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Unraveling the Oppressed Psyche: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Female Oppression
in The Yellow Wallpaper (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear mommy and papa and Kamouli for being such a real sweet home and all my beloved family members

To my sun that always shined my life and has been my source of cheerfulness

To Choukbraham Sabria that I'm so proud to call my friend

Acknowledgment

Alhamdulillah for all the blessings i have. I owe my deepest gratitude to my dear teachers particularly Professor Mired who has a soul lighter than feather and Mrs. Ghernout for being a sweet mother.

Abstract

In the depths of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's mesmerizing short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, lies a profound exploration of the female psyche and the complex interplay between psychological struggles and societal constraints. This present research work attempts to embark on a transformative journey, exploring together the narrative of the story by relying on Sigmund Freud psychoanalysis concepts of the unconscious mind and repression. Through these lenses the study aims at unearthing the hidden truths that lie beneath the protagonist's crumbling sanity. With each turn of the page, we witness the protagonist's defiant rebellion against the suffocating norms that confine her and drive her to madness, defying expectations and challenging the very essence of societal constructs. This research stands as a testament to the enduring power of Gilman's words, inviting us to contemplate the intricate dance between the conscious and unconscious, and inspiring us to confront the complexities of the female psyche.

Key Words : Madness, female psyche, psychoanalysis, unconscious, wallpaper, repression

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| PPD | Postpartum Depression |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |

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General Introduction

Literature, the cosmos of words, floating around the pages roaming tales that captivate the soul and carry us to realms unseen. It is a brilliant symphony of language, where emotions find their voice and thoughts are endowed with a home. In this realm of literary creations, certain works possess an eerie power to unravel the complexities of the human mind, exposing the depths of our subconscious and illuminating the profound impact of psychological experiences. Among these literary gems, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, stands as a captivating exploration of the female psyche and a literary masterpiece that requires attention.

A compelling episode from the writer's own life, Charlotte Perkins Gilman *The Yellow Wallpaper* was published in 1892, during a time when societal norms and expectations heavily influenced the lives of women. It delves into the depths of a woman's descent into madness between the walls of her own mind, presenting a compelling narrative ripe for psychological analysis. During the late 19th century, women were expected to conform to rigid social expectations and adhere to prescribed norms and behaviours dictated by a patriarchal society. While their mental health concerns were often dismissed or trivialized, leaving many women silently grappling with inner turmoil, repressed emotions, and unmet psychological needs that confined them and limited their autonomy.

Drawing upon the powerful lens of psychoanalysis under Sigmund Freud's concepts of the unconscious mind and repression, this research uses the short story as its main source of data and seeks to analyse *The Yellow Wallpaper* to uncover hidden meanings, explore the psychological dimensions of the characters mainly the protagonist, and shed light on the impact of societal norms on women mental state that was unheeded in the nooks and crannies of the society.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the psychological impact of the protagonist's experiences in *The Yellow Wallpaper* on her social and personal life. It aims to delve into the effects of her deteriorating mental health, confinement, and restricted autonomy on her relationships, social interactions, and self-identity, as well as understanding in general how women's mental health was at the times of the era and the protagonist being a representation of the era's women.

To guide the investigation, the research aims to answer the following questions:

- How does the protagonist's psychological state evolve throughout the story, and what factors contribute to her descent into madness?
- How does a psychoanalytic analysis deepen our understanding of the psychological dimensions of the story?
- What is the symbolic significance of the yellow wallpaper and how does it reflect the protagonist's inner conflicts?

The research hypothesis suggests that the protagonist's psychological deterioration is intricately linked to her repression of desires and societal expectations. Additionally, we anticipate that the yellow wallpaper serves as a metaphor for the protagonist's subconscious mind, mirroring her struggle for autonomy and self-expression.

The research is divided into three chapters: chapter is a theoretical one, it explores the theory of psychoanalysis by understanding Freud's concept of the unconscious mind and repression that are used to understand the protagonist's character. The second chapter focuses on explaining how psychological issues affect our lives and examine the profound interplay between the human psyche and the external world. The last chapter we shift our focus to the exploration of the psychological struggles depicted in the narrative.

Chapter One :

Into the Depths: Understanding the Theory of Psychoanalysis

1.1.Introduction

Within the realm of psychology and literary analysis, several theoretical frameworks have emerged to focus on the complexities of the human mind and the narratives that unravel within literature. Psychoanalysis is one of the most crucial theories which offers profound insights about the complexities of the characters psyche, behaviour, and the hidden depths of the unconscious. In this chapter, we will explore the meaning of psychoanalysis as a scientific and a literary theory, by establishing an exploration of its historical context and embarking on a journey that draws upon the theory of Sigmund Freud the father of psychoanalysis, examining his concepts and principles that will be tackled in this research and delving into the tangled tapestry of the human mind, and uncovering the profound insights that Freud offers in the context of literary analysis.

1.2. Psychoanalysis: Freud

Illuminating the enigmatic depths of the human mind, psychoanalysis has opened a new gate to the comprehension of the underlying forces that drive our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. Psychoanalysis is the study of the human mind and when saying the human mind both the conscious part and the unconscious are included. Psychoanalysis is a talking therapy that aims to treat a range of mental health issues by investigating the relationship between the unconscious and conscious elements of psychological experience using clinical techniques like free association and dream interpretation (Pick, 2005). It was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it revolutionized the field by delving into the mysteries of the unconscious, unveiling hidden desires, repressed memories, and complex defence mechanisms that shape our behaviour (Mcleod,2023). A key element in Freud's

theory is the unconscious mind, the reservoir of memories, thoughts, and emotions that shape the human behaviour and it is the concept that psychoanalysis basically emphasizes on (Cherry,2023). In other words, the theory sheds light on exploring and understanding the hidden aspects housed within the mind to gain invaluable insights into human psyche.

In another part, psychoanalysis as a literary theory applies Freudian concepts and theories to works of fiction in order to explore the unconscious motivations, desires, and conflicts present in literary texts. It views literature as a manifestation of the author's unconscious mind and interprets the symbolic meanings and hidden messages within the narrative (Delahoyde), and we give the example of Sylvia Plath characters that are considered a picture of her own psyche and several writers as well.

Moreover, it analyses the characters minds and the use of symbolism, metaphor, and other devices to uncover deeper psychological layers. Another key concept in psychoanalytic literary theory is the interpretation of dreams and the significance of the unconscious, while dreams according to Freud, are the "royal road to the unconscious," providing insight into repressed desires, fears, and conflicts (Zahid, 2018). Similarly, literary works often contain symbolic elements and dreamlike sequences that reflect the author's unconscious thoughts and desires. In addition, the consideration of the reader's engagement with the text is an essential part which makes readers involve their own interpretation of the text based on their experiences (Sandbaek, 2022). However, this literary theory has faced some controversy and criticism while critics did not really support the idea of using psychoanalysis with literary criticism. They argued that it is not always necessary to analyse the author's life or the reader's psychological needs to understand a literary work, and the theory was accused of lacking empirical evidence and that it oversimplifies complex literature by focusing primarily on the unconscious, potentially neglecting other important aspects of a text (Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism)

Nevertheless, focusing on the unconscious is in fact a strength rather than a weakness of the theory (Moll,2023), because by analysing the unconscious desires and anxieties of characters within a story, psychoanalytic literary theory can provide a deeper understanding of the motivations and conflicts that drive the plot and this can give readers the pleasure of appreciating the complexity and richness of literary texts. Besides, it is not concerned solely with the author's life or the reader's psychological needs. Instead, it seeks to uncover the unconscious desires and conflicts that drive characters' actions and behaviours and it is not the only approach to analyse literature, and it is not intended to be used exclusively. Psychoanalytic literary theory offers valuable insights into the labyrinth of the psychological dimensions of literature and human experience, enriching our understanding of literature and inviting us to engage with narratives in a more profound way (Delahoyde).

1.2.1 Freud's Model of the Mind

Sigmund Freud's ideas were considered shocking at the time and a lot of debate and controversy have been stirred concerning them until the current time. Yet, it is beyond dispute that his work had a significant influence on a number of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, literature, and even art (Cherry,2023). It could be said that Freud's biggest impact on the world was the concept of the tripartite model of the mind, consisting of the conscious, the preconscious, and the unconscious. Certainly, we have all heard of the idiom what we see is only the tip of the iceberg, in fact this is the analogy that Freud has explained his concept with. While, the iceberg tip that is visible above the water represents the conscious mind and the submerged part is the preconscious and the unconscious.

a. The conscious:

It is the part of our awareness that we can readily access and control. It is responsible for our logical thinking, decision-making, and reality testing.

b. The Preconscious:

It is deemed as a mental storage area that holds thoughts, memories, and knowledge that are not currently conscious but can be easily accessed and brought into conscious awareness when needed. It acts as a bridge between the conscious and unconscious mind.

c. The Unconscious:

It is the profoundest and largest part of the mind. It contains thoughts, memories, desires, dreams and emotions that are hidden from conscious awareness (Pick,2015). Freud argues that, humanity is not fundamentally in control of themselves, but instead, people are governed by their desires, it is rather the unconscious that runs the show. The unconscious contents can strongly influence our psyche, even though we may not be aware of them. The unconscious is believed to be shaped by early experiences, repressed memories, and instinctual drives, and it can give rise to dreams, slips of the tongue, and other unconscious manifestations (Cherry,2022)

1.2.2 The Id, Ego and Superego:

Later, Freud proposed a more structured model of the mind that better depicted his original ideas about conscious and unconscious processes (Gaztambide,2021). He divided these components into three id, ego, and superego and they work together to shape human actions and personality.

a. The Id:

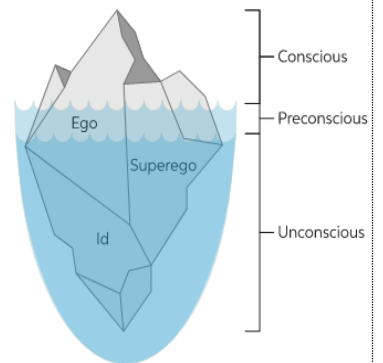
The id is the primal part of the mind that operates on instinctual drives, while it is driven by unconscious desires and seeks immediate gratification. It operates on the pleasure principle and lacks moral considerations and does not regard the social norms or even consequences.

b. The Ego:

The ego is the rational and conscious part of the mind that mediates between the id and the external world. It seeks to satisfy the desires of the id in a realistic and socially acceptable manner.

c. The Superego:

On the other hand, the superego represents the moral and ethical component of the mind. It represents the internalized moral values and societal norms, and acts as a conscience and guides behaviour based on moral principles and ideals.



In brief, the iceberg analogy helps illustrate how the id, ego, and superego exist within the abyss of the mind, with the ego interceding between the unconscious drives and the moral standards. Together, they form the intricate structure of the psyche, influencing our thoughts, behaviours, and personality and it emphasizes that although we are aware of our conscious thoughts, there is a much larger and influential part of our mind that remains hidden beneath the surface.

1.3. The Concept of Repression in Freud's Theory:

In the deep waters of our minds, lie the echoes of our thoughts, feelings and memories that we try to shield from our conscious awareness seeking relief and comfort. In fact, this is the unconscious mechanism that Freud has labelled repression, which is a fundamental concept in his theory that describes a psychological process through which individuals unconsciously push distressing or unacceptable thoughts, memories, and desires out of their conscious awareness as a defence mechanism. Repression can be defined as the avoidance of threatening

information (Baumeister and Cairns, 1992)). According to Freud, when individuals encounter thoughts or desires that conflict with their moral values, societal norms, or personal sense of self, they actively repress them into the unconscious and these repressed contents despite them remaining hidden from conscious awareness, they continue to influence the mind in multiple different ways. Repression aims to maintain psychological equilibrium and protect the individual's self-image (Cherry,2023). Yet, unresolved conflicts and repressed feelings and thoughts may lead to mental disorders and unwanted mental issues. Freud's concept of repression has had a significant impact on the development of psychoanalytic theory and continues to shape our understanding of the unconscious mind.

1.4. Psychoanalysis as a Literary Theory

Immersed in the depths of the human psyche, psychoanalytic literary theory unveils a captivating realm of truths, inviting us to a journey through the labyrinthine landscapes of literature's hidden meanings. It is vital to note that literature is a horizon of imagination, where vibrant characters dance across the pages, and stories unfold like blossoming flowers, enabling us to explore the depths of human experiences, ignite our senses, and challenge our perceptions of reality. Thus, the psychoanalytic literary theory acts as an effective way to delve into the characters tangled minds and decipher their words, thoughts and emotions through the lines. Psychoanalysis is not only a branch of medicine or psychology but it rather aids in understanding culture, philosophy and most importantly literature (Mahroof,2017).

Psychoanalysis is a talking therapy that seeks to treat mental issues considering the relationship between the unconscious and conscious elements of psychological experiences using particular techniques (Pick,2015) and since it can help us better understand human

behaviour, then it must certainly be able to help us understand literary texts, which are simply about human behaviour.

Therefore, psychoanalysis in literature relies on the techniques by Freud and other scholars to decode the writer's and characters' minds, meaning that psychoanalytic literary theory is genuinely a method of analysing literature that uses the theories and techniques of psychoanalysis to understand the psychological motivations and conflicts of characters within a story.

Moreover, It seeks to unravel the unconscious desires and conflicts that drive characters' actions and behaviours, and it is based on the idea that literature is a reflection of the unconscious mind and that the characters, symbols, and themes in a work of literature can be analysed to gain a deeper understanding of the work (Literary Theory,2023). It argues that literary texts like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires and anxieties of the author, which Freud described as "The royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind"(Freud pp.483) and that a literary work is a manifestation of the author's own neuroses (Delahoyde). Ultimately, psychoanalytic literary theory with its insightful lens invites us to delve beyond the surface of words, unlocking the underlying symbolism, dreams, and conflicts that shape the narrative landscape and allow us to appreciate the complexity and richness of literature.

1.5.Conclusion

In conclusion, by acknowledging the historical context and significance of psychoanalysis as a scientific and literary theory, we set the stage for a deeper understanding of the intricate workings of the human mind within literature. With Sigmund Freud's concepts and principles as our guide, we are poised to unravel the complexities of characters' psyches, behaviours, and the hidden depths of the unconscious. This exploration promises to reveal profound insights and shed light on the intricate relationship between psychology and literature, illuminating the transformative power of psychoanalytic analysis in interpreting and understanding the narratives that shape our literary landscape.

Chapter Two:

The Invisible Struggles: Psychological Problems and their Impact

2.1.Introduction

In the vast landscape of human existence, our lives are intertwined with a myriad of psychological experiences and challenges that shape our very being. This chapter delves into the profound impact of psychological issues that permeate our lives, exploring how they can influence our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. From the complicated workings of the mind to the complexities of mental health. Through a compassionate lens, we examine the profound interplay between the human psyche and the external world, offering clarity on the profound significance of psychological issues and its effect on our character development.

2.2. The Perils of Repression

In the mazes of our inner world, we often find ourselves delicately weaving a veil over our true feelings and thoughts. We suppress the echoes of vulnerability and conceal the whispers of our deepest desires, fearing the rawness they might expose. The weight of unexpressed emotions and silenced truths can burden our hearts, casting shadows on our well-being and hindering our journey towards self-discovery. As a matter of fact, this is what Sigmund Freud originally coined as “Repression”, a central concept in psychoanalytic theory, and many of Freud’s ideas centre around the concept of repression. While it occurs when our thoughts, feelings and memories are too painful for us, and we end up unconsciously pushing the information out of consciousness and become unaware of its existence. The repressed thought may still affect behaviour, but the person who repressed the thought is completely unaware of its existence or effect (Repression,2015).

Freud held the belief that repressed content, even though hidden from conscious awareness, remained active and could re-emerge in troubling ways. In addition to a lack of awareness and comprehension, the incapacity to confront and integrate repressed material

could result in psychological difficulties like difficulty focusing, irritability, anxiety, sleep disturbances, unsettling dreams, and feelings of sadness. Furthermore, Freud proposed that reminders of the repressed material could trigger harmful and destructive behavioural patterns such as anger and aggression (Repression in Psychoanalysis).

Repression is the natural tendency to avoid or inhibit certain unwanted, undesirable, or upsetting impulses, thoughts, or feelings says the psychologist Carla Marie Manly. In addition to that, it can morph into a series of mental disorders as well as physical aches if it was not treated and taken seriously (Fielding,2020). It is indeed the root cause of various mental issues as, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and insomnia. In addition to low self-esteem, chaotic relationships, confusion and speaking “unconscious” thoughts which is referred to as “Freudian Slips” (What is Repression). In concise terms, we can describe repression as the lava that has been buried in the depths of the earth and gets expelled during a volcanic eruption resulting in devastation. Since repression affects our lives in distinctive ways, it is necessary considering therapy in order to create an opportunity for emotional release, resolution of inner conflicts and finding inner harmony, and forging deeper connections with ourselves and others.

2.3. Postpartum Depression

It is crucial to note that ancient perspectives about mental illnesses were often attributed to supernatural or spiritual causes rather than understanding them through a scientific or medical lens (Miles,2022). In other words, the understanding of mental disorders particularly depression, was limited and treatment approaches varied immensely and were most of the time inhumane especially for women. Indeed, it is quite common that women’s mental health has been overlooked for centuries and was always maltreated even though it is a serious issue that needs attention (Rossler,2016). Especially during pregnancy and after giving birth, a hard

period when many women go through immense biological, emotional, financial, and social changes during this time, which can eventually lead them to suffer from mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Pregnancy and Mental Health).

Moreover, it is vital to consider that childbirth is a hard and exhausting process, since female goes through a lot of emotional, hormonal, physical, and psychological changes throughout pregnancy. While, tremendous changes occur in the mother's interpersonal and familial world (Mughal et al,2022). As a definition to postpartum depression (PPD,2019), it is a complex mix of physical, emotional, and behavioural changes that happen in some women after giving birth (Bruce,2022). This mental condition happens during pregnancy or in the first year after giving birth and it is the most common complication for women who have just given birth affecting up to 1 in 7 women (Torres,2020). Despite the birth of new life being a joyous moment, PPD as an unwelcome guest comes to cloud the joy making the mother experiencing a range of symptoms that drain her energy (Torres,2020). Women may experience excessive crying, irritability, and mood swings and they may lose interest in activities they once enjoyed and have difficulty bonding with their baby.

Furthermore, other symptoms can include changes in appetite and sleep patterns, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, difficulty concentrating, and thoughts of self-harm or harming the baby. As well as fatigue, lack of energy, and a sense of overwhelm are also prevalent (PPD,2019). It is relevant to mention that these symptoms can significantly impact a woman's ability to function and care for herself and her new-born and leads her to feelings of loneliness and isolation that could even drive her mad. Nevertheless, there are ways to cure this psychological disorder through open dialogue, therapeutic interventions, and a nurturing environment (Plumptre,2021). Thus, women can reclaim their inner strength and gain their mental health back through these therapies that were not unfortunately present in the past times and were compensated by bed rest.

2.4. The Impact of Mental Disorders

It is evident that our mental well-being weaves intricate threads that shape our experiences, relationships, and personal growth. While mental and physical health are equally crucial, and our mental health in particular affects how we think, feel, and act and it is indeed important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood (About Mental Health,2021). Additionally, they may lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining meaningful relationships, as well as challenges in self-esteem and self-confidence (Burton,2012).

Moreover, psychological issues genuinely have the power to shape our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours as well, influencing the way we perceive ourselves, others, and the world around us, and can even impact our relationships, work performance, and overall quality of life (Hull,2023). In other terms, these issues like hidden whispers carried by the wind that extend beyond the confines of our minds, encompass a vast spectrum of mental and emotional challenges that individuals face mainly in their social, personal life.

a. Social Life

Interacting with others promotes social connections and a sense of belonging, which contributes to overall well-being and mental health. Hence, psychological issues have a massive impact on our social life, influencing the way we connect, interact and form relationships with others. These issues can lead to social withdrawal and feelings of loneliness making it difficult to engage in social activities or maintain fulfilling relationships, as well as causing low self-esteem, social anxiety, or difficulties in expressing own self authentically (Cherry, 2023). By exploring the complex web of psychological issues and their effects on social spheres, we have to consider paving a way to a better understanding in order to preserve mental health.

b. Personal Life

Psychological issues can profoundly impact our personal lives, infiltrating every aspect of our being. They have the power to distort our thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, leading to a distorted self-image and affecting our overall well-being (Bansari, 2022). In total, these issues create a constant internal struggle that hinders our ability to experience joy, pursue our passions, and form meaningful interactions with our beloved ones. In simple terms, they make it hard to cope with everyday life making us fail in performing well with our family, friends and others (Bautista,2022). Thus, they can disrupt our sense of self-worth, confidence, and purpose, leaving us feeling isolated, overwhelmed, and trapped in a cycle of negative thoughts and behaviours.

To clarify, recognizing the impact of psychological issues allows for early detection, potentially preventing further deterioration and providing individuals with the opportunity to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. To elaborate, considering how much of a role our mental health play in each aspect of our life, it's necessary to guard and improve psychological wellness using appropriate measures (Plumptre,2021).

2.5. Conclusion

In summary, understanding the implications of repression, postpartum depression, and psychological issues in general in addition to their impact on life is a poignant reminder of the challenging world of human experiences. Repression's silent influence reminds us of the weight carried by unexpressed emotions and thoughts. Postpartum depression reveals the arduous times the new mothers live and the necessity for compassionate support. Through this journey of understanding, we foster the opportunity for healing, resilience, and the ability to lead gratifying lives despite the obstacles posed by psychological complexities.

Chapter Three:

Beyond the Lines: Analyzing the Psychological

Odyssey of the Narrator

3.1. Introduction

Within the folds of literature, characters often serve as vessels through which authors explore the complexities of the human mind. While studying the mental state of characters enhances our appreciation of their multidimensionality and enriches our interpretation of the text, as we gain a deeper understanding of their mental condition and its intricately woven inner world. In this third chapter, we turn our attention to the psychological landscape of the protagonist, unearthing the hidden depths of her unconsciousness, the nuances of her desires, and the conflicts that shape her experience. Through a meticulous examination of her thoughts, actions, and interactions we venture to unravel the enigmatic layers of her psyche, where hidden treasures and haunting secrets reside.

3.2. Synopsis of the Short Story *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Step into the eerie sphere of *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, where the boundaries of reality and illusion blend together in a chilling dance and a woman's descent into madness unfolds within the confines of a mysterious room adorned with a yellow wallpaper.

The narrator and her physician husband rented a mansion for summer, so that she can recuperate from what her husband believes is “temporary nervous depression”. He forbids her from conducting any type of activity including writing, which she enjoys doing but she is obliged to obey her husband, since he is her doctor, he always wins the argument by saying (Trust me, I’m a doctor) most of doctor’s motto. She was living in a house that she finds vaguely uncomfortable saying, she is in a room that she did not even pick, and she had no right to do what she wants. The narrator was longing for company and activity because she

was lonely the entire time. She writes secretly when Jennie her husband John's sister and Mary who takes care of her baby are not around. She did not have a bond with her new born and she considers him a nervousness source.

Later the narrator mentions that her family has just visited and left her even more tired than ever. John her husband wants to send her to Weir Mitchell, the real-life physician under whose care Gilman had a nervous breakdown. The narrator's room was spacious and sunlit with a yellow wallpaper stripped off in two places with a chaotic pattern that she describes as full of "absurd, unblinking eyes.". She does not like the wallpaper but she was somehow fascinated by its patters trying to find purpose in them. As she stays in her room, her mind is becoming more chaotic and she is losing her strength by time.

By moonlight the wallpaper patterns started to look different for her, while she starts to see a woman "stooping down and creeping" trying to break free of the paper that look like a cage bars. Whenever she tries to discuss leaving the house with John, he silences her. Her obsession with wallpaper grew and she started sleeping less and less lying awake at night observing it, and she says there are always interesting developments as the wallpaper smells and she describes it as a "yellow smell." She believed that the front pattern of the wallpaper moves because the woman trapped behind it is shaking it trying to escape, but the pattern of the wallpaper is strangling her. She watches that woman creeping around the house. She mentions that she also creeps around at times. She was afraid that John and Jennie are aware of her obsession with the paper, and she determined to put an end to her obsession by deciding to completely remove the wallpaper, peeling much of it off during the night.

The last day in the house has arrived when Jennie offers to keep the narrator company while John spends the night in town with a patient, but she declines. As soon as darkness falls, the narrator assists the woman peel the wallpaper. By the end she was hopelessly insane and as the sun rises, she felt that the patterns are mocking her. When Jennie entered the room, she

was shocked to realize that most of the wallpaper has been removed and the narrator asked that no one bothers her while she sleeps the remaining hours of the day.

She locked the door after Jennie and threw the key out the window willing to work on catching that woman in the wallpaper after she escapes, she attempts to shift the bed so that she stands on it while removing the wallpaper, but it did not move and she got angry and bit it and thought of throwing herself from the window but it was locked. She believes that there were many women including her stuck behind the wallpaper, and when John has arrived, he started knocking the door and she told him that the key is outside, when he entered, she told him that she finally could free herself from the wallpaper and that he cannot put her back in, because she believed that Jennie and John were planning to keep her locked. he fainted and she continued to peel the wallpaper as if nothing happened.

3.3. Beyond the Words: A Glimpse into Gilman's Crisis

These nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing, wrote Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*. An American writer and a social critic who grew up between the arms of poverty, had a rough childhood and lived in a society that is purely Victorian. As a divorced woman and a mother who carried the burden of a troubled soul, grappling with the torment of mental illness, decided to be the voice of all women by inking pages and pages of art enlightening people about women's mental health that was buried in the chasms of the underworld. She made her mark with several works mainly *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a literary masterpiece that was ahead of its time. Through vivid prose and rich symbolism, she explored many themes including delving into the psychological and emotional struggles of the protagonist, emphasising the damaging effects of societal constraints and patriarchal norms on women's mental health.

The story as well touches on themes of confinement, repression, and the search for freedom within oppressive circumstances. In fact, it is a semi-autobiographical, mirroring Gilman's own health crisis. Besides, she highlighted the crisis of most of the American 19th century women notably the way they were treated when suffering from a particular mental struggle. While they were subjected to a therapeutic approach called the "rest cure", a type of "therapy" when the ill woman is put in a room alone, given the necessary doses of medication, provided with regular meals, and, most importantly, instructed to "rest" and do nothing. As Dr Mitchell said to the protagonist and Gilman herself, since he was her doctor in real life to take as much rest as possible "and never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live".

3.4. Analysis: Decoding the narrator's mind

With every turn of the page, we uncover the hidden nuances and psychological complexities that make "The Yellow Wallpaper" a timeless exploration of the female psyche. With keen eyes and a discerning mind, we embark on an analytical exploration of the protagonist psychological conflicts, that shape her character through the lens of psychoanalysis opening the gateway to a brilliant discovery.

3.4.1. Repression and the Unconscious Mind

According to Freud, the ID represents the repository of our wishes and desires, which are often suppressed through various defence mechanisms. These repressed elements of the mind continue to exert a powerful influence on our psyche. In the case of the narrator, one could argue that Freud's concept of the unconscious, mainly the ID and the Ego apply seamlessly and obviously there is a disturbance in the narrator's unconscious mind. The ID, though repressed, seeks to emerge and make itself known. As soon as she enters the house, she says that there is something "queer" about it even though she loved it. She senses something

unusual about it though it is a beautiful house with a garden that she described DELICIOUS. She did not like her room as well and wanted instead the more stereotypically feminine room:

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! But John would not hear of it. (Gilman 8)

She tried to tell these feelings of the house and the room to John, but he does not listen to her, while she finds herself getting angrier with him and sometimes without a particular reason as she says:

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition. (7)

The anxiety and turmoil brought on by her illness expose the repressed anger she had towards him before. However, her husband dismisses this anger as a sign of her lack of self-control, stating "John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control" (7). John's perspective aligns with Freud's theory of repression, as it suggests that repressed emotions will always find a way to surface. The narrator's struggle to control her unconscious mind is mirrored in her perceived lack of self-control.

She was deprived from engaging in any intellectual activities, mainly writing which she had so much passion for, and it served as her creative outlet and means of self-expression. Yet, she writes secretly from Jeannie and John who considers it trivial and bad for her health. Her journal is an outlet for the anger and bitterness felt for her husband that she is repressing:

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. (5)

She disagreed with their ideas of the “rest cure” by being in a room resting and having fresh air without doing activities like a normal woman would do. She was confined in a room living in isolation and loneliness, obliged to follow the instructions of her husband and forced to repress all of her creative urges, which gives the sense that she is being stripped of her nature as a woman and as a wife. Her accepting all of the ills of the situation demonstrates that her ego tries to maintain a sense of harmony and equilibrium. However, the constant repression of her true self and the denial of her agency lead to a state of inner conflict and psychological strain. The more she suppresses her desires and conforms to societal expectations, the more her ego suffers, and the more prominent her psychological distress becomes.

3.4.2. The Narrator’s Mental Matter

From the beginning of the story, it is evident that the narrator's mental state is fragile and unstable characterized by a gradual descent into madness. The confinement imposed on her contributes to her growing sense of confinement within her own mind reflecting the oppressive forces that constrain and suppress her. In reality, she exhibits an unnatural behaviour for a new mother, failing to nurse her new born. She neglects her maternal responsibilities and fails to actively care for or connect with her child. This behaviour suggests a sense of emotional disconnect and an inability to form a strong maternal attachment. These actions indicate hidden conflicts in her unconscious, which she is afraid to confront openly, as well as her trouble with postpartum depression:

It is fortunate that Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I CANNOT be with him, it makes me nervous. (12)

When bringing a psychoanalytic eye to the story, her mental state reveals the roots of her depression and the opposition she faces from her husband, Jennie, and society at large. There

is a constant struggle between the ID that she is repressing, the EGO that is on watch, and the Superego which is what it is morally required of her to please her husband and nurse her baby; but some aspect of ID does not let her. Hence, this leaves her inert and tormented, leading her to perceive patterns in the wallpaper.

3.4.3 The Yellow Wallpaper as a Symbol for the Hidden Psyche

The wallpaper is indeed more than just a decorative element within the room, it is a silent witness with its patterns whispering cryptic tales of confinement and madness, mirroring the narrator's descent into the maze corridors of her own mind, her hidden emotions and trapped desires yearning to break free. I never saw a worse paper in my life (9)

The colour is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. (10)

As time passes the narrator started to dislike the room and become increasingly fixated with the wallpaper patterns since she is isolated and having nothing else to occupy her time. Her obsession with the wallpaper is a reflection of her own mental state, her repressed desires and emotions, and her confinement and isolation. She is fascinated by a recurring design that resembles a twisted neck and upside-down eyes staring at her believing that not only John and Jeannie are keeping an eye on her but the wallpaper too. As she continues to observe the wallpaper, she notices that its appearance changes with different lighting, revealing a woman “stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern” behind at night other women as well:

...by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be (31)

The front pattern DOES move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! (37)

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind. (37)

Later the trapped woman became a source of comfort and solace, a secret refuge that she keeps to herself. She longs to be alone with the creeping woman, as if they share a connection or understanding. While she started becoming paranoid, feeling the need to protect the secrets of the wallpaper from John and Jennie. She felt the need to free the trapped woman too which can be interpreted as her unconscious attempt to liberate herself from the confines of the oppressive forces. In simple terms, her insistence on removing the wallpaper that seemed as prison bars for her and her lust for freedom was the only thing roving in her head. I've got out at last... and I've pulled of most of the paper, so you can't put me back! (47)

Her gradual loss of touch with reality and the blurring of boundaries between the real and the imaginary indicate her growing madness. Her madness reaches its climax as she locks herself in the bedroom and begins to peel off the yellow wallpaper. This scene can be interpreted as the culmination of the narrator's unconscious desires and the eruption of her repressed thoughts and emotions. The act of peeling off the wallpaper represents a symbolic stripping away of societal norms and expectations, as well as an attempt to reclaim her own agency and identity.

3.5.Conclusion

In the enchanting folds of literature, characters cease to be mere ink on paper and transform into vivid souls and even the ordinary things become alive to ignite our imagination and broaden our scope of understanding what is beyond the lines. Gilman has left an indelible mark in literature by seeking to show the ill and desperate psyche of all women, by showing that the yellow wallpaper in the story was not just an “unclean yellow paper”, but rather a vellum where a woman mind and heart aches are penned. Beneath its seemingly serene surface, there lies a subtle unrest, a quiet rebellion seeking release from the confines of its yellow bars

that hold secrets and whispers of a restless spirit longing to break free and emerge into the light of day.

General Conclusion

In the pale depths of the yellow wallpaper's intricate patterns, a wave of hidden yearnings and silenced voices emerge, inviting us to ponder the delicate dance between confinement and liberation, sanity and madness, societal expectations and personal desires, and the silent battle waged between the self and the world. *The Yellow Wallpaper* as a profound exploration of the female psyche weaves threads of confinement and inner struggles. This dissertation, a harmonious blend of literary and psychoanalytic analysis, has traversed the corridors of the mind, peeling back the layers of repression and unveiling the raw emotions concealed within.

As we delve into the depths of the unconscious, we encounter the silent whispers of forgotten and stifled desires. Through the protagonist's odyssey, we witness the dance of shadows and light, as the yellow wallpaper becomes a metaphorical canvas upon which her innermost battles are painted. Each stroke of the pen reveals the delicate nuances of her madness towards the path of liberation from the pattern's bars.

Through the lens of psychoanalysis, we decipher what is beyond the lines and pages, unlocking the hidden chambers of the mind. The yellow wallpaper, a silent witness to her descent, mirrors the maze corridors of the unconscious, a vivid manifestation of her entrapment and lust for self-expression.

This research stands as a testament to the transformative power of literature, a portal through which we confront our deepest fears and untangle the complexities of our own existence. It beckons us to peel back the layers of societal expectations, to listen to the whispers of women inner world, and to embrace the multitudes within.

Gilman's contribution to literature is significant. She defied the societal norms by giving the muted women a voice and between the lines of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, we find solace and inspiration, within the pages of this remarkable tale, we find echoes of women stories waiting

to be heard and it is our role to give a voice as she did and continue to inspire generations to question and challenge oppressive norms through different lenses.

As the final word draws to a close, we are reminded of the universality of the human experience, the delicate threads that connect us all. It is a call to action, an invitation to foster empathy and understanding for those women's psychological battles that remain unseen. May this research serve as a guiding light, igniting the flame of compassion and sparking meaningful dialogue surrounding women's mental health and their autonomy.

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