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Exploring the Gothic Elements in “The Yellow Wallpaper”: A Psychological Tale of Subjugation and Madness

Hadeel Aziz Mohammed Ridha
Department of English/College of Basic Education/ University of Babylon
basic.hadeel.azez@uobabylon.edu.iq

Ali Thamir Khadhim
Ministry of Education
ali_thamer1990@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This paper delves into the intricate tapestry of Gothic elements embedded within Charlotte Perkins Gilman's renowned short story, “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Drawing on the author's personal experiences and the prevalent socio-cultural context of the late 19th century, this study aims to unravel the profound psychological implications of the Gothic genre as manifested in the narrative. Through a meticulous analysis of key motifs, symbols, and thematic elements, the paper examines how the Gothic genre serves as a vehicle for exploring themes of female subjugation, psychological deterioration, and societal repression. By dissecting the protagonist's descent into madness within the confining walls of her bedroom, this research sheds light on the oppressive forces that society imposes on women, particularly during the Victorian era. Furthermore, the study investigates how the dark and foreboding atmosphere, intricate descriptions, and the unreliable narrative voice contribute to the overall Gothic ambiance, evoking a sense of claustrophobia and fear. Ultimately, this paper underscores the significance of “The Yellow Wallpaper” as a powerful portrayal of the psychological toll imposed by societal norms, while highlighting the enduring relevance of the Gothic genre in exposing the hidden horrors of human existence.

Keywords: Gothic, “The Yellow Wallpaper”, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, short story, female subjugation

استكشاف العناصر القوطية في "ورق الجدران الأصفر": قصة نفسية عن القهر والجنون

هديل عزيز محمد رضا **علي ثامر كاظم**
قسم اللغة الإنكليزية/ كلية التربية الأساسية/ جامعة بابل *وزارة التربية*

المستخلص

يستكشف هذا البحث نسيج العناصر القوطية المعقدة المتجسدة في قصة شارلوت بيركنز جيلمان "ورق الجدران الأصفر". باستناده إلى تجارب الكاتبة الشخصية والسياق الاجتماعي والثقافي السائد في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر، تهدف هذا الدراسة إلى كشف الآثار النفسية العميقة للخصائص القوطية كما تتجلى في السرد. من خلال تحليل دقيق للموضوعات والرموز والعناصر الرئيسية، يستكشف البحث كيف يعمل الرعب بصفته وسيلة لاستكشاف مواضيع القهر النسائي والتدهور النفسي والقمع الاجتماعي. عن طريق تحليل انحدار البطلة في الجنون داخل جدران غرفتها المغلقة، يلقي هذا البحث الضوء على القوى القمعية التي يفرضها المجتمع على النساء، لا سيما في العصر الفكتوري. علاوة على ذلك، يستكشف البحث كيف تساهم الأجواء المظلمة والمخيفة، والوصف المتقن، والصوت السردي المبهم في أجواء الرعب العامة؟ مما يثير شعوراً بالاحتباس والخوف، وفي النهاية، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على أهمية "ورق الجدران الأصفر" بصفتها تصويرا قويا للعبء النفسي الذي تفرضه القوانين الاجتماعية، مع تأكيد كشف الرعب المخفي في وجود الإنسان.

الكلمات الدالة: القوطية، "ورق الجدران الأصفر"، شارلوت بيركنز جيلمان، قصة قصيرة، قهر النساء

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1. The Gothic

The Gothic genre poses a significant challenge in terms of its definition within academic discourse. This challenge primarily arises from the absence of a widely accepted and universally acknowledged definition, leading to an ongoing scholarly debate regarding its characteristics and thematic domains. According to Christoph Grunenberg, the term "Gothic" has evolved to signify a reciprocal relationship with gloomy and unsettling atmospheres, settings, events, and cultural by-products in contemporary American society[1,p.16].Maggie Kilgour characterizes the Gothic as a genre that draws upon and amalgamates a diverse array of literary sources, thereby remaining entangled within the very origins from which it emerges [1,p.7].

According to Wolfram Schmidgen's work in 2002, the Gothic genre is identified as one among several regressive literary forms prevalent in the 18th century that subverted the cultural and literary advancements achieved by figures such as Defoe, Fielding, and Richardson [1,p.7].*The Oxford English Dictionary* defines "Gothic" in two distinct contexts. Firstly, as an architectural style characterized by pointed arches that was prevalent in Western Europe during the 12th to 16th centuries. Secondly, in the realm of literature, it refers to a style popular during the 18th to 19th centuries, featuring elements of the supernatural or horrifying events. Additionally, the term can also be associated with the "Goths," a Germanic people, depicting acts of barbarism [2].

As a result, during the 18th century, the term "gothic" gained considerable prominence as a means to signify the direct opposition to the ideals of Western European civilization, rationality, and societal structure. The Goths gradually became representative of not only various barbarian groups but also the northern tribes that invaded and contributed to the decline of the Roman Empire, subsequently initiating the era commonly known as the Dark Ages. The influx of these tribes caused significant devastation to established civilizations, eradicating valuable knowledge and language, with the term "barbarian" derived from the concept of "barbarism," which conveys a sense of speech impediment or being on the brink of coherent expression.

Within Protestant England, a nation that consciously positioned itself as the hub of progress and modernity, the term "Gothic" encompassed more than just a historical reference but also a reflection of a shadowed medieval past. This past was characterized by the perceived tyranny imposed by feudal lords, the existence of slavery, and the superstitious practices attributed to the Catholic priesthood, which were believed to perpetuate ignorance and idolatry among the masses. In these contexts, "Gothic" carried an inherently negative connotation, embodying everything that deviated from modernity, enlightenment, freedom, Protestantism, or Englishness. Even when applied specifically to a particular genre of literature involving themes of ghosts and the supernatural, the negative undertones persisted. Gothic fiction was regarded as offensive to the prevailing neoclassical sensibilities [3].

Gothic literature encompasses a range of subgenres, such as Victorian gothic, Romantic gothic, and female gothic, each distinguished by its own distinct thematic and narrative elements. Importantly, these subgenres have attracted numerous writers, leading to a rich and diverse body of texts. During the 18th century, several influential and popular authors played pivotal roles in shaping the Gothic genre. Horace Walpole, often

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credited as the progenitor of Gothic fiction, introduced *The Castle of Otranto* in 1765. Furthermore, the genre was further developed through the contributions of authors like Ann Radcliffe, who penned *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794, Matthew Lewis, known for *The Monk* published in 1796, and Charles Brockden Brown, whose work *Wieland* appeared in 1798[4].

The concept of the "female Gothic" delves into fears surrounding "sexuality and childbirth" [5, p.12]. According to Smith, Ellen Moers is credited with coining the term to encompass Gothic literature written by women, which later evolved to include "a subtle feminism and an optimistic view of women's potential for social progress" [6,p.181]. Smith also suggests that the Gothic heroines are often deliberately crafted to bring about the downfall of patriarchal figures who strive to confine them [6,p.155].These fears experienced by female characters are not merely imagined but are explored through use of "the explained supernatural," setting the female Gothic apart from other Gothic subgenres[6,p.157]. Consequently, the Gothic heroine is portrayed as a "proto-feminist" actively resisting patriarchal control [6,p.155]. The female Gothic explores central themes and issues such as the confinement of women within domestic settings laden with hidden codes, such as castles or aristocratic environments. It frequently involves the protagonist's quest to reclaim her female identity, often achieved through the discovery of a "lost" mother or through the intervention of the mother herself [7, pp.30-31].

The enduring popularity of Gothic literature continued well into the 19th century. Initially, Romantic authors like Sir Walter Scott embraced Gothic conventions in works such as *The Tapestried Chamber* published in 1829. Subsequently, Victorian writers like Robert Louis Stevenson with his novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* released in 1886, and Bram Stoker with his iconic novel *Dracula* published in 1897, incorporated Gothic motifs into their narratives of horror and suspense [4].

Furthermore, elements of Gothic fiction permeate numerous recognized classics of 19th-century literature. Mary Shelley's renowned novel *Frankenstein* from 1818, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* published in 1851, Charlotte Brontë's beloved *Jane Eyre* released in 1847, Victor Hugo's enduring work *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* from 1831, and various tales by Edgar Allan Poe, including *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) and *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843), prominently showcase the influence of the Gothic genre [4].

The Gothic genre encompasses a diverse range of characters, both non-human and human, including vampires, ghosts, various types of monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, malevolent aristocrats, monks, nuns, fainting heroines, and bandits [5, p.2]. It is important to note that the texts within the Gothic genre suggest that these vampire and monstrous figures cannot be easily defined, confined, or even identified by the human eye [8,p.130]. These characters inhabit the Gothic landscapes, which serve as symbolic representations of both imagined and tangible threats. Throughout the 19th century, the roster expanded to include scholars, fathers, husbands, mad men, criminals, and other monstrous beings, all embodying duplicity and a sinister nature [5,p.2]. The Gothic landscapes are characterized by desolation, isolation, and inherent peril. In the 18th century, they were frequently depicted as untamed and mountainous settings [5,p.2].These elements serve to challenge conventional human discourse, making the

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Gothic genre a literary form that postcolonial writers engage with, while also providing a framework for exploring postcolonial ideas. According to Smith and Hughes, the primary purpose of the Gothic is to evoke fear, and this aspect of Gothic literature reflects an underlying sense of uncertainty [8,p.52].

In the present era, traditional Gothic literature has evolved into a diverse range of genres, including ghost stories, horror tales, detective fiction, suspense novels, and thrillers. These contemporary forms place emphasis on elements such as mystery, shock, and eliciting emotional responses.While these genres still retain some connection, albeit loosely, to the Gothic tradition, there is a prevailing trend among novelists and poets to adopt and reinterpret the Gothic genre in ways that resist strict classification as purely Gothic writers [4].

2. Gilman's Life and Works

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *nee* Charlotte Perkins, was born in 1860 in Hartford, Connecticut, and her early years were marked by adversity, leaving lasting emotional wounds that tragically culminated in her own suicide. During her formative years, Gilman endured the abandonment of her father, a pivotal event that profoundly shaped her upbringing. Her mother, devoid of sentimental inclinations, sought assistance from relatives, including the esteemed author Harriet Beecher Stowe, in raising the children [9, p.123]. The intricate dynamics of her familial circumstances instilled in Gilman a spirit of self-reliance while simultaneously fostering a sense of detachment from many of her kin. In 1884, she entered into matrimony, only to confront a diagnosis of depression shortly thereafter. The prescribed treatment of extended bed rest seemed to exacerbate her condition, prompting her to dissolve the marriage due to fears that it may have contributed to her melancholic state [10,p.144]. Consequently, Gilman dedicated herself to feminist pursuits and literary endeavors, establishing herself as a prominent figure within the women's movement. Notably, her influential work *Women and Economics*, penned in 1898, argues for the vital importance of women attaining economic autonomy to achieve genuine equality [9,p.108].

Gilman's literary works, particularly the celebrated opus "The Yellow Wallpaper," embody her unwavering feminist convictions. In addition to her written output, she engaged in frequent lecture engagements and founded the influential feminist publication *Forerunner* in 1909. Despite her remarkable achievements, Gilman battled the ravages of cancer, ultimately choosing to end her life on August 17, 1935. A profound exploration of her captivating persona can be gleaned from the pages of her poignant autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, published in 1935 [9,p.1].

Rather than launching a wholesale attack on all forms of patriarchy, Gilman directed her focus toward the treatment of mentally ill women, whom she portrays as hapless victims silenced through gender-biased "rest cures." This portrayal emerged from her own personal experience of enduring a postpartum emotional collapse and undergoing treatment in 1887 [10, p.144]. Gilman meticulously recounts the breakdown and treatment that served as the impetus for writing "The Yellow Wallpaper" in her autobiography and in an essay aptly titled "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Following the birth of her daughter in 1887, Gilman succumbed to severe depression.

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Initially, her husband attempted to assuage her condition by hiring a maid and reading Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* to her. Yet, when these remedies proved ineffective, he dispatched her to Philadelphia for a six-week rest cure administered by Dr.Weir Mitchell [11,p.588]. Mitchell, a distinguished specialist in nervous disorders, had devised a therapy tailored to intellectual women, including luminaries such as Edith Wharton, that entailed complete bed rest, isolation from visitors, abstinence from intellectual pursuits (including reading), and a diet rich in calories designed to trigger significant weight gain - a symbolic parallel to pregnancy and a suppression of artistic and intellectual creativity. Gilman was explicitly instructed to refrain from any form of creative expression[10,p.145]. These measures pushed her perilously close to the brink of insanity, and it was only through temporarily separating herself from her husband and child that she experienced a measure of recovery, ultimately leading her to choose a therapeutic divorce. This transformative experience underscored the imperative of safeguarding her mental well-being, not only for her own sake but also for the welfare of her family [10,p.145].

3. “The Yellow Wallpaper”

“The Yellow Wallpaper” is a pioneering work of feminist literature written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1892. The story revolves around a nameless narrator, who is confined to a room with yellow wallpaper in a rented summerhouse. As she spends her days in isolation, the narrator becomes increasingly obsessed with the wallpaper, which she believes holds a mysterious and disturbing secret.

The wallpaper becomes a symbol of the narrator's deteriorating mental state and the oppressive patriarchal norms of the time. As the story progresses, the narrator's mental condition worsens, and she starts to see a woman trapped within the patterns of the wallpaper. Her obsession intensifies, leading her to tear at the wallpaper in an attempt to liberate the woman she believes is trapped behind it [12,p.415].

“The Yellow Wallpaper” explores themes of gender inequality, the suppression of women's creativity, and the detrimental effects of patriarchal control. It vividly portrays the psychological toll of a society that denies women agency and self-expression. The story is often interpreted as a critique of the medical treatments prescribed to women during Gilman's time, particularly the “rest cure” popularized by Dr. Weir Mitchell.

Gilman's own experiences heavily influenced the story, as she underwent a similar rest cure after experiencing postpartum depression. “The Yellow Wallpaper” serves as a powerful commentary on the challenges faced by women in a society that stifles their autonomy and disregards their mental health.

4. Non- Verbal Gothic Elements

Gilman's “The Yellow Wallpaper” encompasses certain thematic and stylistic elements commonly associated with the Gothic genre. The Gothic literary tradition comprises a blend of unsettling elements, including fear, horror, death, and romantic motifs. In this analysis, we shall elucidate the presence of various Gothic elements in the story and examine its narrative structure from a Gothic perspective.

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One significant aspect of the Gothic genre is the setting, which often unfolds within the confines of a castle, an old mansion, or a palace. Similarly, in "The Yellow Wallpaper," the events transpire in the vicinity of an ancient and dilapidated mansion [13, p.197]. The building's occupation remains enigmatic throughout the narrative, with moments of apparent abandonment followed by instances of bustling activity. This uncertainty surrounding the presence of inhabitants fosters an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. Moreover, using a mansion means that it may harbor concealed passageways, trap doors, secret chambers, intricately designed panels activated by hidden levers, dimly lit or obscured staircases, and potentially fragmented or ruined partitions. These architectural features contribute to the prevailing sense of confinement, seclusion, and isolation, common in Gothic literature. "The Yellow Wallpaper" embodies various elements commonly associated with the Gothic genre. Gothic literature combines themes of fear, horror, death, and romance, all of which are apparent in this short story. One notable feature of Gothic literature is the setting which, as explained in the first section, often takes place in a castle, an old mansion, or the ruins of such structures. These edifices exhibit an aura of uncertainty, with scenes depicting deserted environments, bustling activity, or ambiguous occupancy by individuals.

Another remarkable Gothic element found in the story involves the presence of omens, portents, and visionary experiences. The protagonist undergoes a descent into madness, marked by hallucinations and vivid visions. Fixated on the yellow wallpaper within her chamber, she perceives spectral women secretly trapped amidst its intricate patterns[13,p.197].These occurrences, defying rational explanation, align with the supernatural or unexplained events prevalent in Gothic narratives, effectively intensifying the prevailing disquietude.

While "The Yellow Wallpaper" encompasses various Gothic elements, it deviates from conventional Gothic narratives by emphasizing psychological horror over overtly supernatural occurrences. The narrative delves into the protagonist's deteriorating mental state, exploring themes of confinement, identity, and the repercussions of societal oppression. By employing subtle Gothic undertones, the story cultivates an atmosphere of unease and disconcertment, unveiling the psychological horrors that emanate from the stifling of individual autonomy and self-expression.

Furthermore, the depiction of women in distress is a recurring motif within the Gothic tradition. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," the protagonist assumes the role of a distressed woman, confined within the mansion and subjected to oppressive forces perpetuated by patriarchal control [12,p.420]. Her mental and emotional turmoil escalates progressively throughout the story, exposing her vulnerability and the oppressive forces she confronts, thus exemplifying the portrayal of women in dire straits.

The motif of female distress prominently aligns with the Gothic genre, as it strategically elicits the reader's empathetic response. Female characters frequently encounter bewildering circumstances that leave them in states of speechlessness, screams, or tears. Positioned as reclusive, introspective, and oppressed figures, these heroines assume central roles within the narrative, rendering their sufferings more perceptible and the focal point of attention. The heightened depiction of female suffering is primarily

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attributed to their frequent experiences of abandonment or solitary confinement, intentionally or inadvertently imposed upon them.

Another significant aspect is the creation of an atmosphere permeated with mystery and suspense. This atmosphere generates a sense of apprehension, stemming from the unknown, effectively heightening fear. It is established through fleeting glimpses and partial encounters, leaving characters and readers uncertain about the reality of their perceptions [13,p.200]. The narrative presents ambiguous situations, such as a figure glimpsed momentarily outside a window, leaving observers uncertain about the nature of the sighting or attributing it to a mere gust of wind disturbing a curtain. Eerie sounds, like creaking floorboards, add to the pervasive uncertainty, as they could be ascribed to human presence or commonplace nocturnal noises.

Consequently, "The Yellow Wallpaper" encompasses several key Gothic elements within its narrative. The story features settings reminiscent of castles, old mansions, or their ruins, often characterized by mystery and concealed spaces. An atmosphere of suspense and uncertainty pervades the narrative, while ancient prophecies contribute to the intrigue. Mysterious events, enigmatic disappearances, and unexplained occurrences propel the plot, and the presence of omens, portents, and supernatural elements heightens the Gothic essence. Through these elements, "The Yellow Wallpaper" effectively captures the essence of the Gothic genre, immersing readers in a world of fear, mystery, and haunting fascination.

5. Verbal Gothic Elements

Verbal Gothic elements encompass the artistic tools and techniques employed in Gothic literature, a genre known for its enigmatic, chilling, and otherworldly nature. These literary devices serve to cultivate a somber and ethereal ambiance, often centered around themes of decay, insanity, mortality, and the enigmatic. Symbolism plays a significant role, employing potent imagery to convey profound meanings, intensify the sense of mystery, and foreshadow forthcoming events. Moreover, Gothic literature embraces dark and grotesque imagery to evoke a feeling of apprehension and horror, showcasing vivid descriptions of death, decay, violence, and unsettling visuals. It also delves into the depths of the human psyche, exploring the realms of madness, obsession, and psychological anguish, wherein characters grapple with their inner demons and confront their darkest desires. Lastly, foreshadowing is skillfully utilized to heighten anticipation and build suspense, as hints and clues artfully peppered throughout the narrative offer glimpses of impending danger and concealed truths.

The narrator grapples with the conflicting perspectives of the authoritative figures in her life and her own personal convictions. She highlights the opinions of a reputable physician, who also happens to be her husband, as well as the influence of friends and relatives who dismiss her condition as temporary nervous depression or a slight hysterical tendency. The narrator poses a rhetorical question, expressing her confusion and uncertainty about how to respond to such powerful voices that deny the seriousness of her condition.

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> "If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression-a slight hysterical tendency-what is one to do?..."
>
> So I take phosphates or phosphites- whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again. Personally, I disagree with their ideas..." [14,p.1]

She then recounts the prescribed treatments she is expected to follow, such as taking phosphates or phosphites, tonics, embarking on journeys, engaging in physical exercise, and abstaining from work until she recovers. However, she reveals her disagreement with these approaches, indicating a fundamental disagreement with the prevailing medical and societal attitudes towards women's mental health. Despite the authoritative recommendations, she resists passivity and believes that what she truly needs is activity and stimulation.

Through the use of the word "personally," the narrator emphasizes her individual perspective, which is at odds with the prevailing opinions. This highlights her lack of agency and the marginalization of her voice in decision-making regarding her own well-being. The confusion over the specific details of the treatment, such as "phosphates or phosphites," reflects her disoriented mental state and the hasty nature of her writing in her secret journal. The fragmented and abrupt sentence structure further contributes to the portrayal of her restless and unsettled state of mind.

Later, the narrator's acknowledgment of her husband's oppressive behavior towards her is highlighted as she recognizes that her husband expects her to exert self-restraint and suppress her nervous sensitivity in order to combat her ailment: "I take pains to control myself-before him. at least, and that makes me very tired" [14,p.2]. The husband believes that by complying with his requests, she can overcome her condition. Consequently, the narrator endeavors to adhere to his demands, striving to exhibit the desired self-control.

However, the narrator becomes acutely aware of the toll that this constant effort to meet her husband's expectations exacts upon her. She finds herself growing weary from the exertion required to maintain the façade of control, exacerbating the very condition her husband aims to alleviate through his prescribed methods [15,p.477].

The above quoted passage reflects the narrator's recognition of the oppressive nature of her husband's demands and the inherent contradiction in his approach. While he believes that strict control and suppression will bring about improvement, the narrator experiences the adverse consequences of such compliance, further complicating her condition.

Once more, there is a revelation of the narrator's defiance against the advice of her doctors and the opposition she faces from her husband and brother regarding her creative work, specifically writing.

> "I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal-having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition."[14, p.2]

Despite their admonitions, she persists in writing, albeit clandestinely. However, this clandestine pursuit takes a significant toll on her. She acknowledges that engaging in

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writing does indeed drain her energy to a certain extent, but the true exhaustion stems from the necessity of concealing her writing activities from others or facing their vehement opposition.

The narrator firmly holds onto her conviction that writing is essential for her well-being, even in the face of dissenting opinions [12,p.418]. The constant need to be covert about her creative endeavors and the emotional strain of upholding her beliefs in the face of resistance contribute significantly to her weariness.

The narrator expresses her longing for a different environment and more social interaction. She believes that if she had less opposition and more society and stimulation, her condition would improve.

> "I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus-but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition. and I confess it always makes me feel bad.
> So I will let it alone and talk about the house."[14,p.2]

However, she immediately introduces John's perspective, which emphasizes that she should not dwell on her condition and that thinking about it is detrimental. The narrator admits that following John's advice makes her feel bad, but she decides to comply and avoid contemplating her own unhappiness. The interruption in her train of thought by recalling John's instructions highlights the dominance of his voice in her mind and the extent to which she internalizes his authority. She is deeply absorbed in her husband's power and control, to the point where she hears his voice guiding her thoughts and emotions.

Furthermore, the narrator's conscious decision to shift her focus from her own condition to the house marks a turning point in the story. This shift reflects her descent into mania and madness, as she redirects her energy and emotions into the exploration and fixation on her surroundings, particularly the wallpaper. The house becomes a symbolic representation of her "condition," encompassing both her mental state of depression and her oppressive marriage. Gilman's use of wordplay and irony is evident in this passage, as the narrator tries to avoid thinking about her unhappiness but ultimately finds that suppressing her feelings only aggravates her distress. The irony lies in the fact that her attempt to detach from her condition leads her to project her emotions onto the wallpaper, eventually immersing herself in an obsessive and deteriorating mental state.

Soon, the narrator acknowledges the presence of the baby in the house and expresses gratitude for Mary's competence in caring for the infant. However, she reveals her own inability to be around the child, as it induces feelings of nervousness within her. This admission suggests a disconnection or detachment from motherhood and an inability to fulfill her maternal duties.

> "It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!
> And yet I cannot I be with him. It makes me so nervous."[14,p.3]

The narrator's reference to the baby as "such a dear baby" implies an external perception of the child's endearing qualities, but it contrasts with her own emotional response. Her mention of being nervous in the baby's presence hints at a deeper psychological struggle, potentially indicative of postpartum depression. This psychological

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condition often involves feelings of detachment, anxiety, and difficulty bonding with one's own child, aligning with the narrator's sentiments in this passage.

The narrator also acknowledges that her inability to fulfill her perceived duties as a wife and provide assistance to her husband, John, weighs heavily on her.

> "Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!
> I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!"[14,p.3]

She had intended to be a source of support and comfort to him, but her current state of illness prevents her from fulfilling those expectations. The constant need for rest and inability to engage in household tasks or actively contribute to their relationship exacerbate her feelings of guilt and burden. The narrator's mention of being a "comparative burden" suggests that she perceives herself as a source of inconvenience or trouble for John. This further adds to her feelings of inadequacy and frustration with her own condition. The contrast between her desire to be helpful and her reality of being unable to fulfill that role intensifies her emotional distress.

Moreover, the narrator expresses disappointment in herself for not living up to her own expectations. She had envisioned herself as a comforting presence for John, providing him with solace and support, but her illness prevents her from embodying that role. This discrepancy between her idealized self-image and her current state exacerbates her feelings of disappointment and self-blame.

The narrative style employed in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is integral to conveying its underlying message, as significant as the plot and actions within the story itself. By presenting the woman as the narrator, allowing her to recount her own experiences and observations regarding the room in which she is virtually imprisoned for her "treatment," the reader gains unfiltered access to her mental state: "There comes John, and I must put this away, - he hates to have me write a word" [14,p.3]. The aforementioned quote holds particular significance within the story as it directly prompts contemplation about the potential benefits or drawbacks of a woman engaging in diary writing. As the narrative progresses, the woman's descent into insanity becomes more pronounced, yet her act of journaling does not necessarily hasten this deterioration. In fact, it may even serve as a means for her to preserve fragments of her sanity amidst her illness. Conversely, her journaling may also provide an outlet for her imagination to roam freely, exacerbating her condition by granting more time for her to dwell on her own thoughts [13,p.204]. Instead of chronicling memories from beyond the confines of the room, she becomes consumed with obsessively documenting her experiences within the nursery and fixating on the wallpaper.

Through this narrative device, the story delves into the complexities of self-expression and its impact on mental well-being. It prompts readers to consider the effects of confinement, societal expectations, and the interplay between creativity and madness. The woman's narrative voice provides a raw and intimate exploration of her deteriorating mental state, challenging conventional notions of women's writing and the consequences of self-reflection within oppressive circumstances.

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The verbal Gothic expressed is illustrated by the description of the characters within the narrative. The narrator's husband, John, warns her against indulging in her imaginative tendencies.

> "John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story- making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency."[14,p.4]

He asserts that her nervous disposition, combined with her propensity for storytelling, may give rise to exaggerated and unsettling fancies. John advises the narrator to exert her willpower and exercise rationality to suppress this inclination. The passage also illuminates her awareness of her vivid imagination, potentially hinting at her creative pursuits as a writer. However, John perceives the interplay between her imagination and nervous disposition as detrimental to her well-being. He advocates for the suppression of her imaginative impulses in order to safeguard her fragile nerves. Paradoxically, although John discourages her from externalizing her imaginative thoughts through writing or verbal expression, he cannot impede the workings of her fertile imagination. Consequently, while the narrator refrains from sharing her fantasies with others, her inner world remains unrestrained, potentially leading to the transformation of her imaginative musings into obsessive or delusional states without any external assistance or intervention.

The narrator relays a conversation with her husband, John, expressing his intention to send her to Dr. Weir Mitchell for further treatment if her recovery does not progress at a satisfactory pace.

> "John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.
>
> But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!"[14, p.6]

However, she adamantly opposes the idea, citing her own reservations based on the experiences of a friend who underwent treatment under Mitchell's care. According to her friend's account, Mitchell shares similar traits with John and her brother, but to an even greater extent.

Within the narrative, John is depicted as constantly engrossed in his work, often arriving home late due to the demands of his profession. His sister assumes responsibility for overseeing the narrator's condition and managing household affairs. By using the threat of sending her to someone akin to himself, John inadvertently contributes to her distress rather than providing a supportive environment for her recovery. The narrator implies that entrusting her well-being to another individual with similar characteristics to John would only exacerbate her situation, indicating her resistance to undergoing further treatment under Mitchell's care.

As the story progresses, the narrator expresses her growing sense of despair and dissatisfaction, feeling that nothing in her life holds any value or significance. She becomes increasingly irritable and prone to complaining, and her emotions become uncontrollable, leading to frequent bouts of crying.

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> "I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.
> I cry at nothing, and I cry most of the time.
> Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone."[14,p.6]

However, she clarifies that she restrains her tears when John or others are present, only allowing herself to succumb to them when she is alone. Despite her awareness of her deteriorating mental state, the narrator recognizes that her husband, John, fails to grasp the severity of her condition. His lack of understanding or acknowledgment of her worsening symptoms leaves her questioning the validity of her own experiences. She lacks the medical knowledge or authority to challenge his assumptions about her illness, further exacerbating her sense of powerlessness.

In her isolation, the narrator must conceal the true extent of her suffering, as openly displaying her deteriorating condition would indicate a failure to adhere to the prescribed treatments and therapies. The discrepancy between her inner turmoil and the facade she presents to others highlights the oppressive nature of her circumstances and the need to suppress her true feelings.

The narrator recounts her attempt to have a sincere and rational conversation with her husband, expressing her desire to visit Cousin Henry and Julia. She wishes to make a case for herself and convince him to allow her to go on the visit. However, John dismisses her request, asserting that she is not capable of undertaking such a journey.

> "I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.
> But he said I wasn't able to go....I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished."[14,p.7]

Despite her efforts, the narrator feels that she did not effectively argue her case, as her emotions overwhelmed her and she began crying before she could fully articulate her reasons. From John's perspective, her tears may reinforce his belief that she is unfit to travel and further support his conviction that her emotional state hinders her ability to make sound judgments. However, the reader perceives the deeper significance behind the narrator's tears. They represent her profound desperation for a change in her current treatment and a longing for some form of respite or connection with others. The mention of Cousin Henry and Julia as individuals with whom she discusses her work suggests that her desire to visit them is closely tied to her need for a creative and professional life. Nevertheless, John views her writing as detrimental to her well-being, which likely influences his refusal to consider the possibility of the trip.

In this pivotal moment halfway through the story, the narrator's obsession with the wallpaper intensifies, and she begins to unravel its hidden meaning. The reference to "that paper" signifies the wallpaper that adorns the room she is confined to. She claims to have exclusive knowledge of the secrets concealed within its pattern, emphasizing her growing detachment from reality.

> "There are things in that paper which nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

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It is always the same shape, only very numerous.
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!" [14,p.8].

As the narrator delves deeper into her fantasy world, the shapes and figures within the wallpaper become clearer to her each day. She describes them as a repeated pattern, representing numerous women stooping down and creeping behind the outer design [12,p. 421]. The presence of these ghostly women evokes a sense of unease and discomfort within her. She expresses her dislike for the pattern and confesses that she wishes her husband, John, would remove her from the oppressive environment. Wolter believes the narrator progresses from "John says" to phrases like "I wonder" or "I like" or "I want" later on [13, p.206].

Gilman employs sarcasm in the phrase "nobody knows but me" to underscore the narrator's isolation and the private nature of her revelations. The narrator is torn between her fascination with the hidden truths represented by the wallpaper and her fear of what they signify about her own life and experiences. Despite her attempts to deny the growing clarity of her visions, she finds herself increasingly trapped in the suffocating domestic environment symbolized by the repetitive pattern of the wallpaper.

The metaphor of the woman "bending over and crawling around" reflects both the narrator's confinement within her own mind and her entrapment within the confines of her prescribed role as a wife and mother. Like the woman in the wallpaper, she is unable to escape the rigid expectations and societal norms imposed upon her. The passage quoted above highlights the narrator's descent into madness and her realization that the wallpaper serves as a metaphor for her own stifling existence [12,p.422]. The story continues to explore the themes of confinement, female oppression, and the power dynamics within marriage and domestic life.

Subsequently, the narrator's statement, "Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be,"[14,p.10] showcases the dark, ironic humor that permeates "The Yellow Wallpaper." It follows the scene where the narrator catches Jenny, one of the household members, touching the wallpaper and decides to keep the pattern a secret from everyone else. This moment encapsulates one of the story's defining qualities: Gilman's skillful blend of biting sarcasm and unsettling themes.

The narrator's obsession with the wallpaper has consumed her thoughts and actions, transforming her previously mundane existence into a thrilling and captivating experience. Gilman employs humor to highlight the stark contrast between the narrator's perception of excitement and the reader's understanding of her deteriorating mental state. While the narrator finds her fixation on the wallpaper exhilarating, the reader recognizes the disturbing implications of her obsession.

This juxtaposition of humor and unease is a recurring element in the story. The narrator's lighthearted comment belies the underlying darkness of her condition. It serves as a reminder that her perspective is distorted and her mental well-being compromised. In the subsequent section, the narrator casually mentions contemplating burning the house down as a solution to the smell of the wallpaper, further emphasizing the disconcerting nature of her thoughts.

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Through this blend of humor and dread, Gilman masterfully captures the complexity of the narrator's descent into madness. The story delves into themes of confinement, repression, and the consequences of denying one's true self. The seemingly humorous remarks ultimately serve to heighten the underlying tension and unease that pervade the narrative.

In the subsequent scenes, the statement, "It does not do to trust people too much,"[14,p.13] as depicted in the context of the memoir within "The Yellow Wallpaper," possesses nuanced layers. On one hand, it exposes the narrator's neuroticism and paranoia, reflecting her tendency to be excessively cautious in placing trust in others. On the other hand, her wariness is justified given her husband's prohibition of diary-keeping and his close scrutiny of her actions.

The statement implies the narrator's recognition of the precariousness of relying too heavily on others, suggesting a lack of confidence in the trustworthiness of those around her. This sentiment arises from her own psychological struggles and the constraints imposed upon her by her husband, which foster an atmosphere of surveillance and control. Thus, while the statement may initially appear to stem from her neurotic tendencies, it also serves as a response to the oppressive circumstances she finds herself in, where her autonomy is restricted, and her individuality is suppressed.

A pivotal moment in the story is captured, where the narrator's perception reaches a critical point.

> "I don't like to look out of the windows even-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?"[14,p.14]

She expresses her discomfort with looking out of the windows, fearing the presence of the "creeping women" she envisions. These women are a metaphorical representation of her own suppressed self, confined and constrained by societal expectations and patriarchal control. As the narrator tears down the wallpaper, she begins to free herself from the confines of her oppressive environment. The merging of her identity with the woman she sees behind the wallpaper signifies a powerful realization-that she, too, has been trapped and oppressed. The act of tearing down the wallpaper becomes a symbolic act of liberation and self-discovery.

The narrator's wonderment if other women have experienced a similar struggle highlights the universal nature of her predicament. She contemplates whether other women, like herself, have been confined within metaphorical "prisons" and have had to challenge societal norms to reclaim their freedom and agency.By leaving these questions unanswered, Gilman invites the reader to reflect on the experiences of women within a patriarchal society and the potential for liberation from oppressive circumstances. The narrator's journey serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of self-expression, autonomy, and breaking free from societal constraints.

6. Conclusion

"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman masterfully intertwines gothic elements with psychological depth, resulting in a captivating and unsettling narrative of subjugation and madness. Through meticulous craftsmanship, Gilman creates

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a haunting atmosphere that immerses readers in the protagonist's deteriorating mental state, while simultaneously shedding light on the restrictive societal norms imposed on women during the 19th century. The story's gothic elements, such as the decaying mansion, the mysterious wallpaper, and the descent into madness, serve as powerful metaphors for the protagonist's struggle against oppressive gender roles and the detrimental consequences of repressive social expectations. Moreover, the tale provides a poignant commentary on the devaluation of women's experiences and voices in a patriarchal society. By delving into the interplay of gothic elements and psychological insight, this paper has shed light on the enduring significance of "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a profound exploration of the human psyche and a critique of gender inequality. As contemporary readers, we are reminded of the importance of recognizing and challenging oppressive structures that restrict individual agency and perpetuate the erasure of marginalized voices. "The Yellow Wallpaper" stands as a timeless testament to the power of literature to confront societal issues and illuminate the human condition.

CONFLICT OF IN TERESTS

There are no conflicts of interest

Abstract

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