

In order to accomplish this research, this paper is going to be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will be focusing on the theoretical aspect, and studying the story via a descriptive analytical research methodology, shedding light on the psychoanalytical and feminist approaches and their relation to *The Yellow Wallpaper*, as well as how they are applied to the study of the relationship between the narrator and the protagonist and the analyses of the story and the fragmented sense of the protagonist's identity.

The second chapter is analytical; it revolves around the protagonist in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, who suffers from a nervous ailment and is compelled by her physician husband to stay in a room with a yellow wallpaper, which she gets obsessed with and begins to envision a lady trapped behind it. The first point of this chapter mirrors the narrator's descent into madness and own feelings of imprisonment and oppression in a patriarchal world that devalues her creativity and liberty. As the novel develops, the protagonist's interpretation of the wallpaper evolves from curiosity to terror to emancipation, and she increasingly connects with the lady in the wallpaper, who represents her suppressed self. The second point will explain the fragmented realities that the narrator sees throughout

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the story which ultimately led her to taking down the wallpaper and freeing the lady, but resulting in her loss of sanity in the process. This demonstrates that her emerging sense of self is both liberating and destructive, as she breaks liberate from her husband's control while simultaneously alienating herself from reality.

The third chapter will be focusing on the impact of oppression on the narrator's self and feelings by studying the setting of the country estate, that isolates her from society and culture, and effects her sense of identity and agency in a negative way, and which symbolizes the restrictive nature of the patriarchal society that she lives in and that denies her any freedom or creativity. This chapter is divided into two parts that are going to stand for the narrator's struggles of having no voice or choice in her own life, as she is forced to conform to the expectations and norms of her husband and his profession, in addition to cutting her off from the sources of culture and knowledge that could enrich her mind and spirit which, led her at the end of the story to rebel against everyone and everything just to gain her freedom of expression and find her lost identity.

Chapter One

**Exploring *The Yellow Wallpaper* Using
Psychoanalytical Theory and Feminist
Approach**

1.1 Introduction

The battle for women's inherent rights has long been a source of contention between female and male-dominated civilizations. Since many decades ago, ladies were subjugated and denied of their social rights in patriarchal societies, with men's satisfaction being the primary goal. This verity led to women being increasingly stupid, frivolous, and empty-headed. Women gradually became more aware of their plight, particularly after breaking into the traditionally male-dominated area of writing. During this time, women gained a voice by writing about their experiences in a pragmatic manner. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a compelling and thought-provoking short story that explores gender roles, mental illness, and cultural restraints. By viewing this book via a psychoanalytic and feminist perspective, and studying it using a descriptive analytical research methodology ;we may acquire a better understanding of the protagonist's problems and the narrative's underlying implications. We may learn about the intricate interaction between psychology, gender relations, and societal standards by evaluating the protagonist's journey into madness, as well as the repressive factors that contribute to her decline. This approach helps us to investigate the ways in which power, control, and resistance present themselves in the tale, revealing light on the larger implications for women's autonomy and agency. By examining "The Yellow Wallpaper" from a psychoanalytic and feminist perspective, we may reveal the text's multiple layers of meaning and relevance, thus increasing our comprehension of Gilman's strong and enduring work.

1.2-Studying the Connection Between the Writer and the Protagonist Through a Psychoanalytical Approach

The nineteenth century American society saw substantial sociopolitical developments, including the advent of industrialization, urbanization, and the abolition of slavery. During this time, women's roles and mental health were heavily influenced by existing social standards, economic conditions, and cultural beliefs. Women's principal responsibilities were restricted to domestic work, childcare, and household administration. The ideal lady was meant to be obedient, kind, and unselfish. Education was not seen necessary for women, and many were discouraged from seeking higher education or professional careers. In addition to

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that women's principal goals were to marry and have children. Marriage was frequently viewed as a way to ensure financial security and social status. Women were mostly excluded from the public arena, while men dominated the workforce, politics, and other aspects of public life. During this time, mental health was little understood, and disorders such as depression, anxiety, and postpartum psychosis were frequently misinterpreted or blamed on a lack of moral character.

Women with mental health difficulties frequently lacked access to healthcare, social support, and treatment. Family members or carers may have been unprepared to provide necessary assistance. Mental illness was frequently veiled in secrecy and shame, making it difficult for women to seek care or discuss their problems openly. Moreover women's emotional labor was assumed to be high since they needed to control their emotions in order to keep their families peaceful and stable. The nineteenth century American society had a tremendous impact on women's roles and mental health in the United States. While there were many difficulties during this time, it also paved the way for future generations of women's rights campaigners and mental health advocates as well as female writers who expressed women's struggles in living in oppressive societies through their literary works.

Literature has been around for ages, instructing, admonishing, and emphasizing social issues. Every work of literature is unique, from its origin to the intended message to the audience. In each case, authors are inspired to write their works by a variety of events and life experiences. Although some authors may not openly write about themselves, analyzing the tone, style, structure, and readership of their works shows a hint of personal influences. Charlotte Perkins Gilman is one of the most famous female figures, who gave voice to women in the American society. She was a feminist, lecturer, writer, editor who has advocated for women's suffrage and cultural change (Gilman, 1991) , and a publisher who was a leading theorist of the women's movement in the United States. She was a utopian feminist who served as a role model for future generations of feminists due to her unconventional ideas and lifestyle. Her works were largely concerned with gender, especially gendered labor divisions in society, and the issue of masculine dominance. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

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Gilman's writings were mostly impacted by her childhood, social relationships, marriage, and career. Her best-known work is her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, which she composed during a severe case of postpartum psychosis. *The Yellow Wallpaper* describes a woman's struggle with mental illness and fascination with a room's awful wallpaper after she has been confined to her chamber for three months for her health, as ordered by her husband. The narrative is clearly influenced by Gilman's own experiences with being offered a "rest cure," which was the complete opposite of what she—and her story's protagonist—needed. Gilman forwarded a copy of the published story to Dr. Mitchell, who had prescribed the "cure" for her.

Since the story's (re)emergence, which Hedges describes as a feminist document, female critics have welcomed it with the same zeal that Gilman's male contemporaries rejected it. Three prominent critical works have recently discussed "The Yellow Wallpaper": *Madwoman in the Attic, The Writer and the Nineteenth Century Imagination* by Susan Gilbert and Sandra Gubar; "A Map for Rereading: Or Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts," by Annette Kolodny; and "Convention Coverage or How to Read Your Own Life," by Jean Kennard. These critics have elevated the narrative to the level of a fable for feminist readings, transforming it into a tale advocating the virtues of feminist readings or "revisionary readings." "This type of reading, which Adrienne Rich calls for and defines in "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," entails "a radical critique, feminist in its impulse, that would take the work first of all as a clue to how we [as women] live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see--and thus live--afresh" (265).

Taken together, these modern readings of the narrative reveal two similarities. First, they compare the narrator's husband's failure to grasp his wife's state, or to interpret her text, to the difficulties Gilman's contemporaries had in comprehending the work itself. Second, they connect the narrator's building of her own freedom and sense of identity, as well as "extension the independence of all women," through her interpretation of the wallpaper, to their own rereading of the text.

Using as a basis the laudatory work Hedges published on "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilbert and Gubar assert that "The Yellow Wallpaper" is the narrative all "literary women

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would tell if they had the voice" (89). They explain that by taking down the wallpaper, the narrator "discovers her double and enables this double to escape from her textual/architectural confinement," resulting in her own release (91). The writers broaden this act of freedom to include the "progress of nineteenth century literary women out of the texts defined by patriarchal poetics into the open spaces of their own authority" (91).

Kolodny's article continues along the same lines, affirming that it is "unfortunate that Gilman's story was so quickly relegated to the backwaters of our literary landscape because, coming as it did at the end of the nineteenth century, it spoke to a growing concern of American women who would be serious writers" (459). She expands on Gilbert and Gubar's critique, but she is most interested in understanding why the story's feminist subject has received so little attention to date. She argues that Gilman's contemporaries lacked the insight to see a middle-class housewife's existence as oppressively irritating. .

According to Kolodny, nineteenth-century readers who had read Poe's grisly stories of lunacy were unable to "transfer their sense of mental derangement to the mind of a comfortable middle class wife and mother" (456). She expands on the idea of the narrator's untransmittability by contrasting the text's impenetrable quality with the narrator herself, who is a "text which can neither get read nor recorded," because her husband "will not heed what she says of herself" and forbids her from writing (457). According to Kolodny, the narrator "gives up her attempt to record her reality and instead begins to read it" by seeking to decipher her own meaning, much as modern critics must strive to reinterpret the tale (459). And, like Gilbert and Gubar, Kolodny sees truth and success in this twofold act of reinterpretation: the narrator discovers emancipation even in lunacy, while the critics uncover the text's "true" hidden meaning.

In an essay published in 1981, Jean Kennard delves deeper into the origins of this reinterpretation of the narrative first lit by Hedges. She says that because literary norms shift with social and political developments, current feminist novels and feminist politics have influenced how feminist scholars as an "interpretive community" perceive literary symbols. For example, the chamber, or in the narrative, the narrator's imprisonment to her room, has come to represent women's situations in patriarchal societies. More importantly (and strangely, as Kennard admits), madness has become a "higher form of sanity" inside this

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culture: in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, "the narrator's journey into madness is viewed as a "way to health, as a rejection of and escape from an insane society" (76).

These descriptions of the wallpaper, together with the narrator's growing vision of a symbolic order contained within it, demonstrate that the wallpaper suggests a discourse. However, the oppressive quality of the wallpaper originates from the narrator's immersion in patriarchal rhetoric. Because she must employ this restrictive vocabulary to describe the wallpaper, her sentiments about it can only be discerned in the gaps between her explanations. Thus, on the surface, the wallpaper is horrifying, as her descriptions of its yellow color demonstrate: "It is the oddest yellow, that wall-paper! It reminds me of all the yellow things I've ever seen... but just old, nasty, terrible yellow things" (28). This hue of yellow, "revolting and smoldering," implies a "yellowing" of paper, such that on the surface, the wallpaper reflects her suffocating captivity in John's discourse. On the surface, the wallpaper seems to be a parchment with the "ancient law" upon which John's language is based. However, in her descriptions of the wallpaper, there are hints of a potentially freeing energy, self-discovery as well as finding the lost identity.

Thus, the purpose of this research study and this chapter specifically is to extend the ideas above as well as focus on how Gilman used the story's protagonist to express her own struggles and experiences as a woman forced to live in an oppressive society and how writing helped her gain a voice and speak for her own rights and women rights in general and fight for her identity and position in life as a contributor not a muted restricted person, all this through examining *The Yellow Wallpaper* using psychoanalytical and feminist theories.

To begin with, Psychoanalytic theory is Sigmund Freud's psychological framework for understanding and explaining human behavior, emotions, and personality development. This idea is based on the assumption that unconscious thoughts and desires have a substantial impact on our conscious thoughts and behaviors. Freud's psychoanalytic theory includes several fundamental features:

Unconscious Mind: Freud suggested that a large portion of the human mind acts on an unconscious level, affecting behavior without our knowledge. He defined the unconscious as a collection of suppressed memories, desires, and unsolved conflicts.

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The mind is split into three parts, according to Freud: the conscious mind (thoughts and sensations that we are aware of), the preconscious mind (knowledge that may be brought into consciousness), and the unconscious mind.

Freud believed that human development happens in five separate psychosexual stages: oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital. Each stage is accompanied with unique obstacles and conflicts that might influence an individual's personality.

Defense Mechanisms: To deal with anxiety and defend the ego, Freud hypothesized the existence of defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, and displacement. These systems help to alter or conceal unpleasant ideas and feelings.

Freud defined three personality components: the id (motivated by instinctive wants and pleasure-seeking), the ego (mediates between the id and external reality), and the superego.

According to psychoanalytic theory, a text can be interpreted in relation to the author's own possible neuroses. In the case of Gilman, one could argue that she was oppressed by the patriarchal society in which she lived, and as a result, she chose to create a text that made readers question the idea that men knew better than women. Another theory is that Perkins was reacting to how males treated women, believing they did best when it came to female medical matters. Perkins is implying that males do not know what is best for female medical difficulties, considering that the protagonist becomes psychologically disabled. For some, Charlotte may simply be the lady behind the wallpaper.

Jacques Lacan viewed psychiatry as a "verbal science," since "the psychoanalyst investigates the unconscious mind by using and examining language" (Barry 106). Similarly, the language of *The Yellow Wallpaper* is important since it allows the narrator to record her tale, yet subsequently she is "absolutely forbidden" from doing so (Gilman 2). It is the language framework that drives the tale along and gradually reveals the characters.

Through his work in psychoanalysis, Lacan developed a three-step model of mental development: the Real Order, the Imaginary Order, and the Symbolic Order. The Real represents a moment in an infant's life when all necessities are addressed. As the infant grows, he or she progresses to the Imagery, where there is no distinction between self and others. As the youngster sees their reflection in the mirror, they learn to distinguish themselves from

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others. Lacan refers to this stage as a "mirror stage." When a kid achieves self-recognition, he enters the Symbolic stage, when he learns language to refer to others and objects (Barry 109).

In Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator describes these Lacanian stages of growth. As the tale unfolds, the narrator behaves more like a child than an adult, exhibiting the opposite of Lacanian growth. For example, her husband, John, cares for her like a kid, referring to her as "little girl" and "a blessed little goose" (Gilman 6). However, the narrator recognizes herself in the company of the "other" lady in the yellow wallpaper and becomes one with her. The identification might be viewed as a connection between the narrator ("the self") and the lady on the wallpaper ("the other"). As her passion and connection with the lady become stronger, the narrator's mind becomes distracted with this "other" (Barry 109). In the last scene, the narrator's insanity is shown by her "creeping" about the room. She says "here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way" (Gilman 10). The concept of "creeping" prompts the narrator to crawl as a newborn, guided by the wall. Her last representation as a child-like spirit highlights her journey into lunacy. Her return to the Real Order represents her freedom from mental and bodily confinement.

As a result, her imagination and hallucinations form an image behind the wallpaper. Her laziness triggered her mental disintegration, removing her logic and commitment to reality. The yellow wallpaper allows the psychoanalyst to follow the patterns that have evolved inside the narrator's unconscious mind. The narrative depicts the impact of the unconscious on the conscious mind through the narrator's personification of the wallpaper, noting that it "knew what a vicious influence it had!" (Gilman 4). Thus, the yellow wallpaper reflects Lacan's belief in "the centrality of the unconscious" (Barry 110).

1-3Feminist Approach and Its Relation to “*The Yellow Wallpaper*”

Charlotte Perkins Gilman became one of the most vocal American women during the feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as she followed in the footsteps of prior females who had greatly affected societal reforms in America. Because Gilman's father abandoned her when she was young, she was never impressed by the usual household boundaries imposed for women. Nonetheless, the writer married at a young age and soon had a kid. Gilman's unpleasant experiences in her first marriage fueled her disdain

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for the home expectations and restraints of middle and upper-class women. After breaking free from marital constraints, Gilman intended to create a large platform to express her radical ideas on a woman's place in society. Her reform writings and actions identify her as a feminist, but her societal critique extended much beyond the ordinary suffragist or temperance union member. To truly free women, the foresighted author proposed that American society should be recreated in a socialist fashion (Scharnhorst II).

The feminist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in America, also known as the First Wave of Feminism, was a significant social and political movement that sought to gain equal rights for women. The movement was characterized by a growing awareness of women's rights and the need for women's suffrage, or the right to vote. The movement of feminism is intricate and multidimensional, including a broad spectrum of attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs. Women's rights and opportunities are something that feminism aims to advance, and it challenges patriarchal structures that support gender inequity. Because the patriarchal system is predicated on men's power over women and the marginalization of women's experiences, feminism aims to question and undermine it. The goal of feminism is to provide women and girls the confidence to take charge of their life, make independent choices, and feel autonomous and self-determining.

Gender is not the only aspect that shapes women's experiences; feminism acknowledges that race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and ethnicity all interact with gender to influence women's lives. The diversity of women's experiences—including those that range in ability, sexual orientation, class, culture, and religion—is recognized and celebrated by feminism. Feminism rejects the use of force and violence in the pursuit of equality and instead supports peaceful methods of settling disputes and fostering social change. The goal of feminism is to question and change the ways that patriarchy is ingrained in institutions, societal structures, and cultural norms. Understanding and meeting the unique needs and experiences of women, especially those who are marginalized or oppressed, is a top priority for feminism.

All manifestations of sexism are condemned by feminism, including discrimination, sexual harassment, and gendered stereotypes. Acknowledging the interdependence of social justice movements, feminism endeavors to cooperate with other groups, including those fighting against racism, homophobia, and disability rights. Understanding that individual acts

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alone are insufficient to bring about systemic change, feminism emphasizes the significance of group action and organizing to achieve social change. Given that addressing the intersections of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, and ethnicity is essential to bringing about social change, feminism promotes policies that address these intersections. Feminism promotes alternative viewpoints and challenges prevailing beliefs by fostering critical thinking and examination of institutions, cultural practices, and societal norms. The importance of community-based organizing and grassroots activity in advancing social change and empowering oppressed populations is emphasized by feminism. Feminism aims to encourage gender variety and challenge binary gender standards, acknowledging that gender is a social construct rather than a biological fact. These qualities are not all-inclusive, and various feminisms may highlight or give differing weight to particular items on this list. They do, however, offer a broad framework for comprehending the basic ideas and ideals of feminism.

Before feminism emerged in America in 1919, black women who were owned as slaves by their owners and white women who were viewed as second-class citizens opposed their circumstances by starting the abolitionist movement. Persists throughout the American Civil War in an effort to eradicate slavery and combat the inequality they experience. "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a classic short story that is often analyzed through the lens of feminist theory. The narrative emphasizes the manner in which women in the late 19th and early 20th century were ostracized and alienated from society. The protagonist, who shall remain nameless, has her husband disregard her worries and invalidate her experiences, treating her as a "other". The narrative demonstrates the manner in which men ruled over women in this era. The protagonist's spouse, a doctor, is portrayed as a controlling character who dictates his wife's course of treatment and keeps her confined to a room. The narrative questions the gender roles that were traditionally allocated to women in this era. It is expected of the protagonist to be meek, submissive, and ornamental, and of her husband to be assertive, logical, and successful. People in the protagonist's immediate vicinity—her spouse and the physician attending to her—silence and dismiss her experiences. The ways in which women's voices were frequently silenced throughout this time period are powerfully symbolized by this silencing. The narrative examines the notion that women who were viewed as "mad" or "hysterical" were frequently thought to be inherently less intelligent than males. The demands

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and expectations that society places on the protagonist lead to her eventual spiral into lunacy. The narrative emphasizes how crucial female agency and autonomy are in subverting patriarchal standards. The protagonist's battle to take back her identity and declare her independence serves as a potent metaphor for feminist resistance.

When academics and students discuss Charlotte Perkins Gilman, they are referring to a lady who, after overcoming a severe mental illness during her first marriage, became known as the "New Woman," a prominent author, a lecturer on equal rights, and an advocate for working women with higher education. They occasionally fail to take the necessary precautions, nevertheless, to avoid drawing the incorrect conclusion that Gilman's mental breakdown was an isolated incident with few lasting effects. In actuality, the author's impairment had a big impact on her life. She suffered from anxiety and depression symptoms for more than 27 years, which frequently affected her strength and productivity at work. These were "a time of extreme distress, shame, discouragement, and misery," as Gilman herself put it (103).

Gilman's mental condition became apparent after the birth of her first child. She fell victim to what is now known as postpartum depression, thinking that becoming a mother would take away from her desire to pursue a career and would rob her of valuable time. While the Gilman had a "continuous dragging weariness miles below zero, during the nadir of her melancholy, complete inability, Complete agony" (91). As though trying to escape the agony and misery she was experiencing all the time, she slide under mattresses and crept into closets (96). Friends and relatives thought Gilman's breakdown was unexplainable and that the best course of action would be to return to her household duties with sincerity, as they did not observe any signs of physical weakness. Additional supporters recommended that Gilman "occupy [her] mind with pleasant things" and "force some happiness in [her] life" (90).

Gilman was unable to convince her loved ones that despite her physical strength, her intellect was feeble and ill. She felt doubted and even mocked. She expressed her resignation in writing, stating that "no one observed or understood in the least" (89) about her condition. Gilman famously sought treatment from the nation's top nerve specialist, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, during the worst of her sickness because she thought she was going insane. She sent a letter outlining the course of her illness to the doctor, but he ignored her. History has given

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Gilman what he referred to as "the rest cure," assuring her that she was "just hysterical" and not suffering from dementia (95–6). Mitchell instructed his patient to "live as domestic a life as far as possible," "have but two hours' intellectual life a day," and "never touch pen, brush, or pencil again" before sending them home 'Why'. The doctor stated that this treatment was 'rather a bitter medicine' that made his patients "glad enough to accept the order to rise and go about when the doctor issues a mandate" (qtd. in Jury 222). Gilman followed the doctor's advice for three months and was nearly driven mad.

After Hedges' publication of "The Yellow Wallpaper," critics celebrated it as one of the most important feminist texts ever written. Such feminist readings remain essential to our understanding of Gilman's story and milieu, especially in affording understanding of patriarchal oppression, the philosophy of separate spheres, True Womanhood, and misguided diagnostic and treatment practices of the late nineteenth century. Interestingly, this scholarship also tends to interpret madness as a rebellion directed against women's subjection, an empowering manifestation of feminine sexuality and of ruptured but while such readings impressively engage madness in creatively metaphorical ways, they ignore realities of a narrator devastated by her experience of mental illness. The narrator's emotional condition, after all, severely disables her, destroying her capacity to wholly function and interact in society.

The narrator uses profound lens to analyze the themes of repressions, Mental Illness and Feminine identity. Freud's theory shows that the mind expresses ideas and thoughts are socially or in society are not acceptable. The isolation of women into room and then decorating a wall with yellow wallpaper which was not acceptable for her due to her mental illness and psyche. By applying Freudian theory we can come to know about the suppressed self of protagonist. Madness theory provides framework that Protagonist mind were going towards mental illness there was nothing wrong in Yellow Wallpaper but due to undue pressure of society she fall in mental illness. Through Freudian psychoanalytical lens we come to know that how she became the victim of mental illness. 494 Vol. 7 No.1 2024 Freudian theory on societal norms expresses that she were feminist. After understanding her relation with her husband we can understand that her major reason for mental illness and depression were that she was against the norms and values of that time. It shows how societal expectations influenced her life and destroyed her sense of identity.

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Gilman was never drawn to the middle or upper class lifestyle that was advertised for women. She had always been quite independent, and she was devastated when she was forced to take on the domestic role of wife and mother. Gilman's agony at striving to fulfill the typical role of a late-nineteenth-century white lady in a middle-class marriage sparked a long career devoted to achieving women's liberation. Her rise to prominence as an essayist, fiction writer, and political activist, along with her clear writing style and radical themes, signaled an unequivocal rejection of traditional gender preconceptions. Gilman belonged to a considerably more radical milieu, and her unusual lifestyle and ideas resulted in prejudice and criticism of her works. Nonetheless, Gilman's tireless efforts and belief in women's equality continued to the end of her life. Gilman's ideas regarding typical patriarchal households emerged from a young age.

Charlotte learnt at a young age to rely emotionally and financially on women. She was inspired by numerous prominent women, including novelist and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, Catharine Beecher, founder of the Hartford Female Seminary, and suffragette Isabella Beecher Hooker. As a result, Gilman had various female role models who advocated for human and gender equality through educational and political platforms. According to her biographer, Gary Scharnhorst, Harriet Beecher Stowe was Gilman's greatest role model, and she worked hard to highlight her great aunt's humanitarian efforts. Gilman's admiration for women was also influenced by the absence of a male role during her youth. Gilman's father left his family fatherless and destitute after realizing that her mother should no longer have children. Gilman "learned early to question the sanctity of the home, the 'domestic Mythology,' and the role assigned to women within the conjugal family" (Scharnhorst 2).

Initially dissatisfied with the household responsibilities required of a wife in the late nineteenth century, Gilman's sadness worsened when her domestic commitments were combined with the birth of her lone child. The arrival of Katharine Beecher on March 23, 1865, little than a year after marriage, made Gilman feel more constrained and overwhelmed. Her dislike for domesticity had overcome her, and she felt as if she was excellent at nothing. She healed while visiting a friend of the Stetson's, Grace Channing, but fell back into sadness upon returning home. At this moment, Gilman saw that "the familiarity of the domestic routine bred contempt" (Scharnhorst 8). She was content while she worked alone and was being herself, but she was unhappy when she had to do the duties of a wife and mother.

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Despite her dissatisfaction with her previous marriage, Gilman attempted to cope with her bereavement. To maintain her sanity, Gilman sought to nurture the intellectual and activist spheres. For example, she attended the inaugural suffrage conference in 1886 and began writing for local newspapers and journals. In 1887, the dejected wife sought to alleviate her sadness by undergoing a "rest cure" overseen by "nerve specialist" S. Wier Mitchell. Mitchell's "cure" limited everything Gilman thought was positive. His therapy was "designed to reduce a female patient to the state of childlike docility" and she was advised to limit intellectual work to two hours per day and "never touch pen, brush, or pencil as long as [she] live [d]" (Scharnhorst 9). Gilman's traumatic experience inspired her short novel "The Yellow Wallpaper," which advocates for women's independence. Mitchell's "rest cure" intensified her yearning for autonomy; as a result, the Stetsons separated in 1887 and divorced in 1894.

Although Gilman's stories were not true depictions of her life, her personal experiences affected many of them. Her most famous narrative, "The Yellow Wallpaper," published in October 1890 (before acknowledged to have been influenced by her period under Wier S. Mitchell's supervision), sparked an immediate backlash. Although Gilman meant the short tale to be pure "propaganda" against women's home confinement and conspicuous rest treatments to assist their sadness, it drew a following that saw it as grotesque (Scharnhorst 15). In the play of psychological realism, the protagonist husband and doctor, John, locks her in a nursery to take a "rest cure. "Her triumph 'is symbolized by the overcoming of John, who is last seen fainting on the floor as his wife sweeps over him" (Kennard, quoting Scharnhorst 19). Although the heroine's "cure" did not meet the parameters that her male doctor and husband had hoped for, she, like Gilman, is liberated by realizing her pain as a wife and eventually breaks free from suffering.

By assigning a revisionary reading to the narrator at the end of the narrative, these critics think that the narrator, in being able to analyze her own circumstances, is utilizing a language that may convey her wishes and her need for self-expression. This judgment fails because it is evident throughout the novel that the narrator is locked in patriarchal rhetoric. As a result, she is unable to grasp her predicament consciously; her craziness can only serve as a parody of emancipation. In a recent piece titled "Monumental Feminism and Literature's Ancestral House: Another Look at 'The Yellow Paper,'" Janice Haney-Peritz criticizes these works, citing the narrator's lack of access to language. She claims that these critics have

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distorted the novel into a "feminist monument" or a tribute to female success since she believes the narrator just follows out her husband's wishes. Haney-Peritz sees the narrator's captivity as unavoidable, rendering the entire tale a "repetition," only a mirror of patriarchal ambitions. She says, "Indeed, it's possible that when we read 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' we're reading about John's needs and ambitions rather than anything uniquely feminine. If this is the case, the assertion that the identification [of the feminine in the text] is freeing becomes quite problematic..." (123).

These opponents wrongly characterize the feminine as a feminist 'truth' that embraces all women's experiences. They do not seek or disregard the feminine in the text, as Haney-Peritz does. Instead, they describe the feminine as the times in the text that interrupt masculine desire and allow the woman's wishes to surface. Despite the fact that the narrator is caught in her husband's discourse, it is believed that her wishes are plainly visible in the symptomatic points, or meaning impasses, in her journal. Furthermore, her longing refers to a liberated and disruptive force that both reflects and confines her unconscious-the yellow wallpaper itself-. This energy enables the narrator to begin to transcend her husband's language and goals and build her own.

She has been symbolically integrated into this system of discourse, which is emphasized by John's familial status within the summer house. His re-creation of the family includes putting his wife in the role of the absent kid, to whom she has recently given birth. In his absence, he trusts his sister, Jennie, whom the narrator describes as the 'perfect housekeeper,' to look after her. John's behaviors towards his wife support the concept that she is the kid, forcing her to sleep in the room that used to be a nursery, forcing her to nap, reading to her before bedtime, and referring to her as his 'little girl'. In this approach, he mirrors the child's initial integration into a linguistic system. This aspect is highlighted by Jacques Lacan's theory of language. Language, according to Lacanian theory, arises outside of the person and is governed by a general rule. When the infant enters the symbolic domain, she submits to that rule, which is a pre-existing system of social and sexual roles. The kid can no longer view herself as a single, self-generating subject; she is instead constrained by discourses that cannot fully express her (8)

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John's claim that his wife's illness is a "false and foolish fancy"(12) must unavoidably contradict her claims that she is ill, allowing him to preserve his position in this hierarchy at her expense. Furthermore, his prescription for full rest not only overrules her urge to write and have company, but also, symbolically, removes her ability to communicate. In his diagnosis, he divides between the visible and the invisible, just as he asserts masculine superiority over female. In the eighteenth century, it was discovered that hysteria had no organic cause and hence was not considered a physical sickness. Most nineteenth-century doctors saw hysteria as a "false and foolish fancy" (12)of emotionally charged women.(10)

The necessity for women's liberation is one of the central principles of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. It is expressed in the following statements and actions, which are particularly emblematic of women's struggle to emancipate themselves from the constraints of tradition and patriarchal oppression. "I pulled, and she shook. I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper" ("*The Yellow Wallpaper*", Charlotte Perkins Gilman17). Another example: "I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you [John] and Jane! and I've pulled most of the paper , so you can't put me back.(“*The Yellow Wallpaper*” ,Charlotte Perkins Gilman 19). It is a must to consider the roles of the verbs employed by the lady in the preceding statement, specifically: shook, pulled, peeled, and got out. They perform a perlocutionary purpose, signifying the female character's might and fight, as well as her efforts to liberate the lady on the yellow wall paper, which represents women's attempts at freedom. These behaviors imply that female liberation does not arrive ‘on a platter of gold’,but that women must struggle for it in order to achieve it.

1.4 The Relationship between Psychoanalytical Theory and Feminist Approach

Psychoanalysis and feminism diverged early on, resulting in a limited relationship between the two. The relationship was challenging and sometimes ambivalent. Psychoanalysis provided women with a voice and allowed them to express forbidden topics like sexuality and unpleasant emotions.Feminists attempted to criticise Freud's views, but were unable to present an alternative viewpoint that avoided biological determinism and conservatism. Psychoanalytical Theory has made significant contributions to feminist studies, allowing women to overcome biases and think critically about feminist topics.

1.5 How Did Psychoanalytical Theory Add to The Feminist One

Psychoanalytical theory, most notably the work of Sigmund Freud, added to feminist theory by providing insights into the ways in which unconscious desires, traumas, and conflicts shape individuals' behavior, relationships, and perceptions of themselves. Freud's concepts such as the Oedipus complex, penis envy, and the unconscious mind shed light on the ways in which society's gender norms and expectations can impact individuals' sense of identity and self-worth. Feminist theorists have used psychoanalytical concepts to analyse how patriarchal structures and norms can shape women's experiences of power, sexuality, and relationships. For example, feminist theorists have used Freud's ideas to criticise the ways in which women are often pathologized or relegated to specific roles within society based on their gender. Furthermore, psychoanalytical theory has provided feminist theorists with tools for understanding and addressing issues such as trauma, abuse, and how internalised beliefs about gender can impact individuals' mental health and well-being. By incorporating psychoanalytical insights into their work, feminist theorists have been able to explore the complex ways in which gender, sexuality, and power intersect in shaping individuals' experiences and relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, This chapter explores Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, using Freudian psychoanalytic analysis to explore themes of repression, madness, and feminine identity. The yellow wallpaper symbolizes societal limitations on women in the 19th century, highlighting women's isolation and the consequences of denying them autonomy, power, and intellectual stimulation. The protagonist's descent into madness symbolizes suppressed desires and societal rebellion against oppressive society. The climax, where the protagonist destroys the wallpaper, challenges societal expectations and asserts autonomy. The chapter contributes to the scholarly discourse on Gilman's exploration of gender roles and societal norms, emphasizing the profound impact of societal expectations on women's mental health and identity.

Chapter Two

**Analyses: Detachment from Reality and
Growing Delusions**

2.1 Introduction

The yellow wallpaper is a narrative that tells the story of a lady who is unable to break free from the restraints of patriarchal society and spirals into madness. One could interpret the protagonist's slow descent into insanity as a metaphor for the psychological devastation brought about by the forces of gender inequality. The novel explores the protagonist's struggle with mental health and solitude, highlighting the 19th-century social conventions that denied women independence. Women were expected to be happy as wives and mothers, and their creative and intellectual endeavors were suppressed. This system limited women's ability to express themselves and pursue their interests, leading to mental illness. The protagonist's fantasy of a woman trapped under a yellow wall covering becomes more apparent as her mental breakdown accelerates. Thus, this chapter is going to highlight the protagonist's detachment from reality due to her descent into madness and hallucinations that were caused by her fixation on the wallpaper.

2.1-Descent into Madness

The experience of domestication and confinement at home for several causes resulting from patriarchal dominance and imposed ideals of femininity. The protagonist's endeavor to achieve her potential and pursue her aspirations rather than being the endearing, altruistic, helpless 'Angel in the House' is greatly hampered by her entrapment between a modern existence and restrictive, unfulfilling traditional gender norms. Gilman's narrator rejects these ideals and embraces 'madness' as a way to escape an oppressive existence that prevents her from connecting with her inner self. While readers can experience the inner workings of a suffocating domesticated woman through Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the protagonist feels alienated from a socially constructed self that was molded to fit a prescribed gender role and feels the need to unearth a more satisfying, authentic self that is grounded in her needs and desires, apart from the norm, the reasonable, and the rational.

Quawas (2006) discusses Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'New Woman's Journey', where she presents her female protagonists as complex and grounded in a realistic variety of ways, challenging the nineteenth-century tradition of presenting women as "merely as innocent ingénoues, angelic wives and mothers, or shameful fallen women." ("New Women's

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Journey,"2006,p. 38) Gilman calls for literature that breaks from this tradition and presents women as New Women who free themselves from the hovering Angel of the True woman. Inspired by her personal encounter with Mitchell's rest cure for neurasthenia, which is now diagnosed as postpartum depression, Gilman writes *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a protest against medical practices that perpetuate sexism and are nothing more than "violent process[es] of feminization" (Ammons, 1992, p. 35). promoting infantilization, female dependence, and social and political subjugation. Gilman writes "Why I Wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*?" in response to doctors' criticism of the story, saying it "was enough to drive anyone mad to read it." (271) In this essay, Gilman clarifies that her narrative "was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy" (271). Authorship and creativity were thought to be major contributing factors in cases of female neurasthenia and hysteria. Gilman illustrates the true madness of domesticating women and severing them from the intellectual and political world deemed appropriate only for men by using what creativity remained after being told to live 'as domestic a life as possible' and never touch a "pen, brush, or pencil again" (Gilman, "Why I Wrote," 271). Gilman depicts madness as the ultimate result of severe female oppression that denies women the right to voice their needs, thoughts, and creativity, binding them to a life of servitude and self-sacrifice that hinders their evolution into whole human beings and individuals. It is not that she wants women to find their freedom in and through madness or that she presents madness as the solution to patriarchal oppression.

Denied the freedom to voice her opinions and encountering strong "opposition" whenever she does (Gilman, "Yellow Wallpaper," p. 42), the narrator writes things in a hidden journal that she "would not say to a living soul" (p. 41). Her sister Jennie, who has internalized patriarchal ideologies, believes that writing is what initially made the narrator ill (p. 47), while her husband, a nineteenth-century physician who feels intellectual stimulation wears her mind and nerves, "hates to have [her] write a word" (p. 43). The narrator clarifies, however, that what exhausts her is not writing itself—which she must do—but rather needing to be "sly about it" (p. 42) in order to avoid encountering strong resistance: "I must say what I feel and think in some way – it is such a relief!" (49). Questioning the medical practices of her time, the unnamed narrator complains in her secret diary about her treatment methods and proclaims that she has no choice but to abide by the orders of her husband and brother, the

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“physician[s] of high standing” (p. 41): “[. . .] I am absolutely forbidden to „work“ until I am well again.

In her complaints, the narrator keeps bringing up the recovery plans she must adhere to, the negative effects of her domestication and social isolation, how she feels "dreadfully depressed" (p. 44), "dreadfully fretful and querulous" (p. 48), "awfully lazy" (p. 49), "mostly tired" (p. 47), and how it makes her cry for no apparent reason (p. 48). She mentions a friend who has been under Weir Mitchell's supervision, describing his care as "more so" than that of her brother and John, and expresses her anxiety of being taken to the doctor who created the rest treatment (p. 48). She begs her husband repeatedly to let her go out and socialize with people, like her cousin Henry and Julia, but as part of her recovery plan, which calls for her to just rest, eat, sleep, and abstain from all intellectually or socially stimulating activities, John refuses to let her visit or host them.

In addition to the negative effects of keeping her alone and forbidding her from writing, her husband makes her stay in the room with barred windows despite its "horrid" (p. 45) yellow wallpaper in order for her health to get better. This causes her to become frustrated. The narrator repeatedly begs John to stay in a lovely room downstairs instead of the nursery of his choice, away from the paper's "vicious influence" (p. 46). John refuses, dismissing the plea as a "whim" (p. 45). His choice of the nursery at the top of a colonial mansion is a reflection of his total control over his wife and his idealization of her, as suggested by his references to her as a "little girl" (p. 50) and a "blessed little goose" (p. 44).

The way John dominates his wife and shows little to no concern for her feelings and wants—whether it's about the room she wants to stay in, her desire to work and socialize, or her own feelings about her "condition"—is a reflection of the traditional power dynamics in a typical marriage around the 1890s. The narrator's anonymity highlights how little of an independent identity she had as a married woman adhering to the patriarchal and social norms of her day. Her journal entries describe the life of a middle-class Victorian female writer and artist whose creativity is suppressed and hindered by social constructs and patriarchal dominance, which all serve to restrict her to the role of ideal wife and devoted mother. John's response when his wife suggested that she might not be feeling well—mentally rather than physically—serves as an illustration. John gives her a "reproachful look," emphasizing how

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crucial the narrator's recovery is for him as a husband who depends on her to carry out her responsibilities as a wife and mother. He asks her to put "[his] sake" first and foremost, then "[their] child's sake," and last but not least, "[her] own [sake]" (p. 51). His attitude toward her creative imagination as a writer is another example. He "cautioned" her about the potentially harmful effects her "imaginative power and habit of story-making" would have on her frayed nerves and advised her to exercise her "will and good sense to check that tendency" (p. 46).

The narrator's writings portray an unconscious internalization of her husband's thinking as she records her response to his commands and beliefs regarding her condition, despite the fact that she continues to write in secret against their wishes. When she becomes "unreasonably" (p. 43) angry with him, she "takes pain to control herself — before him, at least," according to her diary. As any sensible Victorian lady would, she places the blame for such unreasonable anger on her "nervous condition," which she believes is impeding her ability to "think straight" (p. 49). The narrator, who is still unaware of the true cause of her anger, expresses her anxiety whenever she considers her child (p. 44), her frustration at not being able to fulfill her responsibilities as a wife and mother, and her feeling like a burden rather than the support and comfort her husband needs (p. 44): "It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!" (p. 44). After finding and identifying with the figure of a woman trapped in the patterns of the horrible wallpaper in the nursery she is occupying, the narrator realizes that her sickness is actually a result of these roles and her husband's domineering attitude, even though she still blames her illness for not being able to fulfill her duties and live up to her ideally constructed role and image.

Even though the narrator detests it, her forced seclusion allows her to reflect on her situation and see herself not as a sick "hysterical" lady but rather as an oppressed writer who must sacrifice who she truly is in order to conform to social norms and patriarchy. The horrible yellow wallpaper she can't stop staring at serves as a mirror through which the narrator learns to identify with herself; day by day, it becomes easier to perceive the reflection of her imprisoned alter ego. The hue yellow, which makes her think of "old, foul, bad yellow things" (p. 54), represents her illness and "hysterical" inclinations in the eyes of her husband and the general public. It also portends the discovery of something within her that will be perceived as "bad" and "foul" by society. The narrator's "sin" as a female writer and artist for daring to break patriarchal and cultural constraints of the time is linked to the flamboyant

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patterns, "committing every artistic sin" (p. 43), for which she is punished with the label of "hysteria" and forced domestication.

As she spends more time in this room examining the wallpaper patterns, she comes to the realization that "there are things in that paper that nobody knows but [her], or ever will..." The shape of "a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern" is always the same, just extremely numerous (p. 50).

The Classic short novella "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a powerful psychological study and a symbolic paradigm about limitation and seclusion, it delves into the complexities of women's lives and experiences in an oppressive society; using different elements such as the house and the wallpaper as potent symbols of confinement, identity loss, as well as lack of freedom and agency. The narrator makes it clear that she didn't feel safe at all and that the house was haunted. The house symbol is frequently seen as a refuge for a woman's metamorphosis and self-expression. Consequently, the home continues to serve as the cocoon for her metamorphosis in this manner; it does not take on the form of the typical symbol of protection for a woman's domestic decisions, but it also prevents her metamorphosis.

The wallpaper on the other hand, represents the narrator's awful position. The wallpaper is the most obvious aspect in the tale; it takes center stage and might almost be considered a character in and of itself. The wallpaper symbolizes various things, one of which being men's limitations on women. The narrator imagines herself trapped behind bars, powerless over her life and health, yet the vision is broader than the person. Aside from that, the nursery chamber serves as a metaphor throughout the plot. A nursery is a location where young children are cared for. It demonstrates that the nursery room is solely for small children, where they may be happy and comfortable. However, the narrator sees it the opposite way around, with the nursery room representing a gloomy message about her predicament. Her husband does not treat her like a wife, and it appears like he is speaking to his small daughter, which is inappropriate. It demonstrates that the spouse is domineering, and oppression is evident in their relationship. Finally, the creeping lady is another metaphor that helps the reader grasp what the narrator is going through under her husband's power. The narrator becomes preoccupied with the vision of crawling ladies behind the yellow background, which appears

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so real to her. The symbolism of the Yellow Wallpaper reflects the fundamental portrayal of gender discrimination and the stripping of identity suffered by women.

Moonlight awakens this woman, who was "subdued" by daytime (p. 52), "shaking]the pattern as if she wanted to get out" (p. 50). The pattern appears differently in the daylight and moonlight contrast (p. 51), which represents the narrator's contradictory emotions and actions around John and Jennie, the symbols of social norms and patriarchy, and around the creepy woman in the pattern, the symbol of insanity, which suggests the narrator is becoming split or schizoid in personality. Upon realizing that John and Jennie are observing her and that they are giving her "inexplicable looks" and acting "very queer" around her, the narrator's uneasiness escalates, and she admits to "getting a little afraid of John" (p. 52). In John Bak's work "Escaping the Jaundiced Eye: Foucauldian Panopticism in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, he draws comparisons between the narrator's imprisonment in the nursery and Foucault's Panopticism (4). According to Bak, confining a prisoner or patient in the Panopticon, which is supposed to be a better environment, ends up being more detrimental than the "unhealthy or unappealing environment of the prison or mental ward" they would otherwise occupy (1994, p. 42), as it causes anxiety and paranoia that compromise their psychological stability. The countless "absurd unblinking eyes [that] are everywhere" (*Yellow Wallpaper*, p. 46) that watch and stare at the narrator represent society's attempt to ensure that she checks her behavior as defined by the cult of true womanhood; on the other hand, the "two bulbous eyes" (p. 46) represent John's, who keeps an eye on her every move and won't let her "stir without special direction" (p. 43). Bak clarifies as follows:

Under the unerring scrutiny of the "two bulbous eyes" (*The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 7) in the yellow wallpaper, the narrator passes through stages from concern to paranoia and, finally, to madness. During the entire journey, we are reminded of Foucault's description of panopticism's "faceless gaze" with "thousands of eyes posted everywhere" (214). By placing her in this room, John, the narrator's husband, resembles the penal officers of the eighteenth-century psychiatric wards or penitentiaries, whose credo Foucault describes [sic]: "project the subtle segmentations of discipline onto the confused space of internment, combine it with the methods of analytical distribution proper to power, [and] individualize the excluded . . . ([Foucault] 199)." (Bak, 1994, p. 42)

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The narrator, first stuck in her husband's conversation, is unable to find her own words or express her emotions. These emotions do exist, though. They appear in her journal as symptomatic moments, signifying impasses in which John's logic collapses. They cause her to make sarcastic remarks, such as, "He [John] is a physician, which may be one of the reasons I don't get better sooner." His status as a doctor--a healer--becomes a hindrance to her wellness since his diagnosis does not capture her true condition. In the words of Luce Irigaray, "The rejection, the exclusion of a female imaginary certainly puts woman in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily, in the little-structured margins of a dominant ideology, as a waste, an excess ..." (30).

When the narrator is stopped from speaking when she makes her final attempt to inform John that she does not believe she is improving, she realizes she has lost her only method of communication. At this moment, she turns to the wallpaper, "laying for hours trying to decide whether... [the] front pattern and back pattern really... [do] move together or separately" (25). And it is via this examination of the wallpaper that she tries to comprehend her circumstances. According to current research, the paper, which the narrator characterizes as "horrid" and cruel, represents the narrator's repressive marriage and restricted self. Haney-Peritz elaborates on this topic, claiming that the wallpaper represents the repressive language in which she is confined. She cites the narrator's description of the wallpaper: "The pattern 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" (13).

Throughout the novel, Gilman makes it obvious that the narrator is the cause of this dislocating structure. Gilman creates a physical link between the narrator and the wallpaper, implying that it might serve as a vehicle for her desire. For example, the narrator notes her urge to touch the wallpaper to see whether it moves, and it is clear that she does so frequently as Jennie chastises her for getting yellow "smooches" from the wallpaper on her clothes. In this manner, the wallpaper has left its imprint on the narrator, yet it was the narrator who first "marked" it. This physical touch with the wallpaper represents the narrator imprinting the wallpaper with her desire by allowing her to go beyond her husband's words and express her desire directly. The "writing the body" incorporates the imagined since the narrator has direct access to reality.¹² In her interactions with her family, the narrator emphasizes her idea that

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she owns the wallpaper and, more crucially, that it houses her. She is envious of anybody who glances at the wallpaper. She continues, "I've observed John when he didn't realize I was watching, and I caught him glancing at the paper! And Jennie, too. I saw Jennie with her hand on it once... I asked her in the quietest, most reserved voice imaginable, what she was doing with the paper... (27).

The narrator's description of the paper emphasizes the idea that it reflects her desires. She claims that the paper smells: "It is not bad-at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met" (29). This description of the fragrance obviously connects it to female sexuality, which Mary Jacobus investigates in her piece "An Unnecessary Maze of Sign-Reading." She quotes Jane Gallop, and said, "Thus, for Jacobus, that fragrance becomes synonymous with the odor of sexuality itself" (243).). This sexual indication that entices the narrator pervades the entire house: "I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs." It gets in my hair" (29). Her sexuality becomes a pervasive and permanent influence in the home, upending John's perception of his wife as a young girl.

More importantly, by utilizing her creative skills and "habit of story-making," the narrator allows her emotions to appear inside the wallpaper design. For example, she identifies features to the pattern that hint to certain personality traits, which John says she must "will and self-control" to suppress. The following excerpts from her analysis of the pattern reveal intense emotions of anger, violence, and provocation: "It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough constantly to irritate and provoke study, when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a short distance, they suddenly commit suicide-plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions."

The color is awful, unstable, and annoying enough, but the pattern is torture... You think you've mastered it [the pattern], but it knocks you down, slaps you" (13). These sentiments are very similar to those she mentions while describing her physical condition. For example, the narrator frequently expresses her wrath and anxiety about John: "I become irrationally upset with John occasionally... But John warns that if I feel this way, I will lose adequate self-control, so I make an effort to restrain myself--at least in front of him, which exhausts me (11).

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By analyzing the wallpaper and experiencing this new way of thinking, the narrator overcomes her oppressive circumstances. She adds she's "getting really fond of the room, despite the wallpaper." Perhaps it's because of the wallpaper (27). When she begins studying the wallpaper, she exclaims, "I must say what I feel," despite having before stated that she did not feel like writing (21). Furthermore, by bringing her own text to the forefront of the "text" of the wallpaper and her writing, the narrator is able to begin to dismantle the fake text of satisfaction she has established in her diary thus far. The narrator gradually notices figures emerging in the wallpaper, indicating her state, which is "unrepresentable" inside John's discourse. The "strong, provoking, formless figure" that appears to skulk about behind "the front design" of the paper gradually becomes clearer and emerges as "a woman stooping down and creeping about behind the pattern," while the outside pattern becomes "bars" representing her own stifling condition in her marriage. This is a moment of release for the narrator, as she has discovered a symbolic embodiment of her state.

However, as soon as she understands this symbolic portrayal of her genuine feelings, she begins to suppress any link between this symbol and herself. Instead, she learns to view the symbols as real, rather than abstract. As a result, she moves from the symbolic to the imaginary, as Lacan defines it. She starts to see the lady behind the wallpaper as genuine. In her depiction of the woman, she adds, "I pulled [the wallpaper], and she shook" (32). She has regressed to the position of a child, according to Lacanian theory, who has no need for language since she cannot distinguish between subject and object.

After finally being able to "see through [John]" (p. 56), the narrator asks her a variety of questions while "pretending to be very loving and kind" (p. 56). It is through these exchanges that the narrator learns about the patriarchal oppression John, as a husband and medical professional, represents. Consequently, she starts completely identifying with the imprisoned woman behind the bars of the sickening yellow existence of the wallpaper, crawling around the room when no one is looking, just like the trapped woman does, and focusing her energy on freeing that woman from the narrow patterns she is confined to: "As soon as it was moonlight and the poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. Before daybreak, we had dragged yards of that paper together as I pulled and she shook

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(p. 56). The narrator writes in her last journal entry that she saw "so many of those creeping women" and wondered, "I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?" (p.58). After breaking free from the constraints of marriage and patriarchy, the narrator sneaks around the house and meets her shocked husband, stating, "I've finally gotten out, despite you and Jane." Additionally, you can't put me back because I tore off the majority of the paper. (p. 58), where she concludes her story with his passing out in front of her beside the wall and her "creeping over him."

The woman behind the wallpaper, who stands in for the division between the narrator as mind and body, tries to emerge as the narrator's insanity deepens and the alterity starts to crumble. Going back to the narrator, she says, "It seemed as though she wanted to escape, as the faint figure behind the wallpaper seemed to shake the pattern" (Gilman, 1998, p. 493). Gilman has distinguished between the narrator's two selves; therefore, they have to reunite. The narrator finds this especially alarming because she has internalized her husband's views on the intelligent woman; the wallpaper depicting her knowledge is the deplorable Other, even if it was formerly the aspect of her that she treasured and loved. The narrator now claims that she is no longer aware of this aspect of herself, saying that "not even the faintest memory [of it] is familiar" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 5). Gilman has created a weird and otherworldly woman beneath the wallpaper—so much so that she briefly appears to have her own body. For Gilman's narrator, the idea of getting back in touch with (or It is now terrible to be "connecting," as she would put it, with this utter self.

Gilman returns the two selves to the narrator in the last section (IX) of "The Yellow Wallpaper," where the narrator's fantasies come to pass. The dual identities—the narrator in the body and the woman in the wallpaper) all compete to be in charge of the narrator's "I" in this bizarre environment, which Kristeva would refer to as the chora. The struggle over who controls the narrator's body takes center stage as Gilman switches the speaker's "I" between the two selves and the spouse, John. In turn, each of the two refers to John as "I," and she both identify as the body that is "creeping" throughout the yellow chamber. As John tries to break through her closed door, the narrator, a dutiful wife and mother, addresses him as he is used to hearing from her:

‘John dear!’ said I in the gentlest voice, ‘the key is down by the front steps, under a

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plaintain leaf!’ (Gilman, 1998, p.499)

Gilman conveys the image of the narrator as a kind little lady who lacks intelligence by using her "gentle" voice, helping demeanor, and usage of the word "dear." Gilman switches the "I" speaker a few lines later:

‘I’ve got out at last,’ said I, ‘in spite of you and Jane?[sic] And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back!’ (1998, p.499)

In this case, the speaking "I" is insisting that it is an intellectual being that cannot be suppressed and is being harsh with John, rejecting his requests.

Gilman has now divided the narrator into two selves, and when the two become one inside her body, the narrator loses her mind. The other that the narrator saw in the wallpaper transforms into the Other that was in her head, and as a result of her transformation into something other and insane, the narrator begins to creep around the room. This is evident from the unstable speaking "I" at the end of the story, which leaves the reader wondering if it refers to the narrator or the woman hidden behind the wallpaper. Gilman employs this as an example of sublimation, according to Kristeva:

“Sublimation, on the contrary, is nothing more than the possibility of naming the pre-nominal, the pre-objectal, which are only in fact trans-nominal, trans-objectal [...]. As soon as I perceive it, as soon as I name it, the sublime triggers – it has always already triggered – a spree of perceptions and words that expands memory boundlessly. I then forget the point of departure and find myself removed to a secondary universe, set off from where ‘I’ am – delight and loss. Not at all short of but always with and through perception and words, the sublime is a something added that expands us, overstrains us, and causes us to be both here, as dejects, and there, as others and sparking. A divergence, an

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impossible bounding.” (1982, pp.11-12)

The act of naming the unfamiliar (‘I’) in "The Yellow Wallpaper" makes it familiar rather than dehumanizing; in this instance, the unfamiliar is the portion of the narrator's mind that has been repressed. The narrator alternates between being dejected and someone else. Claire Kahane describes this un-separation as the blending of the self and the un-self, the woman as mother and the woman as intellect, in "The Gothic Mirror."

The Gothic fear is revealed as fear of femaleness itself, perceived as threatening to one's wholeness, obliterating the very boundaries of self. (1985,p.347)

In Gilman's story, the narrator assumes the role of "mother," transforming into an ethereal entity that sublimates and ultimately devours the ‘Other self’ through a horrifying act of merging. The designation turns into an act where the narrator identifies with a monster that is herself; the abject ‘Other’ is within her and is therefore not Other; yet, this Other is nonetheless strange, unknown, and terrifying even if she has now internalized it. Gilman sublimates the story by having the narrator name yet another Other, or Others, more examples of the deplorable—in this case, more delusions, or more women who are stuck and intellectually disenfranchised:

There are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast. I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did? (1998, p.498)

Consequently, the act of sublimation in this case results in the narrator's annihilation (insanity) as well as the creation and identification of numerous further instances of the abject, indicating that the abject is a phenomenon. That proliferates rapidly. The others are always there because there are more women being placed in a position of abjection, and Gilman utilizes this example of the exponential subject to further emphasize the deplorable condition and position of women in Victorian society.

In the end, Gilman turns this reunion into a conflict in which the narrator fights to both acknowledge and reject the reunion in order to prevent the rejected from becoming a part of herself. In fact, one could argue that The word "reconnection" is wholly inappropriate in this context because the narrator's insanity has made the familiar entirely strange and her own self completely transformed, making it impossible for her to recognize the woman in the

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wallpaper as a part of herself. Gilman depicts a total reversal of the first conflict: the narrator now opposes the reconnection because it will only drive her insane, whereas previously she fought having her body and mind separated. Gilman's narrator engages in a power struggle: would the "I" who closes the story be the lady hidden behind the wallpaper, or will the "I" who we have come to know as the narrator—the one who became the narrator-as-body? Gilman modifies the individual throughout the last page, the narrator uses the pronoun "I" a lot and quickly as he descends into madness and battles with his body and the woman hidden behind the wallpaper for control over the narrative and the self. The lady concealed by the wallpaper, the woman confined to a home, a building, and a thought, has been set free. As she becomes one with the narrator's body, the woman hidden behind the wallpaper acknowledges that her freedom is uncommon and frowned upon. In the narrative, this 'Other' takes on the role of "I," realizing that her position as "I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!" says the speaker, who is just as unconventional and taboo as her independence. (1998), page 499. The intelligent woman must return to her cell; her release is not acceptable. It's strange that knowledge must be suppressed at night, when madness rules and the moon is full. Gilman both undercuts and perpetuates patriarchal ideas about female intelligence by implying that at the time, female intelligence was seen to be insane. Feminine intelligence, but denying it unrestricted access at night, when insanity is generally connected with it. During the day, Gilman pushes female intelligence to be free because it cannot be disregarded or mistakenly written off as hysteria. She remains free despite her declaration that she sees herself returning to her nursery-prison. The societal and familial constraints that would have restricted her in this way only marginally delay her advancement. At the end of the story, the narrator remarks:

Now why should that man [John] have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so I had to creep over him every time? (1998, p.499)

John stands in for the familial and societal constraints that would have led her back to prison, but he is merely a "speed bump" in her journey. Gilman suggests that the Victorian woman who might experience madness emerges from behind the paper prison, yet freedom endures. In fact, when the demands of family and society are reduced to a little annoyance, the craziness makes freedom easier to enjoy.

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Within the framework of Female Gothic traditions, the pathetic narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" serves as a literary example of the abjection of self, and it is within the wallpaper, the narrator discovers her concealed self and her final damnation/freedom. Her fixation with the paper starts softly and eventually absorbs both the narrator and the tale. Additionally, the terror of the narrator's insanity in turn serves the reader outside of the text by constructing the Other and limning the despicable for the reader, reflecting Gilman's work beyond the boundaries of literature into a broader social and cultural context. For Victorian women, Gilman portrays a terrifying reality: facing the abject would lead to the development of the abject and, eventually, the breakdown of the mind and sanity as a result of the woman's self-imposed self-denial. This argument will inevitably come up since discourse will seem tenable only if it ceaselessly confront that otherness, a burden both repellent and repelled, a deep well of memory that is unapproachable and intimate: the abject. (Kristeva, 1982, p.6)

The narrator of Gilman's story believes that the encounter with the 'Other' is the only thing that will start a conversation, however the conversation is always between the "I" (storyteller or wallpaper lady) as well as the audience. It is this that, as Kristeva claims to be "Both repellent and repelled," meaning that it is both terrifying and untouchable, but inevitable. No matter how hard she tries, she is unable to break free from her thoughts. it outside of oneself, as well as the consequence of the abject in She is the madness within herself. Her only route to an academic career is through this madness. Liberty, as it is the sole means by which the social and cultural Pressures won't really matter because she'll have the intellectual independence she wants. She does, however, obtain this freedom by creating an insane 'Other self' that will grant her some freedom—but only after her loss. By combining lunacy with intellectual freedom, and the depressed, Gilman shows via the tragedy of her narrator that the only outcomes of a society that oppresses women are depravity and insanity.

The tale emphasizes revolt or resistance to the established order or patriarchy. The symbolic act of revolt or resistance leads to madness for John's wife. This is beautifully represented in the text when she sneaks around the room and says the following statement. "'I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path. I do not want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in... I want to astonish him ("The Yellow Wall-Paper" 18). In another instance, this rebellious feeling manifests as fury. "I am getting angry enough to do something desperate" (*The Yellow Wall-Paper*", 18). These activities symbolize a

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feminist sensibility and consciousness raising technique, as John's wife refuses to allow herself to be taken for granted any more, by her husband, Jane, or society at large.

Also present in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is a contrast in the representation of John's wife; in the beginning of the narrative, she is portrayed as a passive and obedient wife, unwilling to offend the system or question the rationale behind the supposedly caring or loving statements of John, her husband, or Dr. Weir Mitchel. She adopts this gender attitude and role since it is what society expects from her: to be seen but not heard. However, in the latter section of the book, we observe a new consciousness, a new awareness, which indicates the birth of a new aggressive female subject who has claimed her subjectivity via force.

Her feminist consciousness or agency is manifested in the following actions: her refusal to open the door for John, her husband; the symbolic action of tearing to shred the wallpaper; and her refusal to stop writing or engaging in creative activities despite Dr. Weir and her husband's instructions. Within herself, she comes to that understanding, a type of consciousness that her acts mark a new beginning of self-awareness as she observes that, "I know well enough that a step like this is improper and might be misconstrued" (*"The Yellow Wall-Paper"*18) And this has been the attitude of the culture towards women's acts, since women's desire of agency is perceived as unsuitable, misinterpreted, deviant or rebellious.

2.2-Fragmented Realities

A tiny but influential minority of American women campaigned to end slavery during the Ante-Bellum era. However, it's ironic that many of these women discovered they were going through similar struggles as they worked to enhance the rights of other people prejudice. As a result, American women started to publicly gather after the Civil War to demand their rights as citizens of the country. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, white middle-class women participated in a wide range of social and educational activities, but obtaining the right to vote was at the center of their worries. Manifested among intellectuals, social reformers, religious zealots, and socialites, many white middle and upper class women understood the need to participate in the political process in order to gain equal educational opportunities, achieve societal changes, and break from the domestic sphere in which they were locked.

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Women made significant progress in these areas between 1870 and 1935, yet the same women who battled for women's education, suffrage, and social reform were also the ones whose social standing kept them in a distinct realm from males. Because these mostly white middle-class and upper-class women lived in close quarters with their domestic help, domestic servants, and domestic kids on a daily basis, their free time allowed them to organize as their dissatisfaction with being treated as second-class citizens in the United States grew. Though the majority of the movements for women's suffrage started in the Northeast, Western states were the first to grant women the right to vote. The women's movement expanded across the nation, setting up innovative forums at universities and, more specifically, in the women's club movement. Eventually, women achieved a number of objectives, including suffrage, temperance reform, and equal educational opportunities, but these achievements were only the start.

The progress made by American women in Knoxville, Tennessee, and the surrounding areas between 1870 and 1935 offers an intriguing microcosm for comparing local movements with national ones. In light of this, the writings of Kate Chopin and Charlotte Perkins Gilman offer a gauge for comparing historical data. Near the turn of the 20th century, both Gilman and Chopin wrote avant-garde works that aimed to develop women as equal people in America, despite the fact that Gilman was far more politically involved. Gilman, who was born in the Northeast, is a representative of the national women's movement; Chopin, who was born in the mid-Southwest, based her effort to realize the unique goals of each local woman and her role in women's rights. It is important that a number of women across the nation battled for women's rights in a variety of ways, not just women's suffrage, because both Chopin and Gilman thought that women's national suffrage would not end the various ways in which women were oppressed.

In a variety of methods, women started to demand their rights in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Urbanization and industrialization both have a role in this. Barbara Epstein contends in *The Politics of Domesticity* that women started to connect with When the growing market economy and industrialization gave rise to a new social realm, the "middling classes," a particular set of "female" ideals Women lost the direct engagement that they had previously had when [men and women in traditional families] went to the towns and cities, isolating themselves from their rural origins and the family farm had in economic production

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and were reduced to domestic chores, taking care of the children, and establishing the home as a haven for males (Epstein 2). Thus, it was seen as honorable and even essential for a husband to provide for his wife financially; nonetheless, "middling class" women were further isolated from men, even while reliant on them. Some women became resentful of their newfound freedom from a "man's world," but they also developed a "distinct set of values" as a result of their financial reliance on males (Epstein 2). These new ideas, which started with the abolition of slavery, also included reforms such as suffrage, female education, and temperance.

A remarkable study of the destitute is provided by Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," a work of Female Gothic literature that follows a young woman as she goes from writer to bride to mother to invalid to insane, a process that the reader is only partially aware of because the novel starts after her child is born. This woman is an example of the abject to herself (selves), unable to distinguish between herself and the original abject (the woman in the wallpaper). Her husband's infantilization and intellectual stifling, combined with the trauma of childbirth and the postpartum depression that followed.

These ultimately lead to her plunge into insanity, where the barriers between reality and hallucination, and between sanity and insanity, dissolve, leaving her in a terrifying condition of blurriness. The narrator's humiliation serves in "The Yellow Wallpaper" to illustrate women's subjugation during the period and the process by which their mental identities were divorced from their bodily identities in a terrifying act of mental alteration.

The first-person story "The Yellow Wallpaper" tells the story of a young woman who finds it difficult to give up her intellectual identity while still trying to fit in as a wife and mother. She eventually transforms from her cerebral self to an illusion, the woman behind the wallpaper is a mental projection of the narrator. This hallucination appears as a talking, physical "I" that is free to leave the house. On the other hand, the narrator is confined to the nursery and is the only one remaining there, not the baby. As soon as the confined Gilman uses another traditional Gothic device, an imprisoned woman, to contrast the narrator with the woman hidden behind the wallpaper who is free to go about. According to Eugenia DeLamotte (1990, p. 10), "most of these books are about women who just can't seem to get out of the house," which highlights the centrality of this convention. Although the narrator is

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unable to leave the house, her mind is still free to travel; she can no longer recognize it as a part of herself. Even so, the woman the narrator's insanity and the internalization of her socially prescribed mother duty, which preceded the wallpaper's creation as part of her (her intellectual self), make the eventual reconnection of the body and the mind such a horror that it renders her abject.

The self is broken and unrecognizable as a result of the abject, which is also a means of defining and identifying the self as well as debasing the self to the point of un-selfing. According to Juliann Fleenor, this phenomena is essential to the even though she does not consider it "abject," she is a female Gothic. Rather, she refers to this as the "self-divided heroine," one of the Female Gothic conventions:

In the Female Gothic the ambivalence toward the female (good and evil) has been internalized (sic). The ambivalence toward the female self leads to feelings of self-disgust and self-fear rather than fear and disgust at something outside of her. (1983, p.11)

The internalized fear and loathing in Gilman's work are then directed onto the wallpaper outside of the narrator. Gilman illustrates the rejection of oneself with this projection by using the Female Gothic dichotomy convention. The narrator experiences two selves within his or her one self, which try to combine and drive the narrator insane. Gilman presents a situation in which a woman's body—her pregnancy—is isolated from her mind. This division of self and other satisfies the abjection formula proposed by Kristeva:

It is something rejected from which one does not part, from
which one does not protect oneself [...] Imaginary
uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up
engulfing us. (1982, p.4)

The narrator believes that the turmoil that follows can only lead to lunacy. As Kristeva may put it, the speaker's instability causes confusion about whether "I" am the body or the thinking being because "I" cannot be both.

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In this sense, the narrator defines and identifies her own intellect as being outside of herself—that is, as the woman in the wall paper. This intellectual self is made foreign, unrecognizable, and due to the narrator's absorption of her assigned parental role, alien. Since the woman behind the wallpaper is a delusion and an indication of the narrator's approaching insanity, Gilman debases the character to the point of complete disintegration of self. According to Kristeva, this disintegration represents the pinnacle of the rejection of the self:

When that subject [the narrator], weary of fruitless attempts to deal with something on the outside [the woman in the wallpaper], finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than the abject. (1982, p.5, italics in original; brackets are mine)

The woman's fear and paranoia, which are initially directed at the wallpaper and eventually at the woman she perceives behind it, are how Gilman embodies the deplorable. Gilman eventually combines the paranoia and anxiety with the woman's disgust with the wallpaper and the woman who is hiding behind it to highlight the narrator's insane state. In Gilman's work, the attempt at self-splitting fails, and the narrator discovers the outsider inside her—the woman behind the wallpaper, the intellectual self that was denied due to the difficulty of the intellectual woman's survival. She is intellectually constrained and upholds a distinct intellectual identity that is incompatible with her expected position as a mother and woman. Even though the narrator's spouse, a doctor, is quite clear about what she should and shouldn't do for her "health," boredom plays a big part in the issue:

[I] am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again. Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. (1998, p.488)

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The narrator's creative ability has been stifled by John under the pretense of providing for her, depriving her of both intellectual stimulation and independence. Rather, the storyteller needs to establish a concealed life as a writer. Because the other characters attribute her illness to her mental work, or "the writing which made [her] sick," which separates her from everyone else (1998, p. 491). The narrator's first division into two selves—her body and another hidden, intellectual self—occurs thanks to Gilman's invention of this secret self in the narrator (mind). The narrator is not only aware of this creation, but also actively involved in it. Saying with a certain satisfaction that she "can write," she seemed to almost enjoy the deceit and secrecy with which she continues to write. She [John's sister] is outside, and observe her from these windows quite a distance away. (1998), page 491. Her Other self is obviously valuable to her, just as valuable as the writing that fulfills her intellectual needs; nonetheless, Gilman's creation of this alterity will demonstrate the first step toward rejection, since the narrator's split identity turns into the means by which she becomes insane.

Gilman divides her narrator into two entities: a body and a mind, and she positions one of these entities to appear to be outside the narrator. The creepy woman's delusions are the first indication of this separation. The division between the narrator experiences a confused and destructive duality of self because her body and intellect combine to produce a paradigm in which she perceives herself as two, yet both are her. All the narrator can do is stare at her walls, which are festooned with an awful wallpaper. "I never saw a worse paper in my life," the narrator declares. If I had to live in this room, I ought to detest it. lengthy (p. 489, Gilman, 1998). Out of boredom, she starts to follow the pattern and notices things:

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder – I begin to think – I wish John would take me away from here! (1998, p.493)

The divide of the ego that Kristeva articulated is simply the ambivalence between self and other, between what is internal and outward. Here's where the nightmare starts: the gap between conscious awareness and what is known by the subconscious, where internalized knowledge pushes out. A portion of the self that is externalized—that is, removed from the body—becomes the other. Despite having her tacit consent and agency, Gilman utilizes the narrator's irritation and uncertainty with the forced construction of an alterity within herself to

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manifest this internal alterity as the creation of another lady. Although the narrator believes that the woman behind the wallpaper is an imposter, both of them are completely rejected because the woman behind the wallpaper creates and identifies herself and the narrator as the abject other.

As abjection is so intimately personal, the narrator's response to the other is the only one that counts, as the other woman is abject to her and is only visible to her. Gilman, though, provides this illustration. She skillfully conveys the narrator's repulsion and peculiar fascination with the wallpaper, making the awful personal relatable to all readers. Gilman tantalizes the reader by withholding a direct description of the wallpaper in favor of providing just enough information to let the reader's imagination to create this potentially mad wallpaper. Gilman creates an intriguing dynamic wherein the reader is made to feel like to abjection, yet detached from the reality and instant of abjection. Gilman goes into considerable depth about the wallpaper in about the response the reader gets from the paper. The paper is one of those showy, expansive patterns that commits every sin in the arts.

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. The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others. (1998, p.489)

In this paragraph, Gilman used negative imagery to evoke feelings of disgust, revulsion, and terror in reference to Kristeva's notions about abjection in relation to the body and the sacred. The work establishes a profane space in what should be a holy and secure space for kids; the paper is filthy and self-destructive. Kristeva (1982), pages 17 and 2-4. She describes the work as "irritating" and "provoking," which makes it interesting, confused, and negative (Gilman, 1998, p. 489). This section turns the paper into a attraction for the narrator as well as the reader. Kristeva asserts that the imagination plays a crucial part in the production of abjection. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded [...]. But if one imagines, (and imagine one must, for it is the working of imagination whose

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foundations are being laid here) the experience of want itself as logically preliminary to being and object – to the being of the object – then one understands that abjection, and even more so abjection of self, is its only signified. Its signifier, then, is none but literature. (1982, p.5)

To put it briefly, Gilman is pressuring her audience to begin the process of denying who they are by asking them to use their imaginations to design the wall covering. Because of the reader's alignment with the storyteller, a false relationship is formed. based on how the reader and the narrator see this common horror.

Conclusion

To put it briefly, Gilman is pressuring her audience to begin the process of denying who they are by asking them to use their imaginations to design the wall covering. Because of the reader's alignment with the storyteller, a false relationship is formed. Based on how the reader and the narrator see this common horror. The only thing that will start a conversation, according to Gilman's narrator, is the encounter with the other; but, this conversation will always take place between the reader and the "I," or narrator/wallpaper woman. Through this chapter and by analyzing the wallpaper and its relationship to the protagonist's descent into madness it's clear that the protagonist can only achieve intellectual freedom through this insanity since it is the only way that the social and cultural constraints will have minimal effect on. She does, however, obtain this freedom by creating an insane other self that will grant her some freedom—but only after she loses everything. Gilman shows via the tragedy of her narrator that lunacy and rejection are the only outcomes of a society that is oppressive to women by combining intellectual freedom, insanity, and the downtrodden.

Chapter Three

Impact: The Aftermath of Social Absence and Cultural Void

3.1 Introduction

In her renowned short tale *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman expertly depicts the main character's solitude, symbolizing her alienation from society, culture, and her own identity. Gilman's description of the main character's solitude is a harsh commentary on the limits that women faced in the late nineteenth century. The protagonist's isolation from the outer world reflects the confining limits of gender roles and the cruel patriarchal traditions that kept many women in home areas. Through the woman's steady decline into lunacy, Gilman criticizes the cultural institutions that perpetuate women's oppression and marginalization.

Furthermore, the main character's journey of revolt against her assigned role mirrors Gilman's own campaign for women's autonomy and independence. As the woman starts to peel back the layers of cultural conditioning and patriarchal domination, she goes on a journey of self-discovery and asserts her own agency. Through her opposition and eventual rejection of cultural standards that aim to constrain her, the protagonist confronts repressive forces that want to deny her uniqueness and autonomy. Hence, in this chapter we will examine how Charlotte Perkins Gilman employs the concept of isolation in *The Yellow Wallpaper* to depict the protagonist's battle for identity and agency in the face of societal restraints. This chapter will focus on the protagonist's progressive shift from a passive spectator to an active agent of change to see how Gilman illuminates the intricacies of women's experiences in a patriarchal society and emphasizes the significance of self-determination and empowerment.

3.2 Isolation from Society and Culture

Individuals' personalities and identities are heavily influenced by their social and cultural experiences. These encounters allow people to learn about themselves and others while also developing a sense of self in the context of their culture and society. Socialization is an important method in which social and cultural interactions shape personality and identity. Individuals are socialized from an early age by their families, classmates, schools, and communities to embrace specific culturally acceptable views, attitudes, customs, and

behaviors. These socialization experiences aid individuals in developing a sense of self and establishing their identity in a broader social environment.

Additionally, social and cultural connections allow people to build relationships with others, which may have a big influence on their personality and identity. Interactions with others allow people to learn about diverse viewpoints, opinions, and experiences, which can shape their own beliefs and values. These interactions also give people feedback and affirmation on their own identities, allowing them to better understand themselves and their role in the world.

Furthermore, social and cultural interactions influence people's self-concepts and self-esteem. Positive social connections may make people feel appreciated, welcomed, and supported, resulting in a greater feeling of self-worth and confidence. Negative social interactions or discrimination, on the other hand, can have a negative influence on people's self-esteem, contributing to feelings of insecurity and self-doubt.

Overall, social and cultural interactions are critical to the formation of personality and identity. These encounters give people the tools and resources they need to manage the intricacies of social life, form meaningful connections with others, and develop a strong sense of self within their cultural and social contexts.

A research study made by the American anthropologist Rappaport, L. (1953) on the development of the capacity for play, proves the concept above by exploring the role of play in shaping an individual's identity and mental health. He contends that social contact and cultural experiences play an important part in creating one's sense of self. According to Rappaport, being isolated from such experiences might make it difficult to establish a strong and well-rounded identity. The study emphasizes the importance of playing and socializing for overall mental health and personal development.

Isolation from society can have a variety of negative repercussions, including an increased chance of developing mental health conditions including despair, anxiety, and, eventually, lunacy. When someone is cut off from socioconnections and support networks, they may feel divorced from reality, which can contribute to a worsening in mental health. One of the most serious consequences of solitude is loss of identity. When people are cut off from the outside world, they may struggle to maintain a sense of self and purpose. Individuals

who do not engage in social relationships or get external input may become caught in their own thoughts and views, resulting in erroneous conceptions of themselves and their role in the world. Individuals who remain solely may have a collapse in their sense of identity. They may fail to distinguish between reality and their own internal ideas and emotions, resulting in confusion and instability. Individuals may lose touch with who they are and what they believe in if they do not have the support of social ties and connections. In severe circumstances, prolonged isolation may drive someone insane as they grow progressively disconnected from reality and lose touch with their sense of self. This can lead to serious mental health problems, such as psychosis or dissociation, in which people lose touch with their sense of self completely.

Gilman's narrative *the yellow wallpaper* follows an anonymous woman who is given a 'rest treatment' for what her doctor husband says as a 'brief nerve melancholy - a small hysterical tendency', which is today known to be post-natal depression. In an attempt to cure her of her sickness, she is secluded in a nursery with awful yellow wallpaper, which symbolizes her spiral into insanity. Without a creative outlet or enough social or cultural engagement, the narrator's mental state rapidly deteriorates. This is finally proven by the unsettling imagery of the wallpaper, as she describes the ladies 'creeping around behind that pattern', indicating her desire to leave the room. During her cure, she can only communicate with her husband and sister-in-law. The therapy has a detrimental impact on her mental health, rather than a cure. The narrator experiences psychological challenges before becoming insane. The Yellow Wallpaper exemplifies how forced change may lead to disaster and destruction of a person's identity.

Throughout the tale, the narrator gets more cautious of the outer world. Initially, she feels lonely and seeks companionship. When she requests her husband John to invite Cousin Henry and Julia for an extended stay, he says he would rather put the fireworks in her pillowcase than have such exciting people around. John believes that keeping his wife apart from family and friends will help her health. As a result of their solitude, the narrator becomes anti-social and refuses to leave the room until John arrives. She begins to lose faith in others and herself, as seen by the following passage: "I have found out another funny thing, but I shant tell it this time! it does not do to trust people too much. She refuses to reveal what she discovered in her diary, demonstrating her scepticism. As her seclusion goes on, the golden

color of the wallpaper dominates her thoughts. When she enters the room, she instantly observes the ‘repellent, almost disgusting; a smoldering and dirty Yellow wallpaper’. She dislikes the wallpaper, but because she is in that room at all. Every day, she is compelled to stare at it. She says, "It dwells in my mind, so!" While inside the chamber, the narrator recognizes patterns in the background that only she can see. In other cases, she repeatedly describes the yellow wallpaper in her diary writings. This illustrates her preoccupation with the wallpaper. The author's fixation on the color of the paper is evident in her writing: "the only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell (*The Yellow Wallpaper*", Charlotte Perkins Gilman, p. 15) She also believes she can smell the color, which has a yellow scent. Her isolation in the yellow room causes her mind to be consumed with the color and her senses to become entangled with the smell.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" emphasizes the value of self-expression to others. If the narrator's spouse had listened to her, she wouldn't have needed to go insane to express her feelings. Her spouse attempted to change her personality. Her illness deteriorated as he attempted to alter her unique identity. Her husband expected her to be the usual wife who watched the children, stayed at home, and obeyed every whim, despite her unique personality. It is not feasible to change someone for whom they truly are since doing so alters the essence of what makes that person who he or she is, and as a result, the individual may become mad due to the strain placed on him.

Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" examines the widespread adoption of True Womanhood ideas. Women's periodicals prioritized four virtues for the "True Woman": piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. They believed that without these qualities, popularity, accomplishment, and richness were meaningless. And that they promised her happiness and power. Upper and middle-class white societies embraced these principles, with upper-class women expected to preserve the temple's pillars. Designed to keep women in the temple with her frail white hand" (Welter 152).

The narrator of *"The Yellow Wallpaper"* represents women at a time of social isolation that seemed to come with merely being a woman, much alone a woman prone to problems of any type. Isolation themes are built in *"The Yellow Wallpaper"* through a greater historical and cultural framework, setting, and societal expectations, all of which revolve around the narrator and her connections with other characters. Submissiveness was firmly held over

women, because "men were the movers, the doers, the actors." (Welter 159). Men were supposed to work in the economic sector, earning money and forming social relationships across the world. Because males worked so hard, the True Woman was expected to be weak and timid, in need of a protector, rather than feeling or acting for herself. Women's job was to be unnoticed and unheard, and she should "work only for pure affection, without thought of money or ambition" (Welter 160). The True Woman prioritized her husband's life and work over her own desires. The anticipated submissiveness made middle and upper-class women fearful of the world, causing them to marry soon and then remain safely at home (8). Because many of these women were likely to live with their parents until marriage, they frequently had little interaction with the world outside of the Victorian family system. Constant isolation and minimal social stimulation resulted in a generation of women who were terrified of their surroundings. Many women felt household work to be monotonous, despite having access to entertainment options (11). Reading was a common domestic hobby among women during this time period. True Womanhood advocates often struggled with reading, particularly with the emergence of female-authored literature. According to Welter (165), the True Woman should avoid activities that interfere with "serious piety." As women's reading habits increased, there was a growing social stigma associated with reading "exciting and dangerous books" (Welter 166), fearing that educated women would upset societal equilibrium with their views. The most sensational of these novels portrayed marriage as a cage, and families full of hatred and contempt (Perkin 104). Fear of women readers stemmed from the success of books about the "New Woman," which were written by and for women. These novels generally showed women organizing movements and questioning marriage's need (12). Despite the outcry, women readers continued to read and publish works with female characters that challenged traditional gender roles. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was one of those writers, and her personal experiences inspired her to create "*The Yellow Wallpaper*".

Reviewers, particularly men, were outraged by Gilman's depiction of women's imprisonment due to household tasks, as is common with female-centered novels. Nevertheless, Charlotte Perkins Gilman discusses the significance of her controversial work. The author chose to write a dark and visceral portrayal of femininity. In response to the most often asked question, in a subsequent article titled "Why I Wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*," she explains her motivation. The author composed the novel "to save people from being driven

insane" (524), citing her personal experience with the barbaric rest-cure, which had nearly lost her sanity and that of many other women.

Imagination is an invaluable tool. It leads the narrator-protagonist of *The Yellow Wallpaper* to feel that she has discovered her new self in the lady lurking behind the pattern. Gilman suggests that women can only truly be free if their material conditions alter and a dialectical movement between private and public areas is established. Most of Gilman's literary heroines, like herself, seek to push beyond the predetermined bounds of their life and become active participants in their society instead of being isolated from it, inserting themselves into both the text and the reality. . This is not an easy task; the consequences of being locked in one place are enormous: frustration, lunacy, suicide, and a creeping existence that is clearly not worth living for. According to Gilman, life is about development, and the worst sin is to stifle that progress, because doing so destroys all hope for the future, any hope for change.

When women's voices are silenced, they may express themselves in ways that contradict male norms. The narrator's reliability is questioned due to tense shifts between past and present, and character fusion. She explores the concepts of lunacy and monstrosity. This is the text that subverted agents speak. Tragedy often leads to solitude. The narrator was in seclusion, but she had no option. There is no error of judgment in the absence of option. When she can act, she exclusively portrays a tragic character. Gilman claims that she composed the narrative to prevent people from going insane, which proved successful (1). The ideal condition does not involve having everything in order. However, it is where you have the ability to challenge orders.

3.3 In Search of Identity: The Path of Rebellion

Identity and feminism are hotly debated topics in literature due to their polarizing nature. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1890) offers a feminist interpretation of identity, depicting a woman gaining freedom from oppressive restrictions and expressing herself through actions rather than words after her madness. This study examines how women fight to achieve individuality without being defined as relative to males, which can lead to madness.

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Feminism aims to provide women with a subjective identity, agency, and history, as they are often marginalized in literature and the male-dominated society as the 'other'. Humanists place 'man' at the center of ideas, action, and meaning, dating back to the origin of mankind. Women are often pushed to the edges of ideas, action, and meaning, leading to a reliance on their voices and power to explain the world. They are defined in relation to males as they are not considered autonomous entities. According to Simon De Beauvoir's book "*The Second Sex*";

Thus, humanity is male and defined woman in itself
but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an
autonomous being . . . She is defined and differentiated
with reference to men and not he with reference to her,
she is the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is
the subject, he is the absolute. She is the other. She is
the object. (Webster, 71)

Women's positions differ from men's because they are defined relative to males rather than individually. They are the 'other' and cannot express themselves since they are not the subject or absolute ones, but rather the 'other' and 'object'. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the woman's character is determined by her relationship with her husband, John, a doctor. She is the 'other', the 'object', and is denied identity and unable to express her desires and speak for herself. The woman character, the story's narrator, consistently uses 'I', despite the fact that she is the "other" to her husband. In a textual world, she has an identity as the "I" subject, but in a male-dominated environment, she can only be the "other" (object) without a name. In reality, the usage of this pronoun suggests a growing feeling of self and conviction. It shows "a positive change in self-presentation precisely at the point when her actions dramatically compromise her sanity and condemn her to madness" and the expression "becomes not an act of assertion but rather of acquiescence determined by John's authority" (Golden 193, 195). The pronoun shows the narrator's attempt to establish an identity.

The woman character in *The Yellow Wallpaper* is forced to live in a room that her husband picked for her. The lady character does not have her own room, but rather the owner's. It is a chamber set up for her by her husband, and she is not permitted to write. She says in the article that 'he hates to have me write a word'. Nonetheless, she quietly continues to write. It is crucial that she is simply writing, without speaking or thinking. As a result, at the end of the novel, she expresses herself via her acts, not her words. Furthermore, she does not receive either financial or moral help. All of these constraints imply that there is a very strong male influence in her life that confines her in every manner. Because of male domination and societal roles, women have little time for themselves.

Women are limited by the roles they perform in life, such as mother, wife, homemaker, worker, and many more, as well as by societal pressures, norms, and traditions. As a result, in compared to males, women must work twice as hard to raise their voices and demonstrate that they can be as excellent as men if they are given the same opportunities. Women face uneven living conditions and limitations that prevent them from achieving success. Traditionally, female characters were shown in connection to males. Feminist critics objected to such representations of female characters. Josephine Donovan is one of these conflicting feminist commentators. she argued that women should be portrayed as moral agents capable of self-determination, not as "others" in male-dominated literature (Newton,159). According to Josephine Donovan, the key question is not whether women should identify with the masculine self, rather whether they can and the answer obviously is women should identify with their 'own self' rather than a 'male self' as each individual should strive to discover their 'true identity'.

Feminist critics feel that self-discovery leads to a deeper knowledge of oneself and the ability to influence the world, regardless of their theoretical emphasis. Feminist critics strive to establish their own identity and challenge male dominance by becoming subjects rather than objects defined by men. At the very beginning of *the Yellow Wallpaper* the wife (narrator) says; "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage." (*The Yellow Wallpaper*,Charlotte Perkins Gilamn,p.3)With these words she is making a generalization and this represents for the readers common sense. She is accepting everything he does and says because he is the strong one and she is the weak one in the male-dominate world.

The husband is "armed with knowledge" (King, Morris 27). He uses his knowledge to impose his version of reality on his wife. The weak wife's weapon against her husband's knowledge is her "madness", which frees her of responsibility (Johnson 526). In fact, madness is a weapon that the wife (narrator) uses to find her own identity and rebel against all the people who try to silence and change her. Thus, she remains silent while the husband decides for everything on behalf of her. He does not give her the chance to choose the room she wants; "I don't like our room a bit, I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it."

In the story the narrator is attempting to escape not only the house but also her own body because she has lost her identity as Mother, Wife, Housekeeper, and Friend, an identity that is doubled within Mary, who is implied to be nursing her mysterious child, 'It is fortunate Mary is so good with the Baby', and Jennie, the new version improved model of desired womanhood. "Jennie sees to everything now." (8) Jennie, as a character, reflects the narrator's lost femininity and logic. The lady in the wallpaper therefore depicts a new freeing identity, disguised within the dwelling house to transform her physical and emotional imprisonment into an escape from control. Perkins writes, "There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will." (11) This is really essential to her; she is the only one who understands the wallpaper. She converts her distaste into interest by writing about her fascination with the wallpaper, which leads to her new identity as she allows herself to think freely.

The story's imagination gets increasingly vivid as the protagonist is suppressed. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator transforms an ancestral hall into a haunted mansion and encodes herself as a fantasy character. She is the mad woman in the attic. She is battling against the confines of gender that contain and restrict her, and the scene reflects this, from the window bars to the screwed-down bed and attic chamber. She wants a choice, but she doesn't have one; the male characters, in her opinion, are domineering and ignore her.

As a result, she seeks solace and company in the wallpaper, which depicts another woman imprisoned in the home. The concept of isolation is underlined by the wallpaper design, which resembles another jail within the prison from which a crawling lady wishes to escape. The mirroring of semantically charged space, as well as the woman's contact with her imprisoned duplicate. As an outcome, her mind begins to adopt a new way of thinking, an

independence that undermines her pre-existing views and conditioned way of living. She achieves liberation by tearing the wallpaper and freeing the “mad lady”, or by becoming the woman in the wallpaper herself. In any case, she accepts a new autonomous identity that may be her fantasy but is entirely her own, which is obviously exhilarating in a ridiculous atmosphere where everything is unclear.

The woman in the wallpaper, who is unnamed like the narrator, is an intriguing component of the short story that lends mystery to its identity. Is this a ghost? A representation of the narrator's worsening mental state? , but most probably is that it is the narrator's own feminine double attempting to break out from the confines of the house, the eerie, and find freedom . According to her account, "the faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out." (11), Shaking the wallpaper design and the pattern in which the narrator spends her life, she follows rather than leads. Perkins explains the narrator's interaction with the woman in the wallpaper: “that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to aid her...that awful pattern began to laugh at me.” (17) The laughter is a scary and intriguing feature to add to their connection, since it might indicate a variety of things. The insane lady might be laughing because she knows the narrator will be of no assistance because she can't even help herself, and identifying the mad woman as 'poor' is ironic because she reflects the narrator's desire for freedom. According to critic Golden, the story's sharp and dramatic ending is an imaginary creation, a fantasy identity as the mad-woman; this closing image displays a conjunction of erotic and aggressive impulses, a conjunction which once again suggests that by identifying herself with the wallpaper's shadow-woman, the protagonist has truly set up herself in the territory of the imaginary.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novella *The Yellow Wallpaper* highlights the topic of self-expression as an important component of life for maintaining mental health. The key symbols of the home where they are staying, the main character's diary, and the yellow wallpaper that borders the nursery all serve to indicate its importance. Throughout the story, they are smoothly blended as characters that contribute to the plot while also providing a role for the primary principles. Finally, the lady discovers her identity in a self-destructive location and develops a delusion about her surroundings (Gilman 15). She feels she has "gotten out at last," after being trapped behind the wallpaper (Gilman 15). The narrator's isolation from civilization and incarceration within the house lead her to become obsessed with the walls and

the alleged persons behind the paper. This narrative demonstrates the critical need of self-expression throughout one's life, as its absence leads to a decline in rationality and identity.

The Yellow Wallpaper is a first-person tale of a young lady who struggles to balance her roles as a wife and mother while maintaining her intellectual self. Eventually, her intellectual self becomes an illusion, a projection of the narrator's thoughts as the lady hidden behind the wallpaper. This hallucination develops as a verbal, physical 'I', capable of leaving the house and being free. In contrast, the narrator is unable to leave the nursery, where she (not the newborn) is now residing. Gilman's use of a constrained narrator contrasts with the free-roaming lady behind the wallpaper, reinforcing a Gothic theme of imprisonment. Eugenia DeLamotte cites this tendency as significant, saying "most of these books are about women who just can't seem to get out of the house" (10). The narrator is unable to leave the house, but her intellectual existence continues to travel; nevertheless, it is no longer a part of her that she can recognize as such. The narrator's craziness and internalization of her socially prescribed mother position make the reconnection of body and mind a terrifying experience, despite the fact that the lady behind the wallpaper was originally part of her cerebral self.

The concept of the abject involves both identifying and defining oneself, as well as debasing oneself to the point of fragmentation and unrecognisability. Juliann Fleenor describes this phenomenon as important to the Female Gothic, although she does not call it 'abject'. Instead, she refers to this as a Female Gothic convention the "self-divided heroine":

In the Female Gothic the ambivalence toward the female (good and evil) has been internalized (sic). The ambivalence toward the female self leads to feelings of self-disgust and self-fear rather than fear and disgust at something outside of her (11)

Gilman's language directs the narrator's revulsion and anxiety onto the wallpaper. Gilman uses the Female Gothic concept of a dualism inside the narrator to depict self-abjection. The narrator becomes two selves that strive to combine, leading to insanity. Gilman illustrates how a woman's body (maternity) is separated from her brain. This division between self and Other fulfils Kristeva's formula for abjection:

It is something rejected from which one does not part, from
which one does not protect oneself [...] Imaginary uncanniness
and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. (4)

For the narrator, the resultant uncertainty leads to lunacy. According to Kristeva, confusion arises from the speaker's inability to distinguish between 'I' as the thinking being and 'I' as the body, as the "I" cannot be both of them.

The narrator labels her intellect as "other," similar to the lady in the wallpaper, and describes it as apart from herself. This intellectual self is made unrecognizable, alien, and the narrator's adoption of a traditional parental role makes her feel strange. Gilman's portrayal of the lady behind the wallpaper as a hallucination exacerbates the narrator's self-doubt. Kristeva defines fragmentation as the ultimate manifestation of self-abjection and loss.

When that subject [the narrator], weary of fruitless attempts to
deal with something on the outside [the woman in the
wallpaper], finds the impossible within; when it finds that the
impossible constitutes its very being, that it is none other than
the abject. (5)

It's true that *The Yellow Wallpaper* is an intriguing novella about a lady suffering from postpartum depression. However, a deeper look at the protagonist's description and presentation reveals that it is really about her difficulties with identification. The protagonist creates an artwork of an imaginary woman. She is originally referred to as her 'shadow'. but her struggle with identification becomes more apparent when her shadow begins to rattle against the wallpaper's bars. Her progressive personality alteration is the result of her solitude in her yellow chamber. When her despair worsens, the shape of her shadow changes. The protagonist's persistent loneliness and obsession with her surroundings create the illusion. She noted in her notebook that for a long time, she had no idea what was causing the dim sub-

pattern. But later she realized it's a lady, she doesn't notice the shadow as another human shape.

This is because her shadow's silhouette is likewise what she wishes it to be, the fact that this "thing" or lady is referred to as a woman permits her to express herself. The "dim pattern" is the bar that reveals her shadow. It becomes a trap for her, and she adopts the persona as though it were human. Her changing identity is revealed by her change from a formless shadow to a concealed lady. Initially, it appears that the woman behind the wallpaper is the woman in the shadows. Gilman reported that she spotted the woman on the long road beneath the woods and was 'climbing along' when she saw a carriage, but she shelters behind the blackberry bushes. These figurines might represent the shadows cast by the garden's flora and animals. She may have transformed into this manufactured lady in her head. She imagines the lady being able to leave at daylight, which is congruent with her wants to flee the outer world and contact with others.

The tale of *The Yellow Wallpaper* appears to revolve on a lady who is driven insane by isolation and postpartum melancholy. But it is more than that. The protagonist's shadow against the patterns on the wallpaper drives her nuts, leading her to believe she and the "woman" had changed places. While the narrative is unpleasant since it revolves around something dark, and the storyline is interesting, the writing is outstanding. This narrative contains a wealth of information regarding women's oppression, mistreatment and loss of identity because of the wrong social rules in nineteenth-century America, as well as the boundaries of the human mind before snapping.

Gilman's use of symbolism, the narrator's struggles, and her eventual breaking point all contribute to a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of gender roles and the limitations imposed on women. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman gives voice to the experiences of women who were marginalized and silenced during this time period. The protagonist of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" is heavily influenced by cultural expectations, which ultimately contribute to her mental collapse. As a woman in a patriarchal culture, she is expected to fulfill the responsibilities of wife and mother while denying her own ambitions and needs. This repression, along with her husband's contemptuous attitude towards her mental illness, heightens her sense of isolation and captivity. The protagonist's battle to preserve her individuality in the face of societal pressure is represented by her

infatuation with the wallpaper, which she interprets as a metaphor for her own incarceration. As her obsession with the wallpaper and its patterns grows, she loses contact with reality and her sense of self. The restrictive cultural expectations and patriarchal power that surround the heroine eventually undermine her identity. Her failure to express her own autonomy and agency causes a deterioration in her mental health and a loss of her genuine identity. This is a sharp statement on the negative impact of society restraints on personal freedom and self-expression.

Conclusion

To summarize, This chapter delves into the impact of isolation on the protagonist's sense of self and sheds light on her battle to keep her individuality in the face of mental illness and society pressure. Her journey into lunacy is a direct result of the restraints imposed by society on her. This is a sobering reminder of the pitfalls of adhering to cultural conventions at the price of one's own mental health and sense of identity. Finally, the protagonist's identity dilemma serves as a warning tale about the negative effects of cultural expectations on personal liberty and mental health.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

People's definitions of identity might vary greatly. It may be about who one hang out with, the music one listen to, where a person reside, or the nationality. Simply, identity defines the self. However, confusion about identity can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Growing in a society that views women as delicate, caring, and sensitive makes it difficult to trust in oneself and achieve independence. To fit in, one feels compelled to deny the genuine self or attach the identity to something else.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* brilliantly blends psychological intricacy with gothic themes to produce a frightening and captivating narrative of madness torture and identity loss. Gilman effectively creates a threatening atmosphere that drags readers into the protagonist's gradually decreasing mental condition, while also shedding light on the oppressive societal customs of the 19th century for women. Gothic motifs in the story, such as the crumbling mansion, the cryptic wallpaper, and the descent into insanity, serve as powerful allegories for the protagonist's struggle against limiting gender stereotypes and the disastrous consequences of social expectations. In addition, the narrative makes a tragic point about how women's ideas and experiences are ignored in patriarchal countries. And this research paper has highlighted the relevance of *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a critique of gender inequity and an investigation of the human psyche through the lens of gothic motifs and psychological insight. Modern readers should see and combat oppressive systems that limit human autonomy and devalue marginalised voices. *The Yellow Wallpaper* exemplifies how writing may address societal issues and provide insight into human nature.

The narrative is widely appreciated because it highlights the uneven connection between men and women in society. The male gender is believed to rule society, whilst the feminine gender is denied the ability to make decisions independently of males. This is seen in the moments that John disparages his wife's artistic endeavors. John does not respect his wife, therefore he treats her as if she were one of his children, referring to her as a small girl. This makes the wife detest her home. She is dissatisfied with her surroundings because she feels too secluded. The narrative portrays women in Western culture as being denied their rights. They are instead considered like things or men's property. They have no place to practice their own liberties and feel marginalized by their male colleagues. For example, John continues to

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ignore his wife's views and opinions. He feels his wife should rely entirely on him for practically everything. This is why the narrative has gained appeal, particularly among women who believe they deserve a better role in society and want room to express their creativity and productivity. Women believe they have tremendous potential and the capacity to accomplish anything, just as men do, girls should not rely on males for everything. Instead, girls should rely on males in the same way that men rely on women. Women's judgments should be respected, and their views should not be dismissed. Ideas should be exchanged and debated regardless of gender. Furthermore, males should treat women as equals rather than degrade them.

In Gilman's novel *The Yellow Wallpaper*, John serves as a mirror for how women are seen unfavourably in society, a society in which women are denied identity and not perceived as complete citizens. They are not intended to be in the political arena or in the public spotlight. Instead, they should stay in their houses. This viewpoint has led to women fighting for their rights by forming feminist movements to fight for their position in society.

Everyone chooses who they want to be and represent but sometimes people are forced by society to be fake, to be someone else who is the total opposite of who they are, just for us to fit in our community and satisfy people around us in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman tells a heartbreaking story about the catastrophic effects of restrictive cultural conventions on women's identities and rights. The narrator's terrible trip is a sharp remark on how rigorous expectations and limits put on women may undermine their sense of self. The theme of identity and societal expectations is explored through the protagonist's struggle to assert her true self in the face of societal pressures. The story highlights the damaging effects of rigid gender roles and the suppression of individuality. The narrator's descent into madness can be seen as a metaphor for the consequences of denying one's authentic self in order to conform to societal norms. Ultimately, the story serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of embracing one's true identity, even in the face of societal expectations.

In life, everyone goes through such situations where society obliges people to do something against their will, just like the case of the story's protagonist, but as women and as human beings before all, we should not accept what the rotten society puts us through. Women should fight for their rights, their agency and their own identities, and that's exactly what the protagonist did in the story, she rebelled against all what was holding her from

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expressing herself and being who she really is, even her husband. She raised her voice and made a place for herself in society as a capable woman, who can take her own decisions and do what she wants without going back to anyone for permission.

When women fight for their rights, men consider that messing with the structure of the society, but when men do it; it's considered calling for human rights, and this is the real mess. A mess that has been going on for ages, giving men the absolute right and power and denying women the bare minimum. Therefore, it's time for women to end this game and stop letting things the way they are because that's not a solution, and to do that each woman should find her own way

All in all, women have always been struggling for their identities in society, and only female writers gave voice to these obstacles through their writings and stories just like Charlotte Perkins Gilman who portrayed her own experience through "*The Yellow Wallpaper*", just to let women know that after all what she went through, from restrictions, rules and isolation and even madness, at the end she found her lost self and gained back her identity and only by fighting for it instead of waiting for the change to happen miraculously like most women do.

The goal of this extended essay was to illustrate that words hold so much power in them that can even change the way society works, and that identity won't be given in a golden plate, one should fight for it. And each person should find the place that he belongs to, without the need to be someone else, because at the end the ones who mind don't matter and the ones who matter don't mind.

In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," the protagonist, an unnamed woman, struggles to maintain her identity in the face of mental illness and societal pressure. The story explores how societal expectations and patriarchal norms can erase a woman's sense of self. As she grows increasingly infatuated with the yellow wallpaper in her room, the protagonist's sense of self begins to crumble. She is compelled to forgo her own ambitions and interests in order to focus on the wallpaper, which she interprets as a representation of her own entrapment and tyranny. The wallpaper serves as a sort of alter personality for her, expressing her own quiet and suppressed impulses. Throughout the novel, the protagonist's identity is gradually eroded by the societal pressures imposed on her by her

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spouse and the physicians who treat her. Her husband's patronizing and dismissive attitude towards her disease, along with the physicians' lack of empathy and understanding, erodes her sense of self even more. The protagonist's fight to keep her individuality is also evident in her relationship with her spouse. She is unable to articulate her own wishes and needs, therefore she is compelled to adhere to his ideals of what a woman should be. Her husband's treatment of her exemplifies patriarchal dominance, as he strives to keep authority over her body and mind. The yellow wallpaper itself represents the protagonist's captivity and persecution. The color is characterized as "a smoldering unclean yellow" that "climbs up between the walls" and "creeps all over the floor." This visual implies that the wallpaper is more than simply a physical thing, but a reflection of the protagonist's feelings of imprisonment and tyranny.

As the heroine gets increasingly preoccupied with the wallpaper, she begins to imagine herself as a part of it, as if she is merging with the same thing that confines her. This blurring of boundaries between self and environment exemplifies how societal pressure may destroy a person's sense of identity.

In the end, the protagonist's attempt to keep her identity proves useless. She becomes stuck in her own thoughts, unable to break free from the yellow wallpaper that has enveloped her. The novel concludes with the protagonist's death, which might be seen as a representation of her total erasure from society. Overall, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a striking examination of how societal pressure and patriarchal conventions may undermine a person's sense of identity. The protagonist's battle to keep her individuality in the face of mental illness and societal pressure is a striking reminder of the value of self-determination and autonomy.

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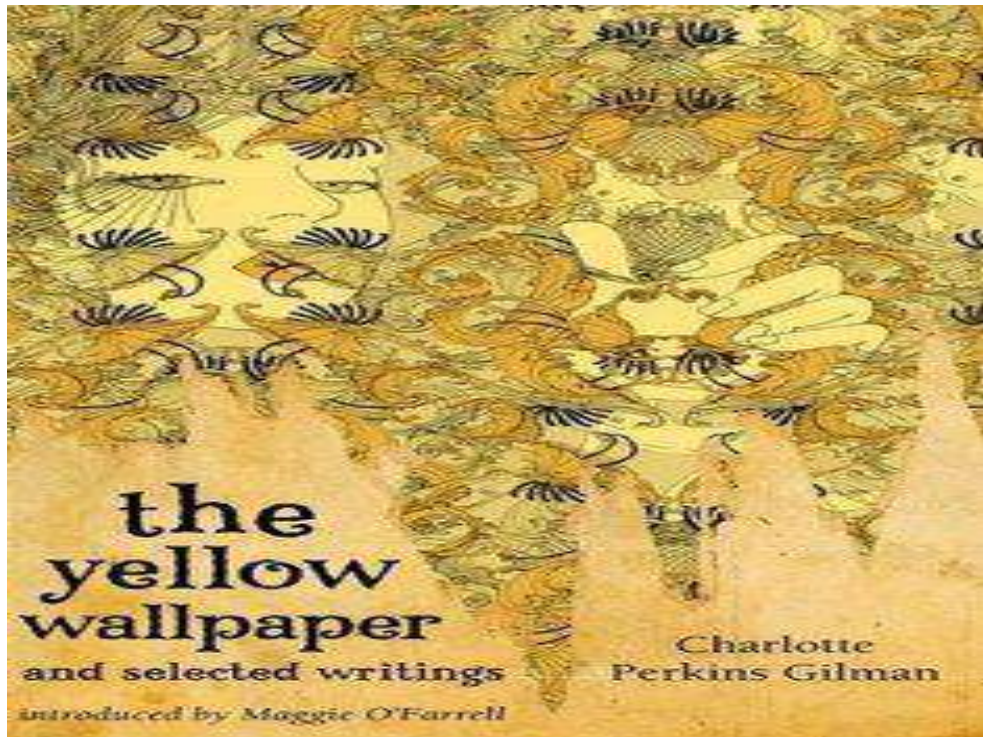
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Appendices



Charlotte Perkins Gilman (born July 3, 1860, Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.—died August 17, 1935, Pasadena, California) was an American feminist, lecturer, writer, and publisher who was a leading theorist of the women's movement in the United States. Charlotte Perkins grew up in poverty, her father having essentially abandoned the family. Her education was irregular and limited, but she did attend the Rhode Island School of Design for a time. In May 1884 she

married Charles W. Stetson, an artist. She soon proved to be totally unsuited to the domestic routine of marriage, and after a year or so she was suffering from melancholia, which eventuated in complete nervous collapse. A California trip in 1885 was helpful, however, and in 1888 she moved with her young daughter to Pasadena. She divorced her husband in 1894, and, after his remarriage shortly thereafter to one of her close friends, she sent her daughter to live with them. The entire affair was the subject of scandalized public comment.



"The Yellow Wallpaper" is a short story with elements of psychological horror that details one woman's descent into madness as a result of patriarchal constraints. Written in 1892, the story serves as an allegorical portrayal of female repression and is a significant and influential work of feminist literature.

