

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Life and works of Gilman:**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, an American writer, economist, and lecturer, an early theorist of the feminist movement, who wrote over two hundred short stories and ten novels. Gilman saw that the domestic environment has become an institution which oppresses women. She was widely known both in the United States and abroad for her incisive studies of women role and their status in the society. She was the leading intellectual in women movement from the 1890s to 1920. She drove her entire life for liberating women from housework and child care and for increased opportunities for meaningful work when the middle-class women were enslaved by masculinistic ideas and a cult of domesticity. She focused on the work as the one part of life. So she defined work as "joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite" and envisioned the series of reforms, including an organized day care system, which would enable women to be more active in the public sphere.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was born on July 3, 1860 in Hartford, Connecticut. Fredrick Beecher Perkins was her father and Mary Fritch Perkins was her mother. Her father was a Liberian, a writer, and a book editor. He said to have learned nine languages before his marriage to Mary. Her childhood was very difficult. Although her father was the grandson of the prominent preacher Lyman Beecher and a cousin of Harriet Beecher, Charlotte Perkins Gilman grew up in isolation from those prominent relatives. She was living on her birth place of Hartford, Connecticut. Her father abandoned his family soon after her birth in 1866 because of family conflict. Her father and her mother created huge ditch between them. Gilman was reported to be the last of three pregnancies for Mary. Upon Gilman's birth, the doctors told Mary that another pregnancy would kill her. It is also said that her father left his family immediately

after that announcement. But Gilman was unsure if the two events were related. It was reported that Mary gave birth to forth child, but that child was also died.

She was raised by her mother Mary Fredrick Perkins in the brink of poverty when her father deserted them in 1866. Her mother, a talented musician, sold her piano when Gilman was three in order to pay for butcher. She never owned another one. The broken family was forced to move "nineteen times in eighteen years to fourteen difference cities" (Gilman vi). In this way Charlotte Perkins Gilman, her mother and her brother, Thomas A. Perkins moved constantly, often barely skirting poverty. The seeds against patriarchy were already planted since her childhood when mother also suffered from male dominated society. Her mother resisted upon that society.

She studied art and earned her living by teaching and designing greeting cards to get support for her life and her family. Including a brief stint at the Rhode Island School of design, she combined with a series of jobs, governess, commercial artist, and a teacher as well. She began her writing at an early age and published her first newspaper articles at 1883. The following year, she married an artist named Charles Stetson and published a poem "*In duty bound, a life hemmed in.*" based on the various social and feministic subject matter. Within nine months her daughter, Katherine was born and charlotte was plunged into a depression that continued for three years.

Gilman consulted the prominent doctor Dr. S. Weir Mitchell and underwent his famous "rest cure" a regiment of total rest, confinement and isolation. Once at home, she attempted to follow Mitchell's advice to devote himself to domestic work and her child "never touch a pen, brush, or pencil as long as you live", it drove her and said, "Utter mental ruin." A trial separation from her husband and trip to California restored her health and eventually she and Charles

Stetson were amicably divorced. Gilman's second marriage to a first cousin, George Houghton Gilman, in 1900, was deeply satisfying and endured until his death in 1934, a year before her own. In 1932 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. After her husband died suddenly from that breast cancer in 1934. She returned to California to live near her daughter. Gilman died on August 17, 1935, in Pasadena, California. She ended her own life by taking an overdose of chloroform. (*An Autobiography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*)

Establishing herself in California, she began to write and lecture on suffrage and women's rights and on the social reforms advocated by the nationalist clubs inspired by Edward Bellamy's Utopian Novel "Looking Backwards"(1888). Gilman's first book was *In This World* (1893), a collection of satiric poems with feminist themes. She published her famous story, "*The Yellow Wallpaper*" (1892), depicted a depressed woman who slowly descends into madness in her room, while her husband is often away due to his work at a hospital. "*The Yellow Wallpaper*" based on her experience with Dr. Mitchell. It is an indictment of 19<sup>th</sup> century medical attitudes towards women as well a subtle analysis of the power politics of marriage. Rejected by the prestigious "Atlantic Monthly" whose editor found it too personally distressing to publish, Instead, it appeared in less widely circulated "New England Magazine in 1892.

When she suffered a lot from depression, she accepted her husband's suggestion and put herself into the care of Dr. Weir Mitchell, a prominent Philadelphia physician who had also treated her cousin, Georgiana Stowe and many other patients suffering from depression. Dr. Weir Mitchell's treatment for women patient called for complete rest, lots of food, and no intellectual stimulation. Later, she described this experience in "*Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper*" (1913). "I came so near the border line of utter mental ruin that I could see over" and after three months, she fled the doctor and her marriage to retain to sanity.

When *The Yellow Wallpaper* was published in 1892, she sent a copy to Dr. Mitchell. Though he never acknowledged receiving it, she was told later that he altered his treatment of nervous disorders as a result of reading her work. The real purpose of *The Yellow Wallpaper* was to reach Dr. Weir. Mitchell and convince him of the error of his ways. So she says:

I sent him a copy as soon as it came out, but got no response. However many years later, I met someone who knew close friends of Dr. Weir. Mitchell who said that he had changed his treatment of nervous prostration since reading *The Yellow Wallpaper*. If that is a fact, I have not lived in vain. (Dock, 89)

With her move to California and subsequent divorce, she was now ready to devote her life to what she saw her destined work-writing. She began her lecturing and writing on women's rights and social reform. Then she published *Women and Economics* in 1898. This is her comprehensive analysis of women's past and present subordination to society. Here Gilman's major thesis was that women's economic dependence inside marriage, their unpaid situation and therefore undervalued work in the home, determines their subordinate status. Her solution was to remove women's work- and women themselves from the home and to professionalize and socialize the domestic work. Abolishing the sexual division of the world free women to pursue work in the public world and become more productive members of society. . Its popularity led to recognition and international lecture tours. In June of 1903 she addressed the International Congress of Women in Berlin, and the next year toured in England, Holland, Germany, Austria, and Hungary. *Women and Economics* brought Gilman immediate fame.

After the success of *Women and Economics*, the issue of female education became a familiar theme in Gilman's works. She became the prolific writer and she published one

collection of poetry based on the various social and feministic subject matter. In the decades that followed she enjoyed an international reputation, lecturing extensively in the United States and abroad.

She continued to develop her social analyses in the series of books including *Concerning Children* (1900), in which Gilman advocated professional child-care. *Concerning Children* is responsible for civilized them and should meet its responsibilities" by attending to the needs of all its young. As depicted in *Harland*, infant education became a social responsibility, not the responsibility of the biological parents. In arguing for the extension of responsibility to all children through a collectivist approach to early childhood education, Gilman noted the frustration of many women with the inability to properly care for their children. It was absurd to assume that each mother, educated for neither marriage, social service, nor motherhood, was a natural-born teacher of children. "You cannot expect every mother to be a good school educator or a good college educator. Why," she asked, "should you expect every mother to be a good nursery educator?"-(Concerning Children-24)

Her famous works are *Our World*(1893) *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), *What Diana Did*(1910), *The Crux*(1911), *Harland*(1915), *Concerning Children*(1900), *The Home* (1904), *Human Work* (1904), and *The Man-Made World* (1911) with countless essays and short stories. *His Religion and Hers*(1923) In both *The Man-Made World* and *His Religion and Hers*, she argued that this imbalance in the nature of women's education resonated in the types of knowledge extended to women: the knowledge considered of most worth to women was the knowledge determined, accumulated, and organized by men; it was masculine knowledge presented within a masculine culture in a masculine way. In *His Religion and Hers* she planned a religion freed from the dictates of oppressive patriarchal instincts. In two of her essays, *Human*

*Work* (1904), and *The Man-Made World* (1911) she also advocated women working outside of the home.

Novels presented the ideal societies based on her reform principles, including *What Diantha Did* (1910) *The Crux* (1911) and the feminist utopian novel *Harland* (1915) where we can see a Utopia of women without men. She wittily exposed American society's arbitrary assignment of masculine and feminine roles and behavioral traits. In her novel '*Harland*', is a positive utopia made up only of women, Gilman gives us a vision of what perfection would be like, if only the inevitable power, money and sex did not get in the way of things. In *Harland*, there are no men thus eliminating the sex motivations. And they live a highly socialized communal life within which most of the problems of modern society have been conquered or mastered.

The ladies of *Harland* have been isolated from the rest of the world for about 2000 years and during the early part of that period all the men in their society were killed or died off. This left a society of women only. To go on, they developed the ability to have virgin births, through an unusual biological quirk. But all the offspring are women.

She was able to publish twenty eight books in seven years. Her own journal called the *Forerunner* from 1910 to 1916 for which she alone wrote for seven years and in which she published all the copies of articles, editorials, poems short stories and serialized four full-length novels. Gilman's work constantly explored the role of women in society, questions of what knowledge was of most worth to women, ways women might use that knowledge to improve society. Though she had a mixed audience in Europe and the United States, Gilman directed her message to the women who were not engaged in the larger movements of that time and needed to expand their sphere outside the home. In the *Forerunner* she said the goal of education was to

teach individuals to "see clearly, to understand, to properly relate one idea to another, to refuse superstition and mere repetition of other people's opinion

Through out her life, she emphasized on social responsibility, specialized knowledge, and the common characteristics in a system of education in which women could develop their full potentials. In teaching women to dedicate their lives to the common good rather than the familial good, education liberated women from the "chamber and scullery work" of the home and helped them to recognize their connection, commitment, and contribution to the larger world. The emphasis on social responsibility enabled women to participate in "human work" and to become active members of the economy within the home and the community. Gilman enabled women to enter and to act as full and equal members of society. She wanted to expose the same types of knowledge, equality, independence, and autonomy and she encouraged women towards parallel goals with males. Through a gender-balanced education, women and men would develop into socially active, intellectually stimulating, and financially self-reliant, civically responsible, personally courageous human beings.

Throughout her long and distinguished career as a feminist writer and lecturer, Gilman was never comfortable with labels. "I was not a reformer but a philosopher," she wrote in her autobiography. "I worked for various reforms, as Socrates went to war when Athens needed his services, but we do not remember him as a soldier. My business was to find out what ailed society, and how most easily and naturally to improve it."<sup>27</sup> The way she found "most easily and naturally" to improve society was through education. "I am a teacher," she declared in a statement rarely noted by scholars. Gilman used her lectures and publications deliberately to teach present and future generations about the possibilities that lay open to them. Her educational efforts were twofold: she wrote about education, and she wrote to educate. All of her works

focused on women; some of them commented on schooling, but almost all included her critique of the informal education women received within the home and the community. Though written a century ago, Gilman's critique of womanhood and education remains potent as society continues to struggle with issues of gender and women continue to struggle for equality, independence, and autonomy.

## **1.2 Preview of Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper***

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century onwards, the women writers started to search for their own voice and identity, as opposed to the identity granted by patriarchy. The present thesis will search and show Resistance to Patriarchy in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper* is also searching for female identity, their rights and the place in the society. The male dominated character, John is seen when the protagonist is restricted from her writing activities and taken for rest treat as she is suffering from depression.

The critic Carol Fairley Kessler emphasizes on the feministic aspect on the fiction. She says that *The Yellow Wallpaper* provides a rendering depiction of a woman driven mad. Her madness is her revenge upon and rebellion against patriarchal confinement. It has received acclaim for its powerful imagery of *wallpaper* as prison, and release, for it's heroine who perceives herself as having both as authentic self and male constructed self

On the other hand, Amy E Hudock on her analytical essay says that *The Yellow Wallpaper* is to condemn not only a specific medical treatment but also the misogynistic principle and resulting sexual politics that make such a treatment possible. Gilman makes John the window through which readers can view the negative images of woman in her society. In the end, the narrator triumphs over John- she literary crawls over him- but escapes from him only in

madness. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, see it as the narrator's triumph by fainting John shows he is defeated, and the narrator has become the woman behind the *wallpaper*, who can creep down the road, away from the house and her husband's authority.

Lisa Kasmer finds the narrator's defeat in the story. She has retreated into the world of the childishness whereas Catherine Golden perceives as a realistic tale in its portrayal of the narrator's descent into madness, as a feministic gothic tale in its use of abnormal behavior and occurrences. Beth Snyder in his book *A Poetic of the Inside* regards *The Yellow Wallpaper* as, in some ways, a male text punctuated with female silences, a powerful discourse that allows itself to be interrupted with margins, so that its dominance can be reaffirmed in a silencing of the other. The journal entries are divided so that each are set apart from one another." There comes John, and I must this away,- he hates to have me write a word. We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first say".

Similarly, Rena Korb on An Overview of *The Yellow Wallpaper* takes this short story as the story of female confinement and escape. The story seeks attentions, not only for the harrowing journey into madness it portrays but also for its realism. It comes as no surprise, then to discover that the *The Yellow Wallpaper* is autobiographical.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, one of the important exponents of feminism defends against patriarchy. Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a fiction that is usually regarded as typical late nineteenth century feminist text. The protagonist, the narrator resists the patriarchal, cultural and traditional structure of male dominated society. The Protagonist is taken to summer house for the treatment of neurasthenia (depression) and avoided to do any kind of works whether physical or mental, for complete rest. But she secretly does some literary writings. She sleeps in a large room she believes it was once a nursery. The room contains a bed, barred windows and ugly

yellow wallpaper. She stares at the pattern and eventually decides that it depicts a woman trapped behind bars. Ultimately, she locks herself in the room and starts to peel the paper off the walls. She begins to think that she is the part of the wallpaper pattern and crawls the floor following the pattern. She compares her conditions with the conditions of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and does the activities like the character. Her husband, John breaks open the door and gets fainted when he enters the room. But narrator on that time only laughs and crawls over him. In this way, protagonist resists against patriarchal or male dominated society for liberty, equality and female rights. She writes secretly against her husband's will, not to do any things and take rest only. She laughs when her husband becomes fainted because she feels she has got ultimate relief. Her resistance ultimately gets victory upon her husband and whole traditional patriarchy imposed by her husband.

### **1.3 Feminism and influence of feminism in Gilman's works**

Female, the other half of humanity next to male, has remained confined in our patriarchal society. It was evidently so in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian society. The concern about women's rights in early 19<sup>th</sup> century especially associated on their marital complication but in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the woman writers started to search for their own voice and identity, as opposed to the identity granted by patriarchy. As Kasmer writes in her book, *Literature and Psychology*,

Women were longing to break themselves free from the clutches of male dominated society. They were being stifled both in marriage and social life as well as in the higher masculine authority.(341)

The search for identity and their places in the male dominated society was the crucial female issue in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* is highly influenced with this theme.

The basic view is that western civilization is pervasively patriarchal- that is, it is male centered and controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate woman. In respect to men in cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic. From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy to the present, the female tenets are defined by the negative reference of the male, hence as another, or kind of non-man.

The era was marked by male chauvinism. Females lay a strong desire to be free. The female freedoms, womanhood, oppression to women, both in sexual context as well as their emotional needs, were the subjects that were not permitted to be spoken by women. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a time of great change not only in America but also in many places around the world. The industrial revolution influenced the daily life, for better or for worse, of all Americans. As Wendy states in book *Freedom, Feminism and the State*,

Women, at the beginning of the century by the handful and at the turn of the century millions, left their assigned domestic sphere for public sphere and that changed women's lives forever. (220)

The poor and working class women long aspired to be free from domesticity, this desire was still neglected. In the early part of the century, before the industrial revolution really took place, women were still valued in the home for their ability to prepare herbal remedies for nursing the sick, to care for the aged and to raise their children, to grow crops and vegetables in their fields and kitchen garden. Moreover, their main responsibilities were to tend the animals and perform various household tasks. Time and again, these women found that before they could

be effective in the public domain, they would first have to create a climate in which women were welcomed into the public domain. So, the nineteenth century women's movement arose along with the other social reform movements, initially as a way of making female reformers more effective activists for their chosen cause. Only by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century did a significant number of women begin to work for woman's rights as their primary issue and there was a lot of work to be done to attain women's equal status in the society. 'A number of feminists have concentrated, not on the woman as the reader, but on what Elaine Shelter calls gynocriticism- that is, a criticism which concerns with developing exclusively female framework, for dealing with works written by women'. (*A Glossary of Literary Term*-243)

The first generation of the first wave of American feminism broke many barriers, opening doors of opportunity for women of future generations, and opportunities which those later women could use to mount greater challenges to the system which excluded women. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, married women could not enter into contract without their husband's consent; women lost all title to property or future earnings upon marriage. And children were legally controlled by husbands and other male relatives. From the time immemorial, it has been the custom of woman to sacrifice herself whenever she got a chance, and any deflection from the course she was expected to pursue must necessarily occasion a deal of comment.

The 1890's in America were decade of social change and social tension. The depression of 1893-96 accentuated class division; urbanization and industrialization continued to challenge traditional ways of life. Darwinism and higher criticism of the Bible threatened established ways of thinking about human origin and destiny. It is not surprising that in decade of such social and intellectual ferment, reaction and resistance to change took the form of a particular Puritan-American brand of Victorian moralism.

By 1890 the women had been a matter of public discussion in America for over fifty years. In that year, the two national suffrage organizations merged for the final push for the vote to women. However, it was not practiced for another thirty years. They formed innumerable women's organization; social, intellectual political and philanthropic to practice women rights and women identity. Lower middle class white women came together to work long hours for low wages, and the organization they did was to combat working conditions in the textile mills and sweetshops where they were employed. African-American women, who continued to work overwhelmingly in agriculture and as domestic workers organized, and started to combat among the social problems in the society. Women, black and white, southern and northern, were active in attempting to attain better status.

Women's independence became central issue during this period. American women were legal property of their husbands who were married to them. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Napoleonic code was still the basic of state law governing the marriage contract. Though she might retain control over any inheritances she had received prior to her marriage, all of the wife's accumulations after marriage were the property of her husband. The husband was the legal guardian of the children in the events of divorce in between them. The wife was bound to live with her husband and follow him wherever he chose to reside. A wife could not sign any legal contract without the consent of the husband, nor could she lodge a lawsuit, appear in court, hold public office or make domination to a living person. They were trying to get released from those the domestic and social chains.

Upper class white women, raised with a particular sense of women's place derived from some mythic age of chivalry and then drawn by Civil war in to arenas of activity previously unknown and forbidden to them, came relatively late to the women's movement. The feminist

upsurge was initiated by women who had attempted to function politically in the reform movement of their days. Abolitionist movement that ended slavery in America was one such. Within abolitionism, women's right stirred a hot debate. The strongest advocate of women's rights was the libertarian William Lloyd Garrison (1807-1879), editor of the *Liberator*, who insisted that anti-slavery movement was a battle for human right, not male rights. Many abolitionists were on opposed Garrison that women were self-owners but resisted mixing women's rights with anti-slavery for fear it would hurt the latter cause

As the century drew to close, it was marked by many changes. Change was everywhere and the population was struggling to come to the terms with those developments. Middle and upper class women were still expected to stay at home as idle, decorative symbols of their husbands' wealth. Virginia Woolf termed "as angels in the house" (820) they were pregnant frequently, they cared their homes husband and children, played music, sang or drew to enhance the charms of their and reflect well on their husbands. Wives were possession, cared for and displayed, who often brought a dowry or inherited wealth to marriage. They were expected to subordinate their needs to their husbands' wishes. She says in her celebrated essay "A Room of One's Own" aptly depicts the condition of the women in that era

Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel: they need exercise for their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and, embroidering bags.(822)

The society believed that women were for the pleasure and assistance of men; their role was complementary to that of men, and they should fulfill their natural feminine functions. It considered them different from men and warned not to compete with them but to depend on them for everything, especially for their identities, the social definition of who they were. It had rewarded them for the limited role of wife, mother and mistress all of which were pleasing and beneficial to men. One who did not seek her identity through man was a threat to social value.

## 2 Feminism and patriarchal ideology

### 2.1 Feminism and female desire

Feminism is the belief, and principle that stresses women should have the same rights and opportunities as men in the society. Although women have been playing very crucial role in the development of whole human society, they have remained confined in our patriarchal boundary. It was obviously so in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Victorian society. Women were longing to break themselves free from the authority of male dominated society, abandoning the male-made space and identity that had limited them only within the family in connection to their husbands and children.. They were being muted both in marriage and social life as well as in the higher masculine authority. The search for self, personality, identity and their places in the male subjugated society was the important female issue in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

Feminism generally is a theoretical discourse advocating women's rights based on belief in the equality of the sexes and quest for independence. It is a doctrine redefining women's activities and goals from women-centered point of view and refusing to accept the cult of male chauvinism and superiority that reduce women to a sex object, a second sex, and a submissive to other'.(Jeremy's *A glossary of Contemporary Theory*-431) It seeks to eliminate the subordinations, repression, inequalities, cruelties, and injustices women suffer because of their sex, and preserve equal rights for women in a political, economic, psychological, personal and aesthetic sense.

Women were subjugated to numerous trails as the era was marked by male chauvinism. But, they lay a strong desire to be free. The female freedom, womanhood, oppression to woman, both in sexual context as well as their emotional needs, was the subjects that were not permitted to be spoken to women. The nineteenth century was a time of great change not only in America

but also in many places around the world. The industrial revolution influenced the daily life, for better or worse of all Americans.

Gradually, they became aware for their rights and opportunities. Woman, at the beginning of the century by the handful and at the turn of the century millions, left their assigned domestic walls for civic sphere that changed women's lives ultimately. Although poor and working class women long aspired to be free from narrow domesticity and household work, this desire was still inactive. In the early part of the century, before the industrial revolution really took place, women were still valued in the home for their ability to prepare herbal remedies for nursing the sick, to rear the animals, to satisfy their husbands' needs, to care for the aged and to raise their children, to grow wholesome crops and vegetables in their fields and kitchen garden. Moreover, their main responsibilities were to tend the animals in the barnyard and perform various household tasks, which were required to turn a house into a home.

During the same time, many middle class women began to enter the public sphere as reformers to demolish the evils of slavery, prostitutions, violence to women and poverty with their free time to devote to a cause under the impetus of their new-found religious faith. Time and again, these women found that before they could be successful in the public domain, they would first have to create a climate in which women were welcomed into the public sphere. So, the nineteenth century women's movement arose along with the other social reform movements, initially as a way of making female reformers more effective activists for their chosen grounds. Only by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century did a significant number of women begin to work for woman's rights as their primary issue and there was a lot of work to be done to attain women's equal status in the society. A number of feminists have concentrated, not on the woman as the reader, but on

what Elaine Showalter calls gynocriticism- that is, a criticism which concerns with developing exclusively female framework, for dealing with works written by women. Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* (1977) is a prominent masterpiece of the theoretical work of feminism. It describes the female literary tradition in the English novel from the Brontes' onward as a development of subculture by arguing that since women in general constitute a kind of subculture within the framework of a larger society, their work would demonstrate a unity of values, conventions, experience and behaviors, encroaching on each individual.

## **2.2 Feminity, the feminists and the female**

Showalter divides feminist criticism into two distinct modes. The first is ideological which she terms 'feminist critique'. It is concerned with the feminist reading of texts which considers the images and stereotypes of women in literature, the exclusion and misconceptions about women in criticism, and women-assign in semiotic system. The second mode of feminist criticism, according to Showalter, is the study of women as writers. She calls it 'gynocritics' which provides the subjects, the history, styles, themes, genres, and structure of writing by women: the psychodynamics of female creativity: the route of the individual or collective female career: and the devolution and laws of a female literary tradition

Showalter, likewise, in her analysis of historical development of feminist, presents three stages of women writings: Feminine, Feminist, and Female. First is the female imitation of mainstream, male literary tradition dated from 1840 to 1880 and includes the writers like George Eliot and Bronte Sisters. The second is the protest against the standard of this dominant tradition concerning social values and rights. It is dated from 1880 to 1920 and it includes the writers like

Elizabeth Gaskell, Frances Trollope and Schweiner. The third stage is self discovery which aims at search for independent identity. It is dated from 1920 onward, and it includes the writers like Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwomen in the Attic* (1979) is another brilliantly written substantial book on historical study of feminism which stresses especially the psychodynamics of women writers in the nineteenth century. Gilbert and Gubar in this book, according to M.H.Abrams,

Proposes that the anxiety of authorship that resulted from the stereotype that literary creativity is an exclusively male prerogative, effected in women writers a psychological duplicity that projected a monstrous counter figure to the heroine [...]; such a figure is usually in some sense the author's double, an image of her own anxiety and rage. (91)

Gilbert and Gubar's main argument is that artistic creativity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition which is perceived basically as a male quality, is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writers who are imprisoned within it. In the image of 'Divine Creator' the male author fathers his text. But taking the same masculine cosmic author as their model, women end up coping or identifying with the dominant literary images of femininity which comes out of the phallogocentric myth of creativity. They advised the female writers first to struggle against the effect of socialization that becomes struggle against men's oppressive reading of women. But they further argue that the women can begin such struggle only by actively seeking a female pioneer who can revolt to patriarchy, representing a threatening force to be denied or killed to the tyrannical rulings of male chauvinism.

The women of the first wave of American feminism broke many barriers, opening doors of opportunity for women of future generations, and opportunities which those later women could use to accumulate greater challenges to the system which expelled women. In the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, married women could not enter into any treaties without their husband's permission; women lost all title to property or future earnings upon marriage. And children were legally controlled by husbands and other male relatives. From the time to time, it has been the custom of woman to sacrifice herself whenever she got a chance. The 1890s in America was a decade of social change and social tension. The depression of 1893-96 accentuated class division; urbanization and industrialization continued to challenge traditional ways of life. Darwinism and higher criticism of the Bible threatened established ways of thinking about human origin and destiny. It is not surprising that in decade of such social and intellectual ferment, reaction and resistance to change took the form of a particular Puritan- American brand of Victorian moralism. By 1890 the women had been a matter of public discussion in America for over fifty years. In that year, the two national suffrage organizations merged for the final push for the vote to women. However, it was not practiced for another thirty years. They formed innumerable women's organization; social, intellectual political and philanthropic to practice women rights and women identity. Lower middle class white women came together to work long hours for low wages, and the organization they did was to combat working conditions in the textile mills and sweetshops where they were employed. African-American women, who continued to work overwhelmingly in agriculture and as domestic organized, started to combat among the social problems in the society. Women, black and white, southern and northern, were active in attempting to attain better position.

American women were legal property of their husbands who were married to them. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Napoleonic code was still the basis of state law governing the marriage contract. Though she might retain control over any inheritances she had received prior to her marriage, all of the wife's accumulations after marriage were the property of her husband. The husband was the legal guardian of the children in the events of divorce in between them. The wife was bound to live with her husband and follow him wherever he chose to reside. A wife could not sign any legal contract without the permission of the husband, nor could she lodge a lawsuit, appear in court, hold public office or make domination to a living person. They were trying to get release from these the domestic and social chains. So, Women's independence became central issue during this period. Upper class white women, raised with a particular sense of women's place derived from some mythic age of courtesy and then strained by Civil war into arenas of activity formerly unknown and prohibited to them, came relatively late to the women's movement.

Women's right stirred a hot debate within abolitionist movement, which ended slavery in America. The strongest advocate of women's rights was the libertarian William Lloyd Garrison (1807-1879), editor of the *Liberator*, who insisted that anti-slavery was a battle for human right, not male rights. Many abolitionists were on opposed Garrison that women were self-owners but resisted mixing women's rights with anti-slavery for fear it would hurt the latter causes. In this sense, the feminist surge was initiated by women who had attempted to function politically in the reform movement of their days.

Change was far and wide and the population was struggling to come to the terms with those developments. Middle and upper class women were still estimated to stay at home as inoperative, decorative symbols of their husbands' wealth. According to Virginia Woolf, women

were being pregnant frequently, they cared their homes husband and children, played music, sang or drew to enhance their charms and reflect well on their husbands. Wives were controlled, cared for and displayed, who often brought a dowry or inherited wealth to marriage. They were expected to subordinate their needs to their husbands' wishes. She says in her celebrated essay "*A Room of One's Own*" aptly depicts the condition of the women in that era.

Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel: they need exercise for their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and, embroidering bags.(822)

The women were for the enjoyment, pleasure and assistance of men; their role was harmonizing to that of men, and they should fulfill their natural feminine functions along with conducting the family. It considered them poles apart from men and warned not to struggle with them but to depend on them for everything, especially for their identities, the social definition of who they were. It had pleased them for the inadequate role of wife, mother and mistress all of which were pleasing and beneficial to men.

Gilman believed the domestic environment oppressed women. She said that male aggressiveness and maternal roles for women were artificial and no longer necessary for survival "There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. As well speak of a female liver." (Women and Economics, 1898). Gilman believed economic independence is the only thing that could really bring freedom for women, and make them equal to men. She became a feminist when she was asked to join the women's suffrage movement. She declared that motherhood does not disqualify a woman to work outside the home. It called for a creation of professional housekeepers, cooks, and child care services so that the mother may work outside of her home.

“The ideal woman was not only assigned a social role that locked her into her home, but she was also expected to like it, to be cheerful and gay, smiling and good-humored.”

### **2.3 Patriarchal imagery: Women imprisonment in the social periphery**

The fundamental view is that western civilization is pervasively patriarchal- that is, it is male centered and controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way to subordinate women to men in cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic. From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy to the present, the female tenets are defined by negative reference of the males. Women are facing the lack of their own identities in the society. They are defined as the part of male organs and male coordinative agent for conducting the household task but not in social activities. Male powers and male character traits that are presumed in the patriarchal vision, is playing very crucial role to dominate women to have achieved the most important invention and works of civilization and culture. Women themselves are taught in the process of their being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology.

Patriarchy can be defined as the social organization marked by the incomparability of the father in the tribe or family. The legal dependence of wives and children can be seen on males. And the approximation of birthright is in the male line. The society is normally controlled by men of an excessively large share of power a society or association organized according to this principle. Patriarchy can be defined in another way as the hypothetical social system based on the absolute authority of the father or an elderly male over the family group. Inspired by the classical social Darwinism of the 19th century, the pioneering anthropologists Lewis Henry Morgan and Henry Maine envisioned cultures as having developed through evolutionary stages, one of which was patriarchy.

The additional claim is that this patriarchal ideology pervades those writings which have been considered the great literature. The great literature have been written by men for men typically, the most highly regarded literary works focus on male protagonists-Oedipus, Ulysses, Hamlet, Tom Jones, Captain Ahab, Huck Finn-who embody the masculine traits and ways of feeling and pursue masculine interests in masculine field of action. To these males, the characters, when they play any role, women are treated as marginal and subordinate and they are represented either as complementary to or in opposition to masculine desires and enterprises. In such works, lacking autonomous female role models, and perfectly addressed to the male readers, either leave the women readers an alien outsiders or solicit her to identify against herself by taking up the position of the subject and assuming the male values and ways of perceiving, feeling and acting. Patriarchy describes the structuring of society on the basis of family units, in which fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of these units. In some cultures slaves were included as part of such households. The concept of patriarchy is often used, by extension, to refer to the expectation that men take primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole, acting as representatives Britannica says it is a "hypothetical social system"(7). The Britannica article goes on to note, "The view of matriarchy as constituting a stage of cultural development is now generally discredited. Furthermore, the consensus among modern anthropologists and sociologists is that a strictly matriarchal society never existed."(8) The anthropologist Margaret Mead said,

All the claims so glibly made about societies ruled by women are nonsense.

We have no reason to believe that they ever existed. ... men everywhere have been in charge of running the show. ... men have been the leaders in public affairs and the final authorities at home."

Recent writings have not had much good to say about men. Titles like “*Men Are Not Cost Effective*” Roy F. Baumeister speak for themselves. Maureen Dowd’s book was called “Are Men Necessary?” and although she never gave an explicit answer, anyone reading the book knows her answer was no. Brizendine’s book “*The Female Brain*” introduces itself by saying, ‘Men, get ready to experience brain envy’, and shows women will soon be envying the superior male brain!

A few lucky men are at the top of society and enjoy the culture’s best rewards. Others, less fortunate, have their lives chewed up by it. Culture uses both men and women, but most cultures use them in somewhat different ways. Most cultures see individual men as more unessential than individual women and this difference is probably based on nature, in whose reproductive competition some men are the big losers and other men are the biggest winners. Hence it uses men for the many risky jobs it has. Men go to extremes more than women, and this fits in well with culture using them to try out lots of different things, rewarding the winners and crushing the losers.

The essence of how culture uses men depends on a basic social insecurity. This insecurity is in fact social, existential, and biological differences. Built into the male role is the danger of not being good enough to be accepted and respected and even the danger of not being able to do well enough to create offspring. The basic social insecurity of manhood is stressful for the men, and it is hardly surprising that so many men crack up or do evil or heroic things or die younger than women.

While women concentrated on the close relationships that enabled the species to survive, men created the bigger networks of shallow relationships, less necessary for survival but eventually enabling culture to flourish. The gradual creation of wealth, knowledge, and power in the men’s sphere was the source of gender inequality. Men created the big social structures that

comprise society, and men still are mainly responsible for this, even though we now see that women can perform perfectly well in these large systems. What seems to have worked best for cultures is to play off the men against each other, competing for respect and other rewards that end up distributed very unequally. Men have to prove themselves by producing things the society values. They have to prevail over rivals and enemies in cultural competitions, which is probably why they aren't as lovable as women. In overall sense, women are confined into the narrow patriarchal social imprisonment that men assigned and defined women's role as well as they determined women's behaviors and place in the society. Men perpetrated an ideological prison that subjected and silenced women.

## **2.4 Feministic Revolution**

The self-aware in women and concerted approach of female rights, their places in the society and search for their own identity was not inaugurated until in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To inaugurate the struggle for the women rights, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which is considered to be the first formal enhancement of feminist writing though many others had tried their hands before her too. Wollstonecraft, in her book, advocates for the political and social rights of women and she argues that the society can never retain women only in the role of convenient domestic slaves and alluring mistress by denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be passive and attentive to their looks to the all exclusion of all else.

John Stuart Mill's *The subjection of Women* (1869), and the American Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth century* (1845) played very significant role in contemporary society. As

they planted the womanly consciousness in the society, it is continues in our time to be intimately interrelated with the movement by political feminists for social, economic, and cultural freedom and equality.

The feminist upsurge was initiated by women who had attempted to function politically in the reform movement of their days. Abolitionist movement that ended slavery in America was one such. Within abolitionism, women's right stirred a hot debate. The strongest advocate of women's rights was the libertarian William Lloyd Garrison (1807-1879), editor of the *Liberator*, who insisted that anti-slavery was a battle for human right, not male rights. Many abolitionists were on opposed Garrison that women were self-owners but resisted mixing women's rights with anti-slavery for fear it would hurt the latter cause, Theodore Weld (1803-1895) exemplified this position. Through his encouragement, Angelina Grimke (1805-1879) Sarah Grimke (1792-1873) became the first women in America to do the lecture tours before audiences that included men. In a speech before the Massachusetts Legislature on February 21, 1839 whereby Angelina Grimke became first women to speak before an American legislative body, she continued to mix the two issues:

Mr. Chairman, it is my privilege to stand before you {...}, on behalf of the twenty thousand women of Massachusetts whose names are enrolled on petitions. These petitions relate to the great and solemn subject of slavery and because it is a political subject, it is often tauntingly been said women have nothing to do with it. Are we aliens because we are women? Are we bereft of citizenship because we are mothers, wives and daughters of a mighty people? (McElroy11)

The women of that period found that they would be isolated from position of decision-making and instead they would do other works such as typing petitions- gathering meeting-

organizing etc, while men made the decisions and got the recognition. According to American writer Ellen Dubois, "Women working abolition found that their full and equal participation in political activity was not especially wanted-that as long as they worked within women sphere, everything would be fine. But as soon as they stopped beyond it, they were severely reprimanded by their abolitionist brothers" (2).The next major event, which the woman figured' occurred three years after the Grimkes, in 1842. In that year, British abolitionists announced that they would sponsor a World Anti-Slavery Convention. Off to London went most of the major American abolitionists, among them Lucretis Mott, who was primarily responsible for organizing anti-slavery work in Philadelphia and Elizabeth Cady Stanton who was a young bride on her honeymoon with her abolitionist husband. Once in London, the American abolitionists had a surprise in store waiting for them. British abolitionists were offended by the thought of women functioning politically as the equals of men and therefore the sponsors of the convention decreed that women would not be seated as delegates to the convention. Once again, a few male abolitionists stood up for the women, but the majority did not bother to even protest this discrimination. The women were placed behind a curtain in the convention hall-so they might hear the proceeding without offending any male sensibilities that they feigned to have.

By the time of Civil War (1861-1865) had started, women began to understand the importance of working with oppressed slightly wary of working with men. But they were not yet totally convinced that it was impossible for women to work as political equals with men. When the war began, women dropped all their activities as feminists and threw themselves into patriotic work. They were very conscious that their participation in the national wartime mobilization would be a test of their political seriousness. They also expected to be amply rewarded for their selfless activity once the war was over. But they were not. And that where the

final blow was struck and the leading feminists realized that they could not place political trust in men; that it was nearly impossible for even the liberal of men to understand how much woman feels her oppression and how much she wants her freedom.

Once again, women discovered that they could not put their faith in male reformers because the oppression of women was not top priority for anyone but women themselves. They had been literally abandoned by most radical political movement of the day. As it turned out, the decision of abolitionists to ignore woman's claim to the ballot was a particularly momentous one. It took another fifty years to get the ballot for women. This was the first blow-feminists had learned that if women were to ever win their rights, they would have to win them without the help of men. The contemporary codes and conducts were so stringent that the women were provided with etiquette books. One such etiquette book titled *Duties of the wife* says:

Never let your husband have cause to complain that you are more agreeable abroad than at home: nor permit him to see in you an object of admiration as respects your dress and manners, when in company, while you are negligent of both in the domestic circle. Much unhappy marriage has been occasioned by neglect in these particulars. Nothing can be more senseless than the conduct of women, whose seeks to be admired in general society for her politeness and engaging manners, or skill in music, when, at the same time, she makes no effort to render her home attractive, and yet that home whether a palace or cottage, is very center of her being-the nucleus around which her affections should revolve and beyond which she has comparatively small concern. (Culley 122)

These limitations upon women clearly depict the male chauvinism. This gives the glimpse of the ways class and race constructed gender in that period. But it is not to state that

women were entirely submissive. They were beginning to realize the implications of these harsh impositions. The women must lead the way to their own enfranchisement, work out their own salvation with a hopeful courage and determination

Ellen Dubois says "She must not put her trust in man in this transition period, since, while regarded as his subject, his inferior, his slave, their interests must be antagonistic" (3). The late ninetieth century was filled with tumultuous economic and social changes. Men, the breadwinners of almost every household, were pre-occupied with business and material goods that echoed the start of the nation. Rapid industrialization, and growing cities coupled with national expansion had created both tremendous wealth and horrific poverty.

When the century was turning to close, it was marked by numerous changes. Change was everywhere and the women were also struggling to come out from the patriarchal ditch and get social liberty. Middle and upper class women were still expected to stay at home as inactive, decorative symbols of their husbands' wealth. Virginia Woolf termed "as angels in the house" (820). They were pregnant frequently, they cared their homes husband and children, played music, sang or drew to enhance the charms of their and reflect well on their husbands. Wives were possession, cared for and displayed, who often brought a dowry or inherited wealth to marriage. They were expected to subordinate their needs to their husbands' wishes.

This was the tragic story of women and shattering of their dreams towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. A much more radical mode was launched by French feminist Simone de Beauvoir says, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature which is described as feminine" (995). She further says:

In sexuality and maternity woman as subject can claim autonomy but to be a 'true woman's she must accept herself as the other. The men of today show

certain duplicity of attitude which is painfully lacerating to woman; they are willing on the whole to accept woman as a fellow being, an equal; but they still require her to remain the inessential. For her these two destinies are incompatible; she hesitates between one and the other without being exactly adapted to either, and from this comes her lack of equilibrium. With man there is no break between public and private life whereas woman's independent successes are in contradiction with her femininity, since the 'true woman' is required to make her object, to be other. (1000)

The late nineteenth century was a tumultuous time for the United States. The social, Scientific and cultural landscape of the country was undergoing radical changes. Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection had questioned established views concerning mankind's origin. As the result of this struggle, women began to bring the heretofore private issues of home and family into public arena.

An important precursor in feminist criticism was Virginia Woolf, who in addition to her fiction *A Room of One's Own* (1929) wrote numerous other essays on women authors and on the cultural, economic, and educational disabilities within what she called a "patriarchal" society that have hindered or prevent women from realizing their creative possibilities. She has vividly pictured the contemporary society. It is once again suitable to code her fiction *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as she says:

Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel: they need exercise for their more privileged fellow

creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and, embroidering bags.(822)

Society and religion, as the forms of patriarchy, blind women to the restrictions of their gendered identities and promote the angel-in –the house image of perfections as their happiest role. Contemporary women were beginning to realize their position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize their relations as individuals in the world. People in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American society were caged by custom which often seemed comfortably protective. Thus protesting against such a cage of illusory custom and conventions, in most of their works, feminists authors portrayed many people who will not or can not leave the cage and others who remain within but yearn to be without, and still others who dare, sometimes only for a moment, to break beyond the bars

Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir contributed greatly for the worldwide emergence of in the first half of the twentieth century. Woolf focuses on situation of women authors throughout the history and their cultural, economic, and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society which had prevented them from realizing their creative possibilities. The feminist trend of her time was concerned for absolute equality and the erasure of differences between the sexes. But Woolf voiced for radical changes as women's freedom and for their suppressed values affecting the concept of power, family and social life that shaped by men in the past. Beauvoir on the other hand, insists against the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or other to man as the defining and dominating subject who is assumed to represent humanity in general.

Feminism itself draws and shares a great deal from schools of thought such as Marxism, Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction: the theories that tend to destabilize the center and subvert the hierarchy. Feminism thus, has never been a well-concerted movement, in that feminist voices range widely from utter denial of male voices to reconciliation between the two sexes.

The contemporary society believed that women were for the pleasure and assistance of men; their role was balancing to that of men, and they should accomplish their natural feminine functions. It considered them different from men and warned not to participate with them but to depend on them for everything, especially for their place in the society, personality, identities, and the social definition of who they were. It had satisfied them for the incomplete role of wife, mother and mistress all of which were pleasing and beneficial to men. One who did not seek her identity through man was a threat to social value

Sandra Cisneros in her novella *The house on Mango Street* (1984) shows her effortless storytelling ability and poetic sincerity. She brings together these stories with their common thread of cultural oppression to women. *The house on Mango Street* basically raises women voices. Cisneros is adept at manifesting feminist sensibilities in her works. She says in the introduction of *The house on Mango Street*

:

The voice of Mango Street and all my work was born at one moment, when I realized I was different. I assumed the world was like Chicago, made up of people of many cultures all living together- albeit not happily at times but still co-existing. This is not to say I hadn't felt this 'otherness' before in Chicago but I hadn't felt quite as keenly as I did in Graduate school couldn't

articulate what it was that was happening, except I knew I felt ashamed when I spoke in class, so I chose not to speak. I can say my political consciousness began the moment I recognized my otherness. (2)

Cisneros gives reader the snapshots of a childhood in Mexican-American surroundings. Each brief passage highlights an incident or observation in her life. In a piece titled *Boys and Girls*, she succinctly puts her feminist sensibility in words, "The boys and girls live in separate worlds. The boys in their universe and we in ours". (4)

One of the most important feminist precursors is Charlotte Perkins Gilman whose short fiction *The Yellow Wallpaper* is also an important landmark in the field of feminist criticism. Using her extraordinary life experiences as a female within a patriarchal system, Gilman redefined womanhood, declaring women the equal of men in all spheres of life. This "new woman" was to be an intelligent, well-informed, and well-educated free thinker, the creator and expresser of her own ideas. She was to be economically self-sufficient, socially independent, and politically active. She would share the opportunities, duties, and responsibilities of the workplace with men, and together they would share the solitude of the hearth. Finally, the new woman was to be as informed, self-assured, confident, and influential as she was compassionate, nurturing, loving, sensitive--a woman of the world as well as of the home. Gilman's vision of an autonomous female challenged not only the traditional "cult of true womanhood" but the concepts and values of family, home, religion, community, capitalism, and democracy.

Gilman's ultimate goal was to develop autonomous individuals, for rational behavior was possible only if self-governing women could connect knowledge with action and judge others' opinions in relation to their own. Judgment and will were the crucial ingredients of citizenship in nurturing respect for others, in developing critical thinking skills. Therefore, education must

emphasize imagination as well as truth and reason, self-discipline as well as self-restraint. Moreover, education must combine all these skills to develop the faculties of reason so essential to rational and judicious-acting individuals.

Moreover, Gilman's writings about these tensions and struggles between marriage and career, social expectations, and personal goals continue to impact women's decisions to that day, while illuminating her arguments for narrowing them has greatly heightened our understanding of the power of social norms on the individual. Gilman's feminist ideas clearly have a place within educational history and the long tradition of female authors who wrote in order to transform society by educating other women. Like her great aunt Catharine Beecher, Gilman illustrated the need to systematize instruction in the domestic realm and to develop institutions for teacher education. Like M. Carey Thomas, she emphasized the need to offer an intellectually challenging higher education for women that was on balance with the collegiate liberal arts education, one that would train women in critical and analytical thought.

Only Jane Roland Martin in *Reclaiming a Conversation* has explored Gilman's ideas on education. Yet Martin placed Gilman within the historical and philosophical discussion regarding the ideal of an educated woman.. Further, her ideas on citizenship education were explored only within the context of motherhood and a female utopia. Thus, Gilman has not been viewed within the context of progressive education, early childhood education, or citizenship education Gilman envisioned a feminized educational system and a feminized society. By feminizing the values, attitudes, and sensibilities of education, as well as the content, methodology, and philosophy, Gilman hoped to end the gender inconsistency within society by creating a fundamentally new woman. Gilman had begun to explore the issue of gender discrepancy within society in the mid-1880's when she first began her career as a writer. She focused on the inequity found within

marriage and child-rearing. She emerged as an acknowledged force on the literary scene with her short story "*The Yellow Wallpaper*." a new mother's descent into madness brought to light the inequity between men and women within the family and the overwhelming nature of Victorian social norms for womanhood. The liberation of women thus required education and the opportunity to use the fruits of their studies to establish social as well as economic independence. Gilman's works constantly explored the role of women in society, questions of what knowledge was of most worth to women, ways women might use their knowledge to improve society.

### 3. Resistance to patriarchy

#### 3.1 The female voice

*The Yellow Wallpaper*, one of the most significant 19<sup>th</sup> century feminist manifestos, written by Gilman, pervades with the female voices from the beginning of the fiction and it runs throughout the text. The story is a brilliant example of quest for freedom and self-identities to women in the society which parallels with the life of Charlotte Perkins Gilman who was one of the most important exponents in the field of feminist criticism. She suffers a lot with male dominated society while patriarchies and male chauvinism were ruling in every corner of the society.

The story is told in first-person perspective--in the form of a series of journal entries as she starts. "It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer"(1). The story details the descent into madness of narrator, suffering from what her physician husband John describes as a "temporary nervous depression — a slight hysterical tendency"(2). John believes it is in the narrator's best interest to go on a rest cure, since he only credits what is observable and scientific. He serves as his wife's physician, therefore treating her like a powerless patient. While on vacation for the summer at a colonial mansion, the narrator senses "something queer about it" fearing maybe the mansion is haunted. The story hints that part of the woman's problem is that she recently gave birth to a child, insinuating she may be suffering from what would, in modern times, be called postpartum depression. The narrator is confined in an upstairs room, a room that seems to have once been a nursery. She examines the room very carefully as she says,

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and

gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children,  
and there are rings and things in the walls"(4

The room where she is kept was nursery then that room became playroom for the children, which is not suitable for her treatment and settlement. It has barred little window and there are rings and things in the walls. The room is decorated with yellow wallpaper that becomes the focal point of her insanity. She devotes many journal entries to obsessively describing the wallpaper. She believes the room must have once been a nursery and that the children who lived in it hated the wallpaper and she also hated as she says,

"It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others. No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long. We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day(7)

The longer they stay in the bedroom, the more the wallpaper appears to mutate and change, especially in the moonlight. With no other stimuli than the wallpaper, the pattern and designs on the wallpaper become increasingly intriguing, and a figure of a woman soon appears in the design. She slowly stops writing in her journal as much as before since it is simply "dead paper." She eventually reaches the conclusion that the figure is trying to escape the bars from the shadows, and that there is a woman creeping on all fours behind them. Then she goes on to say that there are numerous women behind the wallpaper, all creeping about.

The narrator finally asks for permission to leave the room. but John does not agree to give her freedom to walk outside either. So the narrator voices that she may be losing her mind. Being urged not to speak another word of it, she eventually consumes her entire night with watching

the wallpaper, while she sleeps during the day. Eventually the woman descends into complete insanity, thinking she is a woman who has escaped from inside the wallpaper.

She understood that she must try to free the women in the wallpaper; she begins to strip the designs off the wall. While working on peeling the wallpaper, she tries to hide her obsession with the wallpaper due to her paranoia and fear that John may re-diagnose her, and his sister will remain with them. On the last day of summer, she locks herself in her room in order to strip the remains of the wallpaper. When John arrives home, the woman urges him to fetch a key himself and does not unlock the door for him. Here she writes,

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path. I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes. I want to astonish him. I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her! But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on! This bed will not move! I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.(13)

The narrator wants to show her condition to her husband and make him astonished. She tries to prevent from her sister-in-law and she has the sense of taking revenge and tie with a rope as the sense of escape, she has the suicidal motives. Once he forces the door open, however, he finds her creeping around the room, circling the walls and touching the wallpaper. Her husband faints, and she exclaims, "I've got out at last," while continuing to circle the room, but stepping over his passed out body each time. She had become extremely disassociated from reality by the end of the story, and no longer seems to recognize John as her husband, since they lacked the

companionship a marriage typically has. He is only "that man" whose lying body is merely an obstacle in her incessantly-looping stroll around the room.

The social law, rule and regulation trouble her most especially the patriarchal conventional social norms and values spoil the condition of women from generation to generation. She proclaims, "There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and co-heirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years"(7). John does not listen to her seriously. But she is restrained there according to John wills as women are guided and controlled by men. This can be seen as she says "... and hardly lets me stir without special direction"(8) John shows pities, care, love and affection but captures her freedom, womanhood, personality and treats her like animal when he says, "your exercise depends on your strength, your food somewhat on your appetite, but air you can absorb all the time"(9). John does not know how much the narrator suffers; even her nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing." There is no reason to suffer her". He declares it is only nervousness. Gilman reveals here that the men are unable to understand the women and their problems. They just take them as burden. They have become deafen to the female voices.

Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* is the announcement of female desire to raise voices and self identities. The narrator wishes to improve the overall condition of women in their social status as she wishes to get better in her health condition. She says, "I wish I could get well faster"(9). Jennie represents true women of Victorian society, the sibling to narrator's husband and nursing woman to her, is also another woman who suffers from male domination unknowingly as she is treated as enthusiastic housekeeper whereas the narrator represents and search for the new woman. The narrator must prevent Jennie finding her writing since she also

believes it is writing which makes the narrator sick. The narrator has gone against the contemporary social norms which are made by male dominated society. She takes the social norms and values are the silly and conspicuous front design which push back the female rights womanhood and female identity into one corner of the society.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just  
so—I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure,  
that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.(12)

She has used short and broken sentences through out the fiction. As the story unfolds, the narrator comes to write for a different self hinted as on the opening page through her three-fold presentation of self as 'I' The placement of pronouns "I" reveals the narrator's growing sense of awareness to raise female voices of her former passive state and a exchange of the power dynamics of gender.

The changing patterns in *The Yellow Wallpaper* can all be seen as responses to the inflexible social patterns of America which had become oppressive to the feminist interpretive community. Gilman has raised the four basic concepts: patriarchy, madness, space and quest in this story. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, John is an example of husband as patriarch, and his efforts to help his wife are, a result of seeing women as less than adult. Moreover, female madness is related to patriarchy in that it is a result of patriarchal oppression. In this case, however, the final triumph of the narrator "is symbolized by the overcoming of John, who is last seen fainting on the floor as his wife creeps over him.

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time! (13)

The narrator's search for space and quest of selfhood can be clearly seen. She has become one of creeping women in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The figure is also trying to escape the bars from the shadows, and that there is a woman creeping on all fours behind them. She can see that there are numerous women behind the wallpaper, all creeping about. She realized that she must try to free the women in the wallpaper, so she begins to undress the remaining designs off the wall. She tries to bury her passion with the wallpaper because of her terror and fear that John may re-diagnose her while working on peeling the wallpaper. She locks herself in her room in order to shred the remains of the wallpaper.

Up to the twentieth century, men assigned and defined women's roles. Although all women were affected by men determining women's behavior, largely middle class women suffered. Men perpetrated an ideological prison that subjected and silenced women. This ideology, called the cult of true womanhood, legitimized the ill-treatment to women. The cult of domesticity and the cult of purity were the central tenets of the cult of true womanhood. The medical profession in "*The Yellow Wallpaper*" demonstrates men's negative attitudes towards women.. His Rest cure is known for complete rest and isolation. Mitchell, a neurosurgeon specializing in women's nervous ailments, expounded upon his belief for women's nervous conditions when he said,

American woman is, to speak plainly, too often physically unfit for her duties as woman, and is perhaps of all civilized females the least qualified to undertake

those weightier tasks which tax so heavily the nervous system of man.

She is not fairly up to what nature asks from her as wife and mother.

How will she sustain herself under the pressure of those yet more exacting duties which nowadays she is eager to share with the man?(Gilman 62)

Gilman raises her voices against these kinds of treatment and attitude of men in the society. From the early age, men reaped benefits from not only the private domain, but they were also free to leave and enter the public sphere. They received nurturing from women in the private arena. In the public sphere, they made decisions that enhanced their own positions in society, while exploiting women's biological makeup and employing blackmail to render women immobile. Held captive, women were not to venture out into the public sphere where they did not belong. The cult of true womanhood purposely did not acknowledge the growing work force of women, did not authorize professionalism and careerism for women

Women were radiated as emotional servants whose lives were dedicated to the welfare of home and family in the preference of social stability. It is against the far-fetched pressure exerted by men to retain control that women had to trouble. Women attempted to overthrow the traditional definition of women's roles. They subverted the principles thrust upon them, in that way enabling a redefinition that resulted in a new womanhood. Gilman depicts her struggle to throw off the constraints of patriarchal society in order to be able to write. As in the case of Gilman, she was constricted to the set parameters that men determined. Women are conditioned to accept these boundaries and remain in place, in the private sphere.

In the face of the pervasiveness of discrimination and masculine self-interest, the narrator challenges that women were permitted to the same dignities and freedoms as men. Women such as those Gilman portrayed in her work forged ahead and confronted patriarchal ideologies. Men

played the dominant role and placed women at the mercy of their male counterparts in the existence of the institution of marriages in the society. Gilman voices against these kinds of institutional and social barriers in *The Yellow Wall paper*.

### **3.2 Madness of narrator as rebellion to patriarchy**

The narrator in Gilman's story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* becomes mad and starts creeping over him since she is treated abnormally in the normal state. It is because the narrator is not able to get victory with the male dominated society in her normal and regular pattern of life. Madness can be defined as the abnormal behavior and uncontrolled activities which are different from the normal one. The majorities determine the minorities as the mad. The narrator is the one of the many patients in America that turns to be madness at the end of the story as to protest against patriarchy. In this fiction, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator becomes mad since she shows the abnormal activities and she can not get identity in normal life. One can also analyze Gilman's story as one of a practical husband who believes in rigid science, reason and imaginative wife who searches for another world of freedom, self personality, equality and females' rights.

With the summer close to an end, the narrator asks for permission to leave the room. John does not agree to give her the freedom to walk outside, so the narrator voices that she may be losing her mind. Being urged to not speak another word of it, she eventually consumes her entire night with watching the wallpaper, while sleeping during the day. Eventually the woman descends into complete insanity, thinking she is a woman who has escaped from inside the wallpaper.

When she realizes that she must try to free the women in the wallpaper, she begins to peel the remaining paper from the wall. She tries to hide her fear due to her obsession and John may arrive and re-diagnose her, and his sister will remain with them. So at last, she locks herself in

her room in order to strip the remains of the wallpaper. When John arrives home, the woman urges him to fetch a key himself and does not unbolt the door for him.

Why there's John at the door! It is no use, young man, you can't open it!. It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door! "John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf! . Then he said—very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!" "I can't," said I" The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!" And then I said it again, very gently and slowly, that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in."What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing! " I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder. "I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

When the narrator locks the door and starts creeping and peeling the wall paper her husband, John comes and requests her open the door but she refuses. Once he forces the door open, however, he finds her creeping around the room, circling the walls and touching the wallpaper. Her husband faints, and she exclaims, "I've got out at last,". She had become extremely disassociated from reality by the end of the story, and no longer seems to recognize John as her husband, since they lacked the companionship a marriage typically has. He is only that man whose prone body is merely an obstacle in her endlessly-looping trip around the room.

The narrator was given a medical diagnosis of depression, a conventional women's disease of the nineteenth century. Through her therapeutic procedure, language was involved in several ways. In the beginning journals, the narrator wrote that the society censored her language and they said that she had an artificial feminine self. She had to hide the fact she was writing,

therefore proving the journal was her sense of escape. It is important to note that she was confiding to dead paper and was reluctant to tell a living soul them, since they mis-treated her medically." It is only nervousness, my darling" John said. The role of the wallpaper is an interesting topic in regards to the narrator's insanity, since wallpaper is a feminine topic in regards to decorating and furnishing. The heart of the story of *The yellow wallpaper* represents: an escape of medicine and diagnosis.

*The Yellow Wallpaper*, beyond her own revolt against the therapy to which she is subjected, the protagonist becomes the exemplary subject of power/knowledge as her madness progresses. *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a story that offers the detailed and chilling accounts of a woman's entrapment, defeat, and movement toward madness. The narrator does not even know the implications of the story at all and assumes the grotesque, proportions of the *yellow wallpaper*, becomes a grotesque figure, and, in doing so, transforms her narrative into a disturbing, startling, and darkly ironic tale about nineteenth-century American womanhood. The narrator's failure to recognize her complex problem reflects her inability to realize her regressive psychological state. At the end, the narrator attempts to clarify definitively the meaning of the grotesque and merges into it as to become the woman in the wallpaper. The overall activities are to resist the patriarchal conventions and repression to women.

### **3.3 Realism in *The Yellow Wallpaper***

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a prominent social critic and feminist writer in the United States of the period from the 1890s through the 1930s. Her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, written in autobiographical form, portrays the realistic picture of 19<sup>th</sup> century America. She presents her own experience of life and the internal dialogue of a woman diagnosed with hysteria and for whom total rest has been prescribed..

In 1887, the writer suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown tending to melancholia. After three years of depression, she sought out a specialist in nervous diseases, the best in the country. S. Weir Mitchell put her to bed and applied the rest cure. He urged her to live as domestic a life as possible and explained nothing much was wrong with her, yet she was forbidden to touch a pen, pencil or brush ever again, and only allowed two hours of stimulation a day. After three months, Gilman decided to go against her diagnosis and continue to work again. After realizing her narrow escape of mental illness, she wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper* with embellishments and additions to illustrate her point of misdiagnosis. She sent a copy to Mitchell, but never received acknowledgment. Though he never acknowledged receiving it, she was told later that he altered his treatment of nervous disorders as a result of reading her work. The real purpose of *The Yellow Wallpaper* was to reach Dr. Weir. Mitchell and persuade him of the error of his ways. So she says:

I sent him a copy as soon as it came out, but got no response. However many years later, I met someone who knew close friends of Dr, Weir. Mitchell, who said that he had changed his treatment of nervous prostration since reading *The Yellow Wallpaper*. If that is a fact, I have not lived in a vain. (Dock, 89)

*The Yellow Wall-Paper* is a castigation of Gilman's own doctor, Silas Weir Mitchell, who tried to cure her from depression through a rest cure. The idea was to do nothing, certainly not anything intellectually demanding or challenging. This had a debilitating effect on Gilman as she regarded it as punitive rest more than anything else. The events of the story are not as important to the message which Gilman is desperately trying to communicate, and legitimize her condition and discover an effective treatment. When she knew that the doctor Silas Weir Mitchell altered his treatment, she became happy. She has elucidated this in her *Why I wrote The*

*Yellow Wall-Paper*, "It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked".

The writer expresses her own problems in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by creating a protagonist who also writes and suffers a lot from male dominated society as in her real life. Her husband, John as well as her own brother, does not believe on her condition and what she reports them. So she apparently pictures here,

You see he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do? My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing

In the time period in which Gilman lived the ideal woman was not only assigned a social role that locked her into her home, she was also expected to like it, to be cheerful and gay, smiling and good humored. The women who refused this role and chose a life of self-expression and freedom from the social constraints suffered ridicule and punishment from their peers. This is not unlike the consequences that Gilman experienced throughout her lifetime from expressing her need for independence from the private sphere.

Gilman comes from a long list of freedom fighters for women's rights; without having this type of influence throughout her life, she would have never become the free thinker and advocate that she is famous for today. Whether from the inbreeding or from the high intellectual capacity of the family, there was a long string of mental disorders fluctuating from "manic-depressive illness" to nervous breakdowns ranging from suicide to short term hospitalization. Coming from a family of such well known feminists and revolutionaries it's no wonder that

Gilman grew up with the knowledge that she had the right to be treated the same as anyone, man or woman, and was just as capable in her work and in her personal life.

Having this strong background affected more than her mind set about things; it also affected her interpersonal relations that she had with her husband and what role she was expected to play in that relationship. This was a major factor to her breakdown upon entering into the bonds of marriage with Charles Walter Stetson, an extraordinarily handsome and charming local artist. She states that her thoughts, her acts, her whole life would be centered on husband and children. To do the work, she must be free. This idea was scariest of all to Gilman who sincerely loved Charles yet also loved her work and her freedom from constraints. "But feelings of 'nervous exhaustion' immediately descended upon her, and she became a 'mental wreck' What is commonly known as Post-pardum.

Gilman's love for free will and her work caused a major tension that was not anticipated; the stress of denying the normal social roles of women caused her to have a breakdown that led to the meeting with Dr. Mitchell. Her writing was an effort at expressing the tensions she felt between her work, her husband and her child. She tried her best at beating the depression but in the end, she collapsed utterly. This final collapse forced her to search out the Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell the nationally recognized neurologist who specialized in the nervous diseases of women. When Mitchell initially interviewed Gilman he told her that "she was suffering from neurasthenia, or exhaustion of the nerves the diagnosis required his renowned rest cure" (*Harland* 115). The women he treated were basically taught an extreme version of how to be domestic and submissive according to the society outside of the sanitarium. This treatment would be considered cruel and unusual punishment to anyone. She says in her diary that "I went

home, followed those directions rigidly for months and came perilously near to losing my mind" (*Harland* 121).

In the late 1800's women like Gilman were not given the opportunity to choose their career over their families, to do so mean they had to give up one or the other. Gilman did exactly that, despite the enormous amount of controversy, she chose her work over her family. Due to the enormous pressure of the treatment on her psyche and calling upon an inner sense of survival, she rejected both husband and physician (Lane, Introduction x). Gilman divorced her husband in 1887 and moved to California. A few years later in order to lecture across the country she gave her child to her ex-husband and his new wife, who happened to be Gilman's best friend, and left to fulfill her work. Years later in 1890 she wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper* in reaction to Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure. In her *Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper* Gilman describes,

I suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown" and goes on to talk about the doctor who treated her and how in response to treatment had sent a copy to the physician who so nearly drove me mad (Gilman 19, 20)

Gilman's own life in her diary entry states, "I made a rag baby . . . hung it on the doorknob and played with it. I would crawl into remote closets and under beds-to hide from the grinding pressure of that profound distress" (Lane, *To Harland* 121). This is an ironically similar description of the nameless narrator in the story who crawls and creeps in the corners of the room. Gilman showed her emotional reality in the work and tries to discover for herself as Lane describes, "what happens to our lives if we let others run them for us" (Introduction xviii). *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a testament to Gilman's own life experience and in reading it there is a feeling of the tough decisions she made in her life and the impact those decisions had on her

emotionally and mentally. Never again did Gilman write anything with such a biographical attachment as this story had the emotional truth and intensity of mental disorder. *The Yellow Wallpaper* shows how Charlotte Perkins Gilman is confined to live an emotional and psychologically restraining society.

Gilman illustrates the injustices to women and they are forced to accept it. The women need to escape society's pressures, yet seeking her true identity she finds only insanity. This is a sad story that outlines the repression of the women in the late 1800's due to male supremacy. Furthermore, Gilman expresses these three overarching themes: gender, struggle for identity, and survival. These three issues question the position and role of women in a male dominated society. For many years Gilman suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown tending to Melancholia. The men, seen through the eyes of the narrator, are capable and stable. For example the narrator writes,

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.(7).

Here she is clearly portraying the male chauvinism and unreasoning within this male character. Her husband's role also plays a big part in her spiritual suicide. Although she may disagree with John and her brother she still states, "But what is one to do" (6). This clearly portrays that women, although they held an opinion, must learn to keep it to themselves.

Even though, John had his wife placed in a big airy room the room did not help her much. Instead the yellow wallpapered room subjected her to total loneliness and tormented her with this distinct odor and a hideous view. While the men are perceived one way the women are

perceived as the weak sex that depends on men for strength. For example Mary, her sister-in-law, is the expected ideal woman of the 1800's. For instance, she writes, "She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession" (7). So one can see how women are displayed in the Victorian period.

The narrator is also treated like a child or as having the same mentality of a child. For example John says, "What is it, little girl...Don't go walking about like that you'll get cold" (3). It is clear throughout the short story that women are looked upon as illiterate children, not adults. The men clearly think women are too irrational to make decisions of their own, which means they are not even close to being at the same level as men. A common misrepresentation at that time. The next important theme portrayed is search for identity. This is when the narrator starts to question her position in a male dominated world. Although she has yet to figure it out, she knows there is a hidden motive in the wallpaper that may be a link to her true identity. For example; the narrator, with absolutely nothing else to do, is reduced to staring endlessly at a pattern in a wallpaper, thus creating some image that she feels is necessary to find out. The narrator says, "I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman" (7). Once the narrator determines that the image is in fact a woman struggling to become free, she somehow aligns herself with the woman. She continues to pursue this project of getting the woman out. This woman becomes her sanity and that's the only one thing in her life she can control. The narrator soon develops this burst of curiosity, because the wallpaper becomes even more and more mysterious. She tells how the women try to get through, but the pattern seems to strangle her and hold her back. The narrator finds herself reflected in this picture. It is as though she's letting herself know that she is not the only one trapped in a dominating world. She begins to tear off the layers of the wallpaper

in order to help the women escape, just as she too would love to escape. Throughout the short story the narrator slowly starts to fit parts of her controlled life together and form a voice of her own.

The theme of survival shows the narrator reaching out and setting an end to this miserable repeating female reformatory. She now realizes her place in this society and decides her to want to escape. But although she's ready to move on, she is still too terrified to let go of reality altogether. For example she writes, "But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way" (7). And although she is scared she still finds enough strength to begin her new freedom. She exemplifies this by saying,

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in, I've got out at last...in spite of you and Jane...And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back in" (7)

Ironically it took insanity for a woman, finally the narrator gains courage and learn how to survive off of it. John lying on the floor and the narrator going over her husband symbolizes female's overcoming male prevalence. Without doubt, Gilman makes it hard for the reader not to understand the young wife passing from a slight mental imbalance to a deranged lunacy in *The Yellow Wallpaper*. She supports her aggression thoroughly by the conclusion of the narrator's search for the truth and the discovery that the injustice prevailing in the society is reality. Gender is portrayed through the eyes of the narrator. She sets a role most women can relate with, a need to escape from a male dominated world. Through a search for identity, the narrator is able to depict the clues that significantly relate to the narrators roles in society and

justify them to her standards, and survival helps the narrator depict the difference between realism and fallacy and learn how to survive off of this new knowledge. This short story clearly showing real picture of contemporary America, confronted the sexual politics of the male-female, husband-wife relationship. Gilman hoped to end gender discrimination within society by creating fundamentally new women.

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1: The Ultimate Relief

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper's* final scene can be seen as the narrator's ultimate attempt in trying to grasp the essence of her being, victory over the man made world, and ultimate relief from the world of confinement in the society. She attempts to become free breaking out of the bonds of society, as represented by her husband, John.. She rejects the gender role foisted upon her, by imagining herself out of it; she projects a rebellious version of herself into the wallpaper, eventually breaking out of it to overcome the limitations placed upon her and to overshadow her husband.

Once the narrator gets the paper off, she breaks out of the wallpaper as a terrifying crone, her husband breaks into the door. Her husband faints, and he is now the nameless one, because she doesn't recognize him - "Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!"(17). She escapes John's and Jane's demands and expectations. She progresses into a different gender state; she is a crone John becomes nameless. She has become the mad woman in the attic, a terrifying ghostly entity.. The narrator's madness represents a significant victory over the patriarchy.

Gilman and the narrator in her story are suffered from postpartum depression, and entrapment within their roles as of women. Specifically, Gilman and the narrator are trying to escape from the social confinement, placed on them. After fulfilling their expected duties as wife and mother, both Gilman and the narrator become depressed after the birth of their child. It is this depression that leads them to the infamous rest cure so widely prescribed during the late 1800's.

The character she creates in "The Yellow Wallpaper" also fantasizes about ending her regimen saying, "I wish I could get well faster" (8). Both seem to view the rest cure as an unwanted interruption in their lives. It should be no surprise then that Gilman draws from her own experience and Dr. Mitchell's treatment. The narrator in the story is thinking about the reaction of her husband. "if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall" (8). The second common bond between Gilman and her female narrator is the idea of freedom from oppressive traditional female roles.

*The Yellow Wallpaper* is the frightening tale of a woman suffering from postpartum depression, shows the mental and emotional results of the typical rest cure prescribed during that era and the narrator's reaction to this course of treatment. Gilman was writing about her own torment as she herself underwent such a treatment with Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell in 1887, just two years after the birth of her daughter Katherine. The rest cure that the narrator in *The Yellow Wallpaper* describes is very close to what Gilman herself experienced; therefore, the story can be read as reflecting the feelings of women like her who suffered through such treatments. Because of her experience with the rest cure, it can even be said that Gilman based the narrator in *The Yellow Wallpaper* loosely on herself. In this way, the story portrays the realistic picture of the writer to express the theme of oppression: the oppression of the rights of women especially inside the marital status.

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