

THE WIFE'S DEPRESSION IN CHARLOTTE PERKINS

GILMAN'S *THE YELLOW WALLPAPER*

THESIS

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Maitun

Reg. Number A83212168

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND HUMANITIES

THE STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA

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Sunan Ampel Surabaya

Surabaya, 24 February 2018

Thesis Advisor

Surabaya, 24 February 2018



Maitun

Reg. Number A8212168

Dr. Mohammad Kariem, M. Ag
NIP. 196909251994031002

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND HUMANITIES
THE STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA

THESIS EXAMINER'S APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved and accepted by the Board of Examiners, English Department, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya on
Surabaya, January 26 218

The Dean of Faculty



Dr. H. Imam Ghazali, M.A
NIP. 196002121990031002

Head of examiner

Sufi Ikrima Sa'adah, M.Hum
NUP: 201603318

Secretary

Abdulloh Ubet, M.Ag
NIP. 196605071997031003

Examiner I

Abu Fanani, SS, M.Pd
NIP. 196906152007011051

Examiner II

Dr. A. Dzo'ul Milal, M.Pd
NIP. 196005152000031002

THESIS ADVISOR'S APPROVAL PAGE

Thesis entitled *The Wife's Depression in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper."* This thesis has been approved by the advisor and could be proposed to fulfill the requirement of Sarjana I degree of English Department Faculty of Letters and Humanities. The state Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya

Surabaya, 24 February 2018

Thesis Advisor



Sufi Ikrima Sa'adah M.Hum
NUP: 201603318

Acknowledged by Head of Department



Dr. Mohammad Kurjum, M. Ag
NIP. 196909251994031002

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF LETTERS AND HUMANITIES

THE STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF SUNAN AMPELSURABAYA

2018



KEMENTERIAN AGAMA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA
PERPUSTAKAAN

Jl. Jend. A. Yani 117 Surabaya 60237 Telp. 031-8431972 Fax. 031-8413300
E-Mail: perpus@uinsby.ac.id

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Nama : Maitun
NIM : A83212168
Fakultas/Jurusan : Adab / Sastra Inggris
E-mail address : zaynabmejahidah@gmail.com

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CHAPTER III ANALYSIS

This study uses historical criticism approach to analyze the historical context of “The Yellow Wallpaper” that written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman. “The Yellow Wallpaper” is a short story that was published in January 1892 in *The New England Magazine*. The author of the short story (1860-1935) was an American author, lecturer, feminist, and an ardent social reformer. She was an avid proponent of women’s suffrage and their societal hindrances that prevented them from achieving economic independence and she strongly encouraged women to pursue interests outside the domestic sphere.

Through Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s biography above, “The Yellow Wallpaper” was written in the nineteenth century America. The author tries to illustrate women condition in the late nineteenth century toward women's health; both physical and mental through her experience. As she describes in her short story about the women’s condition in their household that image of social reality in America.

In her story, she describes a young woman who is isolated in country summerhouse by her husband who is a physician has rented. The room she lives in is not very pleasurable. The purpose of the narrator’s isolation is to cure her from illness her which calls “temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency”. The rest cure is from medical prescription, which the wife disagree with. Day by day, the wife’s depression more increase in serious condition. Her husband’s attitude also play role in her depression.

story. In other stories, we enter a character's mind and come to know him through his own thought, feelings and perceptions (Kennedy, 77).

The basic trait of round characters is that we are told enough about them to permit the conclusion that they are three-dimensional, rounded, authentic, memorable, original, and true to life. A complementary quality about round characters is that they are often dynamic.

Dynamic characters *recognize, change with, or adjust to* circumstance.

Dynamic characters, on the other hand, exhibit some kind of change—of attitude, of purpose, of behavior—as the story progresses. Because a round character plays a major role in a story, he or she is often called hero or heroine. A major character, you may expect that each action or speech, no matter how small, is a part of a total presentation of the complex combination of both the inner and of the outer self that constitutes a human being. In literature all action, interactions, speeches, and observations are deliberate (Robert and Jacobs 153). The major character is sometimes called protagonist whose conflict with an antagonist may spark the story's conflict. A major character is an important figure at the center of the story's action or theme (Di Yanni, 54).

The study will analyze the major character in short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the wife, as protagonists character that important figure at the center of the story. By analyzing the character, the study intends to tell how the author describe the character's action and speech that called by characterization.

madness, at three distinct points in time, among white, middle-class women in America.

Lisa Galullo (1996) examines several components on the “Gothic and The female Voice: Examining Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*. In this study, she emphasizes the need to look at the social and historical contexts of feminine literature in order to better interpret the significance of the text’s themes and messages. In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, she explores the feminist interpretation of the story by looking at the importance behind the literary text’s social and historical context in order to better grasp and interpret the implications of its feminist themes and messages. This study explores the author interpretation of the story by looking at the impact behind the narrator’s voice as a means by which the writer exposes the Victorian female voice, which has been silenced and assigned to specifically defined gender roles.

So, the difference this thesis with the thesis that mentioned above, the thesis analysis the historical context of *The Yellow Wallpaper*, describing the wife’s condition who experience depression then what the cause it through historical approach. It attempts to show how society attributed a woman’s medical problems to the biological imbalances of her reproductive system.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” tells about a woman in marriage who suffers from nervous depression. The depression cause by childbirth, and patriarchal law.

The cause of women's depression is different each other. Depression in women is often linked to life changes or to loneliness. About 10 per cent of women experience post-natal depression in the weeks following childbirth (Jo Borril, 6). According *The Mental Health*, usually the women's depression had been around after born children. As the narrator's experience that she suffer nervous after childbirth, "It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous." (3). This statement shows that the wife suffers from depression. However, in this time, there is no technical term of baby blues. In this story just mention, she has baby blues. Nevertheless, she is not yet with her baby. It means that she has problem that called baby blues.

Because the mother who suffer depression after born, she keeping at a distance several time until she return normally. She said, “It makes me so nervous” (3). It means she cannot together with her child. The mother’s feels more nervous. After birth, certainly, the mother wants to with her ducky. Fairly, her depression is more in serious condition.

Based on the author, Gilman, she immediately entered into a severe depression after bear her daughter. Then she sought a helping of neurologist,

S.Weir Mitchell who prescribed rest cure. Realizing, however, that her condition was take a bad turn.

3.2.2 Husband's Control

In marriage, woman as wife must be submissive to her husband. As like in “The Yellow Wallpaper,” the narrator has no other choice for her life. Her husband controls all of her activity. It makes the wife in a serious condition.

Depression is most commonly seen as a reaction to something, and the inability to see that something is possible to overcome, thus fuelling the feelings of hopelessness and helplessness:

Traditionally, depression has been conceived of as the response to – or expression of – loss, either of an ambivalently loved other, of the “ideal” self, or of “meaning” in one’s life. The hostility that should or could be directed outward in response to loss is turned inwards towards the self. “Depression” rather than “aggression” is the female response to disappointment or loss. (Chesler, 102)

This traditional view of depression does in many ways fit well with the narrator's perception of reality. She is trying to adjust to a life as a wife and new mother, and in the process she has lost the possibility of living her own life, a life in which she can create and be an individual in her own right. She has lost her "ideal" self, or lost the life she might have envisioned for herself before she got married. Consequently, the narrator's depression can be seen as the result of such a mechanism. Being unable to do with her life as she wishes, seeing her new duties as a wife and mother as unending, the only way to perhaps get away from it all for a while may be to show signs of fatigue. However, what is most interesting

John is a textbook example of a dominating spouse, a husband who holds absolute control over his wife. He treats her as an inferior, as seen here: “John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.” (1) John sees his wife’s ideas and thoughts as laughable, never taking them seriously until it is too late to save her from madness.

From the beginning of the story, the narrator’s creativity is set in conflict with John’s rationality. As a writer, the narrator thrives in her use of her imagination, and her creativity is an inherent part of her nature. John does not recognize his wife’s fundamental creativity and believes that he can force out her imaginative fancies and replace them with his own solid rationality.

In essence, a large part of the “rest cure” focuses on John’s attempt to remove the narrator’s creativity; by forcing her to give up her writing, he hopes that he will calm her anxious nature and help her to assume her role as an ideal wife and mother.

John dismisses anything that hints of emotion or irrationality—what he calls “fancy.” For instance, when the narrator says that the wallpaper in her bedroom disturbs her, he informs her that she is letting the wallpaper “get the better of her” and thus refuses to remove it. John doesn’t simply dismiss things he finds fanciful; he also uses the charge of “fancy” to dismiss anything he doesn’t like. In other words, if he doesn’t want to accept something, he declares that it is irrational.

John is very protective her wife. She prohibited writing and fancying because it makes her nervous. He sure as a doctor, that it is the cause his wife depression.

“My darling,” said he, “I beg of you, for my sake, for our child’s sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind ! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so? (6)

Writing as a woman in a patriarchal society, where male domination over women was the norm, women's writing, and women's voices were not quite their own. Men also controlled textuality. The only areas of writing where women could be reasonably sure that they would avoid male interference were through letter writing and diaries. Included in this control of textuality was men's domination over storytelling and over definitions. Men told the stories, and women were mere characters in the plot. Men had told the story of the world, and how the world worked, and women could either fit into the story, or be outsiders. As Judith Fetterley points out: "Writing from the point of view of a character trapped in that male text. Gilman's narrator shifts the centre of attention away from the male mind that has produced the text and directs it instead to the consequences for women's lives of men's control of textuality" (Fetterley, 254).

In other words, we are offered an insight into the consequences the narrator faces because her husband has the power to define her, as good or bad, insane or sane. John controls the text that is their life and has already decided what kind of character his wife is supposed to play. Thus the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" tells her own story, by telling how she tries to fit into her husband's story, but is unable to, "I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal-having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition" (2) Consequently, she directs her energy inward, creating a narrative where she is the protagonist and her husband a character, instead of the other way around.

Her true nature seemed to be to retaliate against authority and it became clearer to her every day. She concealed her writing activities which had been restricted by her husband who controlled almost every aspect of her life. He had said that it was bad for her, but on a deeper level, he was preventing her from gaining freedom from his control. He wanted her to suppress her imagination or anything that was out of the norm. It was unnatural for a woman to disobey her husband at that time, so the narrator had to hide her thoughts and passions, "There comes John, and I must put this away, - he hates to have me write a word." (2)

It seems that the author did not bestow any name on the heroine in order to make the reader aware of the fact that she represents all the female world. Moreover, the frequent use of the pronoun “I” is worth mentioning. It may indicate an exceptional self-consciousness of the heroine, a concentration on her own needs and ambitions. What is more, it demonstrates an egoism in a positive sense. Yet, these qualities were not considered as favourable as far as female characterization is concerned. Such features were associated with the male world only and could be solely accepted in men.

That is why, Gilman’s short story was perceived as a shocking one and the attitude her heroine represented was unthinkable not only for men but also for numerous women in her day.

The narrator contrasts to worlds. On the one hand, she describes a rich sphere of emotions, delicate feelings and intuition characteristic of womanhood. On the other hand, Gilman acquaints the reader with the male way of viewing the world. Logical reasoning, a sphere of intellect and science as well as masculine domination are presented in the story. A lack of understanding between a protagonist and her husband, John, is noticeable. The heroine suffers from a nervous disease. Nevertheless, her spouse does not treat her illness seriously: “...he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do?” (2)

Furthermore, the man is a respectable doctor and in his view, what his wife ought to do in order to regain a good condition is staying in bed and steering clear of work. Yet, the treatment does not exert a positive influence on the patient.

expresses her condition. She looks women creep to out from it like her in the deep fancy. At the finish, she get lost control herself.

The story reflect women's condition that getting minimal rights. They independent for another. They have restrictiveness movements. Patriarchy law positioned them the second class in the society. The author reflects women's depression, causes, and treatment through her experience in the time.



