



The Representation of Patriarchal Control and Women's Mental Health in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*: A Feminist Literary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study is a critical analysis of *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman using the feminist literary lens to understand how patriarchal domination was depicted and the effect of that on the mental health of females. Three major goals of the analysis are to explore how the authority of patriarchy is portrayed by the protagonist through confinement and silencing; to explore the psychological effects of such oppression on the well-being of the women; to discuss the symbolic elements which criticize the medical and social practices practiced by men. The method used for this research is qualitative method. Through textual evidence and backed by the more recent feminist theories, the paper demonstrates that it is not the natural weakness of the narrator that has led: to madness but instead the systemic level of patriarchal oppression through domestic subjugation, medical paternalism and cultural suppression. Wallpaper and the figure, who is incarcerated inside it, are the main symbols of entrapment and resistance and they represent destructive power of patriarchal control as well as the subversive power of rebellion. Placing the text into the context of the medical matters of the nineteenth century, as well as the modern-day discussions about gender and mental health conditions, this study emphasizes the timelessness of the work by Gilman in raising the question of the intersections between literature, psychology, and social commentary.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The introduction sets the focus of the research because *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman was found to expose the trap of patriarchal power and the psychological well-being of women. The contextualization of the story in the culture of medical paternalism and domestic confinement in the end of the 19th century reveals the fact that the text by Gilman can be viewed as a critique of medical procedures, including the so-called rest cure, as well as a more general commentary on the social processes that suppress women agency. The story of the nameless protagonist, who loses her identity in the hands of her husband, is an example of psychological implications of depriving women of intellectual, emotional, and creative sources. In this way, feminist validity of studying this short story as a piece of literature of its time and place, as well as a classic lesson on how to be wary of continually dominant patriarchy and its impact on feminine mental health.

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1.2. The Patriarchal Control in America of the Late Nineteenth Century

The life of women in the United States of the late nineteenth century was mostly limited to domestic domain, where the principles of patriarchy determined women in their roles, as well as in the ability to receive intellectual and social liberation. Doctors and other family men tended to take control of the female body and mind by prescribing medicines that strengthened the female weakness and their dependency. A particularly popular therapy was the so-called rest cure created by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell and including long bed rest, enforced idleness, and no writing or creative activity. This was also the experience of Charlotte Perkins Gilman herself as she was going through a state of near psychological collapse and this experience is a direct inspiration of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The text, as Raouf (2014) points out, indicates the medical and cultural structures that were oppressive at the time as they revealed how medical systems patriarchal in nature influenced the health practices of women in addition to worsening their psychological states. This setting is critical to the interpretation of the text as a commentary against the dominance of the patriarchal in the form of medical treatment.

1.3. Patriarchal Control and Representation of Mechanisms

In the *Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman presents several processes by which the power of patriarchy functions, including physical containment to discursive control. John the husband of the narrator takes the leadership of the home and as a spouse and a physician withholding her voice, she is subjected to limitations on her everyday life. Such patriarchal power shows the way in which such systems spread to the personal arena, the intimate relationships being used to enforce social conventions. Raouf (2014) remarks that the dominance of patriarchy in the separation, discipline, and surveillance of John is an example of the way this phenomenon controls the narrator and determines her behavior, as well as her thinking process. These limits deprive the narrator of agency making her appear as a passive object in the eyes of the male. The narrative thus theatricizes the process of worsening of mental health in women when put in situations of forced reliance and muted voice and contains a larger comment on how women are systematically repressed by patriarchal cultures.

1.4. Symbolic Expression: Wallpaper as Metaphor of Constraint and Mental Decadence

Gilman resorts to strong symbolism to create the psychological cost of the oppression of the patriarchy. Its disorderly design and unsettling imagery on the yellow wallpaper is metaphorically used to represent how the narrator gets trapped in the wallpaper and loses her mind. The fact that the window is barred and the door of the room is locked only adds to the emphasis of her lack of freedom, as it goes to show how patriarchal systems physically and metaphorically put women in a cage. According to Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016), these symbols are used to describe how women are trapped in the gender roles imposed by society, which put them in the role of forced inactivity. The text demonstrates the psychological loss caused by isolation and repression as the narrator transfers her troubles onto the wallpaper, and we see women trapped in the wallpaper designs. This shows that the confinement and the denial of agency eventually lead to a psychological breakdown, as shown by the eventual identification of the narrator with the imprisoned woman in the wallpaper. In this way, the symbolism used by Gilman displays the close connection between the male dominance and psychological deterioration.

1.5. The Intersection of gender, Identity and Mental Health

The mental health issues that are developing in the protagonist are not shown as a medical condition that has happened in isolation but a consequence of gender oppression in the system. The freedom to write, her forced silence and the inability to make choices in her treatment are examples of how patriarchal systems deprive women of identity and agency. According to Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016), the anonymity of the narrator makes her experience more universal, which is why female readers may recognize themselves in her suppressed struggle. Gilman questions the medical discourses that pathologized women as defying the roles assigned to them by depicting mental illness as socially constructed, rather than biologically determined. The loss of the narrator makes a strong emphasis on the fact that intellectual and emotional expression denial can destroy a sense of self, which implies that patriarchal repression itself becomes a form of psychological violence. This reading places the story as a pioneer feminist discussion of gendered mental health discourses, because well-being should be associated with freedom and autonomy of women.

1.6. Feminist Readings Critical Scholarship

During the last several decades, *The Yellow Wallpaper* has become one of the focal points of feminist literary analysis as the story that reveals the psychological implications of patriarchal control. According to Lanser (1992), the effort of the narrator to find meaning and recreate meaning of the wallpaper is an expression of women struggle to develop alternative discourses to the silencing power. In this feminist reading, the very process of interpretation is resistance. Equally, Raouf (2014) draws our attention to the fact that it is not only the physical situation of the narrator that is controlled by patriarchal structures but also

the inner world of this personality which is what she is permitted to think and feel. These insights indicate that the text written by Gilman is more a tale of personal insanity than a commentary on institutional influences of patriarchal oppression on the mental health of women. The intersection of feminist criticism highlights the timeless appeal of the narrative in exploring the intersectionalities of gender, power and mental health.

1.7. The Question of Women Voice and Feminist Theory

Another theme of the feminist literary theory is how women voices were suppressed by the patriarchal institutions, and *The Yellow Wallpaper* depicts such oppression. The husband of the narrator would not take her views seriously as they are irrational and this reflects the cultural trend to undermine the voices and opinions of women. According to Lanser (1992), the act of writing is placed in context through Gilman story where the secret journal of the narrator is the means of resistance and also a document of the subjugation. By depriving the narrator of the right to talk and write freely, patriarchy is in effect depriving her of her subjectivity and making her a passive patient but not a person. This repression leads to her mental decline, which is a demonstration of how demotivating as well as destructive the refusal to express oneself is. Feminist theoretical perspective, the use of voice in the text by the narrator is a strong tool of regaining control, despite her psychological state falling apart through the forces of systematic oppression.

1.8. Greater Cultural Implications of the Gilman Critique

The short story by Gilman goes beyond its historical context to bring up issues that are still present in the contemporary gender and mental health discussions. The story shows how medical authority may support gender hierarchies, which remains relevant in discussions of women and their development of health care and autonomy nowadays. According to Ghandeharion and Mazari (2016), this is because of the fact that the story constructed by the narrator is exactly a universal experience, and it is therefore a timeless critique of the patriarchal structures that were and continue to exist in various cultural and time realities. Showing how the narrator loses his mind under the influence of oppressive rules, Gilman emphasizes the necessity to pay special attention to the influence of the social systems on the psychological welfare. The novel is therefore not just a critique of the patriarchy in the nineteenth century but also a timeless message on the threats of suppressing female voices and refusing to give them the freedom to make personal choices either at home or in society.

1.9. Research Problem Statement

The research problem that is identified in this work is the deficiency of a thorough feminist analysis, which preempts the connection between the authority of patriarchy and the mental well-being of women in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, especially considering the historical medical approaches, as well as the current gender disparities in the psychological well-being.

1.10. Research Objectives

- To critically analyze the ways in which the feminine power structure is depicted in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by way of the suppression and imprisonment of the leading female character.
- To investigate the psychological impacts of patriarchy oppression on the psychological wellbeing of women as expressed by Gilman in her story.
- To examine the symbolic feature of the story that demonstrate the criticism of medical and social practices of patriarchy.

1.11. Research Questions

1. What does it mean by the patriarchal authority in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by means of controlling and imprisoning the main heroine?
2. How can we explain the retreating psychological impacts of patriarchal oppression to the mental health of women as it has been portrayed in Gilman?
3. What is the role of the symbolic elements in the story to criticize medical and social practices of patriarchy?

1.12. Significance of the Study

The importance of the present study is in the fact that *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman remains able to discuss the issues of patriarchal values that suppress the autonomy and psychological well-being of women. Through the analyses of the intersections of literature, gender, and psychology, the study highlights the need to consider mental health not as a personal or biological issue with a biological focus, but as a condition that is strongly influenced by social arrangements

and cultural conceptualizations. The results indicate that the sources of silencing and confinement of women are directly dependent upon the patriarchal authority whether it is the medical profession, the domestic sphere or the cultural narratives. Therefore, this study can be very useful to feminist literature studies, gender studies, and the medical humanities, and it reinstates the value of literary texts as social critique tools.

Also, research makes a contribution to the existent arguments in the current literature as it places the work of Gilman within the discussion of modern feminist and psychological theories. The plot is not only based on historical experience of women in the state of the patriarchy, but also echoes the contemporary discourse of gender bias in health care and the underrepresentation of women in clinical research, and the cultural stereotypes of female rationality and emotional stability. This study contributes to critical discourse, which is not solely literary but also socio-ethically and socially applicable in the modern context in order to come up with the idea of the story being still relevant in its connection with knowledge about gender oppression in the system as a whole and resistance to it.

1.13. Delimitation

The paper is constrained by the context of a short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and its feminist studies. It does not strive to offer a clinical diagnosis of the mental health state of the narrator and, also, does not stray into a comparative analysis with the other works of Gilman and other feminism texts. The literature only discusses patriarchal domination, mental health of women and symbolic representation of women in the story. Moreover, it is based on the modern feminist and medical humanities scholarly work but limited to the literary and critical analysis instead of the empirical or psychological experimentation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview

In the literature review, the patterns of modern scholarship in dealing with *The Yellow Wallpaper* under various critical approaches, feminist criticism, economic and social oppression, stylistic analysis, and medical humanities, are outlined. Recent literature (e.g., Aman et al., 2023; Bashir and Mehmood, 2024; Villar, 2024) has highlighted that the narrative serves as a key location of mental health exploration of women in terms of both culture and time. Together, these works show that this narrative of Gilman can be seen as a literary work and a cultural document, which reveals the processes of control, captivity and silence that could still echo in the current discussions of gender and mental health. Meanwhile, researchers admit that issues exist, including the necessity of further intersectional and transnational readings, and they believe that future studies can enhance the knowledge of how Gilman can address different audiences and various feminist issues.

2.2. Critical foundations of feminism Language, diagnosis, politics of interpretation

The Yellow Wallpaper was defined by foundational feminist critics as a text on the relationship between the diagnosis of patriarchy and the exclusion of women with the legitimate discourse. This effective essay by Paula A. Treichler suggested that the act of diagnosis in the story becomes a discursive control mechanism: medical discourse captures the narrator and preempts the alternative ways women might speak and know in order that writing in itself becomes an act of resistance and survival (Treichler, 1984). Later provocative celebratory feminist reads were then complicated by Susan S. Lanser who demonstrated that the imagery and rhetorical strategies of the story also comet to larger politics of the culture—Lanser demands that critics pay attention to how race and national anxieties play into the reading of the wallpaper itself (Lanser, 1989). These theoretical frames are still being elaborated by the recent literature: modern critics view the journal-writing of the narrator as a battleground in which the care of the male patient is trying to replace the voice of the narrative with that of diagnostic authority, an act that feminist researchers still criticize as being silencing and epistemologically violent.

2.3. Mediocre talk, the rest cure, and modern clinical equivalents

The second line of criticism historicises Gilman in medical practice and then finds similarities between the rest cure in the story and the current issues in women mental-health care. Gilman created the work based on a personal experience of the Dr. S. Weir Mitchell rest cure; it has long been argued by scholars that a prime example in this work is a direct critique of the imposed passivity, the prescription against creative work, and the associated power of male doctors (Guarise/related theses; Alkan, 2021). More recent medical-humanities scholarship goes farther: Villar (2024) and a commentary by the Baylor College of Medicine (2024) contend that even today, *The Yellow Wallpaper* continues to address present-day issues of underrepresentation of women in clinical research and the existence of paternalistic treatment decisions in medicine – a reminder that the clinical criticism of *The Yellow Wallpaper* is still applicable today as a reminder of issues in contemporary health policy

and research ethics. These works highlight the importance of literary criticism and medical research as each other attempting to understand the process of the construction of gendered power through diagnosis and treatment.

2.4. Symbolism, narrative strategy and building mental illness

A solid literature criticism looks at how the mental breakdown of the narrator is a staging of the formal and symbolic decisions of Gilman as a product of society. The opponents focus on the wallpaper itself (pattern, color, and movement) as an externally visible surface on which the narrator tends to project inner distress and make the wallpaper a social metaphor of gendered captivity. The wallpaper is interpreted by Gandheharion and Mazari (2016) as the symbol of the entrapment of women in the patriarchal home environment; Mambrol (2022) and other modern critics observe the rhetorical device used in the story-free indirect discourse, fragmentation, repetition and reveal that the text itself carries out the epistemic marginalization and disintegration of the narrator. In recent close readings, one still hears how the narrator identifies with the women she observes behind the pattern making mental illness not just personal pathology, but a response of relationship to imposed silence and immobility.

2.5. Loopholes, transgressivity, and future research directions

Even though a lot of recent work has returned to affirming the feminist critique of patriarchy and medical authority, critics also see gaps such as the necessity of more explicitly intersectional studies that consider race, class and disability as well as gender. This was initiated by Lanser in his work (1989) when he requested readers to keep an eye on the racialized anxieties inherent in late-nineteenth-century literature; and the amplification of this has been subsequently carried out by contemporary commentators (Circulating Now / NLM and other 2024 pieces) who both foreground the problematic nature of Gilmanian thinking regarding race and eugenics and ask readers to maintain the feminist power of the story in conjunction with a critical analysis of the overall politics of Gilman. A number of 2023-2024 textual studies based on other cultural backgrounds (Aman, 2023; Ilda Ummah et al., 2024) propose the use of comparative and transnational approaches, in which medical authority exercised by men is explored, as a tool of power across different cultures and in time. Combined, the literature means the potential of a fruitful research agenda: reconcile close feminist understandings of patriarchy and mental health with intersectional, historical, and clinical analyses.

2.6. Loneliness, Oppression and Feminist Textual Analysis in Pakistan based Scholarship

Pakistani scholarship has recently added a new twist to *The Yellow Wallpaper* by exploring the theme of loneliness and oppression through the lens of feminism and contextualised to fit colonial/ post-colonial and local gender norms. Aman, Siddiqui, and Hafeez (2023) examine how the isolation of the protagonist and the lack of treatment she receives due to being an invalid by her husband cannot only result in physical isolation but also in severe psychological loneliness. Emphasizing that the creative and intellectual sources are blocked, writing, socializing, imagination, they are all highlighted as the main causes of her feeling of oppression which slowly disturbs her psyche. This work is able to locate the patriarchal control, not only as a nineteenth-century American phenomenon but also as an element that echoes in most societies where there is a restriction of the voice of women in cultural demands (Aman, Siddiqui, and Hafeez, 2023). Their analysis shows how the wallpaper is a representation of the visible and invisible barricades that confine the narrator, hence connecting loneliness, mental illness decay, and institutionalized oppression.

2.7. Recent studies of Economic Oppression, Gender Roles, and Patriarchal Authority

The other study that is recent is concerned with the intersection of patriarchy and economic dependency as well as the imposed gender roles in the household domain. In the article *Gender, Patriarchy and Economic Oppression of Women by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in The Yellow Wallpaper* (Bashir and Mehmood, 2024), the authors maintain that economic subordination is one of the most important reasons that contributed to the realization of the control over the narrator through patriarchal control. They note that her financial independence, her failure to choose what to do with her own world and how to treat herself are directly connected to her mental breakdown. As Bashir and Mehmood emphasize, the rest cure is not a mere prescribed medication, but an economic and social instrument, after which the husband/physician takes control of the protagonist and renders her reliant, helpless, and powerless. This study incorporates the economic factor into the study on women mental health in the context of patriarchy and demonstrates that resource control is a key factor in control of mental health.

2.8. Critical Stylistic Approaches: Language, Modality and Mental Decadence

Another contemporary methodology that has increased understanding of the language use of Gilman to depict patriarchal authority and mental decay is critical stylistics. Khan, Shah and Hakeem (2024) use the Critical Stylistic Analysis (following the methods of Lesley Jeffries) to find out how naming, actions, modality, and speech patterns in *The Yellow Wallpaper* mirror and

support the control. The speech of John, as an example, is formed by the minimization, orders or dismissal modality serving his authoritative role in the speech (you must, you shall, little girl) and undermining subjectivity of the narrator. The own speech of the narrator is also more disrupted, not so confident, more secretive (writing in journal) with her mental health being weaker. As demonstrated by Khan et al., the stylistic qualities of the text are not accidental, but are the key to describing the psychological cost of patriarchal restraint. Their analysis confirms the notion that the fall of the narrator is mediated linguistically: how she is addressed, how she has to internalize or suppress her own speech, are all segments of what brings about her psychological disintegration.

2.9. Medical Humanities and Intersectionality: Prejudice of Treatment and Identity Stifling

In the article by Camille Francesca Villar (2024) *The modern-day the Rest Cure the Yellow Wallpaper and underrepresentation in clinical research*, Gilman is brought into the field of medical humanities and ethics. According to Villar, although rest cure of the Gilman era is no longer the standard practice, the same underlying problems of dismissive attitude to women patients, inability to see their whole identity (gender, race, socioeconomic status), and discriminatory treatment development are present. The story is used by Villar (2024) to criticize the way most clinical-based studies still regard women as a monolithic category without the intersectional identity, thereby continuing to cause emotional and mental harm. This study links the oppression presented in the story by Gilman, not only with literary form, but also with patterned practice in medical research and treatment, which supports the feminist analysis of literature with health policy and ethics.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Overview

The approach employed in this study is a qualitative and interpretive approach based on the research in literary and interdisciplinary humanities. The main goal is to create a close and historically accurate reading of the *The Yellow Wallpaper* that would associate textual details with the broader social processes (medical, domestic, and legal) that influence the mental health of women. The project methodology is based on (1) close reading and formalist approaches to narrative voice, imagery, and rhetorical means; (2) thematic analysis to determine common patterns of control, confinement, and mental distress; and (3) critical discourse analysis to trace how medical and patriarchal language in the text forms authority and silences the voice of the narrator. By the combination of these methods, one can see how the study can go beyond the micro-levels of textual evidence (syntax, modality, repetition) and make the general assertions about socio-historical relations of power. To maintain the analytic rigor, I will use a clear coding process of themes (based on Braun and Clarke thematic analysis steps) and maintain an audit trail of interpretive decisions and triangulate readings with both historical medical sources and current feminist literature to make sure that close readings are contextually supported (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Foucault, 1973).

3.2. Data Collection Methods

The data used in this literary analysis are textual as well as archival as opposed to empirical in the social-science sense. The main text will be the book *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (first published 1892); the version to be utilized will be the scholarly critical edition (bibliographic information will be mentioned in the list of references). Secondary sources comprise academic critiques (peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters), medical writings of that period, and select works of the present-day writing of medical humanities, relating the critique of Gilman to modern-day clinical practice (Villar, 2024). The search and collection will be systematic: academic databases (JSTOR, Project MUSE, PubMed/PMC, Google Scholar) will be searched by the following keywords: Yellow Wallpaper, rest cure, patriarchy, women mental health, and medical humanities; high-quality open-access commentaries and specific archival resources will also be added where possible. Collected materials will be brought into qualitative analysis software (e.g., Nvivo) to aid in coding, memoing, and patterning through materials; coding categories will be derived inductively through initial close readings and through the iterative process of refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.3. Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the study lies at the intersection of feminist literary criticism, feminist medical humanities and Foucauldian theories of power/knowledge. Feminist literary criticism offers prisms of analysis of gendered voice, agency, and politics of representation (Lanser, 1992), and feminist medical humanities models anticipate how historical medical discourse has been used as a tool of patriarchal power over women's bodies and minds (Villar, 2024). I use the work of Michel Foucault in expressing how medical knowledge constructs subjectivities, namely, how the medical practices of institutionality participate in categorizing, surveilling, and normalizing bodies and behaviors (Foucault, 1973). This framework is supplemented with an

intersectional awareness that serves to address the differences within the experiences of women to ensure that race, classes and other elements of identity are put into consideration (Crenshaw, 1989).

4. Analysis Results and Findings

4.1. Male Authority and Denial of the Voice of Women

Since the very first page of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman prefigures the fact that the narrator does not have control over her life which constitutes the rule of her husband. The narrator does not hide that, she is laughed at by John but, of course, that happens in marriage (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 648). This is the line that reflects the internalization of the narrator in the downplaying of her thoughts as a standard of marriage relations. Laughter by John is a mechanism of silence, and it makes her concerns unimportant and her opinion is invalidated. As has been pointed out by feminist critics, this scene is an embodiment of cultural script of male rationality triumphing female emotion (Lanser, 1992). The journal of the narrator is the only outlet she has, however, even this activity should remain secret as John does not like her writing. It is symbolic, hence, as well as literal: she is not allowed to speak freely, and both of these factors represent the system where the voices of women are not listened to, being treated as hysterical or irrational. This silence emphasizes the way the patriarchal power disempowers women and deprives them of control of their narratives and psychological conditions.

4.2. Being locked up in the Domestic Sphere as being a patriarch

The fact that the narrator is trapped within one room at the behest of John is the epitome of patriarchal dominance in both domestic and medical setups. She remarks, I would have one down the steps that opened out of the piazza, and had roses round the window, and what pretty old-fashioned chintz hanging! But John would not listen to that" (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 649). She does not want a more lighthearted atmosphere; however, John decides where to play, which is the nursery room with barred windows. When the author describes the window bars, the bedstead nailed down, and the peeling wallpaper, the images evoked are those of a prison or some asylum and not a comfortable place of staying, creating the image of her physical confinement. This was imposed isolation, as Aman, Siddiqui, and Hafeez (2023) believe, is the symbol that the women are not a part of the social and intellectual world in general.

4.3. Paternalism in medicine and the power of the rest cure

The authority of patriarchy in *The Yellow Wallpaper* is also represented through the medical power of John that suppresses the self-understanding of the narrator. She says, phosphates or phosphites, whichever it is, and tonics, and traveling, and air, and walking, and am by no means to work till I am well again (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 648). This program resembles the rest cure developed by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell that required women to be intellectually inactive, which reinforced the idea that the mental well-being of women was only possible when they were submissive and passive. John rejects her personal knowledge about her state: If an illustrious physician, and one own husband assures friends and relatives that there is nothing really the matter... what is one to do? (p. 648). In this instance, the narrator speaks of the unattainable stand she is in—her experience of being sick is unsupported by medical authority of men. As Villar (2024) remarks, this story shows how dangerous it can be to leave the woman out of the process of making decisions regarding them and their treatment, an issue that is still relevant in modern clinical practice.

4.4. The Nursery as Infantilizing and Control Metaphor

The most graphic expression of the male dominance over women is perhaps the strong-armed stay of the narrator in a former nursery that infantilizes her under the rule of John. She thinks, it was nursery, and then playroom and gymnasium, I suppose, because the windows are barred to little children, and here are rings and objects in the walls (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 649). The fact that she makes the decision in terms of a nursery represents her demotion to childishness, further supporting the cultural idea that women cannot be autonomous and make rational decisions. The fact that John insists that she should rest, not work and not write is reflective of what children are limited to and not adult women. This infantilization as Bashir and Mehmood (2024) persuade us defines the absence of women in making decisions due to the patriarchal control of power.

4.5. Mental Decadence by Forced Silence

The imposed silence, her inability to reveal her own feelings and to be able to do any creative work is a direct cause of psychological deterioration of the narrator. She admits that she did write to some extent despite them; even so exhausted by it, having to be so crafty about it, or suffer very stiff resistance (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 650). The fact that her journaling is a secret makes her feel guilty and scared, which also adds to her mental stability issues. As Lanser (1992) points out, the sly writing of the narrator points out the conflict between women expressing themselves and the patriarchy, and the repression of creativity

destroys not only intellectual satisfaction but mental health. Psychological pressure of concealing her mind turns the writing into the form of resistance and survival but it also strengthens the isolation of the narrator because she is not able to express her inner conflict. This oppression adds to an internal rift that causes fracture, showing how the silencing of patriarchy is a direct cause of emotional collapse.

4.6 Isolation as a Driving Force toward Obsession

Her perception is slowly distorted by the confinement and isolation of the narrator, which is the result in obsessive fixation on the wallpaper. She confesses that she lies here on this large immovable bed, nailed down- I think- and goes round by that shape about by the hour (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 654). The visualization of the bed to be nailed down strengthens her paralysis, both physical and psychological, and the time she wastes in gazing at the wallpaper makes clear the energy the intellectual was required to turn to obsessive thinking. According to Aman, Siddiqui, and Hafeez (2023), loneliness and the powerlessness are only adding to the downward spiral of the narrator, transforming something harmless into a source of mental suffering. She projects her repressed emotions onto the wallpaper, which represents the feeling of entrapment and desperation that she feels. This compulsive attention is not the compulsory issue of insanity but the result of the imposed idleness and loneliness.

4.7. Hallucination and Self Projection

As the narrator continues her narrative, she starts hallucinating, and she transfers her suppressed identity to the wallpaper. She says, The front pattern does move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 656). This hallucination symbolizes that the narrator identifies with the figure trapped, representing her own condition, which is in a way symbolic in her being imprisoned. Villar (2024) views this forecast as an expression of the disintegrated psyche of the narrator who is oppressed by patriarchy: deprived of her subjectivity, she transfers it onto the wallpaper. The hallucination reflects the psychological cost of being deprived and infantilized- her sense of self is divided between the wife, who is required to be rational; John, and the rebellious woman she creates behind the wallpaper. It is a point that captures the destructive consequences of patriarchal oppression as the oppression of the female voice causes a worsening of her mental health to the level of dissociation.

4.8. Resistance in a Form of Breakdown

Such a devastating psychological impact of patriarchy is depicted by the ultimate breakdown of the narrator as well as a kind of symbolic opposition. At the climax she insists, I have escaped at last.... Despite you and Jane. And I have peeled off the main part of the paper, and you can't put me back! (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 657). In spite of the fact that she is making her way down to madness, her statement claims freedom of being under the control of John and the symbolic prison: the wallpaper. According to Bashir and Mehmood (2024), this moment marks the paradox of patriarchal oppression: women can only have their ability to act in a way that implies insanity. It is tragedy and resistance at the same time, a show that extreme oppression can destroy a mental health but it also compels the assertion of the identity. The insanity of the narrator, in turn, is a culmination of the criticism of the patriarchal order and reveals all the horrific mental effects of the systemic silencing and imprisonment.

4.9.The Wallpaper as a sign of the patriarchal restraint

The wallpaper, of course, the strongest symbol in the story by Gilman, is the symbol of strong systems of patriarchy. The narrator explains it as, "It is boring enough to make the eye dizzy in pursuing, too pronounced to leave the eye ceaselessly irritated and bating to study, and when you follow the feeble waffling lines...they abruptly commit suicide, fall off at angles outrageous, ruin themselves in inconceivable contradictions (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 652). The disordered pattern portrays the perplexity and inconsistency that the system of the patriarchal rule subjects to the lives of women: she is supposed to be submissive and smart, motherly and quiet. The wallpaper, according to Khan, Shah, and Hakeem (2024), is a verbal and visual metaphor of social and societal limitations, the suffocating design of the actual wallpaper symbolizing the walls that trap the narrator both mind and body. Even the fact of her obsessional research of the pattern proves the fact that the patriarchal oppression is eating up her intellectual power, making it flow irrationally. In therefore the wallpaper is both a Beauty Object and a metaphor of control.

4.10.The Trapped Woman as the Projection of Stifled Identity

The narrator becomes more and more aware of a trapped woman behind the pattern of the wallpaper and elaborates on how that wallpaper appears to shake due to a woman wishing to escape her confines (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 655). This incarcerated woman is a metaphor of the suppressed identity of the narrator, a dual who is enslaved by the principles of patriarchy and medical paternalism. According to Aman, Siddiqui, and Hafeez (2023), the character is a symbol of the inner world of the narrator who cannot overcome imposed passivity and silence. The projection by the narrator shows how patriarchy dismantles the female subjectivity whereby women are forced to divide between external conformity and internal resistance. The struggle

of the trapped figure is an indication of the great struggle of women against the oppression of the patriarchy, and implies that madness is not merely a single pathology of a person.

4.11. There was the Tearing the Wallpaper as Resistance Act

The rebellion by the narrator in the climactic scene is portrayed by destroying the wallpaper and she declares, I pulled and she shook, I shook and pulled, and by the time we were through in the morning we had peeled off yards and yards of that paper (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 656). The violent tearing is a literal destruction exercise as well as a symbolic gesture of liberation which is the rejection of the structures that keep her in forms of imprisonment. Bashir and Mehmood (2024) perceive this moment as an agency statement: as the narrator is going mad, her tearing down breaks the patterns of oppression that symbolize the social and medical practices that are masculine in nature. This symbolic freedom shows that Gilman is critical of how the only way women could find the way out of the patriarchal circle was through the extreme rebellion, or even the state of madness itself. The fact that the wallpaper is peeled off, actually revealing the truth of the reality of women oppression, allows the narrator to break down as a tragedy and as a protest.

4.12. The Last Scene: Freedom or Slavery?

The conclusion the narrator gives is the uncertainty of the symbolic opposition: I have finally made it out... despite you and Jane. And I have torn the majority of the paper, so you cannot take me back! (Gilman, 1892/1998, p. 657). This scene is an embodiment of success—she has liberated the woman in the wallpaper, who is the same as herself, yet it is also what the oppression of the patriarchal system does to the psyche of its victim. Villar (2024) emphasizes that the ending of Gilman shows the contradiction of liberation: the narrator can be symbolically free just because she loses her mind, and therefore, reinforces the patriarchal narrative of women who do not obey as irrational. However such irony is the crux of the criticism that Gilman has given: through the story, the breakdown is caused by directing at the medical and social practices of the patriarchal system in such a way that their validity is questioned. This resolution is therefore both rebellious and tragic, implying that it is only when the issue of patriarchy is confronted with the challenging aspect of its deep rooted cultural and medical dominion that it can be shattered.

4.13. Findings and Discussion of the Study

This research has shown that *The Yellow Wallpaper* written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a strong protest against the patriarchal rule and its disastrous effect on female psyches and the symbolic and narrative techniques support this idea. The first objective was analyzed based on revealing the forms of patriarchal control in the form of silencing, confinement, and medical paternalism where John, being a husband and physician, does not give the narrator the right to own her voice, space, and treatment. The second goal brought out the psychological implications of this kind of oppression, how the narrator descended into forced silence through obsessive fixation and hallucinating, and that patriarchal practices are active in causing mental instability and not reducing it. The third goal highlighted the symbolic power of the wallpaper and the imprisoned woman as a symbol of her freedom through destruction of the wallpaper also represents defiance as well as the psychological price of the system of patriarchy. These results are consistent with the recent research which approaches the breakdown of the narrator as socially constructed, and symbolically loaded (Khan et al., 2024; Villar, 2024). Notably, the paper highlights that the narrator being mad is not an attempt at portraying Weakness in the character but the unavoidable consequence of the medical and social institutions of patriarchy that infantilize, silence and restrict women. Incorporating feminist literary criticism with the perspectives of medical humanities, the work confirms the current interpretations, but elaborates on them without leaving out the foresight of connection between symbolic representation, mental health discourse, and systemic gendered oppression.

5. Conclusion

The current analysis has revealed that *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is not simply a classic of feminist literature but also one of the deepest observations about the devastating force of patriarchal power over the TPs of women. The story, when viewed through the prism of feminist literature, exposes the powerlessness, gendered restriction, and paternalism of the medical system to disenfranchise the female protagonist, thus leaving her psychically disintegrated instead of healed. Placing the story in the context of nineteenth-century medical realities, as well as the current feminist scholarship, the paper highlights the perennial value of the Gilman critique in terms of uncovering the systemic sources of the oppression of women.

Also the analysis revealed that the psychological breakdown of the narrator is closely connected to the symbolical structure of the narrative. The wallpaper itself turns out to be a metaphor of the trapping structures of patriarchy, the entrapped woman is the reflection of the repressed identity of the narrator and her fight to be free. All these symbolic elements intensify the criticizing power of the text and madness is both the sad result of suppression and the act of rebellious opposition. These results

echo the contemporary feminist and medical humanities literature, which emphasizes the social construction of female mental health within the patriarchal hegemony.

Finally, this study confirms that *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a multi-layered text that still provides insightful critical understanding of the intersection of gender, power, and mental health. Not only does it criticize historical practices like the manner in which women were treated by the rest cure, but also modern cultural and institutional trends which place those women in a subordinate position in terms of voices in clinics, homes, and social settings. The connection between the psychological decay of the main character and the male-dominated system has made the narrative ageless commentary on the oppression of the system and asked the audience to recognize the autonomy of women, their creativity and subjectivity.

5.1. Suggestions and Recommendations

This study can be extended by future studies using intersectional and transnational approach to the text of Gilman and explaining how the relationship between race, class, or colonialism can provide additional insights into the nature of patriarchal domination and the mental well-being of women. It would be more profound to compare *The Yellow Wallpaper* with modern-day accounts of clinical or domestic oppression against women to understand the fact of its persistent relevance. Also, interdisciplinary methodologies – based on psychology, medical humanities, and feminist theory – may help connect literary criticism with real-life discussions of gender-related health care practices, so that the critique that Gilman develops will remain a part of academic discussion as well as current gender equality campaigns.

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