

UNIVERSITY OF PARDUBICE

FACULTY OF ARTS AND PHILOSOPHY

BACHELOR THESIS

2013

Alexandra Pokorná

**University of Pardubice**  
**Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Depiction of Mental Illness in *The Yellow Wallpaper***

**Alexandra Pokorná**

**Bachelor Thesis**

**2013**

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Akademický rok: 2012/2013

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Alexandra Pokorná**  
Osobní číslo: **H10538**  
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**  
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro odbornou praxi**  
Název tématu: **Zobrazení duševní poruchy v díle "Žlutá tapeta"**  
Zadávací katedra: **Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

The BP should begin with definitions of woman's issues and roles in late 19th century American society with emphasis on representative depictions in mainstream literature and other media. Works by women, for women and about them should be represented. Next, how mental health in general and especially mental illness in women were defined in literature and other media of the period should be shown - this may be connected to the earlier part of the BP by showing how many instances of rebelling against or even questioning the established roles by women were taken by some (not others) as a sign of moral or mental failure. A short biography of Gilman and an overview of her most important works and accomplishments should come next. The longest and most important of the BP should be an analysis of "The Yellow Wallpaper" using the tools and definitions described in earlier chapters. The history of the changing reception and interpretations of the short story throughout the years is another interesting aspect, as well as comparing diagnoses and attitudes of today about mental health with those of the period of the short story. Finally, later literary works that refer directly to "The Yellow Wallpaper" or contain similar themes may be discussed, as well as Gilman's influence in American literature and on society in general.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

1. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Writings*. New York: Bantam Books, 1989
2. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*. New York and London: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935; NY: Arno Press, 1972; and Harper & Row, 1975.
3. Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Wild Unrest: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Making of "The Yellow Wall-paper"*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010
4. Gilbert, Sandra M.; Gubar, Susan. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985
5. Gilbert, Sandra M.; Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century literary imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

**Daniel Paul Sampey, MFA**

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

**30. dubna 2012**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

**31. března 2013**



prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSc.

děkan

L.S.



Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph.D.

vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2012

**Prohlašuji:**

Tuto práci jsem vypracovala samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využila, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

Byla jsem seznámena s tím, že se na moji práci vztahují práva a povinnosti vyplývající ze zákona č. 121/2000 Sb., autorský zákon, zejména se skutečností, že Univerzita Pardubice má právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití této práce jako školního díla podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona, a s tím, že pokud dojde k užití této práce mnou nebo bude poskytnuta licence o užití jinému subjektu, je Univerzita Pardubice oprávněna ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které na vytvoření díla vynaložila, a to podle okolností až do jejich skutečné výše.

Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

V Pardubicích dne 28. 6. 2013

Alexandra Pokorná

## **Acknowledgment**

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Daniel Paul Sampey, MFA, for his guidance and his helpful advice. I would also like to thank my family for always being patient and incredibly supportive.

## **Annotation**

This bachelor paper aims to present a thorough analysis of the mental illness depicted in the *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. The theoretical part of this paper contains essential background knowledge of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American society especially in terms of gender stratification and perception of women's mental health and illness. The following section focuses on application of this knowledge to *The Yellow Wallpaper* with an intention to examine the image of insanity in Gilman's narrative. The paper also provides an explanation of the changing interpretation and perception of the story throughout history.

**Key words:** *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, True Womanhood, mental illness, depression, postpartum depression, madness, 19<sup>th</sup> century, madwoman in the attic

## **Název**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá podrobnou analýzou zobrazení duševní poruchy v povídce *Žlutá tapeta* od autorky Charlotte Perkins Gilman. První část této práce představí nezbytné teoretické základy potřebné pro hlubší analýzu. Teorie se bude zabývat zejména situací v americké společnosti devatenáctého století z hlediska postavení obou pohlaví, a dále pak také soudobým pohledem na duševní zdraví a duševní poruchy u žen. Praktická část získané informace aplikuje na povídku *Žlutá tapeta*. Text se rovněž pokusí vysvětlit, proč je povídka charakteristická změnami její interpretace od jejího prvního vydání na konci devatenáctého století.

**Klíčová slova:** *Žlutá tapeta*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 19. století, mentální porucha, deprese, hysterie, poporodní deprese

## Table of Contents

0. Introduction.....	9
1. The 19 <sup>th</sup> Century American Society.....	10
2. Charlotte Perkins Gilman.....	19
3. <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i> .....	24
4. Narrator and Her Mental Condition.....	28
5. Reading of <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i> .....	34
6. Conclusion.....	38
7. Resumé.....	40
8. Bibliography.....	43



## 0. Introduction

The origin of the horror story *The Yellow Wallpaper* by American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman goes back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the United States, this era was characteristic by a fast technologic, scientific and social progress. However, it is generally known that women's active participation in this process was limited due to their inferior position in society. Women had limited political rights and a narrow range of options in terms of education and career. In addition, the general point of view towards women's physical and mental abilities was still outdated in many ways, creating numerous prejudices and misconceptions. Gilman's masterpiece *The Yellow Wallpaper* introduces a prejudice-based treatment of a mentally ill woman and its disastrous consequences. The story is to a large extent autobiographical as the writer was inspired by her own experience with this kind of medical care. The story, written soon after Gilman's recovery, was originally refused by several publishers for its macabre, explicit content, finally to be published in 1892. Nevertheless, its most successful era had not started until 1973 when it was rediscovered by Elaine Ryan Hedges in her *Afterword* to the *Feminist Press*. It became instantly popular among feminists and it slowly found its way to literary canons, anthologies and the wider public of readers.

This thesis aims to disclose and analyze the elements displaying mental illness in the narrative using the knowledge about 19<sup>th</sup> century society and Gilman's own experience.

The paper is divided into two main sections. First of all, the theoretical part will provide a brief introduction to the historical background of the story with a special focus on different gender positions. It will comment on the pervading attitude towards women's mental health and illness and demonstrate a short list of some of the contemporary medical terms. Secondly, a biography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman will be presented, also explaining the experience which led Gilman to the creation of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. To introduce some more examples of literature written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a short list of her other books and stories will be provided. The second part deals with *The Yellow Wallpaper* and features an extensive analysis of the narrative using the knowledge from the previous part of this paper.

This paper discusses edition of *The Yellow Wallpaper* from 1985 as it can be found in *The Norton anthology of literature by women: the tradition in English* by Sandra Gilbert and

Susan Gubar. An abbreviation ‘GG’ will be used in its later in-text citation to avoid frequent repetition.

## 1. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Society

Before we take a look at the 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the United States from a gender perspective, it is necessary to establish certain exceptions from our range of interests. This paper focuses on a specific group of women including both Gilman and the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. An upfront formulation of this target group will help avoid any inaccuracies in our later statements.

First of all, this paper will not take into consideration women of the African American population in the United States, as the slavery period and later segregation put them into a different context not comparable with the group of women we aim to discuss.

It is also necessary to take into account the existence of social stratification which defines social class as a “*grouping based on similar social factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation*” (Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States, online) and which played a major role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American society. This paper is concerned with the group of women represented for example by Charlotte Perkins Gilman or the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, who both were encouraged by society to lead domestic lives, which is an option available only for families with good income. In addition, both Gilman and her narrator are considered as educated for their time which is again a privilege of certain classes. Given this, it is possible to establish that this paper is concerned with female members of a middle or higher class. Mary Wearn summarizes the situation in the middle-class families in the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century and describes the separate roles of genders:

By the end of the eighteenth century, the shape and texture of the white, middle-class American family was in a state of radical and inexorable flux. The shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy in the North meant that while men got to business, women stayed at home. (Wearn, 2008, 1)

Within this specific area of research, it is possible to describe the historical background necessary to understand the context of Gilman’s story.

From a historical point of view, the 19<sup>th</sup> century is known as ‘the century of steam’. It was strongly influenced by the Industrial Revolution and bore witness to increasing urbanization and extensive modernization. During this era, both men and women had specific predetermined roles. In her article, Barbara Welter defines these roles and explains that while “the nineteenth-century American man was a busy builder of bridges and railroads, at work long hours in a materialistic society”, the expectations for women were completely different as the “woman, in the cult of True Womanhood presented by the women’s magazines, gift annuals and religious literature of the nineteenth century, was the hostage in the home.” (Welter, 1966, 151) The general opinion was that these roles should be separated and the rules strictly followed. The separation eventually led to a creation of two completely detached spheres:

*Women's place was in the private sphere -- family life and the home. Men's place was in the public sphere -- in politics, in the economic world which was becoming increasingly separate from home life as the Industrial Revolution progressed, in public social and cultural activity.*  
(Separate Spheres, online)

As mentioned in Welter’s article, these stereotypes applied to women created a generally required manner for women’s behavior named ‘True Womanhood’. This term almost reached cult popularity and it was frequently referred to in the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature and magazines. Welter gives an explanation of what is meant by ‘True Womanhood’:

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife-woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power. (Welter, 1966, 152)

Welter’s definition proposes that a ‘true woman’ was very modest, obedient and family-focused. It also indicates that serious deviations from requested behavior were not approved by society. Anyone daring to question the correctness of ‘True Womanhood’ would be judged in the following term: “If anyone, male or female, dared to tamper with the complex virtues which made up True Womanhood, he was damned immediately as the enemy of God, of civilization, and of the Republic.” (Welter, 1966, 152) The American image of a ‘True Woman’ was equivalent to the Victorian expression ‘angel in the house’:

*The popular Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman came to be 'the Angel in the House'; she was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all – pure.*

(The Angel in the House, online)

The image of a 'domestic angel' inspired Gilbert and Gubar to create an antagonism of a 'monster woman' who gains her independence from by metaphorical murder of the 'angel in the house' and by rejection of her predetermined gender role. (Gilbert, Gubar, 1984, 17) The 'monster' represents women's passion, temperament and desire for freedom and is often represented in literature as socially rejected or mad. For their idea of a 'monster woman', Gilbert and Gubar took inspiration from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. They also suggest that these two stereotypes – 'the angel in the house' and 'the madwoman in the attic', often coexist within the frame of one work of literature as the angelic character and its monster doppelgänger. (Gilbert, Gubar, 1984, 17) According to Greg Johnson, this theory could not only be applied to the Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, but also to Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*:

Just as that other Mrs. Rochester, Bertha Mason, may be read as a raging doppelgänger whose burning of Thornfield Hall expresses her alter ego Jane Eyre's forbidden anger and allows her the Victorian redemption of blissful marriage, so are the maddening frustrations of Gilman's heroine allowed their fearsome release, resulting in her triumph over her husband in the story's unforgettable final scene. (Johnson, 1989, 526)

In reality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can find many examples of women defying rules of 'True Womanhood'. Their rebellious acts varied in size and shape. Whereas an ultimate refusal of given rules may have led to gaining the status of 'fallen woman', a moderate intellectual opposition from some 19<sup>th</sup> century female writers was at least partly tolerated.

### **Fallen Woman**

If the term 'True Woman' was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to portray an ideal of a middle-class woman, the phrase 'fallen woman' was meant to evoke an image of her complete opposite. By definition, the expression 'fallen woman' was "*a way of describing a woman in the past who had a sexual relationship with somebody who was not her husband.*"

(Fallen woman – definition and pronunciation, online) The expression referred to any woman following her sexual desires or using her sexuality to make a living. In the eyes of society

such a woman has fallen from grace by losing her chastity and dishonoring the sacred act of marriage.

Women's sexual desire and awareness were completely tabooed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sexually active women were perceived as a potential threat – not only they revolted against the rules, but they could have easily become a negative role model for other women to follow. One of the possible interpretations of society's fear in this regard claims that a woman interested in sexual activity represented a “model of female sexuality outside of male control and were thus the antithesis of the chaste and submissive wife.” (Sex and Society, 2010, 785) A sexual revolt was the first step towards emancipation and independent thinking, both of which were not tolerated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century patriarchal society.

### **Emancipated women writers**

A wider focus will be put into women embodying a milder form of deviation from the accepted behavior rules. Charlotte Perkins Gilman serves as a perfect example for this group – a category of intellectual women expressing their opinions on gender issues and the inequality of genders. Their professions and occupations varied – they were teachers, journalists, critics, theoreticians. Some of them led a happy family life; others never married or divorced their husbands.

At this point we shall also mention a few more significant women of 19<sup>th</sup> century and their famous works. One of the first and most influential feminist literary works was written by Margaret Fuller (1810 – 1850). She was an American teacher and writer, whose feminist tract named *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was perceived as a “*demand for political equality and an ardent plea for the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual fulfillment of women.*” (Margaret Fuller – American author and educator, online) The tract served as an inspiration for many other women in her and later generations. While teaching in Bronson Alcott's Temple School in Boston, Fuller is said to have made an acquaintance of Bronson's daughter, another very interesting historical personality – Louisa May Alcott (1832 – 1888). Alcott was a writer and a keen supporter of the women's movement. She never married, which was rather unusual and unpopular decision for a woman of this era. Her most recognized semi-autobiographical book *Little Women* managed to gain a substantial popularity among 19<sup>th</sup> century women and it was even followed by a sequel.

We could also mention Kate Chopin (1850 – 1904), whose most famous novel *The Awakening* was very daring for the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Several other authors and their revolutionary books could be mentioned, but our attention will be drawn mainly to Charlotte Perkins Gilman.

Some of the literary works from this era, including *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *The Awakening* or *Little Women*, contain many autobiographical features. Novels and stories based on the life experiences of middle class women offer a valuable insight and an authentic image of 19<sup>th</sup> century life. The 19<sup>th</sup> century literary society dominated by men was generally set against women's writing. Women authors faced criticism for their amateur and sentimental writing and a lack of style. Showalter mentions in her famous book named *A Jury of Her Peers* that even famous contemporary male writers and critics were complaining about the literary market flooded with books of questionable quality and she quotes an excerpt from a conversation between Nathaniel Hawthorne and his publisher, William Ticknor:

America is now wholly given over to a d---d mob of scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. (Hawthorne qtd. in Showalter, 2009, 83)

In spite of this negative attitude frequently expressed by literary authorities, female authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued writing, even creating a new literary genre named 'domestic realism' (also known as 'sentimental novel' or 'woman's fiction') which gained a considerable popularity among the 19<sup>th</sup> century women readers. (Elliott, 1988, 560)

While Jack Salzman summarizes the main theme of domestic literature as a story of "dominance and subjugation" (Elliott, 1988, 562), Nina Baym explains the main thought of women's fiction as "the story of a young girl who is deprived of the supports she had rightly or wrongly depended on to sustain her throughout life and is faced with the necessity of winning her own way in the world." (Baym, 1978, 19) She emphasizes that the storylines of different works of this genre usually contain common features. At the beginning, the main character finds herself in the middle of a conflict between the society's expectations and her own desires. Her rebelling against the society leads to depression and the discovery that the situation is untenable and the heroine's struggle does not bring the desired happiness. The heroine eventually decides to accept her fate and finally finds peace and happiness in it. Very often, the story ends with a marriage. (Domestic fiction 1830 – 1860, online)

In spite of an undoubtedly increasing expertise in medical science, prejudice about female physiology was only corrected very slowly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Excellent examples of frequently lasting stereotypes can be found in Foucault's *History of Madness*.

For instance, Foucault mentions an 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century belief that physical resistance is determined by the rigidity and the 'concentration' of inner organs and body fluids. A practical application of this theory situated men over women because it was deduced that a stronger, more muscular male body was more condensed than a soft, delicate female body. Thus, women were claimed to struggle with health problems caused by moving organs and redundant liquid. (Foucault, 1994, 101)

In their work, Pouba and Tianen emphasize that women's reproductive system was also a disadvantaging characteristic by saying that "myths regarding menstruation and women's reproductive system endorsed and virtually enforced women's embodiment as the weaker sex in both physical and intellectual realms." (Pouba, Tianen, 2006, 99) One of these myths, whose occurrence dates back to antiquity, would definitely be the well known 'wandering womb' concept. Edwards reviews the origin of the term 'wandering womb' and explains its meaning:

Ancient Egyptians, and subsequently Greeks, blamed a displaced hystera, or womb, for many women's afflictions, including choking, mutism, and paralysis, although the term hysteria was not applied until later. Hippocratic writings speak of a dry womb rising towards the throat in search of moisture, thereby impeding breathing. (Edwards, 2009, 1669)

As we can see in Edward's explanation, the theory of 'wandering womb' in fact allowed the emergence of the phenomenon named 'hysteria', which became one of the most diagnosed mental disorders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Menstrual process as a part of women's reproductive system also serves as a good example of a misconstruction of women's bodily functions. The way it affected women's integration into social life can be understood from a comment on one of the S. Weir Mitchell's cases made by Michelle Murton:

Mitchell pointedly noted the case of Miss C. in his medical treatise entitled *Nervous Diseases*, a text devoted primarily to women. Miss C., a seventeen-year old, lost her menstrual cycle while attending (Mitchell pointedly reminds his readers) a "school in which boys and girls were educated together." (Mitchell qtd. in Murton, 1995)

Apart from predispositions originating from physical characteristics, Foucault also mentions that women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were said to be endangered by excessive interest in knowledge and books, especially novels. Novels were to blame for creating immoderate expectations and dangerous excitement – both of which the fragile mind of a woman was not able to handle. (Foucault, 1994, 133) This particular fight against overstress including both restriction of women’s writing and reading was a mainstay of the ‘rest cure’ method mentioned later in this chapter.

The indicated examples show how easily a common feature of female body could be misinterpreted as a symptom of disease. Concerning women’s mental health, the examination was also based on rather strange beliefs decreasing their level of objectivity and expertise.

Pouba and Tianen’s research paper on American mental asylums of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lists several main symptoms diagnosing mental diseases in women and explains that most of these signs would be viewed as very controversial in comparison with today’s medical practice. (Pouba, Tianen, 2006, 99) According to Pouba and Tianen, apart from deep-rooted prejudice on women’s health, socially unacceptable behavior was also an argument for considering a mental disorder: “Between the years 1850-1900, women were placed in mental institutions for behaving in ways male society did not agree” (Pouba, Tianen, 2006, 95). The defenselessness of contemporary women in this area is highlighted by adding that “women during this period had minimal rights, even concerning their own mental health.” (Pouba, Tianen, 2006, 96)

The following section will introduce some of the most frequently occurring medical terms describing women’s mental diseases in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It will also introduce a psychological method named ‘rest cure’ which is depicted in the short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

### **Hysteria**

As previously stated, the first mention about hysteria comes from Ancient Egypt and Greece. However, the term itself is rather a contribution of 19<sup>th</sup> century translations that helped to define the term hysteria as “extraordinarily prominent in nineteenth-century medicine and culture.” (Gilman et. al, 1993, Introduction)



Physicians started to replace the original cause of hysteria, woman's fragility and her wandering womb by a modern, more psychological cause – overly sensitive nerves, “which they considered could be tuned to a high degree of sensitivity by refined living.” (Edwards, 2009, 1669) As a proper psychiatric diagnosis, it gained large popularity among physicians and it was diagnosed mainly in women. According to Edwards, the 1970's removal of this term from medical classifications played an important role in the laicization of the term and contributed in the term's current negative connotation. (Edwards, 2009, 1669)

### **Melancholy**

The term 'melancholy' also originates in Antiquity. Unlike depression, the exact term was widely known from the very beginning, and according to Paykel it bore a rather general meaning: “Melancholia was recognized as early as the time of Hippocrates, and continued through Galenic medicine and medieval times. The earlier connotation of the term was very wide, and included all forms of quiet insanity. “(Paykel, 2008, p. 279)

Pouba and Tianen document its popularity with an argument that by the year 1880, melancholia was even listed in the summary of seven categories of mental illnesses in the U.S among other disorders such as mania, monomania, paresis, dementia, dipsomania, and epilepsy. (Pouba, Tianen, 2006, 99) Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term's popularity decreased. It was replaced by a more specific expression – 'depression'.

### **Depression, Postpartum Depression, Postpartum Psychosis**

Paykel states that the term 'depression' appeared for the first time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and indicated a feeling of low mood and sadness. It was a rather general diagnose easily applicable to various situations and symptoms of sadness, apathy, nervousness and frustration. (Paykel, 2008, 279)

Postpartum or postnatal depression is a type of depression following childbirth. It can begin immediately or within the first year after the childbirth. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was not a very frequent diagnosis as it was commonly misinterpreted as neurasthenia. (Postpartum Depression and *The Yellow Wallpaper*, online) A mild form of postpartum depression is usually characterized by nervousness, sadness, excessive crying, and fatigue. A more severe cases experience also symptoms directly related to the newborn, for example lack of interest in the baby or even anxiety around the child. The most serious form, occurring mainly in

women who are already suffering from some sort of mental disorder, is named postpartum psychosis. It represents a potential danger for both mother and her baby, because it may cause hallucinations or even desire to hurt the baby. (Postpartum Depression Symptoms, online)

### **Neurasthenia**

This disease became popular as a clinical diagnosis thanks to the discovery on the relation between nerves and electricity and it was generally explained as a decrease in nerve functionality: “At a time when notions of electricity and energy were permeating neurophysiology, neurology and psychiatry, the idea that a patient’s nervous system was operating at less than an optimal setting, made good sense. “(Bynum, 2003, p. 1753) In practice, Bynum (2003) explains that in practice, neurasthenic patients were often depressed and suffered from weakness and tiredness. Among many other specialists, a clinical neurologist named Silas Weir Mitchell was interested in this topic. His fame and previous experience with treatment of neurasthenic patients encouraged Gilman to seek his medical advice when her mental health got worse after her daughter was born. She was prescribed Weir Mitchell’s own special cure for neurasthenia, a ‘rest cure’, which failed completely.

### **Rest cure**

The term ‘rest cure’ describes a method of treatment designed for neurasthenic women; it was developed by Silas Weir Mitchell and applied to many women, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Martin explains that the method, first mentioned in 1878 in Mitchell’s book *Fat and Blood*, was based on three elements – isolation, rest and feeding. (Martin, 2007, 737) Applied to everyday life, the rest cure could look for example like this:

The patient was instructed to lie in bed for 24 hours each day, sometimes for months at a time, with a special nurse who would sleep on a cot in the room, feed her, and keep her mind from morbid thoughts by reading aloud or discussing soothing topics. (Martin, 2007, p. 737)

The patient was kept in complete isolation as visits from family or friends were prohibited. If needed, electrotherapeutic procedures and massages could be used to counteract muscle atrophy. Every single meal and rehabilitation was thoroughly planned. (Martin, 2007, p. 737) Contemporary textbooks show the inevitable result of this forced passivity: “Brain work having ceased, mental expenditure is reduced to a slight play of emotions and an easy drifting of thought.” (Dercum FX, 1917, p. 140) When the patient’s appetite increased and

mental health restored, she was ready to reintegrate into society and live a healthy lifestyle. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such a lifestyle included strict limitation of intellectual life due to its possible stressfulness and interference with the patient's womanly duties.

At this point, the paper had presented some general information about the 19<sup>th</sup> century middle-class and upper-middle class women's position in the society. It also revealed some of the common beliefs about their physical and mental health. All this knowledge will help us identify the hints about Gilman's life conditions in the text of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The following chapter is dedicated to Gilman, her life and writing. It will attempt to convey more on the author's life and the short, yet dramatic, stage depicted in the short story.

## **2. Charlotte Perkins Gilman**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1860 to Mary Fitch Westcott and Frederick Beecher Perkins as their second child. Her parents were very well educated.

Her father was a close relative of the famous Beecher family (he was Mary Beecher's oldest son, which makes Charlotte a great-niece of the famous writer Harriet Beecher Stowe). Frederick Perkins spoke 9 languages and worked as a librarian.

Considering the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideal of beauty, Westcott was perceived as an attractive woman. Unfortunately she was very often ill and her overall medical condition got even worse after she got married. Her first attempt to have a baby failed tragically and the baby died soon after it was born. Her second baby, Thomas, survived, and so did the third, Charlotte. However, right after Charlotte's birth Mary was warned by her physician that another pregnancy would be dangerous for her health. In her autobiography, Gilman assumes that her mother's inability to have more children was the main reason her father decided to leave the family for good. Since his departure, Gilman only remembered her father as: "an occasional visitor, a writer of infrequent but always amusing letters with deliciously funny drawings, a sender of books, catalogues of books, lists of books to read, and also a purchaser of books with money sadly needed by his family." (Gilman, 1991, 5) Gilman explains that her family was facing serious financial problems. They were moving frequently, repeatedly accepting hospitality from various relatives.

Gilman's mother underwent major personality changes after her husband's departure and became emotionally distant from her children. Gilman described it in her autobiography in the following way:

Having suffered so deeply in her own list of early love affairs, and still suffering for lack of a husband's love, she heroically determined that her baby daughter should not so suffer if she could help it. Her method was to deny the child all expression of affection as far as possible, so that she should not be used to it of long for it. (Gilman, 1991, 10)

Marie Westcott also showed little to no interest in her daughter's education. She banned Charlotte from reading novels and writing poetry, forcing her to stay at home and to decline all the invitations from friends and relatives. In spite of this disapproving attitude of Gilman's mother towards her daughter's education, Charlotte eventually managed to start attending the Rhode Island School of Design and become an art teacher and a governess.

When Charlotte met Charles Walter Stetson, she was immediately impressed by his charisma and intelligence. She married him at the age of 24 despite her ambivalent thoughts on combining marriage and career.

At first, Charlotte was very lively and healthy. In her biography she thoroughly described her passion for active lifestyle and exercise. She listed among her hobbies long walks, dancing, running and gymnastics. Gilman even explained being fond of housework since she saw activities such as scrubbing and sweeping the floor as a convenient back and arm exercise. Taking all this into consideration, Gilman was not able to rationally explain the cause of her emerging depression. One day, she made a note in her diary: "A sort of gray fog drifted across my mind, a cloud that grew and darkened." (Gilman, 1991, 88) By the time her daughter Katherine was born, Charlotte was already deeply depressed. Gilman, on defining her mental illness as a nervous prostration, saw her condition as a "growing melancholia, and that, as those know who have tasted it, consists of every painful mental sensation, shame, fear, remorse, a blind oppressive confusion, utter weakness, a steady brain-ache that fills the conscious mind with crowding images of distress" (Gilman, 1991, 90)

As the melancholia and apathy progressed, Gilman was spending her days crying and lying in bed. She was unable to distract herself with anything useful or pleasant. Convinced that it would do her good to change her routine, Gilman took a short trip to Pasadena, California. During this time spent without her husband and child, Gilman's health improved

notably, so she decided to go back to her family. Nevertheless, after her arrival back home the depression struck even harder.

Gilman finally decided to seek for medical advice. She contacted the renowned specialist Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, requesting his aid. Mitchell gave Gilman a simple set of instructions:

Live as domestic life as possible. Have your child with you all the time. Lie down an hour after each meal. Have but two hours' intellectual life a day. And never touch pen, brush or pencil as long as you live. (Gilman, 1991, 96)

Unfortunately, Mitchell's suggested treatment was in fact far from successful, causing severe deterioration in Gilman's condition:

I went home, followed those directions rigidly for months, and came perilously near to losing my mind. The mental agony grew so unbearable that I would sit blankly moving my head from side to side – to get out from under the pain. (Gilman, 1991, 96)

Gilman even confesses to having serious problems maintaining her sanity. "I made a rag baby, hung it on a doorknob and played with it. I would crawl into remote closets and under beds – to hide from the grinding pressure of that profound distress..." (Gilman, 1991, 96) In order to restore her health, Gilman decided to make a radical change in her life and left her husband. She settled permanently in Pasadena. In spite of a very slow recovery she managed to start writing and teaching again. In 1890, she finished *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Gilman admitted writing that the story closely mirrored her own ordeal:

It is a description of a case of nervous breakdown beginning something as mine did, and treated as Dr. S. Weir Mitchell treated me with what I considered the inevitable result, progressive insanity. (Gilman, 1991, 119)

In an article named *Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper*, published in 1913 in *The Forerunner*, Gilman explains, that the aim of the story was not only to inform about her case, but also to inform Dr. Mitchell and wider public about the danger represented by the 'rest cure' method of treatment:

Being naturally moved to rejoicing by this narrow escape, I wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, with its embellishments and additions, to carry out the ideal (I never had hallucinations or objections to my mural decorations) and sent a copy to the physician who so nearly drove me mad. He never acknowledged it. (*Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper*, online)

At first, Gilman thought that she had failed to reach Dr. Mitchell. However, she later discovered that not only had Mitchell acknowledged her warning, but he even adjusted his approach to the treatment:

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. Mitchell's who said he had told them 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. (Gilman, 1991, 121)

Opinions regarding the credibility of this statement vary. Julie Bates Dock explains that Gilman's conviction about the positive outcome of *The Yellow Wallpaper* has been repeatedly reproduced without questioning by many of Gilman's critics and biographers. (Dock et al., 1996, 62) However, Gilman's bold statement cannot be supported by any evidence. Dock even believes that in fact, Mitchell intended to make his 'rest cure' treatment more accessible for lower classes:

We have found no evidence to support Gilman's version of events other than her memoirs. Discussions of Mitchell's career never mention Gilman's course of treatment or her famous short story. Mitchell's published letters contain no hint that he altered his thinking about the rest cure; on the contrary, as late as 1908 he wrote to Andrew Carnegie that he wanted to build a hospital for 'Rest Treatment for the Poor.' (Dock et al., 1996, 62)

It is therefore difficult to say whether Gilman's call for attention managed to fulfill its purpose.

The separation of Gilman and her first husband was followed by an official divorce in 1894. Gilman's daughter Katherine was taken into custody by her father, so Gilman could fully concentrate on her new life and literary career.

In 1900, Charlotte married her cousin George Houghton Gilman. In this marriage she found the intellectual support she was looking for. She started studying differences between literary pieces of both genders and also became a keen supporter of the feminist movement. Gilbert and Gubar observe that Gilman's opinion on unequal position of gender was based on an assumption that "the subordination of the female sex had been necessary in the past for human evolution, but that in the twentieth century masculine assertiveness had to be complemented by a female culture grounded in cooperation and nurturance." (Gilbert, Gubar, 1985, 1147)

When Gilman's husband died in 1934, Gilman moved to live near her daughter. Soon after that, the writer was diagnosed with breast cancer. In 1935 she committed suicide using chloroform.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote most of her works after the dissolution of her first marriage. In 1890, Gilman finished her ghost story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a semi-autobiographical text about a woman suffering from mental illness. As it was already mentioned, the story was originally underrated and even criticized for its shocking, morbid form. Its true recognition came in 1973, when it was rediscovered by Dr. Elaine Ryan Hedges, an educator and scholar calling for a reform in the definition of American literary canons concerning the incorporation of more female writers. The story became an instant success among feminists and nowadays it is still probably Gilman's most widely known work.

Gilman's very first book, a collection of satirical poems, was published in 1893 under the name *In This Our World*. In 1898, it was followed by *Women and Economics*, a book which was immediately adopted as the 'Bible' of the women's movement. The work discussed the necessity of female economic independency and was even used as a textbook for a short period of time. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was already translated into 7 languages. (Gilbert, Gubar, 1985, 1146)

She also wrote essays – for example *Concerning Children* (1900), *The Home* (1903) or *Human Work* (1904). In these, she introduced a revolutionary idea of organizations assisting women in the time consuming tasks of housekeeping and childcare. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these ideas – closely reminding of modern professional housekeeping services and day-care centers – were really ahead of their time.

Gilman felt the need to comment on differences between genders. Her books named *Man-Made World* (1911) and *His Religion and Hers* (1923) aimed to establish both genders' distinctive characteristics. The books feature an interesting thought on men's and women's goals – Gilman suggests that whereas woman's main concern is to create and protect life, man is often driven by a search for power resulting in destroying life. (Gilbert, Gubar, 1985, 1145)

Some of Gilman's fiction was inspired by the theme of Utopia. Her utopian novels *Herland* (1915) and *With Her in Ourland* (1916) enabled her to display her ideal matriarchal

society under cover of a fiction genre. Thus, she successfully avoided criticism she would have to face in case of an open expression of opinions. (Gilbert, Gubar, 1985, 1145) Both utopian novels appeared in Gilman's magazine *The Forerunner*, which was produced by Gilman herself between the years 1909 and 1916 and comprised of various articles, stories, poems and serialized novels.

Gilman also wrote her own autobiography named *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*. The book, although finished in 1925, was published after Gilman's death.

The last mentioned work will be *Through This*. It does not belong among Gilman's most famous short stories and it is not widely known. It is, however, associated with *The Yellow Wallpaper* in some of the critic articles. *Through This* is a short story describing an ordinary day in life of a common middle-class family. The story features characters of the same names as *The Yellow Wallpaper*. However, this time, the nameless female narrator is an opposite to the heroine of *The Yellow Wallpaper*. She is a devoted mother and a wife and her main concern is to take care of the family and household. Despite this difference, the goal of both stories seems to be the same. Denise Knight summarizes it:

Both stories demonstrate what inevitably happens to women who subordinate their own needs to those of others. While the loss of identity is poignantly obvious in "*The Yellow Wallpaper*", it is shrouded somewhat in "*Through This*" by the narrator's pretense of normalcy. (Knight, 1992, 297)

According to Knight, the seemingly opposite stories both refer to the consequences of women's submission to the rules of patriarchal society. Whereas the negative effects are hardly noticeable in *Through This*, the story of *The Yellow Wallpaper* displays these effects very explicitly.

### **3. *The Yellow Wallpaper***

Gilman's story is a work of fiction written as twelve separate journal entries. The intimate and naturalistic diary form enables to easily express feelings and opinions and provides an opportunity for the reader to search for sub textual context. Trevor Field also



praises the authenticity of this sub-genre, which makes the journal form “particularly well suited to creating positive belief on the part of even the least willing reader.” (Field, 1989, 54)

*The Yellow Wallpaper* discusses a young female character, a new mother suffering from depression and nervousness. The narrator’s condition convinces her husband to move the whole family to an old country residence and start treating his wife with the famous Weir Mitchell’s ‘rest cure’ method. Besides from the couple, their baby, and narrator’s sister-in-law Jennie, who is helping out as a housekeeper, there is nobody else living in the house.

The narrator strongly disapproves her husband’s intention to cure her nervousness with isolation and idleness. She hates the bedroom she is kept in and particularly dislikes the hideous wallpaper on the wall, which soon becomes the only object of her attention. After a careful analysis of the paper, the narrator discovers a hidden underlying pattern reminding her of a woman trapped behind the ugly front motif. Not sharing this impression with anyone, she commits herself to find out more about the mysterious woman. Creating a special relationship towards this woman, she begins to sympathize with her and decides to set her free by pulling the wallpaper off the wall. By the end of her stay in the house, she succeeds in tearing off most of the paper and in locking herself inside the room. When her husband finally manages to open the door, he sees his wife, who has clearly become insane, crawling in circles around the room. He faints while his wife keeps crawling around, moving over his motionless body.

The story takes place in a “colonial mansion, a hereditary estate” (GG, 1148) which lies isolated several miles from the nearest village. The large house, surrounded by an attractive garden, is apparently permanently uninhabited due to legal reasons, which is the only information we obtain about the history of the estate.

The narrator’s bedroom is situated in the attic and it is the biggest and airiest, yet ugliest room in the house. Its convenience for the narrator’s recovery serves as her husband’s main argument against possible relocating to another room. The narrator’s resentment towards the room originates from its bad condition. We learn that its floor is “scratched and gouged and splintered“(GG, 1152) and also the wallpaper on the wall is severely damaged: “It is stripped of – the paper – in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down.” (GG, 1150)

The room is unfurnished except for the bed, which is nailed to the floor. The narrator assumes that her bedroom was once used as either a nursery or a gymnasium, pointing out the presence of various rings in the walls and barred windows. However, an observant reader realizes that the narrator just unwittingly described a room typically occurring for example in private mental asylums. Fanghui Wang observes that:

“Clearly, it is not simply a playroom for children. Every exit is either barred or locked; only a nailed-down bed is in the room with the rings in the wall covered with the hideous wallpaper. This is more like a prison, or mental asylum used to confine people.” (Wang, 2012, 11)

Given that the narrator was not able to say anything about the original purpose of the house or its previous tenants, it is not possible to exclude the option of the room being a mental asylum cell.

Wang continues that the bad state of the room indicates that “the room once might have been used to lock up an array of Bertha Masons, or have segregated them from anyone else.” (Wang, 2012, 11) The striking resemblance between the yellow top floor bedroom and the attic accommodation of the original “madwoman in the attic” can hardly pass unnoticed and it creates a connection between Gilman’s depressed young woman and an insane, violent, aggressive woman, who is capable of attacking people and committing suicide.

It becomes obvious that even though the narrator’s case is not presented as serious, her temporary accommodation suggests otherwise.

As the name of the story foreshadows, a special attention in the story is paid to the wallpaper on the walls. Jonathan Crewe understands that narrator’s fixation on the wallpaper is not very surprising since “the exasperating effect of pattern wallpaper on invalids was a medical commonplace of Gilman’s time. “(Crewe qtd. Roth, 2001, 147) In this case, a simple logical explanation of the narrator’s occupation with the wallpaper can be found in the character of the ‘rest cure’. As it was already explained, the therapy is based on lack of mental and physical stimulation. Such a process will inevitably lead to boredom and a need for some sort of compensation, which is, in narrator’s case, her secret diary and her obsession with the wallpaper. Therefore, the detailed observations of the walls do not necessarily indicate abnormal behavior.

The narrator describes the wallpaper pattern as “one of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin” (GG, 1150) and gets angry at the inanimate wallpaper because of its confusing, provoking shapes seem impossible to follow. The narrator angrily complains that “when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide – plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions” (GG, 1150). She also remarks that the yellow color of the wallpaper does not evoke any positive or cheerful associations. She merely associates its strange shade of yellow with “old foul, bad yellow things” (GG, 1157) and acknowledges that the paper even seems to emit an unpleasant odor lingering in her hair even after she leaves the house for a walk.

The narrator’s disgust towards the wallpaper is expressed by words with negative connotation such as ‘suicide’, ‘destroy’ or ‘foul’, which illustrate the depth of narrator’s disapproval of the room and slightly challenge the reader to notice the narrator’s unorthodox expression.

The narrative *The Yellow Wallpaper* introduces a perfect example of a horror setting. The house, which resembles a mental asylum, is drawing attention to a popular topic of hospitalization of mentally ill women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The main characters with whom Gilman worked in her story appear to correspond precisely to some of the 19<sup>th</sup> century stereotypes as we know them from the theoretical part of this paper. For instance, there are three male characters in the story, each of them maintaining the same attitude typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The most important male character is the narrator’s husband named John. Since he is a physician, he feels entitled to diagnose his own wife and suggest a suitable treatment for her. His approach towards his wife is seemingly charitable and benevolent, but we can also notice his patronizing behavior and his unwillingness to listen to his wife’s needs.

The narrator’s brother is a man who does not make personal appearance in the story. He is also a physician and he shares John’s opinion on narrator’s diagnosis and treatment. None of these two men, who are possibly the most important men in the narrator’s life, seems to take her thoughts into consideration, which coincides with our knowledge about strict, male-dominated 19<sup>th</sup> century society taking little interest in female point of view.

The third man, also only shortly mentioned in the story, is Silas Weir Mitchell himself. His involvement in the treatment is put almost as a threat to the narrator. The remark about Gilman's former doctor again reveals Gilman's intention to refer to her own experience with the "rest cure" treatment.

John's sister, Jane, who is helping around the house and keeping the narrator company while her brother is at work, is a very interesting character whose existence in the story may have a negative subtext. The narrator claims that Jane "is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession." (GG, 1152) She is the optimistic and capable embodiment of the 'True Womanhood' and she contrasts perfectly with the narrator's apathetic depression and inability to meet the expectations of society. Although Jane, as a member of the same sex, should be taking narrator's side, the narrator makes it clear several times that she does not trust her. She perceives her more as a jail warden - the narrator does not let her see her diary, refuses to share the bedroom with her while John is away and she frequently lies to her. Perhaps, if Jane had not accepted the prescribed role of a 'true woman', she would have been able to establish a better relationship with the narrator. This way, her submissive identification with the role of a 'true woman' made her an accomplice of the patriarchal side in spite of her female gender.

#### **4. Narrator and Her Mental Condition**

The narrator herself associates her mental illness with simple nervousness and admits being paralyzed by her condition:

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way! I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already! Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able – to dress and entertain, and order things. (GG, 1149)

Her husband's diagnosis corresponds with illnesses commonly diagnosed in 19<sup>th</sup> century women and it names some of the examples we presented earlier in this paper: "temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency." (GG, 1148) Over the years, the prevailing academic opinion used postpartum depression as an explanation of the narrator's state and turned this detail into a common knowledge about *The Yellow Wallpaper*. As Gilman

does not present the reader with any personal details or previous medical history of the narrator (who even remains anonymous), it is difficult to make the correct diagnosis. However, the story mainly focuses on the further development instead of the original mental condition.

The advance of the narrator's mental disease is stimulated mainly by the involuntary separation from her beloved baby, staying in an extremely unpleasant environment and a feeling of estrangement and misunderstanding. The woman, who is basically held hostage in her own bedroom, gradually becomes more and more confused. Jonathan Crewe observes narrator's impaired perception of reality and points out that that her delusion creates situations and paradoxes which are, in fact, among the story's strongest points:

Part of *The Yellow Wallpaper's* power as well as much of its irony comes from the increasing discrepancy between normal-genteel speech codes and the aberrant 'social' situations to which they refer: "To jump out of the window would be an admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try." (Crewe, 1995, 275)

A note about narrator's damaged sense of reality was made earlier in this paper when we discussed narrator's failure to recognize the possible original purpose of her bedroom.

Beverly Hume remarks that the narrator is confused enough to be blaming somebody else for her actions. For example, when the heroine decides to remove the awful paper, she and the woman in the wallpaper manage to peel off a substantial part of it together. Later, when the narrator decides to move the bed in order to reach even higher and tear some more paper, she discovers that the nailed bed will not move and she angrily bites off a small piece of the bedstead. (GG, 1159). The assistance of the ghostly woman in the procedure of paper removal is already very controversial; nevertheless, it is what follows this act that makes Hume wonder:

A few lines later, however, the narrator blames these earlier 'children' for her actions: "How those children did tear about here! The bedstead is fairly gnawed!" Yet after another few sentences, she again admits that it is most likely *she*, not the children, who has been gnawing the bedstead. (Hume, 2002, 9)

Another interesting example of narrator's disorientation would be the smudge on the wall. A conversation between the narrator and her sister-in-law Jennie about the yellow stains appearing on the narrator's clothes seems to be innocent until we are told:

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even *smooch*, as if it had been rubbed over and over. (GG, 1158)

The narrator's remark and Jennie's complaint indicate that the smudge on the wall comes from the narrator's repeated creeping around the room, which is an activity she does not admit engaging in until the very end of the narrative: "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" (GG, 1161). It is therefore obvious that the narrator is not aware of all her actions and her statements are no longer trustworthy.

Besides the narrator's evident confusion, her potential for aggressive behavior is also sometimes discussed. Beverly Hume offers an interesting point of view using a comparison with the main character of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Black Cat* to declare that just like the murderer in Poe's story, "Gilman's narrator displays a chilling potential for domestic violence that not only haunts this tale, but threatens to undermine Gilman's stated feminist goal" (Hume, 2002, 4). Hume emphasizes that whereas Poe's character had opportunity and used it to kill his wife and his cat, Gilman's narrator is already locked up and therefore unable to hurt anyone. Except for being in a different position, both characters have something in common, both showing similar signs of problematic relationship towards their beloved:

Like Poe's narrator who claims to 'love' his black cat, this narrator insists that she loves her child, her 'dear baby,' her 'blessed' and 'impressionable little thing.' She stresses that she 'cannot be with him' because it makes her 'so nervous'. (Hume, 2002, 5)

This may lead to the conclusion that the narrator's original illness was in fact severe postpartum depression or even postpartum psychosis as we introduced it earlier.

As Gilman explained during her life, her intention was to display the danger of an insensitive treatment by the generally approved 'rest cure'. She managed to present a blood-chilling tale of a woman deprived of her freedom who changes her behavior completely due to her own living conditions. George Monteiro denotes madness being a logical result and a strange form of "compensation" of the situation: "Of course, the narrator is now totally mad. Having been deprived of the work that brings dignity and salvation (including thinking and writing), the narrator has reinvented a demonic parody of work." (Monteiro, 1999, 43) However, the main feature of the narrator's insanity is not her misperception of reality, but the reality she creates on her own – the woman in the wallpaper.

The mysterious woman appears for the first time in Gilman's second entry. The narrator starts humanizing the wallpaper claiming that "this paper looks to me as if it knew what a vicious influence it had!" (GG, 1151) and also adds the first mention about a dim, feeble shade of a figure lurking from behind the wallpaper pattern. The later further examination reveals that the shadow looks "like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern." (GG, 1156) Starting from this moment, the narrator's attitude towards the paper slightly changes. While the original resentment over the front pattern remains, the narrator develops certain sympathy for the woman kept in the background layer, explaining:

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over. (...) And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern – it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads. They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white! (GG, 1158)

There is no doubt that at this point, the narrator contemplates about both layers of the wallpaper separately. Whereas the outside pattern remains bad and evil, the woman beneath it becomes a secret ally and an interesting subject of narrator's investigation. The narrator even begins to show signs of determination and enthusiasm: "Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see, I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch." (GG, 1157) The amount of her excitement is even apparent from the growing number of exclamation marks she is using in her sentences.

When John jokes about his wife's hate towards the paper and mentions her wife's progress in recovery continuing in spite of this hate, the narrator confesses that she has "no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wallpaper" (GG, 1157). The way the narrator reacts to John's excitement about her health improvement by "turn[ing] it off with a laugh" (GG, 1157) expresses a certain amount of emancipation implying that the narrator is no longer affected by her husband's treatment because she had found a higher purpose.

Simultaneously with the narrator's sudden discovery of joy and independence, the wallpaper woman also finds a way to escape from the paper at least for a while: "I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why – privately – I've seen her!" (GG, 1158) The narrator, watching the phantom out of the window of her bedroom, approves of the woman's secrecy during her private outdoor trips and even confesses: "I always lock the door

when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once." (GG, 1159) This statement directly proves an opinion present almost in every academic paper on modern interpretation of *The Yellow Wallpaper* that besides the sign of growing madness; the visual hallucination the woman ghost is a reflection of the narrator's own situation. John Bak proposes that the phantom is in fact narrator's way how to escape from captivity: "In objectifying herself through this imaginary woman, the narrator can free herself, if only in mind, from the external prison her husband places her in. (Bak, 1994, 43)

When analyzing the possible connection between the narrator and the woman in the wallpaper, several arguments can be used to support this theory. First of all, the phantom woman appears with a delay and her shape also gradually becomes clearer. As we know, the narrator, though displeased, is not seriously irritated by her situation from the beginning. But she does continue complaining about her treatment and after two weeks, she reveals the first signs of a hidden wallpaper pattern.

Secondly, the narrator herself unintentionally draws an analogy between her own imprisonment and the woman in the wallpaper by comparing the outer motive to bars (GG, 1158) keeping the woman inside the wallpaper. Apart from the emphasized hostility of the paper, Beverly Hume also found a relation between narrator's controlling husband and the strangling front motive of the wallpaper by stating that Gilman's description of a 'broken neck and two bulbous eyes star[ing] at you upside down' (GG, 1152) in the front pattern could easily be marked as "vaguely masculine and phallic" (Hume, 2002, p. 14).

It is possible to notice that the narrator, who never openly opposes her husband, suddenly observes in amazement the ghost's escape and grows bolder every day, lying to John and keeping important information from him, which might be taken as her own form of revolt. She even decides to destroy the wallpaper and release her ally from her prison. The final act of liberation results in freedom for both accomplices but also makes it impossible to distinguish between the narrator and her imaginary friend:

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard! It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please! ... '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! (GG, 1160)



The narrator's final transformation into the wallpaper phantom removes all doubts about the connection between the two characters. The narrator, who is now completely insane, is not aware of her changed personality and enjoys her newly gained freedom by creeping around the room.

The ending, presenting narrator's complete mental breakdown, arouses mixed reactions among the academics. Basically, Gilman's narrative offers two different interpretations of the ending. Whereas one of them recognizes narrator as a winner and praises her absolute freedom from society's restrictions, the other one admits narrator's defeat and claims that the ghastriness of the story not only distracts from its original purpose, but even contradicts the main message of the narrative.

The literary critics emphasizing the positive interpretation are convinced that the narrator is victorious due to her final freedom from oppression. According to John Bak, "the narrator, despite her doctor's ill-advice and her husband's dehumanizing imprisonment, is successful in freeing herself from her male-imposed shackles, her Panopticon" (Bak, 1994, 40). The members of this group perhaps also appreciate the final mockery of the patriarchal forces represented by John's syncope. As John sees the horrible scene of his wife creeping around the room, he faints and loses not only his power over the situation, but also his 'manliness', because of what is commonly believed to be a stereotypical feminine reaction to stress or shock. The narrator is in complete control of the situation whereas John becomes just a harmless obstruction for the narrator to creep over.

One of the many academics taking the opposite position is for example Beverly Hume. Her explanation clearly identifies the alleged weak points of the finale:

*The Yellow Wallpaper* not only rejects, as Gilman intended, the gender-biased rest cure of the nineteenth-century, but also indicts, less successfully, gender-biased definitions of mental illness. Despite her triumphant unmasking of medical (predominantly male) gender bias in this tale, Gilman's narrator falls apart so completely in the end that she tends, unfortunately, to reinforce the common nineteenth-century gender stereotype of the emotionally and physically frail nineteenth-century woman. (Hume, 2002, 12)

Even nowadays, both perspectives on the ending of the story would have their advocates and opponents. Fortunately, the numerous reviews, essays and academic papers

which are now available on *The Yellow Wallpaper* provide the reader with a lot of detailed information on the topic without favoring a particular view.

## 5. Reading of *The Yellow Wallpaper*

The authentic 19<sup>th</sup> century records and later academic papers tell us that Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* was recognized as a controversial, yet quality work of literature almost immediately. Crewe emphasizes the respect of the male public by saying that "the literary merit of Gilman's story was recognized by contemporary (male) readers and even by (male) publishers who nevertheless rejected it on account of its disturbing content." (Crewe, 1995, 275)

The first rejection came right after the story was finished in 1890. Horace Scudder, a renowned American editor, received a copy of *The Yellow Wallpaper* and wrote a letter to Gilman saying that he couldn't publish the story because he would feel guilty that he had made its readers miserable (Schumaker, 1985, 588). Despite this failure, Gilman continued searching for an opportunity to publish her work, finding one in William Dean Howells's collection. The prominent American critic declared that Gilman's story was "terrible and too wholly dire" and "too terribly good to be printed" (Howells in Shumaker, 1985, 588) and put it in his *Great Modern American Stories*. In 1892, the story also appeared in the *New England Magazine*.

This whole time, *The Yellow Wallpaper* was taken as a horror story. Thrailkill suggests that the readers approached the work rather 'psychologically':

While nineteenth reviewers differed on the story's ultimate meaning (from a cautionary tale about the dangers of tasteless home decorating to a Poe-esque study of psychosis), almost all commented explicitly on the story's powerful effects on the reader. (Thrailkill, 2002, 527)

Thrailkill's comparison to the blood-chilling stories of the famous gothic fiction writer is not the only one as Hedges also mentions the connection between Gilman's story and the most American writer by saying that "in its time (...) the story was read essentially as a Poe-esque tale of chilling horror" (Hedges qtd. in Dock, 1996, 59).

*The Yellow Wallpaper* does indeed contain some features typical of contemporary gothic literature. Browsing through *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* reveals at least three common signs (Hogle, 2002, 2):

- an old remote place with a mysterious previous history
- a heroine in distress
- secrets haunting the characters of the story
- ghost or a phantom

The evident intention of creating a quality horror fiction raises a question why Gilman decided to choose such a distinctive method of expression and therefore made the right interpretation of the story more difficult. The question may be answered by of Lamb's and Thomson's statement, that "many women found the ghost story particularly congenial in addressing ethical issues and simultaneously reaching the wide youthful audience of popular fiction." (Lamb, Thompson, 2005, 46) This method was probably preferred due to the 19<sup>th</sup> century resentment towards women expressing their opinions, which forced female writers to display their opinions on delicate topics in metaphors to avoid criticism.

Nevertheless, as we are told by Gilman herself, the primary goal of the story was not to scare its readers, but to draw attention to a serious problem. Thrailkill reveals that this purpose was finally fully understood in 1973, when *The Yellow Wallpaper* was reintroduced by Elaine Ryan Hedges in her *Afterword* to the *Feminist Press* and when the work was finally "interpreted (...) as paradigmatic of the patriarchal silencing of women." (2002, 526) As we learn from Thrailkill's article,

*The Yellow Wallpaper* has since become a case study of the psychological consequences of the masculine refusal to listen to a woman's words, a refusal that critics link to the more general proscription of female self-expression – literary and otherwise – within a patriarchal culture. (2002, 526)

In addition to this, the story, as a quality work of female literature, also played its role in the process of redefinition of the American literary canon. The canon, containing "set of authors and works generally included in basic American literature college courses and textbooks, and those ordinarily discussed in standard volumes of literary history, bibliography, or criticism" (Lauter, 1983, 435) was formed in accordance with the situation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century society. The

connection between the literary canon and American society is well depicted in Lauter's statement, that, "the literary canon is, in short, a means by which culture validates social power." (Lauter, 1983, 435) It is therefore logical that the canon did not contain almost any works of literature by Afro-American writers, women writers or working-class writers (Lauter, 1983, 435).

Thus, Dock debates that in 1970s many women exploring women's literature claimed that an integration of more examples of women's literature into the literary canon is necessary:

Most of the pioneering work on *The Yellow Wallpaper* occurred during the 1970s and early 1980s, when scholars like Ellen Moers, Elaine Showalter, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar were challenging what they perceived to be a patriarchal literary canon and arguing for the centrality of politics in literature and literary criticism. (Dock, 1996, 52)

It is obvious that the reinvention of Gilman's captivating story *The Yellow Wallpaper* was perfectly timed to support this thought and prepare to become one of the classics of American literature.

However, besides its strong message, the story also offers an undoubted literary quality which may serve as an inspiration for other literary works.

The research revealed for example an interesting resemblance between Gilman's work and a dystopian novel named *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood published almost 100 years after *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

The comparison of these two literary masterpieces was made in Fanghui Wang's study. At the beginning, Wang admits Atwood's possible inspiration by Gilman's work by explaining that Atwood's book from 1985 reacted to 1980's women's movement, which has already been aware of Gilman's reinvented story:

As several critics noted, this book reflected on former feminist movements and the mood in the 1980s in North America when a backlash posited women's liberation movement as the cause for many problems at that time. (Wang, 2012, 10)

Taking into consideration Atwood's interest in 1980's women's movement, it is possible to assume that Atwood might have read *The Yellow Wallpaper* before she wrote the novel.

*The Handmaid's Tale* is a dystopian novel introducing an extremely male-dominated, totalitarian and religious theocracy named Republic of Gilead, which has replaced the United States. The local system persecutes women, enslaves them and forces them to accept various inferior roles. The narrator, whose name 'Offred' refers to the family name of her owners, for example serves as a surrogate mother, which is a common role due to the large number of infertile women in the country.

Works of both authors are written in diary forms – in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator keeps a secret journal and in *Handmaid's Tale*, Offred uses a tape recorder. The narrators also live in similar settings. Wang clarifies that they occupy their own rooms, but they have no privacy, because while in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, there is Jennie carefully observing narrator's every step, Offred is held in a room which is impossible to lock or even close properly. (Wang, 2012, 11) Also, neither of the women is allowed to leave the house without permission. And probably the most notable common feature of both tales can be found in the shared “fear of being controlled and locked up by patriarchal authority. “(Wang, 2012, 11)

The amount of shared features between the two works is surprisingly high considering the fact that Gilman's narrative is almost one hundred years older and its purpose is evidently outdated as the “rest cure” is no longer present in modern medical practice. Nevertheless, this discovery points at the timelessness of Gilman's topic.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze the depiction of insanity in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. This late 19<sup>th</sup> century short story described a young woman's descend into madness caused by an inappropriate treatment of her mental illness. The narrative, based on Gilman's own life experience, presented a real 19<sup>th</sup> century procedure named "rest cure", whose character was based on commonly accepted prejudices against women.

Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the gender inequality was still an issue greatly influencing society in many ways. For example, while women were mainly expected to take care of children and domestic duties, men were encouraged to build a career, enter the public sphere and make all the important family decisions. The 19<sup>th</sup> century society also believed in women's fragility and weakness in terms of both physical constitution and psychological disposition. Especially the contemporary medical opinions based on wrong assumptions about women's mental health severely disadvantaged women and gave rise to many incorrect misconceptions including their assumed tendency towards mental disorders. As a result, 19<sup>th</sup> century women were diagnosed with mental illnesses very often. A "rest cure" treatment, which is described in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, represented one of the frequently used therapies for these medical cases.

The main character of the narrative is originally presented as a nervous, depressed young woman who is, however, still sane enough to think almost rationally and debate with her physician husband. She lives together with John, who is a typical exemplar of the 19<sup>th</sup> century dominant male, and with his sister Jane, who has happily accepted the given role of a domestic woman and successfully represents the embodiment of the "true woman". In the story, both of these characters are constant reminders of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideals and especially in Jennie's case, the ideal image clearly contrasts with narrator's situation and highlights narrator's incapability to fulfill her destiny.

The story is set in an attic bedroom of an abandoned old mansion whose history remains a secret. The house and location of narrator's bedroom not only represent an ideal lodging for a "rest cure" patient, but also provoke our imagination by referring to the notoriously known madwoman Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre*. From the narrator's description

it is evident that the bedroom is equipped with objects characteristic for a mental asylum room. The narrator mentions for instance barred windows, nailed-down bed and rings in the walls and complains about scratched floor and gnawed bedstead. Nevertheless, she fails to understand the possible interpretation of these signs, making the reader wonder whether this ignorance might be interpreted as the first sign of her worsening mental state.

In the bedroom, there is one crucially important detail – the wallpaper. The narrator hates it from the beginning describing its bad state, repulsive color, ugly pattern and even rancid smell. As the frustrating treatment continues, the narrator starts transforming the original pattern into two separate layers, one of which turns into a phantom woman and her secret ally. The narrator projects her growing discontent onto the hallucination, letting it struggle with the outside pattern. Due to her newly found compensation, the narrator becomes stronger and more independent and starts lying, keeping secrets and planning the final liberation of the ghostly woman. In her final act of revolt, the narrator peels the wallpaper of the walls, setting the ghost free and losing her own sanity as during this process, she unwittingly transforms herself into the woman from the wallpaper.

The story, introducing one of the possible results of the brain-washing, stupefying “rest cure” treatment, managed to illustrate narrator’s madness using many different tools. Gilman referred to another work of literature, surrounded the narrator by stereotypical members of the 19<sup>th</sup> century society, and even created a hallucination which comes to life and replaces the narrator’s own personality. The writer created a very persuasive narrative which would probably fulfill its purpose of a warning against the dangers of the “rest cure” therapy. However, the narrative was presented in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the society took little interest in women’s point of view. The narrative was therefore mainly approached and recognized as a ghost story. Taking into consideration the 19<sup>th</sup> century situation and the general opinion on “scribbling women”, it was still quite a success.

The story finally achieved recognition for its original purpose in 1973. The modern approach to women’s mental health also adjusted methods of treatment for women, so it was no longer necessary to warn anyone about the “rest cure”. Nevertheless, the original message of the story discussing unequal gender position and its disastrous results was still an issue at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the American society was just beginning to apply the gender equality in practice for example by redefinition of a male-dominated literary canon.

In conclusion, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and its portrait of madness are universal. Regardless of whether the reader is searching for a historical literature, a chilling ghost story or a feminist inspiration, a slight change in his perspective will enable him to see the narrative in several different, enriching ways.

## 7. Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce si klade za cíl analyzovat zobrazení mentální poruchy v povídce Charlotte Perkins Gilmanové *Žlutá tapeta*, jež vznikla na konci devatenáctého století jako kritika tehdejšího lékařského přístupu vůči psychicky nemocným ženám. Je všeobecně známo, že Gilmanová tuto částečně autobiografickou povídku sepsala na základě vlastní životní zkušenosti proto, aby varovala veřejnost před škodlivým dopadem léčebné metody s názvem „léčba klidem“, která byla v 19. století často předepisována ženám trpícím nejrůznějšími mentálními poruchami. Sama Gilmanová terapii absolvovala na základě doporučení Dr. Silase Weir Mitchella, který byl nejen její lékař, ale také vynálezce této metody. Proto byla její povídka věnována zejména jemu a to se záměrem ho přesvědčit, aby přehodnotil svůj přístup k předepisování této procedury.

Podíváme-li se zpět na americkou společnost devatenáctého století, je možné si povšimnout přetrvávající nerovnosti mezi ženským a mužským pohlavím, která do značné míry ovlivňovala život ve společnosti. Jako příklad toho, jak se nerovnoprávnost týkala naší cílové skupiny – tedy žen pocházejících ze střední nebo vyšší třídy – můžeme uvést například obecně přijímanou teorii, že zatímco muž by měl budovat svoji kariéru, činit důležitá rozhodnutí za celou rodinu a účastnit se veřejného života, role ženy by měla být spjata se starostmi o domácnost a výchovou dětí. Muži a ženy byli také vnímáni zcela odlišně z hlediska fyzické a psychické konstituce, což velmi často vedlo k mylným předpokladům, které znevýhodňovaly ženy a vytvářely o nich předsudky. Mezi jeden z nich patřilo například přesvědčení, že ženy jako slabší pohlaví jsou náchylnější k fyzickým a psychickým poruchám. Tato domněnka u nich v 19. století vedla k častému diagnostikování mentálních poruch, což však nebylo vždy zcela oprávněné. Jako léčba pak byla často předepisována tzv. „léčba klidem“, o které pojednává *Žlutá tapeta*.



Hlavní postavou příběhu je mladá žena, novopečená matka, která trpí depresí. Žena se s dítětem, manželem a jeho sestrou odstěhuje za účelem ozdravného pobytu do odlehlého venkovského domu. John, který pracuje jako lékař, se rozhodne svoji manželku podrobit „léčbě klidem“. Jeho dominantní osobnost a neochota naslouchat manželčiným názorům činí z Johna typického představitele mužsky orientované společnosti 19. století. Johnova sestra Jennie v příběhu figuruje jako pravý opak vypravěčky – Jennie je ochotná hospodyně, která nadšeně přijala svou roli ve společnosti, a v textu tak výrazně kontrastuje s postavou samotné vypravěčky, která očekávání společnosti není schopná naplnit.

Celý příběh se odehrává ve velké podkrovní ložnici odlehlého domu. Z umístění pokoje možno vyvodit, že nejen že představuje ideální světlý a vzdušný pokoj pro uzdravení pacientky, ale také odkazuje na notoricky známou šílenou Berthu Masonovou z románu *Jana Eyrová*, která byla v podkrovním pokoji permanentně držena svým vlastním manželem.

Z popisu pokoje je možno usoudit, že místnost v minulosti sloužila buď jako vězení, nebo jako pokoj pro duševně nemocnou osobu. V oknech jsou mříže, postel je pevně přikovaná k zemi a na zdech se nacházejí nejrůznější skoby pro upevnění provazů nebo řetězů, ale hlavní hrdinka si tuto skutečnost neuvědomuje, což vede ke spekulacím, zda se právě tím nezačínají projevovat první příznaky jejího zhoršujícího se duševního stavu.

V ložnici se nachází jeden zásadně důležitý detail – tapeta na zdi. Hlavní hrdinka k tapetě pojme okamžitý odpor a poukazuje na to, jak je potrhaná, nevzhledně žlutá a dokonce i zkaženě zapáchající. Čím déle je však nucena tapetu ve svém domácím vězení strpět, tím více se jí zdá, že tapeta vlastně sestává ze dvou oddělených vzorů, z nichž jeden postupně začne připomínat ženskou postavu a druhý podivné mříže, za kterými je postava uvězněna.

Hlavní hrdinka postupně promítá svůj vzrůstající nesouhlas s léčbou do imaginární ženy v tapetě. Díky této kompenzaci se hrdinka postupně stává silnější a také odvážnější, začne lhát vlastnímu manželovi a tajně plánovat akt osvobození své imaginární přítelkyně. Při tomto činu strhá tapetu ze zdi, aby ženu za ní osvobodila, a současně s tím sama přijde o rozum. Nevědomky se totiž sama promění v ženu z tapety, a končí svůj příběh tím, že se po čtyřech plazí po podlaze a oslavuje tak své vítězství.

Povídka „*Žlutá tapeta*“ představuje jeden z možných následků otupující, deformující „léčby klidem“. Dramatičnosti výpovědi dosahuje několika různými způsoby. Hned na samém

začátku umístila Gilmanová hlavní hrdinku do prostředí, které připomíná jiné literární dílo s uvězněnou šílenou ženou. Hlavní hrdinku obklopila postavami, které představují typické vzory společnosti 19. století, a které vedle hlavní hrdinky vytvářejí zjevný kontrast. Hlavním motivem šílenství je však bezesporu přítomnost autorčiny halucinace.

Povídka by pravděpodobně velmi dobře posloužila svému varovnému účelu, ale jelikož situace v 19. století nebyla příliš nakloněna ženám a jejich kritickým názorům, zůstalo poselství ještě na nějakou dobu téměř nepovšimnuto. Povídka se však na svou dobu poměrně proslavila jako kvalitní dílo hororového žánru.

Povídka byla znovuobjevena v roce 1973 v rámci ženského hnutí a jeho boje za skutečnou rovnoprávnost pohlaví. Přestože metoda „léčby klidem“ již byla překonána, hlavní myšlenka škodlivého vlivu předsudků a nerovnosti pohlaví byla pro tehdejší feministické hnutí stále aktuální. Povídka získala značnou popularitu, která se rozšířila i do okruhu běžných čtenářů, a nyní představuje jedno z klasických děl americké literatury.

## 8. Bibliography

- BAK, John S. "Escaping the Jaundiced Eye: Foucauldian Panopticism in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 31 (1994) pp. 39-46. Available at <<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=cad121a6-6d1f-4930-bbdf-95f7224df991%40sessionmgr110&vid=1&hid=124&bdata=Jmxhbmc9Y3Mmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#db=a9h&AN=9503010336>>
- BAYM, Nina. *Woman's fiction: a guide to novels by and about women in America : 1820-1870*. 2nd. print. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987. ISBN 08-014-9184-3.
- BYNUM, Bill. "Neurasthenia." *The Lancet* 361.9370 (2003) pp. 1753. Available at <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/73300745?accountid=17239>>
- CAMPBELL, Donna M. Domestic or Sentimental Fiction, 1820-1865. *Literary Movements*. [online]. ©2010 [cit. 2012-03-08]. Available at <<http://public.wsu.edu/~campbell/amlit/domestic.htm>>
- CREWE, Jonathan. "Queering *The Yellow Wallpaper*? Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Politics of Form." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 14.2 (1995) pp. 273-293. Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/463900>>
- DOCK, Julie Bates and ALLEN, Daphne Ryan and PALAIS, Jennifer and TRACY, Kirsten. "But One Expects That': Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and the Shifting Light of Scholarship." *PMLA* 111.1 (1996) pp. 52 – 65. Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/463133>>
- EDWARDS, Martin. "Hysteria." *The Lancet* 374.9702 (2009) pp. 1669. Available at <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/199030723?accountid=17239>>
- ELLIOTT, Emory. *Columbia literary history of the United States*. New York: Columbia University, 1988. ISBN 02-310-6780-1.
- fallen woman – Definition and Pronunciation. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* [online]. ©2011 [cit. 2012-01-08]. Available at <<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/fallen-woman>>
- FIELD, Trevor. *Form and function in the diary novel*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes, 1989, xii, 198 p. ISBN 03-892-0819-1.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. *Dějiny šílenství v době osvícenství: hledání historických kořenů pojmu duševní choroby*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidových novin, 1994. ISBN 80-7106-085-2.
- GILBERT, Sandra M. and GUBAR, Susan. *The madwoman in the attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. ISBN 03-000-2596-3.

GILBERT, Sandra M. and GUBAR, Susan. *The Norton anthology of literature by women: the tradition in English*. New York: Norton, 1985. ISBN 0-393-95391-2.

GILMAN, Charlotte Perkins. *The living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: an autobiography*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991. ISBN 02-991-2744-3.

GILMAN, Charlotte Perkins. "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper." *The Forerunner*. 1913. Available at <<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/yellowwallpaper.pdf>>

GILMAN, Charlotte Perkins and DOCK, Julie Bates. *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The yellow wall-paper" and the History of its Publication and Reception: a critical edition and documentary casebook*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998. ISBN 02-710-1734-1.

GLASPOOL, Stevie et. al. *Postpartum Depression and The Yellow Wallpaper*. [online]. ©2004 [cit. 2012-06-20]. Available at <<http://www.lsu.edu/faculty/jpullia/postpartum.htm>>

HOGLE, Jerrold E. *The Cambridge companion to gothic fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. ISBN 05-217-9466-8.

HUME, Beverly A. "Managing Madness in Gilman's *The Yellow Wall-paper*". *Studies in American Fiction* 30.1 (2002), pp. 3-20. Available at <<http://goo.gl/NLr6d>>

JOHNSON, Greg. "Gilman's Gothic Allegory: Rage and Redemption in 'The Yellow Wallpaper'." *Studies in Short Fiction* 26.4 (1989) pp. 521-530. Available at <<http://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/marie.dybala/engl-1302/research-paper-articles/gilmans-gothic-allegory-rage-and-redemption-in-the-yellow-wallpaper>>

LAMB, Robert Paul and THOMPSON, Gary Richard. *A companion to American fiction, 1865-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2005. ISBN 978-140-5100-649.

LEWIS, Jone Johnson. *Separate Spheres*. *Women's history* [online]. ©2013 [cit. 2013-01-08]. Available at <<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/lives19th/a/Separate-Spheres.htm>>

Margaret Fuller – American author and educator. *Encyclopedia – Britannica Online Encyclopedia*. [online]. ©2013 [cit. 2012-02-25]. Available at <<http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/fallen-woman>>

MARTIN, Diana. "The Rest Cure Revisited." *American Journal Of Psychiatry* 164.5 (2007) pp. 737 – 738. Available at <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/220468624?accountid=17239>>

MONTEIRO, John. "Context, Intention and Purpose in 'The Yellow Wall-paper', a tale in the Poe and the Romantic Tradition." *Fragmentos* 17 (1999) pp. 41-54. Available at <<http://www.periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/fragmentos/article/download/6408/5931>>

MURTON, Michelle Mock. "Behind the 'barred windows': The Imprisonment of Women's Bodies and Minds in Nineteenth-Century America." *The Women in Literacy and Life Assembly of The National Council of Teachers of English IV* (1995) pp. 22-26. Available at <<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/old-WILLA/fall95/Murton.html>>

OpenStax College. Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States. *Connexions* [online]. ©2012 [cit. 2013-02-20]. Available at <<http://cnx.org/content/m42843/1.3/>>

PAYKEL, Eugene S. "Basic concepts of depression." *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 10.3 (2008) pp. 279-289. Available at <<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181879/>>

POUBA, Katherine and TIANEN, Ashley. "Lunacy in the 19th Century: Women's Admission to Asylums in United States of America." *Oshkosh Scholar* I (2006), pp. 95-103. Available at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1793/6687>

ROTH, Marty. "Gilman's Arabesque Wallpaper". *Mosaic : a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 34.4 (2001) pp. 145 – 162. Available at <<http://search.proquest.com/docview/205368867?accountid=17239>>

*Sex and society*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2010. ISBN 07614790823.

SCHIMELPFENING, Nancy. Postpartum Depression Symptoms. *Depression – About.com* [online]. ©2011 [cit. 2012-4-15]. Available at <<http://depression.about.com/od/forwomen/f/ppdsymptoms.htm>>

SHOWALTER, Elaine. *A jury of her peers: American women writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx*. New York: Vintage Books, 2010. ISBN 978-1-4000-3442-0.

SHUMAKER, Conrad. "Too Terribly Good To Be Printed": Charlotte Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper". *American Literature* 57.4 (1985) pp. 588 – 599. Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2926354?uid=3737856&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102238100137>>

The Angel in the House. *William Makepeace Thackeray* [online]. ©2011 [cit. 2013-06-10]. Available at <[http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel\\_19c/thackeray/angel.html](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/thackeray/angel.html)>

THRAIKILL, Jane F. "Doctoring *The Yellow Wallpaper*". *ELH* 69.2 (2002) pp. 525-566. Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30032030>>

WEARN, Mary McCartin. *Negotiating Motherhood in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008. ISBN 978-0-415-98104-0

WELTER, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18.2 (1966), pp. 151-174. Available at <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2711179>>