

## The Subconscious Struggle: Freudian analysis of Repression, Madness and Feminine Identity in "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

<sup>1</sup> Hafiz Imran Nawaz

Lecturer Hamdard University

<sup>2</sup> Zara Kayani

<sup>3</sup> Ms. Farzana

### Abstract

*This research investigates into an in-depth Freudian analysis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," illustrating themes of repression, madness, and feminine identity. The study examines Gilman's personal experiences, contextualizing her work within the socio-political landscape of the late 19th century. Theoretical frameworks, particularly Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, are applied to reveal the protagonist's subconscious struggles. The research objectives focus on understanding the role of repression in the protagonist's mental health and analyzing the portrayal of feminine identity in relation to her falling into madness. A literature review contextualizes the research, emphasizing the interconnectedness of madness, feminine identity, and societal expectations in Gilman's work. The research methodology employs a qualitative approach, combining textual analysis and close reading to dissect the layered symbolism within "The Yellow Wallpaper." The textual analysis reveals the yellow wallpaper as a powerful metaphor for societal constraints, the confined room symbolizing women's isolation, and the creeping woman representing suppressed desires and rebellious act to acquire Freedom. The climax, where the protagonist liberates herself through destroying the wallpaper, signifies a victorious assertion of autonomy. The interdisciplinary approach integrates psychoanalytic theories, feminist critiques, and historical context, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of Gilman's masterpiece. By exploring the themes of psychological and societal dimensions, this research sheds light on the enduring relevance of Gilman's exploration of gender roles and societal norms. The study concludes by emphasizing the significance of recognizing the impact of societal expectations on women's mental health and identity.*

**Key words:** *Freudian Analysis; Repression; Madness; Feminine Identity; Societal Constraints*

### Introduction

Charlotte Parkins Gilman (1860 – 1935) was born in Hartford and her life was with full of difficulties. As her father left her family when she was too young due to which her mother nourished her two kids alone which has great influence upon her life. She was very active for woman's rights at this stage of life and she wrote a lot of her influential fiction and amazing notification writing. One of her well known notification writing is "Women and Economics". Her amazing works were used as textbook.

Fiction was here specialty instead of other works. She wrote plenty of successful texts such as "The Home: Its work and influence" and "The Yellow Wallpaper". Moreover, her work was published in her own magazine named by "The forerunner" which was her great achievement. Due to all these works she expressed her ideas about women's issues. Her most of the work published from 1909 to 1916 including essays, opinion work, Poetry and parts of novels.

She faced lots of struggle in her life as she married twice in her life first married with Charles Statson which was not successful and she got divorced and then she married with her cousin George Gillman and they stayed together till death. Before death she faced breast cancer due to which she decided to commit suicide because she did not want to die with breast cancer. After the birth of her daughter she suffered from lots of stress and depression that is why she wrote "The Yellow Wallpaper".

This research including textual analysis along with close reading of the text. The primary research technique involves a examination of the text breaking key passage to get the results and

symbolic meaning and different other literally tools in original text. The researcher analysis the Gilman's use of language, Metaphors and literally devices that contribute to psychological dimensions of the story.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> technique researcher analyze that how societal and other impacts effects mental health of the character. Researchers Akram et al (2022); Akram and Abdelrady (2023) also acknowledge the role of societal and academic factors on mental health of individuals. After Close reading of original text the researcher analysis that there is strong relation between societal conflicts, Mental Health and fight for feminine autonomy. Bhutto and Ramzan (2021), and Ramzan et al. (2020) also acknowledge the importance of feminine autonomy in their studies.

The researcher explores Freudian analysis of Charlotte Parkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper". Figuring themes of Repression, Mental Illness and feminism of the character. This research represents study on Gilman's personal experiences investigating her work within the Socio – Political landscape of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Freudian Psychoanalytical theory is applied to analyze the protagonist's mental illness and to analyze how her feminine identity became the reason to fall her into mental disorder.

The Literature review emphasizes on interconnectedness of mental illness, Feminism and other expectations from society. By using qualitative approach along with close reading and textual analysis understand the connection of symbols used in "The Yellow Wallpaper". As the Metaphor Yellow Wallpaper used for Societal Constraints, Similarly the confined room symbolizing women's isolation and the creeping women representing hidden desires and acquire of freedom.

In the climax when protagonist break wallpaper represents one's self control. This research incorporates psychoanalytical theories, Feminism and historical context gives understanding of Gillman's masterpiece.

A Story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gillman is a short story in which a women isolated by her husband to a room for a rest due to her mental illness, The narrator presents gender role, nom and values of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Yellow Wallpaper represents her fall into madness and narrator discussed the matter which greatly affects women's mental health in the form of well-organized commentary.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

In this theory the narrator uses profound lens to analyze the themes of repressions, Mental Illness and Feminine identity. The framework of The Yellow Wallpaper exploring the complicating actions of the protagonist's struggle and hardworking.

### **Repression:**

Freud's theory shows that the mind expresses ideas and thoughts are socially or in society are not acceptable. The isolation of women into room and then decorating a wall with Yellow Wallpaper which was not acceptable foe her due to her mental illness and psyche. By applying Freudian theory we can come to know about the suppressed self of protagonist.

### **Madness:**

This theory provides framework that Protagonist mind were going towards mental illness there was nothing wrong in Yellow Wallpaper but due to undue pressure of society she fall in mental illness. Through Freudian psychoanalytical lens we come to know that how she became the victim of mental illness.

### **Feminine Identity:**

Freudian theory on societal norms expresses that she was feminist. After understanding her relation with her husband we can understand that her major reason for mental illness and depression was that she was against norms and values of that time. It shows how societal expectations influence her life and destroy.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this research scrutinizes the complexity of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," employing a Freudian psychoanalytic lens to dissect the themes of repression, madness, and feminine identity. The in-depth textual analysis and meticulous examination shed light on the symbolism hiding in the yellow wallpaper, revealing it as a potent metaphor for the societal limitations imposed on women in the 19th century. The confined room emerges as a poignant symbol of women's isolation, and the wallpaper's role in the protagonist's descent into madness undercovers the detrimental consequences of denying women autonomy, power and intellectual stimulation.

The creeping woman within the wallpaper symbolizes suppressed desires and societal rebellion, encapsulating the collective struggle of women against oppressive society. The climax, where the protagonist liberates herself by destroying the wallpaper, marks a victorious assertion of autonomy, challenging societal expectations.

This research provides a clear comprehension of the psychological and societal dimensions within Gilman's great piece of work. It focuses on the importance of recognizing the profound impact of societal expectations on women's mental health and identity. By interweaving elements of psychoanalysis, feminism, and historical context, this study contributes to the scholarly discourse surrounding "The Yellow Wallpaper," shedding light on the enduring relevance of Gilman's exploration of gender roles and societal norms.

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