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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Margaret Victoria Delashmit entitled "The Patriarchy and Women: A Study of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

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THE PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN:
A STUDY OF CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN'S
"THE YELLOW WALLPAPER"

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Margaret Victoria Delashmit

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I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Sharon, Ray, and Michele.

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ABSTRACT

Charlotte Perkins Gilman reached within her own gothic world for the inspiration for "The Yellow Wallpaper," and in doing so, she created a gothic heroine to whom women of her own and succeeding generations could relate. This study examines the elements in Gilman's life that helped her to create this story; but unlike many other studies, it treats "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a work of art apart from its author as much as possible. This study interprets the story as an example of the female gothic and examines Gilman's philosophy of literature and her skill in employing the narrative voice to depict her heroine as a grotesque within the context of nineteenth-century Victorian mores and medical practices. It also analyzes her unique treatment of the female doppelgänger by comparing and contrasting her use of this device with that of Dostoevsky's in The Double. A different type of doubling, that of the beloved Other, is also discussed in an effort to understand the sexual relationship between Gilman's narrator and her physician-husband John. The early history of the story then precedes an annotated bibliography of Gilman criticism in chronological order beginning with Carl Degler's 1956 article and including dissertations and published criti cism through 1989.

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INTRODUCTION

I was first introduced to "The Yellow Wallpaper" through a televised production of the story on the educational channel. I was in a hospital wearing a heart monitor at the time, and while the production was not a particularly good one, the story lodged in my mind and nagged at me until I finally located a copy and read it. After reading the story, I realized that in some respects the narrator's life paralleled my own and those of many of my friends who, like myself, grew up during the fifties and sixties. Many of the same patriarchal attitudes toward women that reduced Gilman's narrator to madness were inculcated in my generation of men and women as well, and the tensions created by those attitudes finally induced symptoms suggestive of heart failure in my own body. Unlike Gilman's narrator, however, I returned to my work with the realization that my heart was healthy but my nervous system was exhausted from internal struggles resulting from efforts to balance my desire to attain personal goals at the university with my guilt at attempting to attain those goals. Although I thought I was a liberated woman, deep within my subconscious I

"knew" that I really belonged back home keeping house for my husband, and I doubted my ability to perform well in the male world of books and ideas. Like Gilman's narrator, I wanted to be a strong, independent woman with work of my own, but my previous experiences--not unlike the narrator's--had reduced my self-confidence and expectations. In many respects my story is not unique; we are legion. In another age we might be diagnosed as hysterics.

Since "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a fictionalized account of an actual autobiographical experience, Chapter I, entitled "Gilman's Personality: Fact and Fiction," is devoted to incidents from Gilman's early life that explain her later behavior. The reader will notice parallels between Gilman's life and that of her narrator, between her husband Walter and her narrator's husband John, and between Gilman's experiences with Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's prescriptions and her narrator's experiences with Dr. John's prescriptions. As the study progresses, the woman reader, especially, will also notice that the parallels extend to include the lives of a great number of other women whom she knows as well.

Keeping in mind Mary A. Hill's assertion in her

biography of Gilman that Gilman's autobiography sometimes contradicts her diaries (45), I have used the autobiography as source material only when Hill does not refute it or when Hill's text seems to corroborate Gilman's memory. Whenever possible, however, I have used Gilman's own words. In a further attempt to present a balanced picture of Gilman, I have quoted from Hill's interview with Gilman's daughter Katharine and from Walter's diaries to present their impressions of this important woman in their lives. My use of Walter's diaries and Katharine's memories in this particular way, as well as my conclusions about the reasons for Charlotte's shortcomings as a mother, are my original contributions to this chapter.

Chapter II, entitled "What Kind of Literature is This?," is a study of Gilman's philosophy of literature as expressed in articles she wrote for The Forerunner and as she demonstrates in her work. Although her writing is often considered inferior as art, it is the product of Gilman's conscious search for a vehicle that would present women in different roles from those passive ones in which male authors had traditionally cast them. In her attempts to demonstrate that women could--and must--assume the responsibility of making rational choices for

their lives that included careers in the world outside the home, her writing is didactic, as she intended, but it is also often lively and entertaining. Her literary techniques are demonstrated in explications of several of her short stories, culminating in "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a preface for an in-depth study of that work.

Chapter III begins a study of "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a gothic story. As one critic has observed, it was probably not so much that Gilman chose the gothic as the means of presenting this story as that the gothic chose her. As the information in this dissertation illustrates, the gothic appeals to women because women have frequently inhabited gothic worlds. Traditionally surrounded by gothic elements that included mystery, danger, and entrapment, it was inevitable that they would project their fears and frustrations into their own encoded literature. This chapter, entitled "'The Yellow Wallpaper' and the Female Gothic: The Mystery and the Grotesque," is a study of the gothic genre and its appeal to women. Using Juliann Fleenor's five-point definition of the female gothic as a loose framework for this and the next chapter, I begin my own interpretation of "The Yellow Wallpaper" that continues throughout the entire

dissertation. In the latter part of this chapter, I examine Gilman's manipulation of the narrative voice to produce a grotesque, another gothic element in this story.

Chapter IV, entitled "'The Yellow Wallpaper' and the Female Gothic: Victorian Societal and Medical Views," is a continuation of the study of the gothic in women's lives. Although "The Yellow Wallpaper" does not figure quite as prominently in this chapter as it does in the others, the information presented here is important for an understanding of the Victorian woman's position within her world and, therefore, of Gilman's and of her narrator's. The attitudes of nineteenth-century physicians and laymen toward woman's sexual and reproductive organs and the phenomenon commonly diagnosed as hysteria are examined. The Victorian woman's world was truly a gothic one in many respects.

Chapter V begins a two-part study of doubling, another gothic element in literature. This chapter, entitled "'The Yellow Wallpaper' and the Gothic: The Double as Evil Self," is a study of the doppelgänger. The term "gothic" rather than "female gothic" is used in this title because doubling is not peculiar to women in

literature. Actually, more male doppelgängers have been depicted than female; yet, Gilman creates a female doppelgänger. In an effort to determine if differences exist between male and female treatments of this literary device, Dostoevsky's The Double and Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" are examined, compared, and contrasted in some detail. In the latter part of the chapter, several other works by both male and female authors are discussed in conjuction with "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Chapter VI, entitled "'The Yellow Wallpaper' and the Gothic: The Double as Lover/Destroyer," continues the doubling theme but in a different vein. The doubles considered in this chapter are lovers or potential lovers. As the search for the beloved Other is viewed psychoanalytically, John's patriarchal treatment of his wife and her compliance with that treatment are examined for motivation. Since the narrator accepts John as an authoritative father figure and since John views his wife as his "little girl," both probably suffer from arrested sexual development. The yellow color prevalent in the story and the mysterious "yellow smell" that permeates the narrator's world carry sexual connotations and symbolize sexuality itself. The union of this husband

and wife is not the satisfying relationship Aristophanes envisioned when he defined the beloved Other as the Other who complements or completes; the lover and the beloved form a unit because they are different and each completes t he other. Instead, John, more like Narcissus who loved his own image, attempts to form his wife into a female image of his logical self instead of accepting her "differentness" as a counterpart to and completer of himself.

The second section of this study is divided into two chapters. Chapter I, "The History of 'The Yellow Wallpaper,'" is an account of the reception of Gilman's story by her contemporaries in 1892. It is followed by the first complete compilation of Gilman criticism, an annotated bibliography that begins with Carl Degler's article in 1956 and includes criticism through 1989. Arranged in chronological order, this bibliography is a record of the story's, and Gilman's, gradual emergence from obscurity to prominence, chiefly within the world of female academics. It is also a record of the growth of literary criticism and its many schools during the past three decades, for almost every school is represented in this body of criticism.

Perhaps, as Susan Lanser argues, "The Yellow Wallpa-

per" is not a universal text but speaks rather to white women in the Western world (424, 434). It is a paradigm of all their experiences of being a woman in a patriarchal social system, and this study focuses on the story in an attempt to understand both the underlying reasons for patriarchy's effects on women and some of the effects themselves. From within her gothic existence Gilman portrayed a woman very like herself, and because she is very like many other women as well, this story has become a classic.

CHAPTER I

GILMAN'S PERSONALITY: TRUTH AND FICTION

> I figured it out that the business of mankind was to carry out the evolution of the human race, according to the laws of nature, adding the conscious direction, the telic force, proper to our kind--we are the only creatures that can assist evolution;
>
> . . .
>
> Social evolution I easily saw to be in human work. . . . Therefore the first law of life was clear. . . . The first duty of a human being is to assume a right functional relation to society, --more briefly, to find your real job, and do it.
>
> ---Charlotte Perkins Gilman

At the 1989 MLA conference held in Washington, D. C., one session was devoted to Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Approximately seventy-five people sat and stood in a room designed to hold about thirty. At this session Elaine Hedges made the observation that in the past four years

around fifteen articles on "The Yellow Wallpaper" had been published, "compared to fourteen in the previous twelve" (3). At this same session leaflets were distributed to gauge interest in a projected Charlotte Perkins Gilman Society. This flurry of interest and increased activity centering on Gilman raises some questions. Who was this woman whom few people remembered until recently and why so much interest in her at this point in history? The answers to these questions will provide readers with information to help them judge both her literary merit and her past, present, and future influence on the feminist movement.

Gifted with one of the most brilliant minds to address women's issues in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Gilman was much in demand as a lecturer and writer on the condition of women at the time. Her book, Women and Economics, used as a college textbook for a time, was called "the most significant utterance" on the woman question since John Stuart Mill (The Nation 443; quoted by Degler 21). An immediate success in this country, it was then translated into "German, Japanese, French, Dutch, Italian, Hungarian, and Russian" and by 1911 had been published in seven English

editions (Degler 22n6). In addition to this important contribution to the feminist movement, she also wrote six other non-fiction works, seven novels, a book of poetry, many articles, poems, and short stories, seven volumes of a monthly magazine, The Forerunner, and an autobiography which was published after her death in 1935.

Twentieth-century social historians view her as a major influence in the advancement of the condition of women in America during the early years of the century. Aileen S. Kraditor, for example, observes that Gilman's was the only "systematic theory linking the demand for suffrage with the long sweep of history" and calls her "the most influential woman thinker in the pre-World War I generation in the United States" (97). Similarly, William L. O'Neill declares that she "made the finest analysis of the relation between domesticity and women's rights" (vii), and Andrew Sinclair calls her "the greatest writer that the feminists ever produced on sociology and economics, the Marx and Veblen of the movement" (272).

Influential as she was then, however, women's apathy toward the feminist movement after they were granted suffrage and the intervention of two world wars caused

Gilman's works to descend gradually into obscurity. Gilman was rediscovered in 1956 with the publication of Carl Degler's article entitled "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism," and her purpose as Degler states it appealed to a new audience of women who were once more becoming dissatisfied with their lack of equality:

> Her concern in all her writings was essentially two-fold: to show the disastrous and all-pervasive effects upon women and upon society of the continued suppression of her sex; and to demonstrate in theory and practice means whereby women could assume their rightful place in society. (22)

This purpose is reflected in Mary A. Hill's explanation of Gilman's appeal to her as a subject of study. Hill's account also explains Gilman's appeal to other women today--essentially the same reasons she appealed to women a century ago:

> I was looking for a heroine, for closer contact with a woman who could articulate my own frustrations and explain women's problems in ways relating directly to my life. Her concerns were mine as well: how to reconcile family responsibilities with professional

> ambitions; how to be a responsive mother to two small children and still have time to teach and write; how to satisfy the human need for love and work. (3)

These concerns of Gilman's grew out of a childhood traumatized by the desertion of a beloved father and the deliberate withholding of affection of an equally beloved, but embittered, mother.

Born Charlotte Perkins on July 3, 1860, the third of four children of Mary Westcott and Frederick Perkins, of whom only she and her brother Tom lived past infancy, she was the great-granddaughter of Lyman Beecher. Frederick, her father, was the son of Mary Beecher Perkins; Charlotte's great-aunts included Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom's Cabin, who worked for the abolition of slavery, Catherine Beecher, who crusaded for higher education for women, and Isabella Beecher Hooker, who was a leader in the woman's suffrage movement. Although the Beechers are renowned for their attention to public service in their various causes intended to better mankind, Frederick deserted his family when the children were small, leaving their mother to care for them as best she could. One possible reason may have been Mary's

fertility. Gilman speculates that because the doctor told her father that another pregnancy could endanger Mary's life, he left rather than risk that possibility (Living 5). Hill, however, speculates that the situation was much more complex: "Facing the stark realities of debt, illness, and death, Mary and Frederick were forced to seek aid and comfort with their families and to adopt an itinerant style of life which in some respects only enhanced their troubles" (CPG 22-23). Furthermore, Hill continues, in leaving Mary, Frederick performed a "requisite self-affirming act":

> Having married unwisely, even impetuously, he refused to do penance with his life. Abstractly, he glorified the peaceful harmonies of home and family, but the tension-filled setting compared poorly to his romanticized ideals. And though Mary's innocent naivete and charm had been appealing in the context of premarital flirtations, in marriage her immaturity, dependence, and submissive loyalty may have been offensive. (24)

During the ensuing years Frederick seldom saw his family and gave them little financial support. In her autobiography Charlotte observes:

> But he was a stranger, distant and little known. The word Father, in the sense of love, care, one to go to in trouble, means nothing to me, save indeed in advice about books and the care of them--which seems more the librarian than the father. By heredity I owe him much; the Beecher urge to social service, the Beecher wit and gift of words and such small sense of art as I have; but his learning he could not bequeath, and far more than financial care I have missed the education it would have been to have grown up in his society. (5-6)

Frederick escaped into the world of work, man's world, where he was a respected librarian who, incidentally, introduced the decimal system of cataloguing books and later wrote a reference book, The Best Reading, a standard for many years. Jeffrey Berman cites Frederick's errant behavior toward his family as only one negative factor in Charlotte's development, however:

> The theme of a child waiting for a man who will never return, and the attendant bewilderment and rage, characterizes Charlotte Perkins Gilman's feelings toward her father in particular and men in general.

. . .

> Equally ominous is the impact of an embittered mother who denies her child the parental love and attention she herself had been denied by her husband's desertion. Mother becomes both victim and victimizer. Despite the fact that the mother is described as a "baby-worshiper" who devoted her entire life to the children, she also inflicted upon them the pain and lovelessness from which she herself suffered. (34-35)

Charlotte's mother Mary reared her two surviving children with great difficulty, moving, as Charlotte herself describes,

> nineteen times in eighteen years, fourteen of them from one city to another. After a long and thorough musical education, developing unusual talent, she sold her piano when I was two, to pay the butcher's bill, and never owned another. She hated debt, and debts accumulated about her, driving her to these everlasting moves. . . . She lived with her husband's parents, with her own parents, with his aunts, in various houses here and there when he

> [Frederick] so installed her, fleeing again on account of debt. (Living 8-9)

Watching her mother's struggle to care for her little family and her forced neglect of her musical talent had a profound effect on Charlotte. Later, she would, understandably, equate marriage with babies and babies with woman's imprisonment.

In a misguided effort to spare her daughter the pain she had suffered as a result of her husband's desertion, Mary withheld affection from the baby Charlotte so that she would not become accustomed to it. She later told her daughter, "I used to put away your little hand from my cheek when you were a nursing baby, [for] . . . I did not want you to suffer as I had suffered" (Living 10). Charlotte soon learned that after her mother thought she was asleep at night, she would come in and cuddle and kiss her, so Charlotte began trying to stay awake while pretending to be sleeping so she could enjoy her mother's caresses (Living 10-11). Her mother's deliberate withholding of affection, however well meant it was, and her father's desertion left Charlotte with insecurities and unresolved needs that would haunt her throughout her life.

To fill the emotional void in her life, Charlotte began to invent a fantasy world peopled with "a Prince and Princess of magic powers, who went about the world collecting unhappy children and taking them to a guarded Paradise in the South Seas" (Living 23). Jeffrey Berman discerns that this fantasy world evinces "wish fulfillment . . . as well as a rescue fantasy in which the dreamer becomes her idealized parent, transmuting an anguished childhood into paradise" (35). The fantasizing suddenly came to a halt when her mother, "influenced by a friend with a pre-Freudian mind, alarmed at what she was led to suppose this inner life might become," called upon her "to give it up. This was a command. According to all the ethics I knew I must obey, and I did . . . " (Living 23). Her mother's fear of the powers of the imagination and her command that Charlotte control her fantasies would be echoed later in John's admonitions to his wife in "The Yellow Wallpaper" that she should use her willpower to control her "imaginative power and habit of story-making" which would no doubt "lead to all manner of excited fancies" (Gilman "TYW" 15-16).

Deprived of her fantasy world, the adolescent Charlotte set about to improve her body and mind. Apparently

driven from within to be the best she could be, she became quite an athlete and read voraciously, faithfully, and systematically from books prescribed by her father. Books from the following sample listing which Charlotte had saved over the years, possibly because it was in her father's handwriting, were also widely read and discussed by the reading public and influenced many people, such as Kate Chopin and Edith Wharton, who would later become writers themselves:

Rawlinson's	Five Great Empires
" "	Sixth Great Empire
" "	Seventh " "
Dawkins,	Cave Hunting
Fergusson,	Rude Stone Monuments
Lubbock,	Prehistoric Times and Origins of Civilization
Tylor	Early History of Mankind
"	Primitive Culture

[sic] (Living 36)

Charlotte was particularly fascinated by scientific works which discussed evolution, a theory that influenced her in her search for "a basic theory of life" (38). As the adult Charlotte writing her autobiography remembers, while she was still a young girl, she decided that there

is one "dominant underlying power. . . . One God and it Works!" (*Living* 39). On the question of evil and death she observed, "That is right for a given organism which leads to its best development" and that death was ultimately a necessary and logical phenomenon:

> It is told that Buddha, going out to look on life, was greatly daunted by death. "They all eat one another!" he cried, and called it evil. This process I examined, changed the verb, [and] said, "They all feed one another," and called it good. Death? Why this fuss about death? Use your imagination, try to visualize a world *without* death! The first form of life would be here yet, miles deep by this time, and nothing else; a static world . . . . Death is the essential condition of life, not an evil." (*Living* 40)

As to pain, Charlotte deduced that it "does not come in unless something goes wrong" and that mankind's sufferings come about because of "erroneous action" (*Living* 41). Although she was young, she had already begun to attempt to think analytically, a quality that would characterize her throughout her lifetime. As the epigraph to this chapter states, she "figured it out that

the business of mankind was to carry out the evolution of the human race, according to the laws of nature" (42), and this insight became for her a directive: "Life, duty, purpose, these were clear to me. God was Real, under and in, and around everything, lifting, lifting. We, conscious of that limitless power, were to find our places, our special work in the world, and when found, do it, do it at all costs" (Living 43).

To prepare herself to do what she called the "world's work," Charlotte was determined to be as physically, mentally, socially, and morally perfect as possible. She was not the typical young girl in her relentless struggle to be perfect: "Self-righteous? Tremendously so. For eight years I did not do anything I thought wrong, and did, at any cost, what I thought right--which is not saying that all my decisions were correct" (Living 60).

No doubt this striving for perfection was caused by Charlotte's drive to be in control of her life. She knew that women, her own mother, for instance, were not usually in charge of their lives, and she seems to have been determined that her mother's fate would not be hers. Her mother's life taught Charlotte about "the false secu-

rity and spurious deceit of wife--mother myths" (Hill CPG 13). The rambunctious Charlotte charged out to meet life with a strong agile body and keen mind. Determined to make her own way in the world, to be dependent on no one, she studied art at the Rhode Island School of Design and made her living for a while selling her flower paintings on greeting cards and giving art lessons. Of her feelings about herself on her twenty-first birthday she writes that she "was self-supporting of course, a necessary base for freedom" and that "there was a tremendous sense of power, clean glorious power, of ability to do whatever I decided to undertake" (Living 70-71). She planned to study abroad, to learn languages, "sciences . . . history, economics, politics, there was no field of knowledge applicable to human need which was outside my purpose" (Living 71). Her health was excellent and she reports that she was usually cheerful:

> When asked, "How do you do?" it was my custom to reply, "as well as a fish, as busy as a bee, as strong as a horse, as proud as a peacock, as happy as a clam." (Living 71)

Then she met Walter Stetson, a promising young artist, and found herself absolutely normal in her sexual

attraction to the handsome young man:

> There was the pleasure of association with a noble soul, with one who read and studied and cared for real things, of sharing high thought and purpose, of sympathy in many common deprivations and endurances. There was the natural force of sex-attraction between two lonely young people, the influence of propinquity. (Living 83)

When he proposed marriage to her, she declined but gave him permission to call on her for a year. At times she wanted to marry him; at others she did not. Although she realized that marriage was normal, she could not feel that was the path her life should take. Instead, she felt a call to perform some sort of work, even a mission, in the world, and she knew that marriage meant babies and babies would entail responsibilities forbidding a meaningful life outside the home.

Charlotte's equivocal attitude toward marrying Walter indicates the division within herself as she struggled with the desire to love and to be loved and the fear that love might take away the independence she cherished so much. Her insecure childhood had inculcated into her psyche a desire to be independent and self-

reliant, but not everyone, not even a person with the intelligence and will of a Beecher, recovers so easily from a childhood deprived of love. Walter's diary provides interesting insights into Charlotte's paradoxical character--that is, it provides interesting insights into Walter's interpretation of her character, as well as insights into his concept of love.

According to Walter, Charlotte was an attractive woman whose physical features and personality attracted both male and female friends; her later public life indicates that she possessed what today one labels as "charisma." Walter's diary entries provide first-hand information about the powerful effects of her sexual attraction on him and also indicate the depth of her own passionate responses, as well as the turmoil that resulted from the conflict between her sexual needs and her fears that fulfillment of those needs would entrap her in a woman's world.

His entry dated January 14, 1882, describes his first impressions of her:

> She is an original: eccentric because unconventional, and well versed in almost everything, I guess!

. . .

> She has a form like a young Greek & a face also resembling a cameo. She is an athlete--strong, vivacious, with plenty of bounding blood.
>
> . . .
>
> She has such a classic figure! She is moral, intellectual and beautiful! (Hill Endure 25)

Later that same month, Charlotte and Walter realized they were more than fond of each other, but Charlotte did not want to marry because of the work she wanted to do, her purpose in life, her telos. Stetson records a conversation between them in which she attempts to explain her position to him:

> [January 29,1882] Said I: "Why do you not wish to be loved by me--to love me?"
>
> "I think that you know nothing would give me more joy than to know that you love me. But--you know of my plans: you know of the work I have set about doing."
>
> . . .
>
> [She continues] ". . . I know that a love begun should be consummated: and consummation would mean relinquishment of all my plans--and it would feed the side of my nature which I am holding in check.

> I am pretty evenly balanced, animal & spiritual. Were I to give up--I fear I should give all up and become of no more use than other women. If my life were made for happiness that would be well enough." (33)

These sentiments express her contempt for the traditional role of woman as wife and mother, a role which she feared would consume her if she attempted to assume it. By March, Stetson recognized fully the struggle within Charlotte:

> [March 20,1882] It is a hard fight she is fighting. It will be hard for her to give up to me & it will be almost as hard to keep from it . . . . (59)

The April 12 entry describes what Walter considers Charlotte's divided character. Actually, she appears to behave as a typical intelligent educated woman who can speak knowledgeably about a serious subject one minute and can be in the mood for play the next. In Walter's limited experience with women, he obviously had not previously encountered one so gifted as Charlotte:

> Charlotte, after she has been talking, say about philology, the germ theory, Egyptian history, has a way of talking as childishly (not weakly) as can be

> imagined, in a charmingly playful way. It is a startling contrast. And contrasts seem to rule in her nature. She is independent, but she likes to nestle by my side and depend on me. She is at the head of the Gymnasium, yet she can be as soft & gentle as a weakly woman. . . . (66)

On May 13, 1882, Walter exults because he thinks Charlotte has changed her ideas "in all the important particulars" and that "now she feels that she must have children & . . . fancies her best work will be done through me" (73). On May 29, though, he reports that at their meeting on the previous day, "a shadow was upon us." Charlotte had told him on that day that she was unhappy because she "could not become used to the sense of being 'appropriated.' All her old hopes, longings, etc., had arisen and rebelled against my love. . ." (76). Still, in that same entry he writes confidently:

> She has changed her language regarding the whole thing (honestly too) a dozen times. She has lots of fights in store and will suffer a great deal. That suffering will teach her that the best of all that she can do is to love purely, devotedly and bear children to be trained to something noble. That may

be a premature saying, but I think not. . . . (76)

These entries written by one who is so certain he knows what is best for Charlotte attest to the general patriarchal attitude toward woman and her ideal place in society. Walter sounds like a Weir Mitchell with his "the best of all that she can do is to love purely, devotedly and bear children to be trained to something noble." This ideal is admittedly worthwhile and would make some women--and men--content; for Charlotte, however, it would bring tragedy.

The August 31 entry is one among many that attests to Charlotte's physical responsiveness to Walter:

> Then she came and kissed me: How do women who have had no lovers learn to kiss with that delicious, trustful, senso-supersensuous pressure and melting tenderness? She has learned it in a short time. Is it not the truthful expression of the yearning love within? My sensitive lips can tell the tenor of a kiss most positively, and all along hers have revealed more of her real heart to me than all her logical (?) [sic] expressions of her feeling. (96)

By October Walter again feels victorious and exults that Charlotte, "that strong woman," has now become

> as dough to the kneader or clay to the potter, to be fashioned as her lover wills. Thank God that I will that she should be fashioned into the utmost of noble womanhood, and with the tenderness that passeth all understanding. . . . [October 9,1882] (107)

This passage expresses so well the attitude toward women ("she is as dough to the kneader or clay to the potter") which Gilman fought so hard to eradicate. Judging from his diary, Walter's idea of love meant that Charlotte would allow him to mold her into his image of what she should be ("to be fashioned as her lover wills"). The line "Thank God that I will [italics mine] that she should be fashioned into the utmost of noble womanhood, and with the tenderness that passeth all understanding" sounds Biblical, as though Walter equates himself with Christ who gives a peace that "passeth all understanding," and indicates that Walter thought that if he chose, he could even fashion this woman who prided herself on her superior stamina, fortitude, and moral courage into something less than noble; it also stands as an excellent example of the logic behind the entire patriarchal system. The March 12, 1883, entry provides

another example of Walter's discernment that Charlotte's passion was overcoming her desire for independence and his subsequent gladness that she was becoming pliable:

> She is not the strongly independent creature she was a year ago. With the softening of her heart has also come a softening of physical fibre: a less intensity of physical energy and more of the flame of desire.. . . No human being could be tenderer, sweeter, more willing to be moved as I will. She nestles in me, wants me; wants to be in my arms, lie there, sleep there. She is beginning to depend, and I doubt not that when marriage comes she will look to me for advice, and make me ruler of the house. All her strength seems to be turned to loving. Last night she was not quite well, and very humble. She has found, she says, that she has been thinking too much of her own pleasure and delight, and not enough of mine; that she has not been half "good" enough to me. And she began in strange fashion. She's a strange being taken, all in all--but God! How beautiful! And how beloved! (140)

Passages such as this one are especially poignant in view of Charlotte's impoverished childhood with its dearth of simple cuddling. The emotionally starved child in her can never be fed enough to make up for love lost in childhood, and it struggles with the adult in her for supremacy.

Charlotte and Walter were married in May, 1884, and according to Charlotte's autobiography, their first days together were happy ones. She says of Walter, "A lover more tender, a husband more devoted, woman could not ask," but in spite of her obvious happiness, her spirit began to fail shortly thereafter. She continues, "The steady cheerfulness, the strong, tireless spirit sank away. A sort of gray fog drifted across my mind, a cloud that grew and darkened" (Living 88).

Although Walter's diary entries before his marriage indicate his pleasure that Charlotte is physically responsive to him, Charlotte's diary entries after their marriage suggest that her ardor was not met with the favor one would expect:

> [June 14, 1884] Am sad: last night and this morning. Because I find myself too--affectionately

> expressive. I must keep more to myself and be asked--not borne with.
>
> [June 25, 1884] Get miserable over my old woe--conviction of being too outwardly expressive of affection. (Hill CPG 123)

As Hill observes, these are remarkable admissions for a nineteenth-century bride to make. Victorian views on the sinfulness of sex no doubt placed strictures on both of them to exercise restraints that must have caused frustrations and strains on the relationship, and, as Hill suggests, may have been partially responsible for Charlotte's depressions. Ann J. Lane speculates that perhaps Walter found Charlotte's passion "distasteful or perplexing . . . . her response to him unsettling and forbidding" given the sexual mores of that century (xi). Later, Charlotte was to assert that one of the "most pitiful errors of our views on this matter [of marriage] . . . is letting young girls enter this relationship without a clear understanding of what they are undertaking" (Hill CPG 124). From this experience would come a conviction that "a woman has the need for and right to a fulfilling love relationship, not love as the be-all and end-all of her life, but as a vital and

critically important part of it" (Hill 124).

Charlotte became pregnant right away, and their daughter Katharine was born on March 23, 1885. They had thought Charlotte's health would improve after the birth, but instead of recovering, she grew worse. She remembers: "All was normal and ordinary enough, but I was already plunged into an extreme of nervous exhaustion which no one observed or understood in the least" (Living 89). Her diary entries for the period substantiate her later memories. Hill records:

> September 14: "Cry more after breakfast. an oppressive pain that sees no outlet." September 25: "Dreary days these. Only feel well about half an hour in all day." (CPG 129)

She seemed to have everything a woman could want; at least, she had everything women were supposed to want or need to make them happy, inundated as it were in domestic felicity: "a charming home; a loving and devoted husband; an exquisite baby, healthy, intelligent and good; a highly competent mother to run things; a wholly satisfactory servant" (Living 89). But Charlotte was not happy; she "lay all day on the lounge and cried" (89). And she did not understand why. Speculating that Charlotte suf-

fered from "severe 'hysteria,' and perhaps temporary 'insanity' as well," Hill quotes from Gilman's autobiography:

> I could not read nor write nor paint nor sew nor talk nor listen to talking, nor anything. I lay on that lounge and wept all day. The tears ran down into my ears on either side. I went to bed crying, woke in the night crying, sat on the edge of the bed in the morning and cried--from sheer continuous pain. Not physical, the doctors examined me and found nothing the matter. (CPG 129; Living 91)

The depression worsened until her doctor ordered her to wean Katharine and to go away for a rest. Charlotte then went to California to visit their friends, the Channings, for the winter, and she reports in her autobiography that miraculously, "From the moment the wheels began to turn, the train to move, I felt better" (92). She improved so quickly, in fact, that she reports returning home in March believing she was cured, as she herself expressed it: "Hope came back, love came back, I was eager to get home to husband and child, life was bright again" (94). Her biographer, however, presents a somewhat more qualified account as she presents excerpts

from Charlotte's letters written from California to her friend Martha Luther. Early in her visit she writes, "In despair of ever getting well at home I suddenly undertook this journey. It has already done me an immense amount of good, and I expect to return in the spring as well as I ever shall be. Perhaps that is not saying much" (Hill CPG 133). Then, at the end of the winter she again writes to Martha, "My California winter is about done. Shall start for home in a week or two more. I look forward with both joy and dread. Joy to see my darlings again, and dread of further illness under family cares. Well. I have chosen" (Hill CPG 134).

Whatever brightness was there soon dimmed. As soon as she returned home, "the dark fog rose again" (Living 95), worse than before this time, and Charlotte was faced with the sobering and depressing realization that domestic felicity was making her sick. Hill points out the difference in Charlotte's "dullness at home and her relative spunk when she had a chance to get away":

> The energizing programs at the gym, the lively debates at her women's "parlor meetings," the collaborative scurry at the local suffrage headquarters, the political buzz and stir at the Woman's Journal

> office in Boston (which occasionally she visited)--all these seemed to boost her spirits, promote her self-respect, and provide her with the kind of work she liked to do. All these, presumably, Charlotte might have managed to continue and extend, but too often she stayed home and cried instead. (CPG 144)

She finally consulted Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, the prominent nerve specialist, who decided she suffered from hysteria or neurasthenia, a common nervous ailment afflicting women and some men during the nineteenth century. According to Ellen Bassuk's thoroughly researched article on Mitchell's rest cure, nineteenth-century doctors' understanding of nervous disorders was much different from that of today:

> They believed that hysteria, neurasthenia and hypochondria imperceptibly merged into each other, had similar exciting causes and resulted from structural lesions in the brain cortex. The inability to identify the organic defect was ascribed to unsophisticated detection techniques, or to the fact that the problem only occurred at the molecular level. Psychodynamic concepts of etiology had not yet been introduced. (139n1)

Mitchell's cure involved complete bed rest, fattening food, body massages, and no visitors or excitement of any kind. Charlotte writes that Mitchell also did not believe she was physically ill: "As far as he could see there was nothing the matter with me" (Living 96). This observation coincides with the narrator's words in "The Yellow Wallpaper" about her physician husband's view of her illness: "You see he does not believe I am sick!" (Gilman "TYW" 10). In addition to his strict physical regimen, Mitchell attempted "'moral reeducation'" to teach his patients to control their feelings. Bassuk has determined that "Mitchell's objective was 'to make clear to her [his patient] how she is to regain and preserve dominion over her emotions' (Mitchell 1888:8). Women, he thought, were too emotionally expressive, perhaps even 'hysterical,' certainly prone to inappropriate displays of feeling which weakened physical endurance" (Bassuk 143). Mitchell also believed that if women expressed their emotions too often or too excessively, they might predispose themselves to nervous disorders. Therefore, they must exercise strict self-control. Bassuk notes further that Mitchell attempted to elicit from his patients promises that they would fight "'every desire to

cry, or twitch or grow excited' (Mitchell 1885a:38)" (143). Bassuk continues: "To counteract women's 'shortcomings,' Mitchell advocated a system that encouraged order, control, and self-restraint. He felt that women should model their lives on the principles underlying the rest cure" (143).

Most Victorian doctors, like Mitchell, believed that a woman's reproductive organs were her primary organs; thus, it followed that woman's primary function was to bear children (or perhaps the order of the reasoning should be reversed). Since doctors also believed that "each organism possessed a finite amount of vital energy and was a closed system, anything that diverted women's energy from the reproductive function, such as education or work outside the home, must be avoided" (Bassuk 145--apparently paraphrasing Foster 1900 and Smith-Rosenberg 1974). This information facilitates a more sympathetic understanding of John's attitudes and actions in "The Yellow Wallpaper" and explains why he guards his wife against all excitement and prescribes her every action:

> He is very careful and loving and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

> I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day. (Gilman "TYW" 12)
>
> [John] says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillowcase as to let me have. . . stimulating people about now. (16)

After one month, Mitchell released Charlotte from his care with this condescending prescription:

> Live as domestic a life as possible. Have your child with you all the time. (Be it remarked that if I did but dress the baby it left me shaking and crying--certainly far from a healthy companionship for her, to say nothing of the effect on me.) 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. (Living 96)

Gilman relates that she followed this advice for months "and came perilously close to losing my mind" (Living 96). She and Walter finally decided to separate because "it seemed plain that if I went crazy it would do my husband no good, and be a deadly injury to my child" (96). On October 8, 1888, after more than four years of marriage, Charlotte left Walter and took Katharine to California. Although she immediately began to improve,

she reports that she never fully recovered her mental powers but suffered from mental exhaustion throughout her life and was always forced to pace herself in her work.

Gilman never could understand exactly why she became ill. She felt that it was somehow connected with the conditions of her childhood and with "the rigid stoicism and constant effort in character-building of [her] youth," but she attributed the "immediate and continuing cause [to] mismarriage" (Living 98). It is important that the last entry of her journal written just before she agreed to undergo Weir Mitchell's rest cure in Philadelphia expresses bitterness toward Walter:

> No one can ever know what I have suffered in these last five years. . . . Can Love hurt like this? You found me--you remember what. . . . learn to doubt your judgment before it seeks to mould another life as it has mine. I asked you a few days only before our marriage if you would take the responsibility entirely on yourself. You said yes. Bear it then. (Hill CPG 148)

Significantly, a voice within her kept saying, "You did it yourself! You did it yourself! You had health and strength and hope and glorious work before you--and you

threw it all away. You were called to serve humanity, and you cannot serve yourself. No good as a wife, no good as a mother, no good at anything, And you did it yourself!" (Living 91). Berman comments upon the irony of the parallels between herself as a child and her own child and between herself as an adult and her own father:

> The fear of committing a deadly injury to her child would seem to be . . . an unconscious repetition of the traumatic wound inflicted upon Charlotte Perkins Gilman when she was a child herself. . . . The little girl's identification with the absent father, along with the aspiration for the glorious work that was a male privilege in a sexist society, was so intense as to compel her against her will to become her own father and, like him, to abandon spouse and baby. . . . the silent aggression she felt toward the father who abandoned her was now directed against herself. She fell desperately ill, overcome with confusion and guilt. Only by rejecting her own family, as her father had rejected his family 20 years earlier, could she free herself from the weakness and passivity that symbolized to her the condition of motherhood. (39)

In 1890, she wrote "The Yellow Wallpaper," and while it is not autobiographical in every detail, as a fictionalized account of her breakdown it must have provided her with some measure of therapeutic relief. This story is about the conditions of wifehood and motherhood--both of which excluded glorious work in the world--and their effects on women. Gilman spent the rest of her life critiquing these two institutions and the conditions under which women lived in all her writings, whether she was writing about religion, the home, economics, or whatever. Always her goal was to revolutionize wifehood, motherhood, womanhood.

In California, Gilman supported her mother, her daughter, and herself by running a boarding house. After she and Walter were finally divorced, he married Charlotte's best friend, Grace Channing, with Charlotte's blessings. The three were lifelong friends and shared in Katharine's upbringing. When Katharine at nine was sent to live with her father, the press that had already severely criticized Charlotte for divorcing her husband for no apparent reason now condemned her as an "unnatural mother." She says that she sent Katharine to Walter

because she "did not mean her to suffer" the lack of a father as Charlotte herself had suffered. Charlotte reports that Katharine "divided her time fairly equally" between the two of them and "in companionship with her beloved father she grew up to be the artist that she is, with advantages I could never have given her" (Living 163).

Although Charlotte praises her mothering skills at length in her autobiography, her daughter's view of those skills was somewhat different. When Mary Hill interviewed Katharine Beecher Stetson Chamberlin in 1975, Katharine was ninety years old, and her memory provides interesting observations from an elderly person's recall of a youthful point of view--much as Goethe's biographers considered his autobiograpy, Dichtung und Wahrheit, fiction and truth, as, indeed, Goethe's title indicates. Hill reports that Katharine's reflections on her relationship with her mother "suggest a repetition of themes of mother-daughter history Charlotte described with Mary." Both mothers "had been exhausted by economic and emotional responsibilities," and both daughters "criticized their mothers for being churlish and mean." Although both daughters were allowed freedom to "develop

confidence and independence," both complained of being "unnecessarily and inexcusably alone." Katharine, however, unlike Charlotte, does not remember the "lonely desolation" that Charlotte experienced:

> Viewing her mother as a somewhat irresponsible and selfishly distracted "Amazon," she saw no need for sympathy. With self-assertion, never mournful pity, she expressed irritation and resentment with her mother's "brilliant" indiscretions: "You can do anything if you have holes in your head!" But she also acknowledged, albeit reluctantly, profound respect. (Hill CPG 232-233)

Katharine remembered a happy childhood but indicated Charlotte had neglected her frequently while "'lying around in the hammock . . . . enjoying nervous prostration.'" She also recounted to Hill some of the potentially dangerous episodes in her unsupervised playing: "kerosene fires in the basement and the henhouse" and "frolics in her favorite playground--the freightyard." She avows that Charlotte also neglected her in other ways:

> Look at the "baggy eyes," she exclaimed, as she pointed to her early photographs. Look how "under-

> sized" because of sleeping irregularly and eating ginger nuts and "nothing else for lunch." "Ostensibly" she was living with her mother, but in reality she was "turned loose" on the neighborhood since Charlotte was either ill or "always on the run." "Mama was always scurrying," always "too tired or too distracted" to provide restful healthy meals, to get the tangles from her hair, or to care about the way she looked. To make matters worse, Charlotte called her "Kate," and that Katharine still associated "with someone being a little cross, quick, hasty." (Hill 233)

There is more. Katharine disputes Charlotte's abilities as a teacher, for example, citing that she often taught by ridicule. In summation, "to Katharine, Charlotte seemed arrogant and selfishly preoccupied: 'She was too absorbed in expressing herself, making a career for herself, or in her causes' to take good care of her" (233-234). To balance Katharine's opinions of her mother, she did find that Charlotte was "'always encouraging' and supportive and 'felt I had a right to my independence.'" She also described her mother as a woman of strong principles and honesty, "which does not mean

that she always saw herself as others saw her. But I think she would go to the stake if necessary rather than tell a lie. . . . And she of course never never would have willingly hurt anyone," and "she was of course by nature very generous of her time and her possessions" (236-237). Katharine's views about her mother indicate that Charlotte made some of the same mistakes that Mary had made with her, which is not surprising since she learned her mothering from Mary. Perhaps it is also not surprising that Charlotte did not realize she was making those mistakes. People can give only what they possess; in spite of Charlotte's lofty ideas about motherhood and her good intentions, she did not possess adequate mothering skills. The gist of Katharine's analysis of her mother is that she was basically selfish, and why should she be otherwise? As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined. Mary, through necessity and rigorous self-discipline, became so self-centered that she could not extend herself to her children. True, she worked for their support, but she did not share herself with them. Left emotionally alone with only a life of fantasy to keep her company, then bereft of that also, Charlotte decided to try to be perfect. Her entire being concen-

trated upon herself. She could work for the perfection of humanity in the abstract, but she had difficulty with personal relationships because she could not share herself. She had no model to follow or practice in doing so as she grew up. In a letter written to Houghton Gilman several years later, Charlotte attempts to assess her personal qualities that interfered with close friendships:

> To most people, meeting them as I do, I can behave nicely, and as you have observed they mostly like me. I can be nice and kind and patient, and steady and cheerful and all sorts of nice things. but as soon as any one comes near me and takes hold, I wobble awfully. . . . And I don't like it. It makes me unreasonable. It makes me feel--where I don't want to feel; and think--where I don't want to think. It sort of wakes me up where I'm dead, or where, if I'm not dead, I ought to be. Now, I can't afford to be fond of anybody in that sort of way--man woman or child [sic]. I can't afford to want things. . . . I'm <u>not</u> a nice person to be close to. I do very well at long range. (Hill <u>CPG</u> 206-207)

This analysis does not suggest that her work is

valueless, however. On the contrary, it is of great value. Perhaps only someone like Gilman could accomplish what she did because someone else might give personal relationships priority in her life. Because Gilman was single-minded, she behaved somewhat as our culture expects of a successful man.

Fortunately for Gilman, she did manage to form at least one close personal relationship, for her second marriage appears to have been happy. In 1900, she married Houghton Gilman, one of her Beecher first cousins, and they remained married until his death thirty-four years later. Although she is strangely quiet about their relationship--she only mentions him in a couple of sentences in her autobiography--they left behind a large correspondence that demonstrates that Charlotte discussed everything with Houghton, writing letters to him almost daily as she traveled and lectured. As Ann Lane notes, Houghton Gilman was well aware of Charlotte's dedication to her career, "her recurring anguish about her sanity or her abilities as a mother, her worries about their forthcoming marriage, her determination to achieve self-realization through her work, her need for his stability, love, and strength, and her resolve to conquer, or at

least to co-exist with, her devastating and terrifying depressions" (xiii). Their long courtship finally ended in marriage when Charlotte was forty and she had already experienced a great deal of success. Perhaps these two factors and the fact that they were not mother and father to any children contributed to their happiness.

This introduction to Charlotte Perkins Gilman both as a woman and as a human being should contribute to a better understanding of her short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," which will be the subject of the remainder of this study. The reader can surely see parallels between Gilman's experience with postpartum depression and the narrator's experience in the story. Much of her biography has not been included because it does not pertain to the story, which is the focus of the study. Critics usually discuss the story and Gilman's life as though they cannot be separated, and in some respects perhaps they cannot. This study will, however, discuss "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a work independent of Gilman's life as much as possible. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a work of art, and like any work of art, it can stand on its own.

CHAPTER II

WHAT KIND OF LITERATURE IS THIS?

> When you can assume that your audience holds the same beliefs you do, you can relax a little and use more normal means of talking to it; when you have to assume that it does not, then you have to make your vision apparent by shock--to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures.
>
> ---Flannery O'Connor

Gilman's artistry and craftsmanship displayed in "The Yellow Wallpaper" can be more fully appreciated and understood if a representative sampling of her other works is surveyed. Gilman used fiction as one vehicle to get her message across to the American people. She believed that human beings must assist God in lifting the species toward a higher evolutionary plane by working to develop the potential of its female members, for if women were not allowed to develop their potential, Gilman was persuaded that their shortcomings would

drag the species down and keep it there. She believed that woman's economic dependence on man which had deemed it necessary that she "attract and hold the devotion" of a man for her very subsistence had altered the originally natural balance between the sexes (Women and Economics 170) and that this alteration hindered the upward evolution of the human race because woman did not attempt to select the best father for her children when she was selecting a husband; instead, she was selected on the basis of her sexual charms. As a result, the species suffered biologically; and since woman was not allowed to develop her talents to their full potential but was forced to live a stunted, narrow life, the species suffered psychically and socially as well. Most of Gilman's writings, therefore, deal in some manner with human evolution or, more specifically, with ways in which nineteenth-century American women were oppressed, the social results of that oppression, and the means by which such oppression could be lifted. This chapter examines some of her beliefs and explores some of the literary strategies she used to argue those beliefs in fiction.

Gilman's views on social reform were greatly influenced by Nationalism, a reform movement inspired by

Edward Bellamy's utopian ideas as these were expressed in his 1888 romance Looking Backward. Her most influential book, Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as A Factor in Social Evolution (1898), reflects many of Bellamy's and the Nationalists' ideas. One of Nationalism's tenets was the abolition of "sex-slavery":

> Nationalism breaks the strongest fetter which binds woman, viz., her material dependence on man, and makes her his helpmeet as an equal and independent partner, accomplishing by economic enfranchisement what political franchisement alone could but partially do. (New Nation 28 March 1891: 139; quoted by Scharnhorst 22)

Gilman realized that women were innately just as capable as men, but their limited education, insufficient contact with the world outside the home, and few opportunities to act independently made them appear to be "smaller-minded, weaker-minded, more timid and vacillating . . . whosoever, man or woman, lives always in a small dark place, is always guarded, protected, directed, and restrained, will become inevitably narrowed and weakened by it" (The Home 277). Gilman knew that woman

could be man's equal if she were given his opportunities. However, the male and the female were even reared differently. Gilman cites a common example:

> See two children on a journey, the mother holding fast to the girl from beginning to end, only the car seat and window for her; the boy on the steps, the platform, running about the station, asking questions of brakeman and engineer, learning all the time. The boy gets five times as much out of life as the girl, and he knows it. It is not long before he is ashamed to play with girls, and one cannot blame him. (Gilman Home 279)

Not only did the woman suffer from her limited position in society, but Gilman also recognized that the male also suffered from woman's repression, as she acknowledges in The Home:

> The woman is narrowed by the home and the man is narrowed by the woman. In proportion as man is great, as his interests are world-wide and his abilities high, is he injured by constant contact with a smaller mind. (277)

Similarly, she argues in The Man-Made World that the male can be thwarted in developing desirable human quali-

ties if the female members of his family are subservient:

> In the process of becoming human we must learn to recognize justice, freedom, human rights; we must learn self-control and to think of others; have minds that grow and broaden rationally; we must learn the broad mutual inter-service and unbounded joy of social intercourse and service. The petty despot of the man-made home is hindered in his humanness by too much manness. For each man to have one whole woman to cook for and wait upon him is a poor education for democracy. The boy with a servile mother, the man with a servile wife, cannot reach the sense of equal rights we need to-day. Too constant consideration of the master's tastes makes the master selfish . . . . (42)

Gilman believed that a culture under male domination by necessity becomes permeated with the male characteristics, predominately sex and combat, on all levels, and the feminine virtue of motherly love is ignored (Man-Made 95-100). In addition, Gilman assumed that male dominance was responsible for what she considered the male view that life consists of struggle and that fe-

male dominance would engender the view that life also consists of growth (Man-Made 84). Gilman was not at all a misandrist, however. On the contrary, she wrote: "There should be an end to the bitterness of feeling which has arisen between the sexes in this century" (Women and Economics 129). Since she also believed in evolution, she was influenced by Darwin to assume a biological basis for the two sexual roles. She theorized that early in mankind's history, woman's role as preserver of the race transcended man's role as hunter, fighter, and destroyer. Man had to renounce his former role, however, in order to build civilization:

> The sexuo-economic relation was necessary to raise and broaden, to deepen and sweeten, to make more feminine, and so more human, the male of the human race. If the female had remained in full personal freedom and activity, she would have remained superior to him, and both would have remained stationary. . . . In her subordinate position, under every disadvantage, through the very walls of her prison, the constructive force of woman has made man its instrument, and worked for the upbuilding of the world. (Women and Economics 132)

Since man's energy could only be controlled "by the power of sex-attraction, it needed precisely this form of union, with its peculiar exaggeration of sex-faculty, to hold him to his task" (133). Woman's subordination "has acted like a coiled spring" upon man, enabling him to move mountains. By the nineteenth century, however, she believed that that stage of evolution was ended; man now needed woman's contributions to further the evolution of humanity (Women and Economics 132-137).

Having developed her theories about woman's earlier superior position in society, it was natural that Gilman would embrace Lester F. Ward's gynaecocentric theory that argued the organic primacy of the female. According to Ward, woman was "the unchanging trunk of the great genealogic tree; while man . . . is but a branch, a grafted scion, as it were (Hill CPG 267). In her utopian novel Herland, her strongest expression of the innate human abilities she believed women possessed, Gilman explodes traditional ideas of masculine and feminine behavior; the women in Herland do whatever needs to be done to create a perfect community. In this world only desirable human attributes have been cultivated, and the qualities which Gilman considered destructive male traits, specifically

combative tendencies and aggressive sexual drives, have been eradicated. Features developed by the society in Herland are identified as human, rather than gender-based, characteristics.

Gilman's fiction tends to stress these human characteristics, but she especially emphasizes those that she considers intrinsically female. When critics discuss Gilman's fiction, they generally describe it as didactic and unimaginative. Carl N. Degler is one who analyzes both her poetry and her prose as "straightforward, lucid, but without much imagery or deep sensibility." According to Degler, its appeal depends "more upon wit, clever turns of phrase, and ideas than upon rhythm or aesthetic expression" (Introduction, Women and Economics xiii). In spite of his great admiration for her work, he concedes that this "militant madonna" had "little talent for imaginative writing" (xvii-xviii). Ann J. Lane describes Gilman's writing in similar terms of limitation:

> Gilman gave little attention to her writing as literature, and neither will the reader, I am afraid. She wrote quickly, carelessly, to make a point. She always wrote fiction to meet a deadline. Still, she had a good ear for dialogue, was

> adept at sketching within a few pages a familiar but complicated set of relationships, and knew well the whole range of worries and joys women shared. She wrote to engage an audience in her ideas, not in her literary accomplishments. (Introduction, The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader, (xvi)

Christopher P. Wilson, however, in discussing Gilman's "often-neglected literary skills" in his 1986 article entitled "Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Steady Burghers: The Terrain of Herland" argues that much of what readers today consider Gilman's "lack of 'affect'" [sic] was intentional, as if she wrote for the half-blind and half-deaf as it were:

> . . . her fiction often consciously lobbied to overturn her reader's preconceptions about what was "natural" or desirable in a work of literature--principally, by frustrating the ideological expectations of the literature of "adventure" and "romance" from her era. Furthermore, Gilman aimed to conceive of a feminist and socialist idiom partly by remodifying literary . . . conventions which linked standards of taste to received gender roles and expectations. (273)

As Wilson points out, heretofore neglected articles in The Forerunner "demonstrate Gilman's intention to fuse her feminist perspectives with her literary practice" (278). Since her Forerunner articles--indeed, the entire body of her writing--demonstrate the wide breadth of her reading and her keen understanding of literature, critics should realize that Gilman was consciously applying herself to the creation of a distinctive literary mode.

In an essay entitled "Masculine Literature" in the March 1910 issue, Gilman complains about the differences accorded men and women in literature and in history, the men--and thus male thinking--being considered human and the women being considered a mere "side-issue" (18). She reflects that so-called women's columns are filled with so-called women's issues, "Küchen, Kinder, Kirche, and Kleider" (18), while of all the human interests available, fiction and much of history focus on the two "essential features of masculinity--Desire and Combat--Love and War" (20). Protesting that much of the current fiction did not "touch on human processes, social process, but on the special field of predatory excitement so long the sole province of men" (19-20), she argues that since half of humanity consists of women, fiction and

history should reflect that fact. Women, Gilman continues, are also "types of human life" whose "major processes are not those of conflict and adventure" and whose "love means more than mating" (20). She contends that the "main branch" of literature is the love story, but it is the story of "man's love of woman" rather than the reverse, for these stories almost always end with the marriage:

> Woman's love for man, as currently treated in fiction [sic] is largely a reflex; it is the way he wants her to feel, expects her to feel; not a fair representation of how she does feel. If "love" is to be selected as the most important thing in life to write about, then the mother's love should be the principal subject: This is the main stream. This is the general underlying, world-lifting force, [sic] The "life-force," now so glibly chattered about, finds its fullest expression in motherhood; not in the emotions of an assistant in the preliminary stages. (20)

Gilman further asserts that masculine fiction focuses on the brief period of courtship during which man strives to win woman because to him

> this mating instinct is frankly the major interest of life; even the belligerent instincts are second to it. To the male . . . it is for all its intensity, but a passing interest. In nature's economy, his is but a temporary devotion, hers the slow processes of life's fulfillment (21).

In this same article Gilman argues for a broader literature and a broader interpretation of history that includes the spectrum of experiences of both kinds of human being, the male and the female, rather than the prevalent one-sided overestimation of "the dominant instincts of the male--Love and War--an offense against art and truth, and an injury to life" (22).

In a later essay in Volume 3 of The Forerunner, "Effect of Literature Upon the Mind," May 1912, Gilman states her theory about what fiction should be:

> To feel and see some vital phase of human life; to throw that feeling, that preception [sic], into such forms as to be easily assimilable to others--that is the art of fiction. . . . It translates the general into the particular and presents it to other minds; which, impressed by the particular instance, can re-generalize again in its own brain. (138)

Dickens was one of Gilman's favorite authors, presumably because of his crusades for the reformation of various institutions which affected the quality of English life as well as his writing style. Allusions to his works are found throughout her writing. To illustrate her idea that literature should "translate the general into the particular," she cites Dickens' indictment of the boys' schools in England in his depiction of one such institution in Nicholas Nickelby.

Gilman was, then, an advocate of the old definition that art "'holds the mirror up to nature,'" and she was convinced that woman's subjugation was not in the nature of things, but that it was, rather, an invention of man. To her, the "art which gives humanity consciousness is the most vital art" (Forerunner, I, 19). She attempted to hold the mirror up to all areas of life in what Wilson aptly terms a "counterpointing style" that attacked "a masculinist distortion which had overtaken contemporary fiction" (279). However, her attempts to remodify literary conventions so as to achieve new literary idioms based on a broader spectrum of human life, one that was more feminist and more generally socialist, are

frequently misread, resulting in such criticisms of her literary style as that of Carl Degler and Ann J. Lane mentioned earlier.

By writing about other facets of the issues of love and war than those that male writers often emphasized, Gilman attempted, sometimes almost by "shock," to use Flannery O'Connor's term, to illustrate the importance of feminine influences and issues that she felt male writers had ignored. Rather than end her love stories with the lovers riding off into the sunset together, for example, Gilman's stories tend to deal with some issue within the marriage itself or with other than romantic types of love. In an attempt to educate the reading public, Gilman demonstrates in her fiction woman's superior human qualities and abilities which were often not recognized or acknowledged and which, therefore, frequently were not cultivated in many women's lives. To make her point and to illustrate that man's view was tradition rather than nature, she often counterpoints the male distortions of war and love with some female distortions of her own. Some of her short stories provide excellent examples of this counterpointing.

In "The Unnatural Mother," Gilman's portrayal of a

woman who has sacrificed her own child to save the people of the town from a flood illustrates a woman's love for humanity that transcends even maternal love and depicts a woman whose physical and mental strength provide a direct contrast to the Victorian ideal that girls should be weak and frail creatures. As the story opens, Mis' Briggs and a group of townswomen discuss Esther Greenwood, deceased, who had been reared "the somewhat neglected child of a heart-broken widower" (Lane 58), a doctor whose alien "views" included allowing his daughter "a wild, healthy childhood" that included sensible clothes, short hair, information about "how babies come," and, even more startling from the point of view of the town's "natural" mothers, information about the "Bad Disease" (62). He had shocked the committee of older, married ladies of the church who "waited on" him for an explanation with his calm assertion that he wanted Esther to have the information necessary to be able intelligently to choose a father for her children.

Scandalized, the townspeople had been certain that no man would marry a girl "who knew all the evil of life," but one had, an "artist or something." The two had spent much time "traipsing" the hills, the husband

painting, Esther keeping him company, and she in turn had reared her daughter as she had been nurtured. To quote old Mis' Briggs, "She just let that young one roll round in the grass like a puppy with hardly nothin' on! Why, a squaw does better. . . . That child was treated worse'n an Injun!" (63) The child had grown, thrived actually, in spite of the town's assessment of Esther's shortcomings. "Why, that woman never seemed to have the first spark of maternal feeling . . . . She seemed just as fond of the other young ones after she had her own as she was before, and that's against nature," the scandalized Mis' Briggs assures her listeners (64).

It was Esther who had first realized the dam was going. Three towns lay in its path, and Esther could have either raced home for her own young child or run to the towns. She had chosen to save the townspeople, and her tomboyish upbringing had served her well. Jake Elder said "he never saw a woman run so in his life" (64). Esther had given her life for the people and had sacrificed her child also, or so she had no doubt thought, but it had been plucked from the water nearly drowned. The town's "natural" mothers who rear their children by "instinct" are, however, shocked. As Mis' Briggs re-

minds her unmarried thirty-six-year-old daughter who tries to defend Esther's decision to attempt to save fifteen hundred people at the expense of her own daughter, "Maria 'Melia, I'm ashamed of you! . . . But you ain't married and ain't a mother. A mother's duty is to her own child! She neglected her own to look after other folks'--the Lord never gave her them other children to care for!"

"Yes," said Miss Jacobs, "And here's her child, a burden on the town! She was an unnatural mother!" (65)

This story borders on the maudlin because of Gilman's outrageous distortions of some prevalent views against which she crusaded: the idea that along with the baby comes an inherent instinct for good mothering which makes childcare education unnecessary; the idea that girls should be kept ignorant and innocent of the facts of life so as to be more marketable for marriage; and the idea that girls should be weak, frail, and helpless for this same reason--marketability. In her view women should choose to marry a man who will be a good father: "Competition among males, with selection by the female of the superior male, is the process of sexual selection, and works to racial improvement" (Women and Economics

110-111). A woman could make an intelligent decision only if she knew the facts of life, both the biological and the social ones. As Dr. Bellair, a woman physician in Gilman's short story entitled "The Crux" admonishes a young woman who is about to allow sentimentality to sway her into marrying a man even after she learns he has a venereal disease, "Beware of a biological sin, my dear; for it there is no forgiveness" (Lane 122).

Maternal love that transcends the love of a woman for her own offspring is also explored in "Turned," a story depicting the sisterhood Gilman saw as a desirable possibility among women. When the educated, genteel Mrs. Marroner learns that her beloved husband has impregnated Gerta, their beautiful young servant girl whom Mrs. Marroner had treated as a daughter, she behaves in an unexpected manner, one that was shocking to many readers of the time. This story told by a third person narrator allows readers to understand the situation from the points of view of all three participants. They see Gerta's innocence, terror, and shame; Mrs. Marroner's grief, pity, wisdom, and strength of character; and Mr. Marroner's hypocrisy and deceitfulness in his selfish unconcern for the consequences of his behavior. This

story of one man's sexual conquest allows the reader to see past the man's victory to the heartache he brings to the two women, the child, and himself. This is also a love story, for Mrs. Marroner's maternal love embraces both Gerta and Mr. Marroner's illegitimate infant in sharp contrast to Mr. Marroner's sexual "love" which causes him to use Gerta, then to turn his back on her and his child. The distorted and delightful twist here is that the two women join forces against the man. Mrs. Marroner is a queen among heroines:

> And then, sweeping over both her feelings for herself, the wife, and Gerta, his victim, came a new flood, which literally lifted her to her feet. She rose and walked, her head held high. "This is the sin of man against woman," she said. "The offense is against womanhood. Against motherhood. Against --the child." (Lane 94)

When Mr. Marroner returns from Europe, he finds the house "clean, in perfect order, wholly vacant" (94). Finally locating his wife after months of searching, he finds that she has resumed the use of her maiden name and is once more pursuing a teaching career. The two women come into the room together to meet him, Gerta "like a

tall Madonna, bearing a baby in her arms" and looking adoringly at Mrs. Marroner, and his wife, "calm, steady, definitely impersonal, nothing but a clear pallor to hint of inner stress" (96). "And the woman who had been his wife asked quietly: 'What have you to say to us?'" (97); Gilman in essence always asks that question of the patriarchy.

While her writing often does rely upon "wit, clever turns of phrase, and ideas" rather than upon "rhythm or aesthetic expression" as Degler charges, contrary to Degler's assessment, it is often imaginative, and the wit, clever turns of phrase, and radical ideas make it mostly enjoyable reading. If adolescent girls and teens of this century were introduced to her work, they might find a healthy balance--a counterpoint--to offset Hollywood's excessive portrayal of the male obsession with love and war. In "Turned," a little gem of its own kind, distortions and reversals combine to create a powerful effect on the reader. The man with his empty house and empty heart ultimately faces the united power of these females he has wronged and is forced to recognize his own impotence, his powerlessness, to alter the results of his wrongdoing.

Sometimes Gilman counterpoints the idyllic notion prevalent in so much fiction that love and marriage automatically bring happiness with a story about a marriage which refutes that idea. In "Making a Change" Frank and Julia genuinely love each other, but love is not enough for happiness. This young mother cannot cope with her baby and finally attempts suicide but is saved just in time by her understanding mother-in-law. The two women decide that Julia will return to teaching music as she did before marriage and that Frank's mother will open a "baby-garden" on the roof to care for their baby and fifteen others. Unlike those characters in stories who live happily ever after simply because the boy wins the girl, these characters live happily ever after because both women thrive financially, physically, and emotionally as they are paid for doing work they enjoy and are fitted for; Frank is happy because his home runs smoothly and quietly and his wife is herself once more; and the baby is happy because he is being cared for in a social environment by someone who is really suited for the task.

Woman's ability to support herself is also depicted in "An Honest Woman." Mrs. Main, who had been "ruined"

years before and abandoned, rears her daughter alone and manages to do quite well financially as the respectable owner of a hotel. Ann J. Lane aptly describes her as "Gilman's answer to Nathaniel Hawthorne," a fallen Hester Prynne who "gets up" (xxi). The man who had deceived her years earlier returns down and out but with the smug certainty that this woman who had loved him so passionately will now welcome him and his offer of marriage. After all, isn't that what every woman wants? The reader feels, along with Mrs. Main, a sense of satisfaction as she rejects his belated proposal. He threatens to expose her, but the townspeople already know her for what she truly is because of the exemplary life she has lived before them. Mr. Main then leaves for parts South. This story refutes the ideas that a woman must have a man in order to be successful in life and that domestic and marital felicity should be every woman's highest ambition.

A different type of male wrongdoing is portrayed in "The Yellow Wallpaper," a story which most critics agree has literary merit as well as didactic utility. For all her protestations that this story is "no more 'literature'" than her other work (Living 121), it fulfills the

requirements expected of "good" literature: the effect moves the reader; the plot is cogently presented and moves along systematically but suspensefully; the characters seem real and plausible; and as Berman notes,

> The story's richness lies in its ability to yield multiple meanings and points of view--psychological, sociological, historical. The house has rich symbolic meanings . . . . the domestic imprisonment of nineteenth-century women, the madness of the Mitchell rest cure, the isolation of rural America, the repression of the body. (54)

Gilman also utilizes some sophisticated literary devices, particularly her involved employment of doubling, which receives extensive treatment in this study, and her effective use of the narrative voice, which is discussed in the following chapter.

In this story Gilman introduces a woman who is eventually driven mad by a well-meaning but tyrannical husband who insists and believes that he knows better than she what is good for her. In relating the story with its perhaps exaggerated consequences, Gilman "translates the general into the particular," hoping that her readers would generalize about the treatment of all women

at the hands of seemingly omnipotent husbands, fathers, and brothers. Perhaps most of these women were not reacting quite so radically against their restricted lives, but many of them were living lives of quiet desperation. Although critics tend to stress its autobiographical aspects, this story transcends autobiography. As Gary Scharnhorst stresses: "Her fiction was autobiographically moored, though it was by no means literal autobiography" (14). Instead, Gilman attempted to portray in her fiction the life of a large segment of the population much in the way that George Eliot defined the function of art:

> Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot. All the more sacred is the task of the artist when he undertakes to paint the life of the People" (610).

By painting the life of the people as she perceived it, Gilman hoped to bring about the changes that she felt were necessary if women were to take their rightful places alongside men in the world. Only then, she felt, would either men or women enjoy full, rich, unblighted

lives. In at least one story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," she emphasized her beliefs by portraying her heroine as a grotesque, a tactic designed to shock the blind into seeing and the deaf into hearing her message. Gilman's grotesque heroine is observed in the following chapter which begins a study of "The Yellow Wallpaper" within the confines of the gothic genre.

CHAPTER III

"THE YELLOW WALLPAPER" AND THE FEMALE GOTHIC: THE MYSTERY AND THE GROTESQUE

> "It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell. . . . But presently she took my veil from its place: she held it up, gazed at it long, and then, she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror."
>
> . . .
>
> ". . . oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face--it was a savage face."
>
> . . .
>
> "Sir, it removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them."
>
> ---Charlotte Brönte

When "The Yellow Wallpaper" was published in 1892, it was received as a story in the gothic tradition of Poe with its elements of mystery, horror, terror, and its

damsel in distress immured within a spacious old house on a neglected country estate. Today readers still enjoy the story's gothic elements, and as psychology unfolds secrets of the nineteenth-century woman's psyche, twentieth-century readers discover more layers of meaning in the story than its contemporaries possibly dreamed of. Perhaps women have intuited the meanings within the gothic all along, for they have been its principal readers and writers. To women the stories are more than mere thrillers, for the central person in the story and the one at risk is usually a woman who responds to her danger with fortitude and decorum. Critics today recognize that fear in the gothic hides and disguises the female's deep anger and resentment at her predetermined roles within society and that the gothic heroine's greatest uncertainty derives from the difficulty of realizing her own self and presenting herself so that others can appreciate her whole being in its entirety, not to mention her individuality (DeLamotte 11;9). In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman addresses these issues--fear, anger, resentment, lack of individuality--by examining their effects on one woman, the narrator of her story, who is gradually transformed into a grotesque by the

gothic elements within her world.

The gothic genre represents an outgrowth of the sentimental novel, such as Samuel Richardson's Clarissa Harlow (1747-1748) or Fanny Burney's Evalina (1778). Usually recognized as the first gothic novel, Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) with its almost allegorical figures involved in fantastic feats resembling the medieval psychomachia and its intrusion of the supernatural into humans' lives, the gothic genre evolved to its later non-allegorical form that depended on human forces rather than the supernatural for its resolution. The gothic novel presented its horrors through the writings of such people as Monk Lewis (The Monk 1796), Clara Reeve (The Old English Baron 1777), Mary Shelley (Frankenstein 1818), Maturin (Melmoth the Wanderer 1820), Emily Bronte (Wuthering Heights 1847), Robert Lewis Stevenson (The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde 1886), and by the end of the nineteenth century, Henry James's (The Turn of the Screw 1898), to name just a few. Probably the gothic novel that influenced the genre most, however, was Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), in which the persecuted heroine Emily faces her trials and her persecutors courageously.

Elements of the classic setting of the gothic romance, several of which occur in "The Yellow Wallpaper," involve a heroine "in a foreign land--in a remote castle--surrounded by vice and violence" (Radcliffe 329) bravely attempting to live an ordinary life under quite extraordinary circumstances. She is an innocent but brave young woman possessing exemplary moral standards, beset on all sides by perplexities. The leading male is usually her jailer though he often is or pretends to be her guardian, and if the other occupants frequenting their world realize the heroine's danger, they are either powerless to help her or they are part of the conspiracy against her. The juxtaposition of the ordinary and the extraordinary produces an aura of mystery as this genre probes "the dark aspects of the mind" (MacAndrew 38). Much of the mystery is created by the heroine's uncertainty about who can and who cannot be trusted. The complex architecture of the castle or large rambling house aids in the heroine's sense of helplessness because, as Gilbert and Gubar have noted, she cannot seem to understand the gothic edifice's floor plan (337), a metaphor for her inability to understand the intricacies of the mysteries surrounding her. She frequently loses

her sense of direction as she gropes her way through dark hallways or subterranean tunnels, and the confines of her own bedroom sometimes offer inadequate protection, as in the case of Anne Radcliffe's Emily whose bedroom contains a door leading to an underground tunnel which may or may not lead to safety. Since its handle and lock are on the other side of the door, it is little wonder that this heroine feels more distressed and endangered at night in her bed than she does at any other time. Help usually arrives in the form of a trustworthy man who vindicates her honor if it is in question, and it frequently is, and who saves her physically from the clutches of the villain whose true nature is exposed.

The isolated landscape and nature operating as pathetic fallacy signal to the reader the emotions proper for specific scenes; storms and fogs, for example, might represent anger or uncertainty, and sunshine might represent peace or happiness. Pervading the entire work, however, is a sense of impending doom as the gothic explores "the torments of the subconscious pressing upon the conscious mind and making a prison of the self" (MacAndrew 48-49). Female writers probably chose this particular genre both as a catharsis to relieve their

minds of the pressures of their own and their readers' domestic prisons and "as a vehicle for ideas about psychological evil--evil not as a force exterior to man, but as a distortion, a warping of his mind" (MacAndrew 5), as did Gilman. And, indeed, the reading public was obviously fascinated by its mystery and terror, for the gothic was a staple in the literary diet of both men and women in the nineteenth century.

Although both sexes wrote and read gothic novels, the genre has correctly come to be associated more with women's writing and reading than it has with men's. In the twentieth century the genre is still popular as various derivatives proliferate in supermarkets, drug stores, and anywhere else that women tend to shop. While a few of the characteristics of the gothic novel have changed somewhat, the major themes still center on a distressed but brave heroine who attempts to determine which of the two men in her life is really to be trusted, and in the process she encounters entrapment of some sort. Critics can only speculate as to the reasons for women's interest in, and in some cases passion for, the gothic. Lillian S. Robinson believes this continued interest is due to women's need "to receive confirmation,

and eventually, affirmation, that love really is what motivates and justifies a woman's life" (221). More precisely, however, it may be that they need confirmation that their "victimization by Love" (Adrienne Rich 19) is justified. Yet, the very fact that so many women, especially housewives, use the gothic as escapist reading indicates that love alone may not be enough to satisfy the basic human need for self-fulfillment. The gothic, however, encompasses more than so-called "trashy" literature. Serious writers such as Flannery O'Connor and Doris Lessing have also written in this genre, and Judith Wilt observes that this "classic" gothic serves to restore order, an observation which she makes in response to D. H. Lawrence's explanation that Poe's Usher twins were doomed because they attempted to subsume the alter ego, to be "one thing with another being. Each must abide by itself, and correspond only within certain limits" (Lawrence 344); further, Wilt observes that "[c]lassic Gothic, the orthodox sublime, believes in correspondence, believes in love, strives against limits" (23). Fleenor distinguishes between these two variations of gothic by stating that the former type might be said to tranquilize the reader while the latter, "repre-

senting the unconscious," restores the reader "by reasserting the absolute" (4). Since both variations of gothic, the so-called "trashy" and the classic, were popular with women during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continue so today, some basic and common elements operational within the genre and within women's psyches must be the responsible stimulus or stimuli. Gilman's astute observations about the space which women occupy in society are pertinent, for although Gilman did not specifically state that women actually occupy a gothic space within society, her works imply as much, as, for example, the multiple women imprisoned within the yellow wallpaper.

Gilman once noted that one result of male dominance over woman forces her to occupy the "place of a preposition in relation to man. She has been considered above him or below him, before him, behind him, beside him, a wholly relative existence--'Syndey's sister,' 'Pembroke's mother'--but never by any chance Sydney or Pembroke herself" (Man-Made World 20). Woman's prepositional position in the world is fairly obviously one major factor often pushing her into gothic situations both in literature and in real life. Virginia Woolf declared that a

woman needs a room of her own; too often, though, women's rooms come furnished with metaphorical yellow wallpaper. Consider, for example, Antigone's cave, Danae's bronze tower, Shakespeare and Fletcher's jailer's daughter's confines, Radcliffe's Emily's unsecured room, Lessing's protagonist's Room 219, and, of course, Gilman's narrator's upstairs nursery room. The adage that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction gains credence, given the phenomenon of the chronic invalidism of so many talented women in the nineteenth century. Florence Nightingale, for example, came home from the tragic and futile war in the Crimea where she had invented nursing and took to her bed for twenty-five years; and Alice James, a writer who lived in the shadow of her famous brothers, was an invalid, as was Elizabeth Barrett before Robert Browning rescued her from her tyrannical father. These women, Gilman included, were literally or figuratively imprisoned in a gothic space of one sort or another. The diagnosis and prognosis had a self-fulfilling effect. No doubt the gothic in all its forms is popular because its readers live in their own private imprisonments and, as Robinson speculates, need a justification for their past lives and continued existence, especially if they per-

ceive themselves only in their relational positions and not as individuals.

In her book entitled The Female Gothic, Juliann Fleenor gives an excellent summary description of women's gothic:

> It is essentially formless, except as a quest; it uses the traditional spatial symbolism of the ruined castle or an enclosed room to symbolize both the culture and the heroine; as a psychological form, it provokes various feelings of terror, anger, awe, and sometimes self-fear and self-disgust directed toward the female role, female sexuality, female physiology, and procreation; and it frequently uses a narrative form which questions the validity of the narrative itself. It reflects a patriarchal paradigm that women are motherless, yet fathered, and that women are defective because they are not males. (15)

"The Yellow Wallpaper" fulfills each of Fleenor's five points to qualify it as an example of the Female Gothic, and in this chapter and the next Fleenor's definition of Female Gothic will be used as a loose framework to discuss "The Yellow Wallpaper" as an example of that genre.

The unnamed heroine in the story occupies, not at all willingly, an upstairs room papered with hideous yellow wallpaper, a room that she thinks once served as a nursery, for the windows are barred and "there are rings and things in the walls" (Gilman "TYW" 12). This room is situated within isolated "ancestral halls," "[a] colonial mansion, a hereditary estate" (9); the heroine would like to call it "a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity--but that would be asking too much of fate!" (9). It would also be asking too much of John to allow such nonsense, for he "is practical in the extreme" and "scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures" (9). Since she has alerted readers to the fact that there is "something queer" about the house, and since John laughs at her opinion (9), the reader suspects that further developments will prove her to be right. Like the traditional gothic story, the landscaping surrounding Gilman's version of the castle adds to its mystery and sense of isolation:

> The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English

> places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people. (11)

The garden itself is described as "large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them" (11). To this peaceful scene is added an element of decay and mystery: the greenhouses are now broken, and "legal trouble" between "heirs and coheirs" has resulted in the house remaining "empty for years" (11). The narrator regrets this explanation for the house having been empty for so long, as it "spoils [her] ghostliness" (11), but the reader senses a gothic mysteriousness within the environs of the house and its premises. The narrator hastens to declare in the next breath, "I don't care--there is something strange about the house--I can feel it" (11), and once again gothic mysteriousness whets the reader's appetite for further details. Furthermore, John's proclamation that what she actually feels is a "draught" as he emphatically closes the window fails to convince the reader that there is no mystery. Quite the contrary, in fact, for this action directs the reader's attention more closely to John's character and intentions.

The narrator's earlier statements concerning John then begin to take on more sinister connotations: this practical physician-husband, loving guardian of his ill wife, laughs at her ideas, forbids her to work, tells everyone she is not really ill but suffers only from "temporary nervous depression--a slight hysterical tendency" (10), and appears to act to deprive her of independent thought. He may, then, be a loving husband or he may be a gothic villain; his solicitous ministrations may free her or they may entrap her. The lines following the window-closing scene express the narrator's anger at John and her sensitivity "due to this nervous condition" (11). Her information that John stresses a "proper self-control" which makes her "very tired" and that part of this self-control means refusing "to think about . . . [her] condition" (10) only add to the mystery and confirm the suspicion that something is awry.

Fleenor's description of the gothic as "essentially formless, except as a quest," applies to this story. Told as a narrative entered surreptitiously into her diary (for John "hates to have me write a word" [13]),

the story's form is that of short, often one-line paragraphs which must denote the narrator's feelings of fragmentation in her search for self. There is no obvious laying out of plot; rather, what plot there is unfolds gradually and the reader is not at first certain there is a plot. The story appears to be a rather rambling monologue directed by the narrator to her diary, but as time and the diary progress, the reader realizes that a plot to drive the narrator mad does exist, though the participants do not seem aware of it. The characters are introduced to the reader only through the narrator's impressions of them: they consist of the narrator, her physician-husband John, his sister Jennie who oversees the house, and Mary the nurse. Gilman creates sympathy for the heroine, the narrator, simply by enabling the reader to view everything in the story through her eyes. Eugenia Delamotte writes that "The Yellow Wallpaper"

> explains why women have to invent mysteries--both mystery stories and mysteries of domestic science. It is about the ways those two mysteries are related to each other in the narrator's life, and the way both are related to her sense that she herself is a mystery: to her husband and herself." (4)

Society has deterministically pre-positioned this nameless narrator's identity as that of wife and mother: she is merely John's wife and her son's mother, two "prepositional" relationships which Gilman suggests in The Man-Made World. As an individual, however, she is certainly a mystery to John, who discourages her individuality, and she does not appear to understand her own self. As she sits within her nursery room writing diary entries which explore her situation and her mind, the ambiguity she creates reflects her own schizophrenic view of herself. She does recognize herself as John's submissive wife and her baby's loving mother, but she nurses an inner anger toward John, not entirely subconsciously, and her thoughts seldom include her baby. This story, then, represents the narrator's quest for her own identity.

Obviously, part of her inner self has already recognized the danger of losing its own identity if she assumes the full responsibility for the constant demands of her child in addition to the cost to her self which her submission to an authoritative guardian has already exacted. She probably has also realized that she cannot be both John's child and her baby's mother. Fleenor's

fourth point that gothic writers choose a narrative structure which "by its nature undermines its validity" is appropriate to this story at this point. She states further that "the struggle with the absolute is so threatening that even the narration must be questionable. This tension between reality and appearance is another example of the characteristic tensions of the Gothic, [sic] and in particular, the Female Gothic." Furthermore, she argues that this tension "produces self-fear and self-disgust, symbolized by the red room in Jane Eyre, by the grotesque beings behind 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' and by the deformed dwarves in 'Goblin Market'" (12). The ambivalence in Gilman's narration creats tension between reality and appearance. The reality is that John has imprisoned his wife, dictates her every move, attempts even to dictate her every thought, is condescending and patronizing toward her, and in general treats her like a child while giving the appearance of a devoted husband who only wants his beloved wife to be well. The problem is that his definition of wellness is a wife who is his puppet, not an individualized person. The narrator's self-fear and self-disgust are produced by the conflict created by the desire to be her own per-

son; and this desire engenders guilt because society has conditioned her to believe that she must be submissive to John and, therefore, that she must not wish to be her own person. Perhaps if John were overtly cruel to her physically, her feelings of guilt at opposing him, if only in her mind, might not be so great, but as it is she keeps reassuring herself that John loves her. The reader is uncertain about the truth of John's love because only the narrator presents a viewpoint and it frequently appears contradictory. The reader, therefore, carries the burden of deciding the narrative's credibility. As the story progresses, however, the reader becomes more aware that the narrator is losing her grip on her former reality and is being illuminated by another reality. This new existence will consume her until she emerges a grotesque.

Gilman skillfully employs the narrative voice to illustrate the development of the narrator as a grotesque. As the narrator gradually descends into madness, she detects in the wallpaper first eyes, then women, then a woman with whom she identifies. The story emphasizes John's patriarchal condescension in his treatment of his wife. Because he staunchly forbids her writing, she writes clandestinely. Her diary entries

trace her illness from its earliest symptoms to its fully degenerated state.

This story, however, is much more than a simple first-person narrative; it is, in fact, a dramatic monologue in prose. Told in the narrator's words throughout as she surreptitiously pens them, the reader is made aware of the speaker, the setting, and the auditor. It is fitting that in this instance the auditor is the "dead paper" (10) upon which she writes; she does not expect to be read any more than she expects to be heard. Like Browning's dramatic monologues, Gilman's story places the reader within the narrator's mind, there to experience the world as the narrator experiences it. The details which Gilman chooses to allow the narrator to divulge serve to illuminate the entire situation within which she acts and reacts to the extent that the reader is able to grasp not only the narrator's subjective view but also many truths of the entire situation that may not be evident to the narrator's conscious mind.

For example, late in the story the narrator begins to think "John is beginning to notice" (Gilman 31) that the paper is being stripped from the wall. She does not "like the look in his eyes," and she has "heard him ask

Jennie a lot of professional questions." Her conclusion is that "John and Jennie are secretly affected" by the paper, while it "only interests" her (32). The reader, however, can visualize husband and sister-in-law looking with astonishment at the mutilated walls and with horror and fear at the narrator who seemingly does not realize that such a change in the walls will be immediately apparent; the reader knows that her strange behavior affects them, not the wallpaper. This story produces much the same effect on the listener as Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" or "In the Laboratory" which begin innocently enough but soon alert the reader through small details that some horror is about to unfold.

In reading the story aloud, a reader can distinguish two voices: one is that of a more independent woman who thinks for herself, and the other is simply that of the wife who reflects her husband's ideas. Several critics have commented on these two voices. Av Drude Daae von der Fehr intuits two voices and puzzles over the splitting of the ego into the narrating and the narrated (51). Richard Feldstein recognizes two voices as he distinguishes between

the protagonist who stops writing in her journal

> and the narrator who produces that journal. . . . Could it be possible that Gilman intended the narrator to be both the same as and different from the protagonist, just as she believes the protagonist to be the same as and different from her double(s) [sic] . . . . (276-78)

Diana Price Herndl notices that "the persona shifts from the woman in the room to the woman in the wallpaper" and concludes that the "final scene . . . leaves open the question of whether we are reading a madwoman's text, a sane woman's post-facto description of madness, or an impossible text, one that could never have been written" (73).

Catherine Golden's article entitled "The Writing of 'The Yellow Wallpaper': A Double Palimpsest" sheds more light on the two narrative voices. She perceives this story as palimpsestic, one in which the "hallucinations and dramatic actions of tearing the wallpaper and creeping on the floor comprise the dominant text, but the writing comprises the second muted text, . . . [which] shows how the narrator fictionalizes herself as the audience of her story" (193). Golden makes distinctions between the madness of the narrator's actions as consti-

tuting the dominant text while the narrator's fictionalized image of herself as the auditor of her diary makes up the muted text. Furthermore, Jeffrey Berman notices that at

> the beginning of the story, the narrator and the author are indistinguishable, but as the former becomes terminally insane, the latter remains firmly in control of the narrative, allowing the symbolic power of the wallpaper rather than authorial intrusions to expose the full horror. At the end, the narrator and author are worlds apart" (57).

With every writer there are almost certainly two voices, one of the narrator and one of the teller-creator, although these two voices are most observable when the narrator uses the first person. Melville's Moby Dick, for example, is told from the viewpoint of Ishmael, but Ishmael is not Melville, and Poe's House of Usher is told by an unnamed narrator who certainly is not Poe. Nevertheless, Melville's and Poe's voices are there somewhere within the texts, separate from their narrators' voices. Similarly, in presenting each individual portrait of the pilgrims in the "General Prologue" of The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer the pilgrim is

not Chaucer the poet, even though he uses the pronoun "I" and is named Chaucer. These first person narrators are not omniscent but are as fallible as any intelligent human observer can and will be. Sometimes the teller-creator's voice, at times identical with I. A. Richards' speaker-composer, is so faint that the reader cannot detect it at all. Gilman, however, somewhat like Chaucer, frequently allows the teller-creator voice to become detectable; in this, her most subtle work, the teller-creator voice is mostly faint, but it is detectable. Just as Chaucer's narrator is human, finite, and fallible, so is Gilman's narrator. For instance, Chaucer the pilgrim admires the "Christian" Knight, the Pardoner, and the Prioress, but Chaucer the poet deplores the Knight's bloodthirsty, mercenary nature which causes him to ally himself with one heathen to fight against other heathens and to go on three chivachies with his young son (the Squire) in a Christian land, destroying every living creature, burning Christian villages and plowing the ground into a field. Chaucer the pilgrim shows a reserved admiration for the Pardoner; Chaucer the poet condemns him as beyond redemption. Chaucer the pilgrim admires and reveres the Prioress; Chaucer the poet de-

plores her excesses and petty breaches of religious doctrine. Somewhat similarly, Gilman's narrator, finite and human, is conditioned to think and behave as a wife of her time. Gilman the teller-creator, however, deplores the narrator's inferior position in the domestic arrangement, and the teller-creator's displeasure is observable in much the same way as is Chaucer the poet's in that the echoing voice emerges only in retrospect. It is only upon reflection that the reader recognizes Gilman's voice in the echoes reverberating from the narrator's mad scene when she expresses her own, and Gilman's, frustration and anger at her cramped position in life. Chaucer the poet wages a necessarily subtle campaign against abuses within the church; Gilman wages a not-so-subtle war against the abuses many women endured.

Recognition of the teller-creator's voice, however, does not solve the puzzle of the two distinct narrative voices. For that, consideration must be given to the "blank paper" that is the auditor of the story. Diaries are meant to be read by the person writing them, in this case a woman who no doubt sees her life as a "blank." Walter Ong states that the "diarist pretending to be talking to himself has also, since he is writing, to

pretend he is somehow not there. And to what self is he talking: To the self he imagines he is? Or would like to be?" (20). Gilman's narrator wishes to be, and perhaps sometimes imagines she is, a strong independent woman with views and opinions of her own. For example, in one instance she strongly asserts, "I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good" (10). A few lines later, however, she is weaker in her assertion as she thinks about John: "I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus--. . . ." Then, as she considers what "John says," she meekly concurs with him: ". . . but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad" (10). Whenever her mind shifts toward John, the wifely narrator reflects his thoughts, words, and wishes, but the moment her mind drifts away from thoughts of John, she becomes stronger and more independent. This double identity, or alteration of the persona, increases the degree of ambiguity and sometimes the degree of truth which Gilman is able to reveal.

Another instance of the narrator's vacillation occurs in their disagreement over bedrooms. The narra-

tor expresses her dislike of their bedroom and describes with enthusiasm the pretty downstairs room she wants. After "John would not hear of it" and tells her his rational reasons for his choice of the upstairs bedroom with barred windows, however, she merely utters, "He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.. . . I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more" (12). In this instance the narrator has once more voiced an opinion of her own only to concede it then to John's logic. Here, however, her expression of guilt at not valuing John's "loving" attentions indicate her ambivalent feelings toward John's prescriptions and her recognition of those feelings.

The reader sees in these examples the strong narrator and the submissive wife. As the story progresses, the independent voice emerges and gradually becomes more prevalent, distorting her previous sense of truth as her grasp of that reality fails her. She now sees John pretending to be "very loving and kind," (32) whereas before she had assured herself that John "loves me very dearly" (21); she thinks Jennie "betrayed herself" when she is amazed at the condition of the paper and laughingly tells the narrator that she, Jennie, "wouldn't

mind" tearing it off herself (33), whereas before the narrator had considered Jennie "Such a dear girl" (17). She is completely authoritative for the first time at the end of the story when John attempts to open the locked door and she reverses the direction of John's supercilious "little girl" (23) with her own supercilious and condescending term of address as she cries, "It is no use, young man, you can't open it" (35). Finally, when John opens the door and sees her condition, she screams, "I've got out at last . . . in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!" (36). At this point the submissive wife has disappeared, and the independent narrator has fully emerged in a mad distortion of the independent personality sometimes detected at the beginning of the story.

As a device to manipulate narrative voice, the diary form of this story is superb. By recording entries in her diary, the narrator can in some measure perhaps, to paraphrase Ong, pretend that she is not there at all. This suggestion of schizophrenia is heightened by her exclamation at the end of the story that she has gotten out of the paper "in spite of you [John] and Jane." If

Jane denotes the narrator's rational self, as some critics postulate (see chapter six of this study), and if the narrative voice at the end of the story is not named Jane as it indicates it is not when it names Jane in the third person, then some sort of division has occurred. The narrator's fictionalized self, to borrow Golden's term though not her conclusion, has become dominant. Rather than suffering writer's block, an idea which Golden presumably extrapolated from an observation by Fetterley ("blocked from expressing herself <u>on</u> paper, she seeks to express herself <u>through</u> paper"; Fetterley 162; Golden 200n2), the narrator has written her rational self, her Jane self, out of its unbearable situation, and her exclamation "in spite of you and Jane" indicates her own complicity in her patriarchal bondage. She had wished to be a strong independent woman, had fictionalized that she was one, but she was too conditioned by her society to believe in her own self. The voice of Jane has been stilled, and John is confronted with a grotesque caricature of the voice of the strong independent woman.

As previously suggested, Gilman's counterpointing in this story, and in many of her other stories as well, involves the reality of one marriage as opposed to the

romance preceding marriage that Gilman felt was too frequently the subject of fiction. While John's treatment of his wife and her subsequent madness may be an exaggeration or distortion of the plight of most women, Gilman realized that distortion, and even shock at times, was necessary to make her readers understand that women should be treated as adults.

In this story, Gilman's use of the grotesque may be described somewhat as J. Cotter Morrison described grotesque art in an essay on Browning's Caliban Upon Setebos:

> Its proper province would seem to be the exhibition of fanciful power by the artist; not beauty or truth in the literal sense at all, but inventive affluence of unreal yet absurdly comic forms, with just a flavour of the terrible added, to give a grim dignity, and save from the triviality of caricature. (quoted in Arthur Symons [125] by Smalley xiiin)

Because of the basic grimness of Gilman's narrator's impending madness, scenes which contain possible elements of humor become grotesque. For example, it is comically absurd for a grown woman to be kept in a nursery with the same safety features which thoughtful

parents provide for children. Likewise, when the narrator is afraid Jennie wants to tear the wallpaper off the wall herself, readers almost smile in spite of themselves at the absurdity of her delusion, but horror prevents laughter. Also, the very idea that an adult would write surreptitiously, then hide the writing when anyone approaches has possible comic overtones, but a full realization of the narrator's apprehensions precludes a comic response. Additionally, the scene in which the narrator throws the key out the window and the domineering, usually precise and correct John must fumble around under the plantain leaf looking for it has comic possibilities; the awkwardness of the situation certainly provides a potential for comic relief, but Gilman denies the reader any relief from the grimness of the story. As a final example, the narrator's exclamation, "Now why did that grown man faint?" as she proceeds to crawl over his body is funny, first, because the unflappable John has been finally compelled to look at his wife and confront reality and, second, because only the narrator in her present state of deteriorating sanity could possibly be surprised at John's reaction. Yet, no one laughs.

Gilman's narrator enters the world of the grotesque

when she is forced to live someone else's truth. Sherwood Anderson defined a grotesque as one who "took one of the [many] truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it." This person "became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood" (5). Gilman's narrator gradually becomes a grotesque in trying to live by John's truth, his certainty that everything in life can be explained by logic--his logic; she is untrue to herself and attempts to live a lie, while John labels her truth, her intuitive responses to life, falsehood by urging her to use her will power to control her natural impulses.

Gilman's use of the two voices of the narrator as distinct from her own teller-creator voice in "The Yellow Wallpaper" depicts woman's capacity as an adult and the psychic damage that occurs when an adult is treated as a child. Both partners in this marriage suffer immeasurably. The strong voice of the narrator, which gradually emerges as madness descends, finally expresses the anger and frustration that had been pent up within the wife as she attempted to cope with patronage

and condescension as well as the anger and frustration that Gilman the teller-creator experienced because of the patriarchal attitudes expressed toward the women of her day.

In order to counteract these patriarchal attitudes, to emphasize the female's potential, and to educate the public about the desirability of incorporating female contributions into society, Gilman frequently uses distortion. In this particular story she utilizes the gothic genre to express her horror at woman's entrapment in society's predetermined "prepositional" roles which often precluded her full development as an adult human being. As a result of her reactions to her entrapment, Gilman's narrator becomes a grotesque when, to use Fleenor's terminology, "self-fear and self-disgust directed toward the female role" override her cultural conditioning. The following chapter is directed toward a fuller understanding of that culture and its implications for women.

CHAPTER IV

"THE YELLOW WALLPAPER" AND THE FEMALE GOTHIC: VICTORIAN SOCIETAL AND MEDICAL VIEWS

> The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her, who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days.
>
> . . .
>
> I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me.
>
> - - - Kate Chopin

Gilman's narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a product of her society, and the story is an indictment of that society. The house in the story, as well as the grotesque yellow wallpaper with its pattern of contradic-

tory angles which the narrator stares at all day and much of the night, and the nursery room symbolize "both the culture and the heroine," the second point of Fleenor's definition of women's gothic. In order to understand this symbolism, the reader must understand Victorian societal and medical viewpoints about women. This discussion will provide further clues about the Victorian woman's feelings of self-fear and self-disgust mentioned above and stated as the third point of Fleenor's definition. Continuing the discussion of "The Yellow Wallpaper" as an example of the Female Gothic according to Juliann Fleenor's definition, this chapter will center on the Victorians' beliefs about women, how those beliefs were reflected in the women's lives, and what sometimes happened when women experienced conflict between those beliefs and their own need for self-fulfillment.

Much of Gilman's writing asserts that women were considered inferior males and hence inferior humans because the ideal human had been defined by male qualities. It is as if a vestige of the old Platonic idea of the goddess of love who nevertheless possesses all male appendages lingers on in this Victorian society: ". . . Heavenly Aphrodite, or Love who springs from a goddess

whose attributes have nothing of the female, but are altogether male . . . . and is [therefore] innocent of any hint of lewdness" (Plato, Symposium 535). Plato's attitude is surprisingly similar to the pervasive attitude of Victorian men and women that the female reproductive organs, dominating her body and mind, were less attractive--more obscene even--than were the male reproductive organs. Victorian society decreed that woman should be "chaste, delicate, and loving" yet that she was also "controlled physically and emotionally by her reproductive organs." She was perceived as a paradoxical creature "both higher and lower, both innocent and animal, pure yet quintessentially sexual . . . . driven by the tidal currents of her cyclical reproductive system" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Puberty" 24).

This Platonic and Victorian concept of male superiority is diametrically opposed to Gilman's theory that the female was the trunk of humanity and the male was only a grafted branch. Perhaps two directly contradictory ideas struggling within the same mind would be so unsettling as to propel the mind toward insanity. "The Yellow Wallpaper" specifically addresses the problem which this Platonic interpretation of male superiority

presents; the narrator's primary difficulty appears to be her inability to accept her unequal domestic and marital position which her husband and guardian assumes as a given, as well as John's insistence upon his wife's conforming to his prescriptions for every detail of her life, thus denying her individuality. In fact, if their culture thought that woman's will was so innately weak, then John's insistence that the narrator stringently exercise will power to control her imagination amounts to a greater cruelty than critics have previously noted, as he knowingly urges her to overtax her wits.

The contradictions and conflicts evolve within the heroine because she is a child-woman whose culture has decreed that she must behave as both child and woman. No wonder she has difficulty in understanding the floor plan of her gothic edifice, not to mention her existence. The effort to fulfill the two extremes of the male concepts of femininity and of motherhood has made her sick; she suffers from an illness called hysteria--John euphemistically calls it "a slight hysterical tendency"--which was common among all classes of women and some men but which especially afflicted middle-class white women of the nineteenth century. This strange malady and its

manifestations which assaulted the inadequacy of medical knowledge in the nineteenth-century are almost identical to the symptoms depicted in the hysterical woman in "The Yellow Wallpaper."

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg observes that hysteria may be viewed as an alternative which some women chose when they could not accept or fulfill the roles society expected of them, and she cites three factors which interacted to make hysteria a possible option for so many women ("Hysterical Woman" 655):

> first, the various experiences that caused a woman to arrive at adulthood with significant ego weaknesses; second, certain socialization patterns and cultural values which made hysteria a readily available alternate behavior pattern for women, and third, the secondary gains conferred by the hysterical role in terms of enhanced power within the family. (654n5)

The ideal woman was expected to be "emotional, dependent and gentle--a born follower," while the ideal mother was expected to be "strong, self-reliant, protective. . . , efficient" (Smith- Rosenberg, "Hysterical Woman" 656). In addition, as Smith-Rosenberg continues, she was

expected to "face severe bodily pain, disease and death--and still serve as the emotional support and strength of her family" (657). Reared to be fragile and dependent in order to gain her man, she was suddenly expected to be the opposite in relation to childbearing and childrearing. These dichotomous expectations seem enough to send any woman into her bed--alone--or out of her mind in search of some other reality. The hysteric was reacting against her society's cultural conditioning in which women were "routinely socialized to fill a weak, dependent and severely limited social role" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Hysterical Woman" 677). Discouraged from "expressing competition or mastery in such 'masculine' areas as physical skill, strength and courage, or in academic or commercial pursuits," they were "encouraged to be coquettish, entertaining, non-threatening and nurturant" (677). Their anger and frustration spilled over into hysterical behavior, a socially acceptable form of rebellion. Gilman's narrator was, therefore, as Smith-Rosenberg notes, "both product and indictment of her culture" (678).

Primitive childbirth practices of the narrator's culture possessed their own gothic elements, for child-

birth was a mysterious and frightening experience for which women were frequently unprepared. Kept ignorant of the facts of their own biology, young women faced the birth of their first child in utter ignorance of the procedure. The unknown was frightening enough, but subsequent births possibly produced greater fear because of the known, for primitive childbirth procedures did not generally include anesthesia nor were there classes in natural childbirth. S. Weir Mitchell, the prominent neurologist mentioned in "The Yellow Wallpaper," wrote that although most women would experience pain as "a grim presence in their lives" (Mitchell, Doctor and Patient 84), they were not trained to deal with pain realistically but "were encouraged to respond to pain and stress with tears and the expectation of elaborate sympathy" (Mitchell 92). Given these expectations, many women sought refuge in hysteria, an illness with varied symptoms: "nervousness, depression, the tendency to tears and chronic fatigue, or of disabling pain" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Hysterical Woman" 660). During the first part of the nineteenth century, the most characteristic symptom of hysteria was "the hysterical 'fit,'" which produced symptoms similar to an epileptic seizure. By

the end of the century, "physicians had categorized hysterical symptoms which included virtually every known human ill":

> They ranged from loss of sensation in part, half or all of the body, loss of taste, smell, hearing, or vision, numbness of the skin, inability to swallow, nausea, headaches, pain in the breast, knees, hip, spine or neck, as well as contracture or paralysis of virtually any extremity. (Smith-Rosenberg, "Hysterical Woman" 662)

Some symptoms were not physical, however. "An hysterical female character gradually began to emerge" in the medical literature:

> Doctors commonly described hysterical women as highly impressionistic, suggestible, and narcissistic. Highly labile, their moods changed suddenly, dramatically, and for seemingly inconsequential reasons. . . .[She] was egocentric in the extreme, her involvement with others consistently superficial and tangential. While the hysterical woman might appear to physicians and relatives as quite sexually aroused or attractive, she was, doctors cautioned, essentially asexual and not uncommonly frigid.

(Smith-Rosenberg "Hysterical Woman" 662-63)

Further, doctors were not always sympathetic toward the hysterical woman. Many were "caustic, if not punitive" towards her because they were baffled by the illness itself and because these women "did not function as women were expected to function, and . . . the physician who treated them felt threatened both as a professional and as a rejected male" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Hysterical Woman" 663). Ann Douglas Wood reiterates Smith-Rosenberg's assertion as she reports that nineteenth-century physicians tended to view these ailments as a means of shirking domestic duties and to consider those same duties as their patient's cure, instead of the cause, of her illness: "Self-sacrifice and altruism on a spiritual level and childbearing and housework on a more practical one, constituted healthy femininity in the eyes of most nineteenth-century Americans" (Wood 7-8).

Because they believed that hysteria might not be a real disease, doctors frequently viewed hysteria as the effects of the indolence and leisure prevalent in the lives of the middle and upper classes or the grueling labor and sensuality supposedly prevalent in the lives of the working classes. They felt that mothers should devel-

op in their daughters self-discipline, dedication to domestic duties, and firm control of their emotions. Physicians and laymen alike equated hysteria with "[e]motional indulgence, moral weakness and lack of will power" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Hysterical Woman" 667).

S. Weir Mitchell, whose name is the most notable among all others in the Gilman canon, was one physician who nevertheless appears to have been genuinely sympathetic to the hysteric and to women in general. His rest cure was in direct contradiction to the popular local treatments of women's "nervous" ailments, that of cauterization of the uterus with nitrate of silver or perhaps with leeches placed "on the vulva or neck of the uterus" (Wood 4). Sometimes these leeches would enter the cervix, and the English gynocologist Dr. James Henry Bennet, who had a wide following in America, wrote: "I think I have scarcely ever seen more acute pain than that experienced by several of my patients under these circumstances" (Bennet 237). Compared with these horrors, patients would no doubt welcome Mitchell's cure:

> When he said "entire rest," he meant it. For some six weeks, the patient was removed from her home, and allowed to see no one except the doctor and a

> hired nurse. Confined to her bed flat on her back, she was permitted neither to read, nor, in some cases even to rise to urinate. The massage treatment which covered the whole body lasted an hour daily. Becoming progressively more vigorous, it was destined to counteract the debilitating effects of such a prolonged stay in bed. Meanwhile the patient was expected to eat steadily, and gain weight daily. (Wood 5)

Even Mitchell, however, described the hysterical woman as representative of

> the pests of many households, who constitute the despair of physicians, and who furnish those annoying examples of despotic selfishness, which wreck the constitutions of nurses and devoted relatives, and in unconscious or half-conscious self-indulgence destroy the confort of everyone about them. (Lectures on the Diseases of the Nervous System 266; Fat and Blood 37)

In "The Yellow Wallpaper," John's prescription for his wife accurately reflects Mitchell's treatment for hysteria: rest in an isolated place, plenty of good food, no excitement, and no work. Although historians some-

times tend to view physicians' harsh medical procedures in dealing with women's ailments as indicative of male hostility toward women, the relatively unenlightened state of medical knowledge and the harsh medical procedures used on both men and women must be kept in mind. During this period when so-called "heroic" medicine was practiced, doctors "'tortured' men and women indiscriminately" (Morantz 47). If physicians were particularly hostile toward women--and some were--they were probably reflecting their society instead of the medical profession per se, and these same men might have been hostile toward women if they had chosen any other profession.

One symptom of hysteria which Gilman's narrator experiences well into her illness is agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces or the need to feel enclosed and protected by walls. William James likened the agoraphobic's concern with remaining indoors to the "death-shamming instinct shown by many animals" and likened the agoraphobic's "terror at the sight of any open place or broad street which he has to cross alone" to the way that "many wild animals, especially rodents, cling to cover, and only venture on a dash across the open as a desperate measure" (2:421-422). Gillian Brown considers this

phenomenon a symptom of the conditions surrounding "American economic life" (136) in her discussion of Bartleby's agoraphobia:

> what inhibits the agoraphobe is the commerce that inhabits American life. . . . The agoraphobic recourse when outside the house to the protection of interiors or companions or shielding edifices represents an effort to retain the stability and security of the private sphere. (136)

Late in her illness after her "slight hysterical tendency" (Gilman 10) has become insanity, Gilman's narrator develops agoraphobia. Early in the story she speaks of the "delicious garden" (11) and does not like her room (12). As the story progresses, however, she begins to enjoy it:

> I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper (15); I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps because of the wall-paper (19).

At this point in the story the narrator is still walking "a little in the garden or down that lovely lane" (19), but at the end of the story after she has identified with the woman behind the wallpaper, she exclaims:

> you don't get me [Gilman's emphasis] out in the road there! . . . It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please! I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to. [In this room] . . . I cannot lose my way" (35).

At this point the narrator is guided around the room by a mark she has made on the wall with her shoulder.

Freedom to produce her own self, her thoughts, instead of fitting herself to a circuitous mark on the wall might have ensured the narrator's sanity. In Women and Economics, Gilman writes that "[e]conomic production is the natural expression of human energy" and that "the desire to make, to express the inner thought in outer form, 'just for the work's sake' . . . is the distinguishing character of humanity. 'I want to mark!' cries the child, demanding the pencil" (116-117). As Walter Benn Michaels notes, it is crucial to the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpapaer" to make her mark, a synonym for her writing, in order that she establish her identity:

> If the threat of hysteria is the threat of losing self-control, of sometimes becoming someone else,

> the point of marking is to produce evidence that you are still the same person. Your mark is a continual reminder that you are you, and the production of such reminders enforces the identity it memorializes. From this perspective, the hysterical woman embodies not only the economic primacy of work but also the connection between the economic primacy of work and the philosophical problem of personal identity. The economic question--How do I produce myself? --and the therapeutic question--How do I stay myself? --find their parallel in the epistemological question, How do I know myself?--or more specifically, as James puts it, How do I know today that "I am the same self that I was yesterday"? (Michaels 7)

By the time the narrator has become agoraphobic, she has been denied her writing, "the power of language to shape [her] vision" (Lidoff 110)--her "marking" as Michaels puts it--that might have ensured the formation and preservation of a more normal identity. Still, she finds a way to make her mark and thereby keep her new identity: "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" (Gilman 35). For weeks she has

crept along the wall, making her mark, until her shoulder has formed her very own identifiable line, her signature, on the wall, a fact that had caused Jennie some consternation when she found yellow dye from the paper on the narrator's clothes earlier in the story. With her shoulder fitting into her mark, she is constantly aware of her identification with or identity as the woman who came from behind the wallpaper, a bizarre identity, indeed, but one she made her very own as she repeatedly made her mark on the wall over the preceding days and weeks.

The narrator's assumption of an alternate identity implies an underdeveloped sense of ego, or weak ego boundaries, one of the effects of some women's upbringing even today that can add to a woman's difficulty in establishing an identity of her own. Although both sexes must separate themselves from their oneness with their mothers in order to form their own separate personalities, girls apparently have more difficulty than boys in effecting individualization (Veeder 14). Carol Gilligan explains the reasons for this difference:

> Girls, in identifying themselves as female, experience themselves as like their mothers, thus fusing the experience of attachment with the process of

> identity formation. . . . male development entails a 'more emphatic individuation and a more defensive firming of experienced ego boundaries'. . . . For girls and women, issues of femininity or feminine identity do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation. (Gilligan 7-8)

Furthermore, Gilligan relates that "girls emerge from this period with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self" and that "females tend to have problems with individuation" (Gilligan 8). Girls, then, like their brothers, must detach themselves from their mothers in order to form their own identities, but unlike their brothers, they cannot detach themselves completely because they must learn their femininity from their mothers. In order to feel empathy rather than sympathy for someone, a woman must be able to place herself mentally in the other person's situation and to feel what the suffering one must be feeling, an action that often accompanies the nurturing instinct. It may be that women frequently possess this quality more often than men do because they do have weaker ego boundaries that permit them to move around and merge, at least

mentally, with their fellow human beings. In addition, a woman's biological makeup can add to her difficulties in forming and maintaining an identity:

> Woman's biosexual experiences (menstruation, coitus, pregnancy, childbirth, lactation) . . . all involve some challenges to the boundary of the body ego. (Chodorow 59)

Woman's body is a host to other bodies. With the onset of puberty when a young girl knows that her body is capable of producing a child, she feels different, set apart from her brothers. In the past this difference was not pleasant, for her activities were curtailed and she was taught that she must behave like a little lady. Being a lady frequently meant standing on the sidelines looking on while her brothers enjoyed life. She must conserve her energies "for the full development of her uterus and ovaries" (Smith-Rosenberg, "Puberty" 27). Penetration of her body by her husband during coitus, hosting another body during pregnancy and then later in a different way during lactation, and the helplessness to aid her body during childbirth all work together to make a woman also feel she has no control over her body; at the mercy of others during much of her life, she has no

real identity except as someone's sister, someone's daughter, someone's wife, someone's mother--Gilman's "prepositional" relationships. As Norman N. Holland observes, "[t]he more usual gothic defines its heroine's anxieties as fears of nothingness, of vulnerability, and, above all, of sexual penetration" (Holland and Sherman 220). This frequently hidden theme in gothic literature reflects the concerns in women's lives.

In discussing both Gilman's and her heroine's weak ego boundaries, Veeder notes that Gilman herself "was extremely open to relationships" as a child and that she also "felt extremely vulnerable to disintegration" (42). Gilman's own father was absent from the home, and her mother was strict and undemonstrative in her love for her daughter. The narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" undoubtedly possesses weak ego boundaries also. One evidence is the unusual affinity she reports feeling for the furniture in her room when she was a child. She also personifies the wallpaper:

> I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. . . .I never saw so much expression in

an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! (Gilman, TYW, 16)

She then wanders back in her memory to the "kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have" and to the "one chair that always seemed like a strong friend. I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe" (17).

One expects a person to remember hopping into a parent's lap for safety, but the narrator identifies instead with a chair. It is interesting that the narrator's parents are virtually absent from her story. All family members are mentioned except her father: her brother is a physician, and her mother accompanies sister Nelly and her children on only one visit. This mother then absents herself, for whatever reasons, from her ill daughter just as that daughter absents herself from her young son. Femininity and mothering are learned from the mother. Studies have shown that abused children become abusing parents and that even animals must have mothering role models if they are to know how to mother. This is not to say that the narrator has been an abused child necessarily, but perhaps she was a neglected child.

For some reason even as a child she personified and related to the furniture in her room; now as a young mother she is rebelling against motherhood and forming a symbiotic relationship with her wallpaper instead of with her baby. Furthermore, her father is pointedly absent from the story, and her mother breezes in and breezes out. These points in the story ironically fulfill the part of Fleenor's fifth point that states that women's gothic "reflects a patriarchal paradigm that women are motherless, yet fathered." In this case John and the narrator's physician-brother appear as father figures, and for all practical purposes there is no mother figure present.

It is, however, impossible to discuss the formation of female identity without discussing also the mother-daughter bond in greater detail. A girl must identify with her mother, yet as stated earlier, she must separate herself from her mother enough to form her own identity. Referring to Chodorow's theories again, Gardiner states:

> To mother maturely, a woman must develop an identity sufficiently flexible that she can merge empathically with her child and still retain an adult sense of herself as nurturing yet independent.

. . .

> . . . learning to be a mother . . .[is] learning to experience oneself as one's own cared-for child and as one's own caring mother while simultaneously learning to experience one's creation as other, as separate from the self. (356-357)

This discussion of the importance of the mother-daughter bond in the formation of the female personality brings the gothic novel back into focus, for the gothic heroine is usually motherless but is the ward of a wicked stepmother of sorts. Jane Eyre, for example, is the ward of her Aunt Reed, a harsh, unloving woman, and Radcliffe's Emily is at the mercy of her aunt and the wicked Montoni. In the gothic, as Leona Sherman notes, "one might find . . . two versions of mother: a nurturing mother who should be trusted and a sexual mother who should not" (Holland and Sherman 228). This ambivalent attitude toward the mother is a direct result of a girl's attempt to pull away from her mother to form her own identity while at the same time emulating her to form her femaleness. Juliann Fleenor writes that "the conflict at the heart of the Female Gothic [is] the conflict with the all-powerful, devouring mother":

> This maternal figure is also a double, a twin perhaps, to the woman herself. For the mother represents what the woman will become if she heeds her sexual self, if she heeds the self who seeks the power that comes with acting as the mother, and if she becomes pregnant. The ambivalences surrounding the conflict with this awesome figure are in part shaped by the twofold knowledge that to become the mother is to become the passive and perhaps unwilling victim of one's own body. . . .[T]he popularity of the Gothic for women writers and readers appears to exist . . . because it expresses this confrontation with one of the central enigmas of female existence, the relationship of mother and daughter. (The Female Gothic 16)

The love-hate relationship between mothers and daughters may be clarified also by analysis of Eugenia C. DeLamotte's discussion on the Hidden Woman in the gothic genre although DeLamotte speaks only of "woman" and not of "mother." This Hidden Woman can be a "Good Other Woman, longsuffering and angelic, whose imprisonment and/or death was unmerited" or she may be an "Evil Other

Woman, who got no more than she deserved and is now either dead, or sorry for her sins and about to die. The revelation of these sins usually implicates her as a bad (selfish) mother, a bad (undutiful) daughter, and/or a bad (sexual) woman" (5). These two Hidden Women may be viewed as two contrary aspects of every woman's personality. The Good Other Woman, or the Good Mother, aspects of the personality can be admired, but the Evil Other Woman, or Bad Mother, aspects indicate selfishness as opposed to selflessness, attention to self as opposed to attention to others, recognition of her sexuality and all its implications instead of the assumption of asexuality or frigidity. To face and accept the Evil Other Woman or Bad Mother qualities within herself may not have been possible for many women. Yet, to be always longsuffering and angelic as is Thackeray's Amelia, for example, meant to be nothing, to have no real identity or selfhood. Gilman's narrator experiences conflict as she, like her society, equates formation of self with selfishness and abdication of selfhood--always concurring with John's opinions--with selflessness. As this study avers in a later chapter, one aspect of her being also desires an active sexual life, a need she may interpret

as evil. The gothic novel which portrayed evil, sensual women who received their just punishment and the vindication of the good but misunderstood woman may have acted as a catharsis for these women. By reading these books, they could experience "evil" vicariously yet return to the safety of their restricted lives unscathed.

One clue that the gothic served as a catharsis for both its female readers and writers is the difference between men and women authors' portrayals of marital bliss as a factor in female madness. Male authors have usually reflected their impressions of the importance of marital bliss for women by having their women characters go mad if they are deprived of domestic felicity. Euripides' Medea, Shakespeare's Ophelia, Shakespeare and Fletcher's Jailer's Daughter, Dickens' Havisham, Goethe's Gretchen, and Faulkner's Emily Grierson are but a few examples of male writers' concepts of female madness, and in each instance, the madness comes on all at once as a direct result of deprivation or anticipated deprivation of marital felicity, loss of the desired male principle. Jason threatens to abandon Medea for a younger mistress; Ophelia suffers the double loss of marital bliss with Hamlet and the approval and loss of

her father; the Jailer's Daughter, suffering from unrequited love for Palamon, commits suicide; Dickens' Havisham, rejected at the altar, becomes a permanently immured recluse; Gretchen, abandoned by Faust, loses not only any hope of marital bliss but loses her brother, kills her infant, and degenerates into a protective insanity; and Emily becomes a recluse, murderess, and madwoman, presumably because her man will not go to the altar and intends to leave her. These women created by male authors go mad almost in an instant because they are denied marital bliss. Apparently, therefore, men considered marital felicity necessary for a woman's real happiness; the loss of her man was enough to drive a woman insane instantly.

Characters created by female authors, however, have frequently been driven mad by the dullness of domestic bliss. They do not fit comfortably into their roles as calm, resigned wives and mothers. Specific examples include the narrator in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Doris Lessing's protagonist in "To Room 219," Kate Chopin's heroine in The Awakening (if, indeed, she was mad), and Gloria Steinem's mother in "Ruth's Song (Because She Could Not Sing It)." Contrary to a pater-

nalistic society's views, each of these women goes mad gradually, not instantly as male authors portray, and their madness is a result of the lack of any real identity of their own, not because they are denied marital bliss but as a direct result of their attainment of it. Being a "mirror image" which merely reflects the male principal's life and views means the sublimation of their own selves. They attempt to cope in the roles assigned to them, but ultimately one of the basic laws that defines a human being, the need to recognize one's very own selfhood, interferes, and they cannot.

Unable to recognize her own selfhood, the gothic heroine employs her castle or room to symbolize both herself and her culture, as Fleenor mentions in the second point of her definition. Further, Leona Sherman reiterates what this study has illustrated thus far: "the primary motivating fear in gothic is of nothingness or nonseparation" (220). She believes that the castle is important to the heroine because "in the castle, you can have the merging and the otherness, along with the threat of annihilation. There life exists on the boundary" (220). The narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" almost immediately feels some sort of affinity for the house to

which she is taken. She realizes it is "a hereditary estate" (Gilman 9), perhaps a metaphor for the patriarchal society in which she lives, but she almost revels in its strangeness, perhaps a metaphor for her own mind: "I will proudly declare there is something queer about it" (9). She wants the house to be even more queer, haunted even, another indication that it may be equated with her mind and that she does not, at least on one level, wish to live in a normal house or to experience the world in a normal way. Perhaps she is haunted by her unfulfilled self.

At first the narrator does not like the large upstairs nursery that John has decreed will be their bedroom, and she dislikes even more intensely the horrible yellow wallpaper with its curves that "destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions" (13). Yet, as this study has illustrated, Victorian society dictated contradictory behavior for its women: passive acceptance on the one hand and active nurturing on the other. The nursery room symbolizes the narrator's infantile passivity to her husband's demands and her subsequent reversion to an infantile state, and the curving contradictory paper symbolizes the struggle transpiring within the narrator as she at-

tempts to reconcile the two Victorian dictates with each other and with her own inner dictate for some autonomous space in which to think, to write, to realize who she is, to form an identity.

The gothic edifice, in this case the nursery room, can also represent the maternal relationship to the heroine since it encloses her as she was first enclosed within her mother, then within her mother's care and influence. (Undoubtedly, the abnormal mother-daughter relationship between Mary and Charlotte created tremendous insecurities which were quite probably relegated to Charlotte's subconscious.) Holland's and Sherman's observation about the gothic enclosure seems especially applicable to Gilman's narrator:

> it [is] a recapitulation of that earliest stage in human development, when the boundaries between inner and outer, me and not-me, are still not sharply drawn, and self cannot distinguish itself from the mother, who is the outside world.
>
> . . .
>
> Because . . . [it] presents a markedly untrustworthy Other that encompasses the entire not-me, physical escape becomes the only way of meeting its threats. From this comes the paradigmatic pattern

> of the gothic: persecution followed by flight, flight being the outward turn from threatened sexual penetration or intrusion. (220-221)

The heroine in this gothic space pursues an active quest to discover the secret of the wallpaper and ultimately of herself while also playing the passive role. If she can accept her mother's sexuality, she can also accept her own, for she identifies with her mother as female. As Sherman maintains, a woman must confront and accept her mother's sexuality and treat it as "her [mother's] secret":

> The mysteries are the issues of sex and birth and death and, too, the necessity of knowledge and concealment in a tension between known truths and feelings within and conventions and lies required from without. The castle with its family secret is the embodiment of this, the gothic denial. (231)

Since the narrator's mother plays no role in this story, it is difficult to ascertain whether the narrator can accept her mother's sexuality. Because she has difficulty accepting her own, however, the reader can surmise that she might not be able to accept any woman's sexuality.

DeLamotte's Good Other Woman and her Evil Other

Woman and Sherman's nurturing mother and sexual mother may be viewed as two aspects of the same person as she attempts to discover her own identity and to resolve the seeming paradox of the dichotomous aspects of her psyche. This paradox results in a dread that Judith Wilt correctly observes creates the horror and the anger in the gothic (5). Whenever people feel that their lives are out of their control, for whatever reason, they become frightened and angry. In a society wherein a person's destiny is controlled by biology, wherein that person is kept ignorant of the facts surrounding that biology while viewing the effects of those facts on her mother and other women, the mystery of life can easily assume horrible faces which produce dread, terror, and anger. In addition to retarding identity formation in the woman, her biological processes can create real fears that can assume monstrous proportions. Childbirth, for example, can be traumatic, but dealing with the baby after it is born can be even more traumatic because child care can easily lead to loss of freedom and even loss of identity, loss of self. Actually, in a sense giving birth can be viewed as losing a part of oneself. To say, therefore, that the mother's life is different after she has

a baby is an understatement. The mother usually does not have an independent life after she has a baby. Especially in the nineteenth century, a woman was expected to devote her entire being to her family at the expense of her own identity, a fact that may be at the heart of the popularity of the gothic.

As women wrote and read gothic novels, they wrote and read about their own deprived and stultified lives, their fears and their hurts. Mary Shelley, for example, wrote Frankenstein during a period of prolific childbearing and prolific child death. She was constantly pregnant from the age of sixteen until she was about twenty-one, and most of her babies died. No matter how much she loved Shelley, her life must have been filled with grief and anguish. The fact that she was not married (at least when she began writing Frankenstein) must have added to her pain, for her father disowned her and her society condemned her. Ellen Moers calls Frankenstein "a birth myth" (92) in which Shelley "brought birth to fiction not as realism but as Gothic fantasy" (93). She adds that "Frankenstein seems to be distinctly a woman's mythmaking on the subject of birth precisely because its emphasis is not upon what precedes birth, not

upon birth itself, but upon what follows birth: the trauma of the afterbirth" (93). Frankenstein abandons his newborn, nameless monster, displaying "revulsion against newborn life, and the drama of guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequences" (93). While most mothers do nct give birth to literal monsters, their babies can seem almost monstrous in their parasitic features, in the weight of responsibility which the conscientious mother feels for her child, and in the guilt she bears because these feelings co-exist with her mother-love. Frankenstein runs away when he realizes the enormous consequences of his dabbling with creation. Most mothers do not run away, but many want to at some time, and most do suffer some depression after childbirth; some, in fact, suffer such debilitating postpartum depression they never fully recover.

In her discussion of "The Yellow Wallpaper," Juliann Fleenor states that "one of the major themes in the story, punishment for becoming a mother (as well as punishment for being female), is supported by the absence of the child" ("Prism" 235). There is a childlike being present, however. The narrator is an adult large child created by her society generally but by her husband

specifically. Like Frankenstein, who plays at being a god by modelling a "human" being out of charnel house remains and who creates a monster he cannot control, John insists on modelling his wife according to his notions of what a wife should be and creates a being as grotesque as Frankenstein's monster and as impossible to control.

In her discussion of Frankenstein, Elizabeth MacAndrew observes that his

> hold on us is inescapable, mythic, because the consequences of his deeds are horrible out of all proportions to his intent in performing them. It is just so that we look on the possibility of evil in ourselves, knowing as we do so many mitigating circumstances, convinced as we are that we are indeed compassionate beings" (101).

The same can be said for John, the guardian of his wife in "The Yellow Wallpaper." He is no doubt a compassionate person, but the consequences of his deeds are horrible out of all proportions to his intent in performing them. He, in fact, actually believes he is helping his ward. MacAndrew's comment that in attempting to create a man, Frankenstein has also made a monster of himself and that his new creation is his

"double, representing . . . his whole, complex spiritual state" (103) is almost equally applicable to John. When his wife becomes mad, her monstrousness reflects his own--and their society's--monstrously bankrupt spiritual state.

John faints, in fact, when he is forced to look at the monster and realizes in one breathtaking epiphany what he has created with his supercilious and condescending practitioner's prescriptions. Since the story stops here, the reader does not know how he behaves later, how he deals with the ineluctable consequences of his monstrous creation resulting from his monstrous failure, or whether, indeed, he ever realizes or admits his culpability. As Frankenstein begins to pursue his monster to destroy it, he begins a "journey of self-discovery" (MacAndrew 104) which reveals to him his own evil heart. John's story, however, could not be completed because Gilman herself did not know how it would end. Since "The Yellow Wallpaper" depicts a vignette out of one nineteenth-century marriage, readers must analyze the information they are given and speculate about the ending. Without changes of moment and consequence in the minds of both men and women, all marriages

risk such results emanating from the experience of inequality. If only John can arise to begin a "journey of self-discovery" that will free him and his wife. If only his wife can regain her sanity and live to work productively in the world alongside John.

In summary, the gothic conditions Victorian women frequently encountered in life made the gothic tradition in literature appealing to them both as readers and as writers. Inwardly angry and frustrated with their society's view of their status as human beings, a view which allowed them a narrow sphere within that society and which often demanded that they behave as child-women, these women often, as has already been stated, developed mysterious illnesses as a means of escaping their onerous duties. Frequently they were diagnosed as suffering from hysteria, a strange but real illness that exhibited a potpourri of physical and emotional symptoms. The one symptom all shared, however, was the inability to function effectively as wives and mothers. Using Fleenor's five-point definition of women's gothic as a loose framework, this chapter and the preceding one have discussed "The Yellow Wallpaper" as an example of that genre. The following two chapters will continue the gothic interpre-

tation of the story with a study of two types of doubling frequently encountered in the gothic tradition, the doppelgänger and the beloved Other.

CHAPTER V

"THE YELLOW WALLPAPER" AND THE GOTHIC: THE DOUBLE AS EVIL SELF

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I--I hardly know, Sir, just at present--at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar, sternly. "Explain yourself!"

"I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

---Lewis Carroll

The Victorians' smugness at what they considered their unique position at the zenith of civilization was shaken by a combination of the announcement in 1858 of Darwin's (and Alfred Wallace's) theory of biological evolution and archaeological evidence that even greater civilizations had existed millenia earlier. The realiza-

tion that they were but one among many civilizations, and perhaps not even the most advanced, in the long evolution of man through eons of time coupled with the industrial revolution that was propelling people from their quiet lives in the country into the cities' bustle and confusion caused a feeling of displacement among many that led to feelings of bewilderment. Nothing seemed certain anymore. God and His heaven receded and left a void in people's lives that they attempted to fill with monetary gain and worldly success. Time itself was measured differently. Railroad travel, for example, often replaced the slow pace of the coach, and the steamship crossed the Atlantic at twice the speed of the wind-driven ship.

Nineteenth-century English literature as early as Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, for example, contains hints of the existentialism that would be portrayed more graphically by others as the century progressed. Tennyson's In Memoriam and Browning's Child Roland to the Dark Tower Came are but two of several other examples that come immediately to mind. In America the trend developed somewhat later, but well before the middle of the century conditions prevailed that inspired Poe to write his

gothic tales dealing with divided personalities and a few years later inspired Melville to voice his dissatisfaction with Wall Street in his portrait of Bartleby who preferred to turn his face to the wall rather than join the race for riches.

The doppelganger, a device frequently employed in gothic literature, is one reflection of the fragmentation that people sometimes experienced as a result of the inevitable conflicts that arose when Victorian attempts to live industrious new life-styles that made every moment count collided with psyches geared to a slower age when time had been measured by nature's revolving seasons. In addition, some people experienced the sense of a loss of identity in their attempts to cope with a new knowledge of the world that affected them in much the same way as Copernicus's discovery of the sun-centered universe affected many people in the seventeenth century.

In particular, women in the middle- and upper-classes suddenly fouund themselves saddled with a hitherto unknown burden because, unlike their sisters in the lower classes who had to work outside the home to help feed their families, these women were expected to develop and

maintain a gentility and refinement that excluded responsibilities outside the home, except, possibly, engagement in minor charitable ventures. Their status in their society, that of a valuable and necessary asset to their husbands' business success and to their children's future prospects, dictated that they develop those traits which would qualify them as the Angel in the House that Virginia Woolf would later realize she must exorcise if she were to become a writer. From her pedestal the ideal Victorian woman ran her household, her virtue and goodness diffusing a glow of tranquillity upon the home, making it a peaceful haven from the hustle and bustle of the outside world for her husband. Her brain, however, incredible and incomprehensible as it may seem a mere century later, was not considered sufficiently complex to ponder, let alone to promulgate, decisions on the weighty issues surrounding business, politics, religion, or any other intellectual pursuits of moment.

Gilman believed that women, like men, needed challenging work and mental stimulation to develop those qualities that made her human. She viewed the traditional home as antiquated and advocated communities consisting of kitchenless houses, community kitchens,

laundries, and baby-gardens. Of the effect on women of confinement to the home, Gilman writes in The Home:

> She is feminine, more than enough, as man is masculine more than enough; but she is not human as he is human. The house-life does not bring out our humanness, for all the distinctive lines of human progress lie outside. (217)
>
> . . .
>
> The widespread nervous disorders among our leisure-class women are mainly traceable to this unchanging mould which presses ever more cruelly upon the growing life. Health and happiness depend on smooth fulfilment [sic] of function, and the functional ability of a modern woman can by no means be exercised in this ancient coop. (225-226)

Because she is not allowed mental stimulation, the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" experiences a dissociation within her cooped self that results in her identification with her "mirrored" double as she perceives her in the complex interlaced pattern of the wallpaper.

This chapter will examine the doppelgänger from a psychoanalytical viewpoint and will use Otto Rank's seminal work, The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study, to de-

fine that phenomenon. It will also provide a detailed examination of Dostoevsky's The Double and Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," followed by a cursory examination of several works that depict doubling by both men and women authors, in an attempt to discover whether an author's gender influences the depiction of the doppelgänger. The discussion of Gilman's story will continue the original interpretation that runs throughout this dissertation; in this chapter the wallpaper's pattern is viewed as symbolic of the paternalistic male logic that entraps the narrator.

In Freudian terms doubling sometimes happens in real life when the unconscious usurps conscious processes, enabling a person to "see" a part of himself, actually a splitting off or fragmentation of one of the structures of the personality as a separate being, or fragment. According to Freud, all such manifestations can be traced back to infancy when self-love or preoccupation with self predominated. Briefly, Freud divides the personality into three psychological processes: the id, the ego, and the superego, which are often compressed into two ontological entities, the ego and the alter ego. The id is that part of the personality that "represents the inner world

of subjective experience and has no knowledge of objective reality" (Hall and Lindzey 33). It "consists of everything psychological that is inherited and that is present at birth, including the instincts" (33). If the id is allowed full control, a person will behave as an uncivilized barbarian, satisfying instinctual needs at any cost. The ego is "the organized portion of the id" (34), the civilizer, so to speak. It mediates between the id and the external environment. The ego can be thought of as the conscious mind, while the id can be thought of as the unconscious mind. The ego's "subordinate objectives are to maintain the life of the individual and to see that the species is reproduced" (35). It civilizes a person, but "if the ego fails to satisfy the instincts, the id reasserts its power" (43). One way or another, the instincts will be satisfied. The third process is the superego or what might be termed the conscience. It is "the internal representative of the traditional values and ideals of society as interpreted to the child by his parents . . . . Its main concern is to decide whether something is right or wrong so that it can act in accordance with the moral standards authorized by the agents of society" (35).

Tension results when these three processes are not properly balanced, when the ego opposes the id or the superego opposes the ego, for example. Let repression become too severe, and the personality may divide and the divided part then may project itself onto some "real or imagined other" (Vernon 14); for example, in cases of paranoia, the superego may split off from the other two processes to assume a life of its own: "Projection reduces anxiety by substituting a lesser danger for a greater one, and it enables the projecting person to express his impulses under the guise of defending himself against his enemies" (Hall and Lindzey 50). The narrator in Gilman's story, therefore, projected her identity upon the woman in the wallpaper because that identity, though it resulted in insanity, presented a lesser danger to her sense of self than did living in John's world.

The double in literature often represents these conflicts by appearing to the projecting person, and sometimes to other characters as well, as a mirror image of the protagonist. In his essay "The Uncanny," Freud observes the existence of such affinities as a result of similar physical appearance:

Thus we have characters who are considered to be

> identical because they look alike. This relationship is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another--by what we call telepathy--so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings, and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, or that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing, and interchanging of the self (234).

For instance, in Poe's "William Wilson," the double acts as the first William Wilson's conscience, arriving on the scene at moments of extreme need. Wilson is always furious with his double's presence and, finally, in an attempt to kill him kills himself. According to Otto Rank, the "impulse to rid oneself of the uncanny opponent in a violent manner belongs . . . to the essential features of the motif" (The Double 16-17). Unfortunately, killing one part of the self results in the death of the entire self, as William Wilson learns.

Freud's theory is illustrated by Hanns Sachs in The Creative Unconscious as he elaborates the idea that

the four brothers in Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov illustrate the "fragmentation of Dostoevsky's soul" (Rogers 3):

> All four of them are Dostoevsky himself. Each is a part of his mind. . . .Every one of the four is a perfect absolutely complete human being; with none of them [do] we get the impression that he is only a part or particle of an individual . . . . Yet while all these figures are complete individualities as far different from each other as human beings can be, there is still a mysterious bond between them; we feel that they have in spite of all diversities a hidden identity which becomes manifest in their common urge for parricide. (Sachs 343-44)

Psychoanalysts who examined the subject "demonstrated that this use of the double-theme derived not so much from the authors' conscious fondness for describing preternatural situations . . . or separate parts of their personalities . . . as from their unconscious impulse to lend imagery to a universal human problem--that of the relation of the self to the self" (Tucker, Introduction, Otto Rank, The Double xiv).

Whether or not Gilman's use of the doppelgänger in "The Yellow Wallpaper" was an unconscious impulse or not is debatable. She did tell William Dean Howells that the story was written "with a purpose" (Living 121), but she averred that the purpose "was to reach Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, and convince him of the error of his ways" (Living 121; Forerunner 4. 271). Another purpose may have been the exploration of the phenomenon of the divided self. Though the story rises from Gilman's "social awareness" of the situation of women in her century (Hedges 46), it is also a fictionalized account of some autobiographical experiences. Gilman writes that the story "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" (Living 119). Gilman's biographer, Mary A. Hill, states that while the story may indicate Gilman's interest in helping other imprisoned women, it also "portrayed the violent anger that accompanied the fight to free herself, the desperate struggle that ultimately resulted in the breakup of her marriage" (CPG 151-152). In Theory of Literature, Wellek

and Warren focus on a writer's doubling as revealing potential aspects of the self:

> The novelist's potential selves, including those selves which are viewed as evil, are all potential *personae* . . . . Dostoevsky's four brothers Karamazov are all aspects of Dostoevsky. (90)

Likewise, the angry woman in Gilman's story must be one facet of her own self which she took out and examined, perhaps in an attempt to understand and dispel her anger.

Based on the example of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Rogers distinguishes between *latent* and *manifest* fragmentation. Latent fragmentation as illustrated in this novel is implicit, while manifest fragmentation as illustrated in Dostoevsky's novella *The Double* is overt, or explicit (4). In *The Double* the protagonist, a clerk named Golyadkin, encounters one Golyadkin, Jr., his alter ego who is almost a physical (manifest) "mirror image" of himself but who is quite unlike him in action and bearing. In this same study Rogers uses the terms "doubling, splitting, fragmentation, and decomposition" synonymously, as well as the terms double and composite character (4). He also distinguishes between "doubling by multiplication and doubling by division." *The Brothers*

Karamazov exemplifies doubling by division,

> "the splitting up of a recognizable unified psychological entity into separate, complementary, distinguishable parts represented by seemingly autonomous characters. Illustrative of doubling by multiplication would be the appearance in a story of several characters, all of whom are [for example] father figures representing a single concept of, or attitude toward, the father" (5).

Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" demonstrates doubling by multiplication, for the many women she sees creeping behind the wallpaper and out in the open countryside, and the woman behind the wallpaper with whom she finally identifies, represent women like herself who are stifled within a patriarchal society. Dostoevsky's The Double exemplifies simple division of the protagonist into one other recognized by Golyadkin as himself and named Golyadkin, Jr. Late in the story this simple division is compounded by multitudinous doublings which all look like Golyadkin. In this respect they are similar to the women behind the wallpaper in Gilman's story.

Otto Rank assesses Golyadkin as "paranoiac." He believes that Dostoevsky "lent many traits of his own

personality" to Golyadkin, and quotes Hoffman as saying that Doestoevsky "repeatedly termed him his 'confession'" (Rank 47; Hoffman 49). Lawrence Kohlberg disagrees with this assessment on the grounds that a typical paranoid sees himself as an innocent person unjustly persecuted by others, a person who cannot conceive of an evil double of himself. He argues that Golyadkin, as well as Dostoevsky's other doubles, appears to be obsessive-compulsive instead of paranoid. Rather than a splitting of selves (or the facets of the personality), this type of decomposition is "an obsessive balancing or undoing of one idea or force with its opposite" (345-362). Rogers thinks Kohlberg must be thinking of the manifest double:

> His argument that awareness of a double self is not characteristic of paranoia naturally does not hold for instances of the <u>latent</u> double; in fact, latent doubles like Shakespeare's Iago and Melville's Claggart turn out to be classic paranoid personalities. Projection, the defense mechanism so basic in paranoia, is only one typical characteristic and by itself not a defining feature; i.e., projection can be seen in other syndromes and even in "normal" psychology. (177n30)

A close reading of The Double reveals traits of paranoia as well as of the obsessive-compulsive personality. Since many readers, however, may not be familiar with this novella, a brief synopsis of it will introduce or refamiliarize, as the case may be, and will illustrate Golyadkin's disintegration of personality so as to clarify Dostoevsky's treatment of this device. Later in this chapter a comparison of Dostoevsky's and Gilman's handling of incipient insanity and of the double will provide a deeper insight into Gilman's narrator and her relationship with her double.

Dostoevsky's Golyadkin is a clerk on the lower scale who regards himself as a skilled copyist. He is flawed even in the fulfillment of his responsibilities as a clerk, and he is almost devoid of all social graces and skills. His internal agony becomes increasingly evident as the story progresses. One vignette depicting a visit to his doctor captures in a capsule his social ineptness:

> Having neglected to get ready his first sentence, which was invariably a stumbling block for him on such occasions, he muttered something--apparently an apology--and, not knowing what to do next, took a

chair and sat down, but, realizing that he had sat down without being asked to do so, he was immediately conscious of his lapse, and made haste to effect his offense against etiquette and good breeding by promptly getting up again from the seat he had taken uninvited.

Belatedly recognizing his incompetence, he attempts to rectify this lack of social grace:

on second thought, dimly perceiving that he had committed two stupid blunders at once, he immediately decided to commit a third--that is, tried to right himself, muttered something, smiled, blushed, was overcome with embarrassment, sank into expressive silence, and finally sat down for good and did not get up again.

Then, to protect his ego and apparently to counter any suspicions the doctor might possess about his sanity, an indication that Golyadkin harbors some suspicions himself, he decides to go on the offensive and glares at the doctor defiantly:

This glance, moreover, expressed to the full Mr. Golyadkin's independence--that is, to speak plainly, the fact that Mr. Golyadkin was "all right,"

that he was "quite himself, like everybody else," and that there was "nothing wrong in his upper story." (Dostoevsky 63-64)

Golyadkin's double, Golyadkin, Jr., appears on the scene after Golyadkin, Sr., has again made a fool of himself, this time by crashing a family birthday party given for the beautiful Klara Olsufyevna. After being forcibly evicted, he rushes in humiliation "away headlong, anywhere, into the air, into freedom, wherever chance may take him" (92). As he flees from his "enemies," he fancies that someone is beside him; then later he actually sees a stranger whom he knows "perfectly well" (97). To his amazement, the man precedes him to his own flat and is waiting for Golyadkin when he arrives. From this moment on his manifest "mirror image" insinuates himself into every situation Golyadkin encounters, even finding employment as a clerk in Golyadkin's department.

On meeting his manifest "mirror image," Golyadkin is struck with horror. Earlier his paranoia was evident in his statement to the doctor that he has malignant enemies who have sworn to ruin" him, and that he wants the doctor to tell him how to get his revenge (68). Later

his paranoia reasserts itself as he attempts to understand the phenomenon of a man who is so much like himself that in a sense he is himself and yet he is not himself. "They are simply plotting to frighten me, perhaps, and when they see that I don't mind, that I make no protest, but keep perfectly quiet and put up with it meekly, they'll give it up . . ." (100). The reader does not comprehend the identity of the "they" that Golyadkin continually mentions but suspects the pronoun refers to everyone who is not Golyadkin; he perceives some sort of overbearing power in almost everyone in his world. Given his personality, this perception of evil in others appears to be a projection from his own psyche onto mankind. His perceptions that others behave in a mean-spirited fashion from ulterior motives emanate from his own malicious character which he hides behind a servile demeanor, and he finally perceives this quality in a double who looks exactly like himself.

Although Golyadkin's double is physically his twin, he conducts himself in society as Golyadkin wishes he could . Golyadkin, Jr., is so successful at work that he is soon given special assignments and is admitted to the inner circle that Golyadkin so envies. Readers have

difficulty knowing whether Golyadkin, Jr., is projected onto a real man or whether he is merely a figment of Golyadkin's imagination. For example, at one point Golyadkin talks with Anton Antonovitch, his superior, about the new clerk's striking resemblance to himself, and Anton Antonovitch agrees that they are similar, but by this point in the story, it is not clear that even this conversation actually takes place outside Golyadkin's mind or, if it does, that Anton Antonovitch is not just humoring Golyadkin (106-107). The narrator is not Golyadkin, but frequently he does tell the story from Golyadkin's perspective, albeit he often adds nuances that escape Golyadkin but reveal to the reader the actual state of affairs in Golyadkin's external world as well as the conflict taking place within Golyadkin's mind. Sometimes, though, he is silent and allows readers to form their own opinions about the reality of Golyadkin's world.

Another ambiguous incident presents itself in Golyadkin's receipt of a letter from Klara Olsufyevna begging him to elope with her. As he waits in her yard at the designated time, deliberately planning to leave while a party is in progress, he feels for the letter but finds

that it is missing. Golyadkin is certain that it has fallen into "evil hands," those of his double who will now use it as evidence against him. Suddenly he notices that those inside Klara's large house have crowded to the windows en masse to gape at him. His double then rushes out and drags him inside against his will, "straight up to Olsufy Ivanovitch," Klara's father (204).

After Olsufy Ivanovitch receives him warmly, the narrator makes the interesting observation that Golyadkin feels reconciled with everyone, even "his noxious twin (who seemed now to be by no means noxious, and not even to be his twin at all, but a person very agreeable in himself and in no way connected with him) . . . " (205). It seems possible to him now, and to the reader, that the civil service hired a new clerk coincidentally at the same time Golyadkin's hallucinations began, that Golyadkin feared this clerk was hired to replace him, and that he projected his double's features onto this man who is everything Golyadkin would like to be.

After this brief period of lucidity, Golyadkin experiences a momentary loss of consciousness and feeling followed by the two Golyadkins performing a mirror action as they attempt to shake hands, an action that

might have reconciled the two selves had it been successful. The mirroring ends, however, as Golyadkin's paranoia reasserts itself:

> At this point it seemed [italics supplied] to Mr. Golyadkin senior that his perfidious friend was smiling, that he gave a sly, hurried wink to the crowd of onlookers, and that there was something sinister in the face of the worthless Mr. Golyadkin junior, that he even made a grimace at the moment of his Judas kiss . . . . (207)

The verb "seemed" in the above citation, rather than the simple statement that Golyadkin, Jr., was smiling, provides one clue that much of the action of the story actually transpires within Golyadkin's mind, and his inability to reconcile with his double indicates the final break between his two selves.

As the Judas kiss is planted on his cheek, Golyadkin, like Gilman's narrator, experiences multitudinous doubling: "it seemed to him that an infinite multitude, an unending series of precisely similar Golyadkins were noisily bursting in at every door of the room. . ." (207). At this point Mr. Golyadkin junior and the physician appear on the scene to assist Mr. Golyadkin senior into a

carriage which whisks him away, presumably to a sanitarium, his double running alongside the carriage for some distance. The kindly doctor, possibly like the kindly Dr. Weir Mitchell or the kindly John, now appears to Golyadkin as an emissary of Satan sent to transport him to hell: "Our hero shrieked and clutched his head in his hands. Alas! For a long while he had been haunted by a presentiment of this" (210).

The paranoia manifesting itself in the minds of Golyadkin and of Gilman's narrator results in simple doubling and for whatever reasons--for protection or destruction--manifests itself also in multitudinous doubling but not necessarily in the same order in each character. According to Otto Rank, four motifs are common to all authors who use the doubling device:

1. The double "primarily appears to the main character as a reflection."
2. The double "works at cross-purposes with its prototype."
3. "The catastrophe occurs in the relationship with a woman, predominantly ending in suicide by way of death intended for the irksome persecutor."

4. The protagonist often suffers from the "persecutory delusion . . . thus assuming the picture of a total paranoic system of delusions." (The Double 33)

All these criteria occur in whole or in part in Dostoevsky's novella except that Golyadkin does not attempt to kill his double as, for example, William Wilson or Dorian Gray do, although he does hate Golyadkin, Jr., enough to kill him and except for his pusillanimous nature would do so; and he certainly wishes to exterminate him from his sight by escaping from his presence.

Gilman's story also does not meet all these criteria. Her narrator's double is a more diffused "mirror image"; her double's working at obvious cross-purposes is more subtle because the narrator first resists her, then whole-heartedly joins her as this siren sucks her into madness; the ultimate catastrophe does involve the opposite sex, in this case, a man, but, contrary to Rank's criteria, the narrator wants to liberate rather than kill her double; the narrator does suffer from delusions of persecution, and therefore she is paranoid.

Much of Gilman's narrator's conflict arises from the

same sort of patriarchal society which spawns Golyadkin's conflict. There are some parallels between the status of a clerk, one of the lowest orders of public servants, in nineteenth-century Russia and that of a middle-class married woman in nineteenth-century America. The clerk had little money with which to be independent, and although the woman may have had some access to her husband's money, she was not independent because he determined its use and her actions. Golyadkin ultimately loses his sanity because he is essentially without identity, a nobody who desperately wants to become a somebody but who lacks the self-confidence and the social knowledge and grace to interact successfully with other people. Consumed by his ego, Golyadkin's superego, like that of Poe's William Wilson, splits off and instructs him in the proper behavior necessary to excel. Gilman's narrator, however, faces a somewhat different situation. Her conflict arises from the differences between her innate sense of logic and that of the patriarchal society which shapes both her and her husband's world views. She and her husband are different in disposition and perception, yet because she has internalized the belief that the male view is the correct one, she

finds it difficult to trust her own impressions. She laments that "John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures" (Gilman 9). In contrast, the narrator intuits "things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures," and she possesses a lively imagination that would like to pretend that the deteriorating mansion which they have rented for the summer is haunted. The reader who thrills at hints of mystery and gothic phenomena can feel her delicious sense of adventure as she speculates on that possibility.

John is also a practical physician who believes his wife's "slight hysterical tendency" can be healed by a regimen of "phosphates or phosphites . . . tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise" and no "work" (10). He tells his wife and friends and relatives that she has only a "temporary nervous depression," but the patient herself believes she is sick and that "congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good" (10).

So begins a descent into madness through which the narrator will finally experience a doubling of her personality. The conflict between John and his wife and within

the narrator herself is reflected in the following schema:

* She believes she is ill, and she believes that John does not believe she is ill;
* She disagrees with John about the conditions of her cure; her view of the world, contrary to her upbringing, is in many respects different from his;
* She is ambivalent about her writing, which can be viewed as ambivalence toward a more independent, active life. On the one hand, she believes it is good for her; on the other hand, she agrees with John that it is not;
* She feels guilty because she disagrees with John's logic.

The narrator's impatience with John is easily understood. He seldom agrees with his wife's analyses. He laughs at her when she thinks something about the house is queer; he shuts the window and tells her she feels a draught when she says "there is something strange about the house--I can feel it" (11); she hates their bedroom, but John has "logical" reasons why she cannot move to prettier ones downstairs; in short, they actually agree on little. She wants to trust her own intuitions, but she

has been conditioned to trust instead John's learned logic. As she accepts his analyses and explanations and always negates her own, she finds herself negating her very self.

Writing might be a means of realizing her identity, but she is ambivalent about her writing, wishing to write but not wishing to disobey John, her physician and her husband, or her brother who is also a physician: "I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a great deal--having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition" (10).

This confession suggests that her exhaustion is related more to her guilt at disobeying John than to the writing itself. John is "stern" and "reproachful"--and frightened. If he were not frightened, he would allow his wife to name her illness, and he could discuss it with her. Instead, he inadvertently succeeds in assuring her that if her condition deteriorates, it will be her own fault: she will have fancied it so strongly, she will have brought it to pass. Now she has something else to feel guilty about. Guilt, according to Otto Rank, is the "most prominent symptom of the forms which the double takes . . . [it] forces the hero [and we must assume the

heroine, I suppose] no longer to accept responsibility for certain actions of his ego, but to place it upon another ego, a double" (76). Gilman's narrator gradually places the responsibility for her independent thinking upon the woman she perceives in the wallpaper.

Like Golyadkin, Gilman's narrator sometimes sees the multitudinous double. Unlike Golyadkin who sees his double early in the story, she imagines that she sees multitudinous doubles before she focuses on her single double: "I always fancy I see people walking in those numerous paths and arbors (15). Then she gradually begins to discern a single entity inside the paper:

> Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.
>
> It is always the same shape, only very numerous (22).
>
> Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one . . . . (30)

She finally identifies the multitude of eyes in the paper as those of women who have died trying to escape: "They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white! (30).

Unlike Golyadkin who ultimately identifies with the

multiple doublings he sees as "many Golyadkins," this narrator sees many women who she thinks may have come from the wallpaper, but she ultimately identifies with only one of them:

> "I don't like to look out of the windows even--there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.
>
> I wonder if they all came out of that wallpaper as I did? (35)

At this point the narrator has become one with the woman she discerns in the wallpaper.

Also like Golyadkin, she exhibits many of the classic symptoms of paranoia. The earliest indication of a mild paranoia is her realization and resentment that John does not think she is really ill when it is obvious that they came to the country solely for her recuperation. Her paranoia becomes more marked later as she becomes possessive about the paper and suspicious of Jennie's and John's intentions. She relates that she has watched him and "caught him several times looking at the paper! and Jennie too. I caught Jenny with her hand on it once."

She asked Jenny "in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper." Jenny was so startled, "she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry--asked me why I should frighten her so" (27)!

Later, when Jennie is amazed at how much paper her sister-in-law has pulled off the wall, Jennie laughs and says she wouldn't mind pulling it off herself. The narrator reacts with paranoia: "How she betrayed herself that time! But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me--not <u>alive</u>!" (33). By the very end of the story, the narrator as submissive wife is no more. She has rescued the woman from behind the wallpaper and identifies with her fully. She shrieks at John that she has gotten out at last "in spite of you and Jane" (36), indicating that she was also responsible for her patriarchal imprisonment, if, indeed, her name is Jane as some critics, including this one, believe. Her cooperation is indicated by her vacillation throughout the story toward John's overbearing conduct. The part of her that has been conditioned by her society and prevented from maturing wants to cooperate with John in continuing the immature behavior that allows her to be cared for as a

child; another part of her being, however, demands the opportunity to grow and mature. Some critics have seen this ending as an escape, a kind of victory over John. According to Gilman's philosophy, however, both John and his wife are losers. Gilman believed mankind was capable of evolving into a higher order only if the female were allowed to develop her potential along with the male. Otherwise, woman's immaturity and dependence would hold the race back from its full growth.

Dostoevsky's Golyadkin and Gilman's narrator both see their "mirror images," then, but with a difference. Gilman's narrator is able to identify with the creeping shadow woman because she appears as that submissive wife perceives herself to be: a creeping shadow figure. When she identifies fully with this phantom, she is no longer Jane, a sane woman struggling to be, to have an identity, but a non-person with no name. Gilman in many respects has followed the classic examples of doubling in literature, but instead of hating her double and attempting to kill it as male doubles frequently do, Gilman's narrator eventually begins to love her double and attempts to liberate her as she would like to be liberated herself. When that act is complete, she and her double are one

and the same in her tormented mind.

These women struggling to free themselves from the bars created by the multitudinous lines that form the pattern of the wallpaper suggest an interpretation of the wallpaper as symbolic of the nineteenth-century society which imprisoned women in their homes and kept them from developing full self-identity, especially since the pattern's contradictions and confusions stimulate the narrator's insanity. Viewed from this perspective, the pattern represents patriarchal logic, a "sprawling flamboyant pattern committing every artistic sin" which spreads flamboyantly over the fabric of society. This logic is embedded so firmly in people's minds that it is "dull" and therefore unobtrusive but so prevalent it seems to be a natural law. It is pronounced enough, though, to be a constant irritant and to "provoke study," but to no avail. The wallpaper pattern curves lamely, but persistently, before committing suicide by plunging into "unheard of contradictions" (13), as much of paternalistic logic would be seen to do if it could be examined objectively.

In addition to the curves and contradictions, the pattern contains "a recurrent spot where [it] lolls like

a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down. . . . absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere" (16). These eyes covering the walls (multitudinous doubling) watch her constantly with "much expression" (16). Big Brother makes sure she does not write, or, at least, he watches while she does, reminiscent of the old Protestant hymn, "There's An All-Seeing Eye Watching You." No doubt these eyes are a product of the guilt she feels when she disobeys John by writing or by thinking her own subversive thoughts. As her illness progresses, these eyes, these multitudinous doublings, become embedded in women's heads which are "strangled off" as the women attempt to escape:

> "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!
>
> If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad. (30)

This pattern of recurring heads and bulbous eyes is "not arranged on any laws of radiation or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of" (20). The laws of this paternalistic logic,

then, actually follow no natural laws at all. If looked at from one perspective, "each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes [denoting pompous circumlocutions and circumstance] . . . go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity" (20). Each principle seems to stand alone in isolation, but actually on closer inspection "they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase" (20). Thus each principle is propped up by another principle in a diagonal weaving so that the entire logic which at first appeared straight is now seen to slant on the bias. To make matters worse, it also "goes horizontally" and is capped off with a "horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion" (20). This paternalistic "logic" produces a confusing pattern of intermingled straight, diagonal, and horizontal "truths" that will later be seen to form bars that imprison a shadowy woman who represents half the human race.

Sunlight (or daylight) and moonlight play contrasting roles in illuminating the truths in this story. The room has many windows and evidently no shades or curtains, so sunlight, perhaps suggestive of the male god

Apollo, and moonlight, perhaps symbolic of the female goddess Diana, stream through the room without constraint. The sunlight masks the bars so that all that is visible is confusion to the narrator, the pattern's "lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind" (25) that represents the paternalistic logic the narrator cannot decipher. At this point her mind is beginning to show signs of stress caused by her efforts to comprehend the "torturing" pattern of the logic that has been forced upon it:

> You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream. (25)

This passage subtly expresses a woman's experience in a man's world. She attempts to master the rules, once she thinks she has finally deciphered them, only to have them turn on her. Only then does she realize that the rules were not established that she might have a life but that her sole contributions to the world would be to provide comfort, consolation, and children to its male inhabitants--in short, to prop up the lives of others.

The daylight shows the pattern to be "a florid arabesque," and male logic is likened to "a fungus," a growth which thrives in dark, dank, unhealthy places, and to "a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions" (25). Jointed toadstools are unnatural, as is the twisted logic the narrator endures. John, however, suffers no discomfort from the convolutions of the pattern; he remains in the room at night and is unwilling to allow his wife to leave. If he sees the horrors she visualizes, then the only explanation for his refusal to allow her to move to another room is sadistic, and the text does not support this conclusion. No, the logic that appalls the narrator seems perfectly natural to John, as it perhaps has to her in the past before she began to study it.

The pattern changes, however, as the light changes: "By moonlight I wouldn't know it was the same paper. At night . . . it becomes bars!" (26). Illuminated by Diana's moonlight, the pattern finally becomes clear to the narrator: These vertical, diagonal, horizontal principles that cross and criss-cross to form so-called "natural" laws actually form bars to imprison the female

members of the race. Further, only at night is the woman behind the bars revealed: "By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour" (26). Male logic serves to keep women quiet either in resigned acceptance of their fate or in attempts to decipher the puzzle; female logic reveals to the narrator the truth about her situation: hers was "a life with no beyond!" (Gilman,"To the Young Wife" in Gilman, In This Our World; quoted by Scharnhorst 10-11). Rather than face that prospect, Gilman's narrator ironically takes refuge in a new identity whose only "beyond" is within her own mind.

While significant differences do exist in the attitudes of Dostoevsky and Gilman toward the doubles in the two works discussed in this study, there are also remarkable similarities. Perhaps gender, therefore, does not account for the differences. A cursory examination of doubling or the manifestation of the other self in Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer," Edith Wharton's "The Triumph of Night," Flannery O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," and Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, for instance, appears to provide evidence that an

author's sex is not an important factor in the doppelgänger treatment.

There are, for example, unmistakable parallels between Gilman's narrator and Conrad's portrayal of a helpful double in his short story, "The Secret Sharer." Like Gilman's unnamed narrator, Conrad's untried sea captain is never given a name, though his double, a fugitive from justice, is named Leggatt. The young sea captain, like Gilman's narrator, is in a stressful situation at the moment his double enters his life. This is his first command, and he is anxious to perform well, but he is aware that the crew watches and judges every movement. Just as Gilman's narrator's identification with and assumption of her double's identity gives her courage to proclaim her identity to John, Leggatt infuses this captain with the aura of authority necessary for successful leadership as he identifies with Leggatt's power of command in crisis. Unlike Gilman's narrator who finally merges with her double, the captain always realizes that Leggatt is a separate being, albeit he does call him his "second self" (382). Nevertheless, he makes an interesting observation that causes the reader to wonder about the reality of Leggatt's physical presence:

> an irresistible doubt of his bodily existence flitted through my mind. Can it be, I asked myself, that he is not visible to other eyes than mine? It was like being haunted.
>
> . . .
>
> I think I had come creeping quietly as near insanity as any man who has not actually gone over the border. (374)

The same sentiments are echoed by Gilman in her autobiography as she reports that one physician who read her story asked if she had been there and she answered, "As far as one can go and still come back." Her narrator, of course, creeps toward perhaps irredeemable insanity by the story's end. Conrad's sea captain, however, wins the approval of his crew because he is a successful captain.

Leggatt's retreat into the sea to avoid detection and thereby to save his innermost self, not from death so much as from the censure of those who adhere to the letter of the law but eschew its spirit, resembles Edna Pontellier's escape into the sea to save her innermost self from being absorbed by the identity which society has reserved for her. Leggatt does not view himself as a simple murderer, as the law of his society does, and he,

like Edna, refuses to be judged by it. After all, he had actually given a command that saved the ship and twenty-four lives during a storm when the ship's captain had become afraid and "whimpered" instead of taking charge (370). In the midst of the confusion Leggatt killed one who refused to acknowledge his leadership in the crisis. Leggatt, unlike Edna who actively seeks death, hopes to reach land and become lost to formal law by being absorbed into another sea of foreigners. At best, he will be homeless but not selfless. Chopin's Edna commits suicide rather than lose a self she has just begun to discover, but there is no evidence she is insane; she, in fact, apparently makes a sane choice to end her life.

Women as well as men write about evil doubles. Edith Wharton, for example, portrays an evil double in "The Triumph of Night." This story has an unusual twist in that John Lavington, a man described as having an "intensively negative personality" (329), refuses to acknowledge his evil double, his true self, which is made visible to another person, the narrator George Faxon. Faxon is a decent enough man, a secretary to the wealthy, who propitiously becomes acquainted with the wealthy nephew, Frank Rainer, and the wealthy uncle.

Although John Lavington professes a great deal of affection for Rainer, Faxon is amazed to view an evil double of Lavington standing behind that one's chair and leering at Rainer with unadulterated hatred, but no one appears to see this creature except Faxon. When asked if he has a double, Lavington denies the possibility, but the very tone of his denial indicates that he is aware that one exists: "Ah? It's possible I've a dozen" (337). Denial of existence in this case is positive assurance that he is fully aware of the existence of his double, in this case an anomalous evil. Unlike Conrad's sea captain who accepts, welcomes, and appreciates his double, Wharton's Lavington attempts to ignore his out of existence and as a result succeeds in creating doubts of the double's existence in the mind of Faxon, who has previously suffered a mental disorder. Finally driven to terror, Faxon rushes from the Lavington estate and leaves Rainer to his fate. Only later does he realize that for some mysterious reason he had been selected by some outside force to save Rainer, but he had fled instead and Rainer died, leaving his estate to his uncle. In this one possibly unique instance of doubling, Lavington, with the aid of his evil double, has thwarted the rescue of the narra-

tor's double, Rainer, Lavington's nephew.

Unlike the other doubles mentioned, Rainer and Faxon are latent rather than manifest doubles, and so are the doubles in Flannery O'Connor's "All That Rises Must Converge" and Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway. O'Connor's protagonist is known only as Julian's mother--one of Gilman's prepositional positions--a white woman in a South that is rapidly changing. Her double, a black woman wearing a "hideous hat" (16) identical to hers, is responsible for an epiphany that causes Julian's mother to die almost instantly: she suddenly realizes that the world as she has known it is gone and that there is no longer a place in it for her. She dies because, as her merciless son Julian informs her, "You aren't who you think you are" (22). Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway's double is the insane Septimus Warren Smith. The doctor has told Septimus's wife that she must make him "take an interest in things outside himself," for there is "nothing whatever seriously the matter with him" except that he is "a little out of sorts" (31); indeed, Septimus's wife explains to her mother that he "has been working too hard" (33). When Mrs. Warren Smith consults the specialist, Dr. William Bradshaw, she is told, however, how very ill

her husband really is, and the cure he must take is very similar to Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure:

> rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve. (150)

The doctor orders Warren Smith to "lie in bed in a beautiful house in the country" (146) and to try to "think as little about yourself as possible" (149); and later both doctors "said excitement was the worst thing for him" (212). Clarissa Dalloway with her "affinities . . . with people she had never spoken to" (231) feels an affinity with Septimus Warren Smith in his death and in his loathing and dread of the physician Sir William Bradshaw. She dislikes Dr. Bradshaw, just as Septimus Warren Smith dislikes him and for much the same reasons. Clarissa identifies with Septimus Warren Smith as she imagines him going to Bradshaw for treatment:

> A great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage--forcing your soul, that was it--if this young man had gone to him, and

> Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that? (281)

As she contemplates the man's death, she identifies further with him, first feeling empathy as she imagines how death came to him and how he met it (280), then thinking that somehow "it was her disaster--her disgrace"(282). But, she feels no pity for him because now he is free from fear as she is not: "She felt somehow very like him. . . . She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. . . . He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun" (283-284).

Woolf's Dr. Bradshaw sounds very much like Gilman's Dr. Mitchell in his personal characteristics, and his admonitions to Septimus Warren Smith are similar to Mitchell's admonitions to Gilman and to Gilman's narrator's experience with her husband John who was obviously following Mitchell's cure. Since Virginia Woolf suffered several breakdowns herself and at one time was treated by a physician who employed that now infamous cure, she, like Gilman, wrote about it from personal experience.

The doppelgänger as the mirror image of the other

self, frequently the evil self or that self that society cannot accept, is a useful vehicle for depicting in literature the dark gothic side of life. Conflicts that cannot be resolved can be projected onto some other real or imagined person, and sometimes the psyche is able to come to terms with this other part of itself and can integrate the two as in Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" or Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, for example. More often, however, the person involved either embraces the double or attempts to destroy it and in the process loses the former identity in insanity or death. Both Dostoevsky's and Gilman's stories illustrate the destructive elements of the double as their protagonists retreat into madness. Sometimes a double is depicted as a vicious other self who is dangerous to other people, as Edith Wharton portrays in her aptly named story, "The Triumph of Night." In a still different depiction of this occurrence, recognition of her double and all that the recognition implies results in death for Julian's mother in Flannery O'Connor's, "All That Rises Must Converge." The various treatments of the double in these examples indicate that gender is not necessarily an influence in the depiction of the doppelgänger in literature. Apparently, the

differences occur from author to author regardless of sex. It is interesting, however, that of the works mentioned, only Gilman and O'Connor depict female doubles, and Gilman's treatment of a manifest double is distinctly female. This observation suggests that the subject of the female doppelgänger may be a promising area for further research.

CHAPTER VI

"THE YELLOW WALLPAPER" AND THE GOTHIC: THE DOUBLE AS LOVER/DESTROYER

Fifteen years form a face, gentleness ebbs with experience, and he was always aware of his own responsibility. He had led the way: the experience that had come to her was the experience selected by himself. He had formed her face.

---Graham Greene

To attempt to analyze doubling in literature, male or female doubling, mirror images or role reversals, is to enter a complex psychological arena. As Albert J. Guerard has noted, the term "is embarrassingly vague, as used in literary criticism." The doubling in "The Yellow Wallpaper" conforms to Guerard's description. In addition to the doppelganger motif, another type of doubling, the search for the beloved Other, is also present. Aristophanes explains the concept as two incomplete people seeking their complement in Plato's Symposium, and, to complicate matters further, Ovid's story of Narcissus and Echo exemplifies the tendency of some to be

drawn to their own mirror images as their Other or, as the epigraph to this chapter suggests, to attempt to form the mate into a suitable image. In this chapter the marriage of the couple in Gilman's story will be examined in an attempt to analyze the failure of the relationship between the married couple in "The Yellow Wallpaper" as the product of two immature people who have not successfully completed the Oedipus or Electra phase of adolescence. Unable to choose a complementary mate, as Aristophanes suggests, they choose their mates for narcissistic purposes that destroy them.

Aristophanes defines love as a joining of two halves to form a whole entity. He relates the story that people were originally androgynous, possessing four arms, four legs, two heads, and so forth, until Zeus in anger split each person into two separate entities which became man and woman. Because of this splitting asunder, each of the two halves seeks its Other to reunite into wholeness:

> . . . ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, seeking to make one of two, and to heal the state of man. Each of us when separated having one side

only, like a flat fish, is but the tally-half of a man, and he is always looking for his other half. (127)

Thus Aristophanes explains the phenomenon of love between man and his other half, and, by extension, love between a woman and her other half (or love between any two humans).

Jung clarifies Aristophanes' concept that each person is but a half being seeking the other half with his theory of the male anima and the female animus, the programmed primordial images of the opposite sex which have developed through eons of history and are stored in the collective unconscious; on the conscious level a man and woman do not necessarily understand the reasons for their sexual attraction to each other. What some consider "chemistry," according to Jung, is merely instinct generated by distant ancestors. Whenever a man and a woman can receive the projections of each other's souls, they have the capacity to become "one":

> No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is, rather, that very masculine men have--carefully guarded and hidden--a very soft emotional life, often incorrectly de-

> scribed as "feminine." A man counts it a virtue to repress his feminine traits as much as possible, just as a woman, at least until recently, considered it unbecoming to be "mannish." The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. No less naturally, the image of woman (the soul-image) becomes a receptacle for the demands, which is why a man, in his love choice, is strongly tempted to win the woman who best corresponds to his own unconscious femininity--a woman, in short, who can unhesitatingly receive the projection of his soul. (189)

Sometimes, however, people seek their own mirror images instead of their other half as their mate. Like Narcissus, they long to see their own reflection in the beloved instead of their beloved's face.

According to Ovid, Narcissus is a beautiful young man who has spurned all potential lovers, including Echo, a beautiful nymph who languishes in her love for him. Echo, who has lost her speech because she kept Juno from discovering Jove's sexual infidelity with her chatter, can only repeat the last syllables of Narcissus' speech.

She does have a body, however, so she throws her arms around Narcissus' neck only to be rejected. After running away, Echo's body shrivels, and after some time only her voice remains. Finally, one spurned lover in exasperation prays that Narcissus will be brought to love himself, and Nemesis hears the prayer and brings it to pass. Thus, on one fatal day Narcissus falls in love with his reflection in the water and from that day longs for that which he cannot have, a longing which eventually causes his death. A later variation of Ovid's legend related by Pausanias (Description of Greece VIII.9.31.60, quoted by Rank in The Double 68) reveals that Narcissus is grieving because of his twin sister's death when he sees his own reflection in the water. Because of his resemblance to his beloved sister, his grief is somewhat assuaged, but love of self leads to death in this instance also. While Narcissus' followers pursue their own psychic duplication, however, the Aristophanean half-being seeks the Other.

Love can be fulfilling or destructive, depending upon the circumstances involved. Sometimes, as in Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher, for example, the search for the beloved Other leads to fixation on a mirror

image of the self, in this case a twin sister. Roderick and Madeline in their narcissistic longing for the unattainable self eventually and predictably destroy each other; somewhat similarly, John's attempts to create his own narcissistic double apparently contributes to his wife's destruction in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper."

The sexual development of both John and his wife appears to have been arrested at a fairly early age. As Freud explains the Oedipus complex, the mother is the first love object for both sexes, and as the little boy grows up, he views his father as his rival for his mother's affections. The little girl, however, transfers her infantile sexual wishes from her mother to her father and views her mother as her rival for her father's attentions. As the children mature, these normal desires are repressed and transferred to other more acceptable objects during adolescence. The male child must become reconciled with his father and the female with her mother, and both must repress and ultimately relinquish their sexual desires for their parents. Children who do not successfully accomplish this separation grow up to be neurotic (Mullahy 23-50). While Freud and Jung

disagreed more than they agreed, Jung does state his belief that "children can have 'incestuous' tendencies in the extended sense used by Freud." (Jung Contributions 119-124). Especially significant for the purposes of this study is his comment that the "fundamental basis of incestuous desire is the thought or impulse of becoming a child again, or turning back to the parents' protection . . ." (Mullahy 154, paraphrasing Jung The Psychology of the Unconscious 446). Siblings who are narcissistically inclined may confuse the transfer and may fix their affections on a brother or a sister, an attraction that is easily confounded as the narcissistic love of one's self, the search for one's Other, or a balancing of the anima and animus. Even then, however, the real object is the parent. Otto Rank points out that the actual occurrence of "brother-sister incest is a substitute for child-parent incest--what the brother seeks in his sister is his mother" (Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage, quoted by Irwin 43), a theory with which Freud concurs (Mullahy 27).

Western literature contains many examples of overt and latent narcissistic incestuous loves. Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" is but one example. The

tragedy of the Usher family is that the "entire family lay in the direct line of descent." Because of familial interrelationships there is a deficiency "of collateral issue" (Poe 115). This situation has apparently existed for generations, and as the story opens Roderick Usher and his twin sister Madeline are the last survivors of their family. They bear a "striking similitude" in appearance, and "sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them" (125). There is no need for Roderick to attempt to form Madeline's face into his own mold, for a multitude of preceding generations has already formed both male and female into the same likeness. Whether their incestuous desires are latent or active is beside the point for the purposes of this study. Critics are in general agreement that the basis of their illnesses is a genetic weakness caused by inbreeding compounded by guilt because of their own incestuous and narcissistic desires. Madeline can be viewed as Roderick's alter ego, the opposite side of his personality or his second self. William Bysshe Stein writes that she symbolizes "the emotional or instinctive side of her brother's personality which has stagnated under the domination of the intellect." He further ob-

serves that repressed feelings eventually revolt, and "the outraged unconscious swallows up all conscious authority, and Roderick is rendered completely insane," while Madeline, symbolizing the instincts, "escapes her death-in-life confinement. . . (97). Given this interpretation, Roderick has attempted to form Madeline, for he has not allowed her own unique qualities to flourish.

Poe's tale and Gilman's story parallel in several respects. At least one critic, in fact, has called Gilman's story "The Fall of the House of Usher" told from Madeline's point of view (Scharnhorst 17). John and the narrator's union is also an example of doubling although it is not immediately recognizable as incestuous. Although John and his wife are not brother and sister as are the Ushers, they in effect were attracted to a sibling's likeness which they saw in each other. John is very like his wife's brother, another physician "also of high standing" (Gilman 10), and he behaves like a father figure to her. As William Veeder in his Freudian reading of the story interprets the interrelationships, the narrator would be attracted to both brother and husband "as father surrogates" even as she felt

"'hatred' for their overbearing force" (954). A telling remark is her description of the wallpaper which "is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother--they [the children who she imagines lived there once] must have had perseverance as well as hatred" (Gilman 17). Another indication that the narrator perceives her brother and her husband as authority figures lies in her attitude about the threat to send her to Weir Mitchell for a cure if her health does not improve soon. She reports in her diary: "But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!" (19). This passage reveals not only the narrator's realization of male authority over her, but it also reveals her aversion to that authority.

Akin to the bond between the narrator and her brother is the strong bond between John and his sister Jennie. She is housekeeper at this estate and will be responsible for preparing their redecorated townhouse for the family's return. As Veeder further observes this relationship, he notices that Jennie reflects John's views just as a model wife would have: "Like John, 'she thinks it is the writing' that makes the

heroine 'sick' (8); like John, 'Jennie too' comes to focus on the wallpaper (13)" (55).

Although the narrator loves Jennie, she also resents her; possibly she unconsciously recognizes Jennie as John's narcissistic other self. She generously, but probably condescendingly, observes that Jennie "is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession" (Gilman 17-18). As Veeder further observes, she perhaps means that Jennie's imagination cannot envision a better role than that of housekeeper, but "her wording allows for [another] possibility":

> [Perhaps] Jennie can indeed imagine a better profession but has no hope for it. Does Jennie hope . . . for the sexual as well as the domestic responsibilities of surrogate wife to John? Such hopes are interdicted by the incest taboo, but imaginings are free. (56)

Although some critics have assumed that the name Jane which the narrator shrieks at the end of the story is the Christian name of Jennie, John's sister, (and they frequently refer to his sister as Jennie/Jane) other critics feel that Jane is the narrator's name, never mentioned until she screams, "I've got out at last

in spite of you and Jane!" (Gilman 36). Conrad Shumacher, for example, observes that Jane is the narrator, "the wife she once was" (597); Elaine Hedges speculates that Jane may be the narrator's "self as defined by marriage and society" (63); and Catherine Golden notes that "the narrator elects to remain nameless until the very end of the story, where she hints that her name may be Jane" (195). If John's wife is named Jane, then the fact that his sister is named Jennie is further indication that doubling is intended since the name Jennie is the diminutive form of the name Jane. Also, if the narrator's name is Jane, then her schizophrenic character is even more easily ascertained as she abandons her Jane self to assume a nameless identity. In this chapter the name Jane will be used to refer to the narrator.

The siblings involved, then, are John the husband, his sister Jenny who runs the house, his wife Jane who suffers postpartum depression and as a result is permitted little latitude in her regimen of resting and eating, and Jane's unnamed brother who is also a physician like her husband. Indeed, the main point of the story is the mental conflict which John and Jane experience as each attempts to shape the other into a predetermined image.

Jane's molding of John consists simply of passive acceptance of his authority even as she accepts her brother's authority. Her acquiescence allows John to become more and more demanding and domineering. Thus, only to this extent is she instrumental in shaping him. John, however, as this study reveals, consistently bullies his wife and forbids her the freedom she needs to develop her own unique qualities that would have contributed a healthy balance to the marriage. As a result, Jane, like Poe's Madeline, seeks escape from her confinement.

Both John's and his wife's marital and sexual difficulties apparently arise from their failure to traverse successfully the Oedipal phase in their adolescence. Each suffers from arrested sexual development in that neither expresses any obvious sexual fulfillment; the child in each of them has felt attraction for the parent of the opposite sex and has transferred that affection to a substitute brother or sister for whom the husband or wife proves in turn an unsatisfactory surrogate.

The text implies that both John and Jane have difficulty accepting their sexual roles. John is quite serious in his role as Jane's father-brother surrogate

and grasps every opportunity to form Jane into the narcissistic reflection which he actually desires; Jane appears to accept John's authority, but she rebels internally and instinctively as she resists her husband's desire to mold her to his liking. As Berman observes, her weak ego boundaries do not permit her to resist the narcissistic tendency of her husband and to mature into an adult:

> From the psychoanalytic point of view of object relations, the narrator cannot separate her identity from the baby's: She is both the hysterical mother searching for freedom and the insatiable child demanding attention. The angry child within the adult seems responsible for the mother's illness. (56)

This observation calls to mind Jung's hypothesis cited earlier that in his view incestuous desires have their basis in the adult's desire to become a child again in order to be once more under the protection of the parent. The child in Jane wants her father's protection; the adult wants to be independent. The text indicates this dichotomy throughout. Berman correctly observes that the story's movement suggests Jane's attempts to avoid a sexual relationship with her husband who repeatedly at-

tempts to coerce her into conforming to his own idea of correct female behavior:

> The movement of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is suggestive of the wife's efforts to avoid sexual defilement, beginning with her abortive attempt to sleep in the room downstairs, with its single bed, and ending with the outraged husband's cry for an ax to break into the room where she has barricaded herself. (56)

Yet, there are also indications that one part of her own self desires a physical and sexual relationship. For example, Jane laments, "It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way! I had meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!" (14). Significantly, Jane also does not like their upstairs bedroom, which she perhaps interprets as a deprivation of the "lower" instincts; one reason she wants the downstairs room to which Berman refers is its beauty in contrast to the ugliness of the room she is given: "I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings!" (Gilman 12). Perhaps she also wants to leave

the nursery for an adult bedroom; however, as Berman notes, that downstairs room to which she refers has room for only one bed, obviously a single one since they are sleeping in one bed in the nursery, and John's ostensible objection to the room is that "there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another" (12). At this point in the marriage, however, her need to flee John's oppression is no doubt paramount.

Instead, John has chosen an upstairs room for her, "a big, airy room . . . with windows that look all ways (12). The windows have bars instead of roses, though, and the horrible yellow wallpaper and "rings and things in the walls" (12) instead of chintz. She obviously resents John's choice and, therefore, his authoritarian and domineering, all-knowing attitude, her resentment building as she analyses the wallpaper which symbolizes inartistic flaws in the male constitution:

> I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin . . . . The color is repellant, . . . a smouldering, unclean yellow . . . . (13)

The color yellow pervades Jane's world. Not only is the wallpaper yellow, but she also complains of a strange "yellow smell" which "creeps all over the house" (28), permeates her hair, and even invades her space at night. The color yellow has always carried both positive and negative connotations. Constance A. Pedoto observes that in Rosetti's The Blessed Damozel, "the madonna is a blue-eyed blonde with tresses falling down her back, 'yellow like ripe corn,'" and proceeds to draw the questionable conclusion that the color implies that "the young virgin may be quite fertile and worldly matured" (4). It seems more likely that the madonna's yellow hair signifies her purity since the blond woman in literature is usually the socially acceptable "pure" one as opposed to the brunette woman who usually symbolizes unacceptable, earthy sexuality. Hawthorne in The Marble Faun and The Blithedale Romance, for example, creates such blonde and brunette opposites, as does Melville in Pierre. Pedoto does, however, make several valuable observations about the negative connotations of the color yellow. Following her observations about George Ferguson's study in iconography, (Signs and Symbols in Christian Art

153), she concludes that this color was used in Renaissance paintings to suggest "infernal light, degradation, jealousy, treason, and deceit." Judas Iscariot, for example, is often shown "in a robe of dirty yellow. Furthermore, heretics wore yellow and, during the Middle Ages, contaminated members of society (and zones of plague contagion) were marked by yellow crosses" (Ferguson 153; Pedoto 4). The color yellow as representative of heretics, plague victims, and perhaps the most famous traitor in history is appropriate for Gilman's "old foul, bad yellow things" (28). There may even be an indication here that a traitor is at work in her world. If so, the obvious traitor may be not only John but society itself which betrays its female members in its traditional denial of equality.

Critics have interpreted the "yellow smell" in Gilman's story in various ways other than those suggested above. William Veeder interprets it as "urine" and "the saturated diaper of childhood" (48); Mary Jacobus views it as the "smell of decay" (242), as the smell of female genitalia which in a multitude of male contexts "becomes identified with the smell of sexuality itself" (243), and as "the smell of male hysteria emanating from

her husband--that is, fear of femininity as the body of the mother . . . which simultaneously threatens the boy with a return to the powerlessness of infancy and with anxiety about the castration she embodies" (244); Jeffrey Berman observes that the smell's "mysteriousness contributes to the indefinable sexual menace lurking throughout the house and penetrating the woman's body" (56); and Gilbert and Gubar view it as a "subtle aroma of decay" (90). Otto Rank's discussion of death and narcissism provides a clue to the meaning of the color and the smell as they relate to decay although he alludes only to aging and the fear of death, which also suggest decay and stagnation:

> One motif which reveals a certain connection between the fear of death and the narcissistic attitude is the wish to remain forever young. On the one hand, this wish represents the libidinous fixation of the individual onto a definite development stage of the ego; and on the other, it expresses the fear of becoming old, a fear which is really the fear of death (77).

Since Jane's psychotic mind may realize she is being destroyed, the images she uses in describing the paper

and the smell may relate to decay and death. This narcissistic fear of destruction finally propels her into action. Late in the story she begins to strip the paper from the walls in earnest, and eventually she "frees" the woman imprisoned there. Since she completely identifies with the woman at that point in the story, she believes she is freeing herself from impending destruction.

While the yellow smell does suggest the decaying state of the narrator's mind, it also suggests the fear of sexuality just as Jacobus and Berman indicate. It seems natural that the rational John would choose an upstairs room that symbolizes a level above the "lower" instincts. Jane's artistic temperament might prefer romantic roses and chintz, but to John the practicality of air, sunshine, and barred windows is personally much more attractive. His rationality apparently does not recognize the healing effects of beauty, and perhaps he also does not recognize the implications of his choice, for the upstairs room symbolizes the head, the rational part of man, while the downstairs room symbolizes the body, man's sensual faculty. Furthermore, as Jane tries to persuade John to allow her to visit "Cousin Henry and Aunt Julia," she begins to cry:

> And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and *sat* by me and *read* to me till it tired my *head* [italics mine];(21)

How different might the outcome have been if John had manifested an active love instead of a passive one, if he had aroused a sexually vibrant head instead of encouraging a listlessly "tired" one.

It does not take a Freudian or a Jungian to recognize that there is more than one kind of tired or aching "head." For example, Chaucer's Troilus laments to his friend Pandarus that Pandarus would understand love's torments more appreciatively if his "hedes ake for love" as do his (*Troilus and Criseyde* II. 549). The reader notes the plural, of course, but the secondary meaning only becomes clearer when Pandarus approaches his niece Criseyde on the morning following a night of a tremendous storm accompanied by a flooding rain and deafening thunder. After spending the night in the same room, his own room, where the lovers, Troilus and Criseyde, became a "mirror image" of each other and formed a union of their halves, Pandarus observes to his niece, when Troilus has departed, that the storm has kept him awake all night.

The uncle insidiously and possibly invidiously laments that some "hedes ake" (III. 1561). Obviously, he is implying that Troilus and Criseyde suffer from one kind of headache while he ostensibly suffers from another kind. Shakespeare dips into Chaucer, and his Pandarus understands only too well Chaucer's and Pandarus' use of headaches when Pandarus churlishly blurts out this question to Troilus and Criseyde, who was certainly no virgin: "How now, how noW, how go maidenheads?" (IV. ii. 23). Obviously, both Chaucer and Shakespeare recognized various species of heads. In Gilman's story, John, who seems to possess the most rational head, makes the reader wonder what he does with his less rational "head" during the many nocturnal hours which he spends away from home ostensibly to be with ill patients. Since he apparently tells his wife in advance that he will not be home on certain nights, the reader assumes that his patients schedule their illnesses. Perhaps he is following the Victorian double standard and is taking another woman into some "lower" room somewhere else.

There is also some indication that the narrator reverts to masturbation, an activity that would indicate that she recognizes her sexual needs. Veeder interprets

the "long, straight, even s̲m̲o̲o̲c̲h̲" on the wall that looks as though "it had been rubbed over and over" (Gilman 15) as a suggestion of masturbation:

> The erotic connotation of "smooch" and the insistent rubbing suggest a recourse to masturbation which is consonant both with the heroine's regressive tendencies and with the hysteric's inclination to autoeroticism. Narcissism directs eros (smooch) back to the self as projection once again configures the heroine's inner life upon a wall. (Veeder 61)

Although Jacobus notes that in 1890 the word "smooch" had not yet taken on its twentieth-century connotation, she does indicate that the mark on the wall suggests "dirty rubbing" which "might be both Doctor John's medical verdict on sexuality. . . . [as well as that] the dirty stain of smooching would constitute. . . the sexual etiology of hysteria." In addition, she concludes that it could also represent Victorian repression of "the representation of female sexuality. . . "(242).

In this story John fails in every instance to appreciate or to value the contribution of his Other to their marriage; above all he ignores her sexual needs, opting instead to treat his wife like a child whose

personality and character are still pliable. For example, at the very beginning of the story Jane recalls, "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage" (9), and later his scoffing at the wallpaper almost proves that he identifies it with his evil double when he denies the potential evil in it in much the same way that Edith Wharton's Lavington denies his evil double's existence: "He laughs at me so about this wallpaper" (14). Still later when her illness has progressed considerably, she arises from bed "to feel and see if the paper did move;" John awakens to ask, "What is it, little girl?" (23), a statement which implies that he does not recognize her as an adult. During that same conversation, Jane attempts to speak seriously about her condition, but John's words and actions resemble those of an indulgent Agamemnon of a father as he attempts to allay her anxiety:

> "Bless her little heart!" said he with a big hug, "she shall be as sick as she pleases. "But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!" (24)

Like many "fathers," John also refuses to acknowledge his "little girl's" sexuality, just as

Agamemnon refuses to acknowledge Electra's sexuality. It is as though Jane has done her duty in producing an heir for her husband, and now she has been placed on the pedestal to which many Victorian women were relegated. Mary takes care of the baby, Jennie takes care of John and the house, John takes care of all of them, so what is left for Jane? She is not allowed to write, nor is she invited to meet her husband's sexual needs. The reader receives several hints that this interpretation is no exaggeration. For example, John's response to the previously cited instance of Jane's request to move to a room downstairs is clearly patronizing and indicates an unwillingness to take her to any place on a lower level that might symbolize removing her from her pedestal to a more sensuous sphere: "Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain" (15). He will not, of course, take his little girl into any areas that must be "whitewashed" to make them respectable. This desire to have the "cellar" of the "little goose" "whitewashed" if she wished suggests a confused desire on the part of both John and Jane to indulge and to deny simultaneously their Oedipal

inclinations. Electra, therefore, repressed and unfulfilled, is left with unrealizable sexual feelings. As a result of sexual deprivation, a head can ache or be "tired."

In a sense John also wants his wife to play Echo to his Narcissus. She, like Echo, wants to love him, but he runs from her. Like a father teaching a child, John tells Jane that she must use her "will" (22) to keep "proper self-control" (11). Jane tries to pull herself into line with John's expectations by attempting to accept his opinions as her own: "It is an airy and comfortable room as anyone need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim" (15). Jane, then, worries about making her husband uncomfortable when she is suffering agony unto insanity, and she accuses herself of acting out of caprice. Like Echo, she loses her power of original speech, incorporating "John says," and "John thinks" into many of her statements. The confusing design of the wallpaper forces her to abandon her perceptions of reality, but John must not be made uncomfortable. Still later when Jane writes that John "loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick" (21), the reader senses that

she is trying to persuade herself that his affection and concerns are true; if she believes he loves her, she will feel guilt if she does not cooperate with him in her treatment, but if she does not believe he loves her, she will feel justified in her anger. Finally, at the end of the story she in one respect, like Echo, loses her body when she embraces the creeping phantom and becomes one with her. Unlike Echo, however, her new voice produces her own words, not a repetition of her husband's.

In some respects John is a conscientious man who is trying to fulfill his duty to a sick wife, and there is no doubt that he loves Jane in a narcissistic way. The point is that as a result of societal conditioning, he assumes a fatherly role that does not allow himself or Jane to complete fully the Oedipal stages of their development; as a result of that same societal conditioning, Jane strives to accept his opinions over her own although a part of her refuses to accept John's innate superiority. As she continually denies her real self in an attempt to realize John's image of her, the parts of her personality that are repressed split off and project themselves onto the woman in the wallpaper, first in the form of multitudinous doubling, then into a single "mir-

ror image" with whom she identifies and eventually merges at the cost of her own sanity.

Some critics view Jane's escape into insanity as a victory over the life she is compelled to live, a life they would consider death-in-life. Others view it as ultimate defeat of her desire to live a life acceptable to her, an insanity which may be viewed as death-in-life or life-in-death. Either way, she is alive, but she is also dead. John, certain there are no complexities in life that he cannot deal with in a moment, acknowledges only the perceived superficialities, but Jane is torn between her cultural conditioning that assures her that John is right and her own instincts which inform her differently. This battle in Gilman's story takes place, just as in Poe's story, within "ancestral halls," "a hereditary estate," (9) a symbol of patriarchal society that has formed both of them.

By denying Jane permission to write and by constantly admonishing her for using her imaginative powers, John quietly asserts a dictum which denies her the right to exercise her creative powers, just as he does when he ostensibly denies her his sexual favors. By the end of Gilman's story, John experiences the reali-

zation that the rational faculty alone is not sufficient for survival; the ignored non-rational faculties that his wife represents in his life, his alter ego or the anima, will turn on him with fury and render him literally unconscious. Like Madeline who bursts from her crypt to throw herself upon Roderick, Gilman's narrator escapes from the wallpaper to creep over John's prostrate form repeatedly. John has formed a grotesque face for his wife, a woman who, like Narcissus's Echo, is destroyed. In her insanity she mirrors his hysteria which, as Jacobus observes, is based on his fear of the feminine, his anima.

In their search for a beloved Other, both John and Jane were attracted to attributes which reminded them of a sibling of the opposite sex who, in turn, was a substitute for the parent. During the marriage, John attempts to form his wife into his image of perfection, a female version of himself. Believing in a logic based on concrete facts, his scorn of his wife's intuitive logic and her imagination causes her to mistrust herself. She resists John half-heartedly but finds some satisfaction in reverting to the role of the little girl played to his role of father. Finally, however, the adult within her

rises and demands an accounting. This fairly thorough analysis of Jane's feelings (the narrator's thoughts) and John's responses suggests that John and Jane, in the same simplistic sense that their common names suggest, are still socially in their adolescence, that they are incapable of realizing a mature sexual relationship.

CONCLUSION

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.

- - -Robert Browning

Gilman reached within her own gothic world for the inspiration of "The Yellow Wallpaper," and in doing so, she created a gothic heroine to whom women of her own and succeeding generations could relate. Although this study examines the elements in Gilman's life that helped her to create this story, unlike many other studies, it treats "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a work of art apart from its author as much as possible. Her aim was to hold a mirror up to woman's true nature as she perceived it to be in order to contrast that reflection against man's traditional limited proprietary view of her. Employing the gothic genre to express her outrage and horror at the crippling effects of this treatment, she skillfully ma-

nipulates the narrative voice in "The Yellow Wallpaper" to demonstrate John's--and therefore patriarchy's--creation of a grotesque monster, an example of the enormity of patriarchy's sin against its female members and Gilman's perception of the deformed state of womanhood under patriarchy.

While suffering her "slight hysterical tendency," as John terms her illness, Gilman's narrator experiences an identity crisis. Conditioned by her culture to be submissive to her husband and other male members of her family, she acquiesces to his judgments and proclamations on one level, but at a deeper level, she rebels. Forbidden to write and perhaps thus to define herself, she lies for hours attempting to interpret the pattern of her wallpaper and finally realizes that the pattern forms bars that imprison the women she sees inside the paper. Ultimately, she identifies with one of these women. Thus, she allows the wallpaper, interpreted in this study as a metaphor for patriarchal logic, to define her as John's prisoner. The paper's pattern, like patriarchal logic, appears on the surface to be rational, but a closer inspection reveals that its premises are propped upon each other lengthwise, crosswise, and diag-

onally. If one were moved, apparently the entire structure would collapse like a house of cards.

Unable to extricate herself physically from her situation, the narrator "frees" herself mentally by merging with her doppelgänger. This study has examined Gilman's portrayal of the doppelgänger and found it to be unique. Although she fulfills much of Otto Rank's criteria regarding the double in literature, a study of other doubles reveals that Gilman's portrayal is unlike any of the other authors' works examined, male or female. Perhaps an author's gender is not a determining factor in the treatment of this literary device; perhaps, in fact, it is not a factor in the use of any literary device. It may well be proven in the future that an author's life experiences determine his/her treatment of literature, that to read a story and immediately determine that it is written by a woman simply means that the woman is writing about what she knows and that society expects her to write from its preconceived idea of what a woman's vantage point is. Female authors' depiction of the doppelgänger in literature is an area that would profit from more exhaustive research.

This study also examines the sexual relationship

that exists between John and the narrator and determines that they suffer from arrested development in this area, a discovery that is not too surprising since the patriarchal system encouraged women to be child-women to a large degree. Gilman hypothesized that the system was as harmful to the full development of the male as it was to the female, and her hypothesis proves true in this story in the marriage bed as well as in other areas. If a father loves his daughter or if a brother loves a sister romantically, it is considered incest. John behaves like a father to his wife, and his wife likens him to her brother; in addition, this study has explored the possibility that the narrator's name is Jane, the Christian name for Jennie, John's sister, who plays a wifely role in this story. Thus, there is a possiblity that another type of doubling is at work here on a subliminal level between John and his sister Jennie and the narrator and her brother the physician.

Forced to make a decision about her identity, the narrator chooses to be someone else. She cannot function independently as Jane, the wife of John the physician and the sister of her brother, another physician. They are too controlling. Her solution is to free her dopple-

gänger from within the wallpaper and to merge with her.

After its publication, this story was forgotten for over half a century, as Gilman herself was largely forgotten. Since its resurrection, however, its influence on and importance to the feminist canon has accelerated with every decade. At first upon rediscovery, readers focused on the femaleness of the writing rather than on the document as a literary monument. Critics have used its text as a means of exploring women's writing--both its subject matter and its techniques--and in the process exploring and attempting to understand female thought processes, as well as woman's historical role in society and the effects that role has played in limiting her growth as a human being. The exhaustive annotated bibliography of Gilman criticism included in this study illustrates the wide spectrum of interpretations given this story over the past three decades. Presented in chronological order, it provides an historical view of the evolution of literary criticism itself since almost each interpretive school that has emerged on the scene is represented in the criticism of this story.

All of the interpretative directions have proved

helpful in placing this story of incipient female madness in its proper perspective. It is almost conclusive as an analysis of female authors' writings that female madness results from an excess of domesticity, not from a threat or actual deprivation of domestic felicity, as most male authors have supposed. As a matter of fact, present criticism of this literary masterpiece indicates the need for rejecting the application of a single critical slant because each critical school uncovers new meanings within the layers of this story of male domination and of doubling as a form of avoidance of or escape from the problems created by domestic and cultural practices in a man's world. These interpretations disappoint those readers who may expect any single observation, or a single group of critical essays for that matter, to create an epiphany. The value lies in a holistic examination of all published views, preferably read in chronological order, which will provide the searching and patient reader with an understanding of the importance of this story as a social document and, equally as important, as a literary masterpiece.

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is not exclusively a cultural document, it is not solely a feminist or woman's text, it

is not entirely gothic, or misandristic, or antagonist toward male physicians treating female hysteria, and above all, it does not offer the most desirable means for persecuted, dominated, and subjugated females to escape their problems. Instead, future criticism should focus on and should develop interpretations of "The Yellow Wallpaper" based upon its existence as a literary monument, not obviating the fact, of course, that the author was a female in a male-dominated world, a Western and European culture dominated by class, gender, and ethnic values.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, like Browning's Andrea del Sarto whose words form the epigraph to this portion of the study, may be considered a "Faultless Painter." Her reach exceeded her grasp, her eye never left her goal of woman's equality, all her many and varied writings in some way project that goal, her fiction is mechanically correct and quite readable, yet something is often missing. As she herself admitted, she did not write to entertain so much as to teach her truths, yet occasionally there are flashes of brillance that suggest the heights she might have reached as an artist if she had allowed her imagination full play. "The Yellow Wall-

paper" is the most vivid of those flashes in the Gilman canon. It is unfortunate for the feminist movement, the ranks of women writers, the comparatively small canon of women's literature, and the world at large that Gilman suppressed her imagination, her "fancies," in order to write strictly didactic fiction. In the process she, like Andrea del Sarto, became a skilled craftsperson, but her work frequently lacks the "soul" that is the mark of art, and art, as Browning knew, is the ultimate weapon to teach truth:

> . . . it is the glory and good of Art,
> That Art remains the one way possible
> Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least.
> . . . Art may tell a truth
> Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
> Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.
> So may you paint your picture, twice show truth,
> Beyond mere imagery on the wall,--
>
> . . .
>
> So write a book shall mean beyond the facts. . . .
>
> (The Ring and the Book, XII, 838-862)

Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" may be her only work that means "beyond the facts." It is Art.

Through her assiduity of purpose, Gilman probably has contributed as much to the ultimate equality of the sexes as any person of her time and has assumed a rightful place in the forefront of the feminist movement long after she has left the scene. Furthermore, the overfilled room at MLA and the plethora of Gilman articles, books, and dissertations appearing in print each month will assure her continued influence through at least the last decade of this century.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

AND

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

OF

GILMAN CRITICISM

1956-1989

THE EARLY HISTORY OF "THE YELLOW WALLPAPER"

When "The Yellow Wallpaper" was published in the *New England Magazine* in 1892, its immediate reception was radically different from the types of readings which it would receive over three-quarters of a century later. Gilman's contemporaries saw it as a gothic horror story on the order of those by Poe. As Gary Scharnhorst reports, "many early readers considered it a tale of the grotesque, 'The Fall of the House of Usher' told from the point of view of the Lady Madeline'" (17). According to Gilman, a reviewer for an issue of *Literature* found the story "worthy of a place beside some of the weird masterpieces of Hawthorne and Poe," and years later Gilman used this quote to advertise the story for sale in the *Forerunner* (October, 1910: 33 is but one instance of several such ads). She wrote to her good friend Martha Luther Lane that Martha must read her "awful story . . . . Walter says he has read it *four* times, and thinks it the most ghastly tale he ever read. Says it beats Poe . . . " (27 July 1890, *Charlotte*

Perkins Gilman's Papers 20; quoted by Scharnhorst 19).

Poe's stories produced many of the same effects on his readers that Gilman's would later produce. In a letter to the editor of The Nation, 9 December 1880, Henry C. Lea reminisces over the impressions the "weird and somber effects so artistically produced" in many of Poe's short stories had made on him forty years earlier; and in discussing some of Poe's horror stories, B. M. Ranking describes the effects of Madeline's ascent from the burial crypt to Roderick's room above, the strange foreboding noises, and the final horrible revelation, as causing the reader to shudder over "the weird story. In sober earnest, I know of nothing more awful, unless it be the last scenes of 'The Duchess of Malfy'" (Time Monthly Magazine VIII, September 1883: 359).

A reviewer for the Chicago News observed that Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" "stands among the most powerful produced in America," another quote Gilman used in her Forerunner ads (I October 1910: 33 is but one instance); and Anne Montgomerie wrote in the Conservator that the "simple, serious, sly, fascinating, torturing [story] grows and increases with a perfect crescendo of horror" (10 [1899]: 60-61; quoted by Scharnhorst 17). In

her autobiography Gilman recounts how she sent the story to W. D. Howells, who in turn attempted to persuade Horace Scudder, editor of the Atlantic Monthly, to print it. Scudder sent the story back to Gilman with the following note:

> Dear Madam,
>
> Mr. Howells has handed me this story. I could not forgive myself if I made others as miserable as I have made myself! (Living 119)

His attitude was not unlike that of the anonymous reviewers who found reading Poe "a sickening task" (Saturday Review 802-3) or who reported that "The Fall of the House of Usher" "leaves on the mind a painful and horrible impression, without any redeeming admonition to the heart" (Southern Literary Messenger 708).

In 1899, Small, Maynard, and Co. of Boston reprinted "The Yellow Wallpaper" in a chapbook with yellow covers that simulated their impression of the wallpaper. (Recently, one of these chapbooks was advertised for sale at $600.) In 1920, W. D. Howells included the story in his anthology, The Great Modern American Stories, and wrote in his Introduction:

> It wanted at least two generations to freeze our

> young blood with Mrs. Perkins Gilman's story of The Yellow Wall Paper, of which Horace Scudder (then of The Atlantic) said in refusing it that it was so terribly good that it ought never to be printed. But terrible and wholly dire as it was, I could not rest until I had corrupted the editor of The New England Magazine into publishing it . . . . I shiver over it as much as I did when I first read it in manuscript, though I agree . . . that it was too terribly good to be printed. (vii)

He goes on to call the story "this awful study of incipient madness" (viii). In response to this publication, H. P. Lovecraft called the story "one of the great 'spectral tales' in American literature" (Scharnhorst 18; Lane, xvii).

As further evidence that the story was perceived primarily as a gothic horror story, The New England Magazine published it in an issue that deals with witchcraft. The story preceding it is "A Salem Witch" by Edith Mary Norris, and in the same issue is an installment of an article entitled "Stories of Salem Witchcraft" by Winfield S. Nevins (January 1892). In 1933, Gilman's story was reprinted in Golden Book, and in 1934, it was

reprinted in a Finnish translation (Scharnhorst 18).

Gilman herself said she wrote this story not as a gothic fantasy but to show the effects on some women of Mitchell's rest cure which had so incapacitated her. "The Yellow Wallpaper" provoked, in turn, varied medical responses. One physician wrote to The Transcript that such a story should not be printed as it could drive some susceptible people mad (Living 120); another responded that the story was so realistic he wondered if she had been there. Her answer: "As far as one can go and come back" (Living 121). Her intention, she said, was not "to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked." She reported that the family of at least one ill woman had read the story, had "let her out into normal activity and she recovered" ("Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper?" 217). Another physician wrote to her:

> When I read "The Yellow Wallpaper" I was very much pleased with it; when I read it again I was delighted with it, and now that I have read it again I am overwhelmed with the delicacy of your touch and the correctness of portrayal. From a doctor's standpoint . . . you have made a success.

> So far as I know, and I am fairly well up on literature, there has been no detailed account of incipient insanity. (Living 120)

Her greatest joy over the story's reception, however, came when she was told years afterward that Mitchell "had altered his treatment of neurasthenia since reading 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" ("Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" 217).

While repudiation of Mitchell's cure may have been Gilman's ostensible reason for writing this story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" concerns much more than the effects Mitchell's rest cure had on some of his patients. This story written in the early part of Gilman's career might be viewed as a microcosm of the patriarchal society Gilman knew, for it represents in figures writ large her view of the possible end result to both man and woman of the uncorrected repressed condition of women, a topic that would be her primary focus during the forty years she actively wrote and lectured.

In 1973, the Feminist Press presented "The Yellow Wallpaper" to the public once again with its edition of the story and an Afterword by Elaine Hedges, whose essay was the first feminist reading of the story. That publi-

cation is now Feminist Press's "best-selling volume," and it is also "one of the best-selling works of fiction by university presses in the United States." In addition, it has been "reprinted in England, the Netherlands, West Germany, Spain, Sweden and Iceland, and it has inspired several films and dramatizations and even an opera" (Hedges MLA 1).

Since Hedges's feminist reading of the story, it has been the subject of a varied spectrum of readings. As Hedges observes in the paper she delivered at the recent MLA conference, the story's readings are "a most revealing graph of major critical shifts both inside and outside of feminist literary theory and practice" (10). Her own reading is biographical as she draws parallels between Gilman's own life and that of her narrator. Such a biographical reading continues in the interpretations dependent on the psychoanalytical theories of such psychoanalysts as Freud and Lacan, for these interpretations, too, attempt to psychoanalyze Gilman along with her narrator. The story has also been examined according to genre as an example of realism, of modernism, and of the female gothic; as a Marxist-feminist document; according to the theories of the reader-response critics; as dis-

course theory in which the wallpaper represents woman's attempts to read--and write--her self; and by the New Historicists who investigate the story's "complicitousness with ideology" (Hedges 9).

The wallpaper itself has been cited as a metaphor for every aspect of the narrator's life situation as it is regulated by her patriarchal society, and also, since the narrator is a writer, as a metaphor for the situation of the female author in search of a language of her own as well as for the relationship inherent between gender and reading and writing. About half the critics interpret the story's ending as victory, about half interpret it as defeat, and sometimes the same critic sees both interpretations as valid. The narrator's madness is thus viewed variously as "a higher form of sanity" (Hedges 2), a reversion to infantile behavior, or a total and utter defeat.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This annotated bibliography of Gilman criticism is arranged in chronological order beginning with Carl Degler's 1956 article that reawakened interest in Gilman and including unpublished dissertations and published criticism through 1989. Since critics who deal principally with other aspects of Gilman's work than "The Yellow Wallpaper" frequently mention that story at least in passing, all the criticism is grouped together with the symbol YW denoting works that deal principally with "The Yellow Wallpaper."

1956

Degler, Carl N. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman on the Theory and Practice of Feminism." American Quarterly. 8.1 (1956): 21-39.

In this article which drew public attention once more to Gilman, Degler draws on much of Gilman's work to explain her theories of feminism and the means by which she thought women could be freed from

the chores of mother/housewife in order to work outside the home. This synopsis offers an excellent presentation of Gilman's theories and is the perfect place to begin a study of her work.

1966

Degler, Carl. Introduction. Women and Economics. By Charlotte Perkins Gilman. New York: Harper and Row, 1966. vi-xxxv.

Degler avers that Gilman probably wrote from memory, was not a careful scholar, and did not always check her facts, but "the value and power of her book does not today rest on the truth of its history or anthropology any more than it did when it was published." Instead, her purpose "was to analyze and criticize contemporary relations between the sexes," and she drew her information "from common knowledge and her own systematic, but wide reading . . . ." Using logic as her method of attack, she targeted the inconsistencies she saw "between the pretensions and practices of society," mercilessly picking up "every social idiocy" that she felt supported "the conventional wisdom about women,

subjecting it to witty ridicule" (xxxi). Degler emphasizes that Gilman's entire argument is based upon social evolution, principles of growth. "She was no proponent of the eighteenth-century idea of natural law. Those static defenses of equality she abandoned in the face of the triumph of Darwinian evolutionary thought" (xxxiii-iv).

1973

Hedges, Elaine R. Afterword. The Yellow Wallpaper. By Charlotte Perkins Gilman. New York: Feminist P, 1973. 37-63.

YW Hedges gives a brief history of the story and of Gilman, relating the two since the story is fictionalized autobiography. She also discusses Gilman's technique in writing the story as she presents its first feminist reading. In addition, Hedges examines Gilman's feminist theories as expressed in Women and Economics.

Wood, Ann Douglas. "'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth Century America." The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 4.1 (1973): 25-52.

YW In her discussion of medical practices on women in the nineteenth century, Wood perceives that the physician's attitude toward women was indicative of the general male attitude toward women's sexuality and identity. She determines that the male physician "on some unacknowledged level, feared his female patient" because in some ways she threatened his own sexuality, and she discusses Catherine Beecher's Letters to the People on Health and Happiness and Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" in this light. She also examines S. Weir Mitchell's theories, and provides insight into the history of the female doctor.

1974

Morantz, Regina. "The Lady and Her Physician." Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women. Eds. Mary S. Hartman and Lois Banner. New York: Harper, 1974; rpt. Octagon, 1976. 38-53.

YW Morantz takes issue with historians who view the Victorian woman solely as a victim of the male and, therefore, of her male doctor. She examines the state of the practice of medicine in the nineteenth

century, especially that of S. Weir Mitchell, in an attempt to put the profession and its procedures in perspective and discusses the ideas of some female doctors of the period "to explore how some Victorian women viewed their roles in nineteenth-century American society." Morantz advocates looking at the women's condition in society from more than one vantage point, not solely "from the perspective of male domination."

1975

MacPike, Loralee. "Environment as Psychopathological Symbolism in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" American Literary Realism 8 (1975): 286-88.

YW MacPike deals with the symbolism in the story, specifically the nursery, the barred windows, the bedstead, and the wallpaper. She believes the story can be considered realism, but that it represents "what is real to the author" since Gilman was a "subjective observer" of "integral (male) society."

Pannill, Linda Susanne. "The Artist-Heroine in American Fiction, 1890-1920." Diss. U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1975.

Pannill discusses the artist-heroine primarily in the fiction of Ellen Glasgow, Willa Cather, and Mary Austin, but mentions many others, Gilman among them, as well. She deals with Gilman as S. Weir Mitchell's "most notorious failure" and briefly discusses "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a "psychological horror tale" (71).

Schopp-Schilling, Beate. "'The Yellow Wallpaper': A Rediscovered 'Realistic' Story." American Literary Realism 8.3 (1975): 284-286.

YW Schopp-Schilling uses Adlerian depth psychology to interpret "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a realistic portrayal of psychological processes involved in the narrator's psychic disintegration as she attempts to overcome feelings of inferiority. She feels that more needs to be done with this aspect of the story.

1978

Fleenor, Juliann Evans. "Giving Birth: Images of Interior Space." Diss. U of Toledo, 1978.

YW Fleenor insists that fictional women can gain freedom only "at the price of celibacy . . . . These fictional women fear heterosexuality . . . (6). The

narrator's nursery in "The Yellow Wallpaper" "assumes a womblike atmosphere" (7). As the wallpaper images increase and multiply, there "is the suggestion in these passages that the narrator is giving birth to deformed beings, that she cannot shape her experiences except as grotesque forms" (9). According to Fleenor, "the male is a symbol of disorder or imposed order, and that is why his presence limits the creativity of the woman" (13).

Gornick, Vivian. "Twice Told Tales." The Nation. 23 September 1978. 278-281.

YW Gornick compares the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" with Anna in the novel Anna by David Reed(1976). Both women have mental breakdowns; the narrator tells her story in "The Yellow Wallpaper," and Reed, the husband of Anna, tells his wife's story. The two stories have so many parallels that Gornick sees Anna's story as essentially a duplication of Gilman's, especially in "the fatal suffocation of spirit that commonly lay behind a nineteenth-century woman's happily married life" (281). Gornick views both husbands as basically good men with good intentions whose basic problem is their

position as husbands; the nature of marriage compels them to do their work at the expense of their wives if necessary. Work defines them and should define their wives as well. Instead, the wives loose their sense of self.

1979

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic. 1979; rpt. New Haven: Yale UP, 1984.

Gilbert and Gubar wrote this landmark book in an effort to understand the common patterns, themes, and images that they detected in the works of disparate women writers from "Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte to Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, and Sylvia Plath" (xi). What unfolds for them and the reader is a coherence in literature written by women that can be explained "by a common, female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic redefinitions of self, art, and society" (xii). This work is an attempt to expand upon and to define further the female literary tradition which Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter have located in earlier studies by focusing on "crucial" nineteenth-century texts. Basing their methodology

on Bloom's premise that "literary history consists of strong action and inevitable reaction," these authors seek to "describe both the experience that generates the metaphor and the metaphor that creates experience" (xiii). In their discussion of Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," these authors liken Gilman's story of "female confinement and escape" to Jane Eyre (85); both heroines, for example, experience fragmentations of self. They view Gilman's narrator's madness as a triumph because her husband "has been temporarily defeated, or at least momentarily stunned," but of even more consequence are the narrator's "own imaginings and creations, mirages of health and freedom with which her author endows her like a fairy godmother showering gold on a sleeping heroine" (91).

Hill, Vicki Lynn. "Strategy and Breadth: The Socialist-Feminist in American Fiction." Diss. State U of New York at Buffalo, 1979.

In her attempt to "locate and discuss attention paid to sexual and economic power relationships in fiction written by American women during the years between the Jacksonian bank crisis and the first

World War" (iii), Hill discusses Gilman's Women and Economics, Moving the Mountain, and Herland as works in which "social conditioning rather than biological inevitability was responsible for sexual role behavior" (229).

Pringle, Mary Beth. "'La Poetique de l'espace' in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" French American Review 3 (1979): 15-22.

YW

Using a house as a framework for analysis of the psyche, Pringle finds that the narrator has juxtaposed her memories of her childhood house as "succor" with her present abode which has barred windows and a wallpaper whose pattern forms bars. "Out of yellow wallpaper the narrator shapes the only thing she knows: a cage."

1980

Glenn, Ellen Walker. "The Androgynous Woman Character in the American Novel." Diss. U of Colorado at Boulder, 1980.

Glenn states that "the androgynous woman does exist to some extent, and current research has attempted to give a concrete portrait of the androgynous per-

sonality" (7); androgyny, however, is "an ideal; it assumes that men and women are free to choose their behavior and their attitudes in an atmosphere of equality" (14). Glenn refers to "the androgynous woman" in Herland (25) and discusses the androgynous qualities of Hester Prynne. The first two chapters discuss Hawthorne almost exclusively. In her discussion of Gilman's Herland, she states that the women there are "totally androgynous. They blend what we call masculine and feminine traits with absolutely no consideration of the appropriateness of masculine traits for women" (110). Among other feminist utopian novels, "only in Herland is manness or becoming a man absent" (117). She writes that Ellador of Herland "is so androgynous that she can convince a man of the value of a world without sex roles" (122).

Hill, Mary A. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Feminist's Struggle With Womanhood." Massachusetts Review 21.3 (1980): 503-526.

Hill examines Gilman's private struggles with the theories she formulated and expounded, citing pas-

sages from her personal diaries and letters to various people that illustrate the agonies she endured as she struggled with her woman's desire to love and to be loved and her human desire to be independent. Her era's view of women's innate and learned characteristics were often blurred and difficult to reconcile with her idea of woman's superiority to man, thus, the contraditions in some of her writing, the dichotomy between her private and public selves.

___. Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Making of A Radical Feminist, 1860-1896. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1980.

This definitive biography is the first volume of a proposed two-volume set. Hill traces Gilman's life chronologically through 1896 after Gilman's return from England and her invitation to contribute to the American Fabian. Her objective is "to trace chronologically the origins of Charlotte Gilman's

feminist convictions and to explain some of the patterns of her early life." The central focus of the book is Gilman's "struggle with the 'burden of our common womanhood,' or, more accurately, the burden of our common humanity."

Kolodny, Annette. "A Map for Rereading: Or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts." New Literary History 11 (1980): 451-67.

YW Kolodny examines the limitations of Bloom's model for the process of reading "a synecdoche for a larger whole including other texts." Since women's texts have few precursors and woman writes from her sphere of experience and not from man's, man cannot understand women's literature if he cannot "read" woman; woman, however, often accepts man's reading of her. She discusses Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" as stories that illustrate man's inability, even unwillingness, to interpret woman and her world. "Revisionary reading" is necessary, in Kolodny's opinion, to "open new avenues for comprehending male texts . . . [and to] allow us to appreciate the variety of women's literary expression . . . ."

Lane, Ann J. Introduction. The Charlotte Perkins Gilman Reader. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. ix-xlii. Lane's book is also a good place to begin a study of Gilman. She offers a succinct biography of Gilman, synopses of the eleven short stories and portions of seven novels included in the collection, and a good overview of Gilman's social views and of her work as a whole.

1981

Hayden, Delores. The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981. The author focuses on "material feminists" who "demanded economic remuneration for women's unpaid household labor" (3). Gilman was not an extremist but was only one of many women who advocated the "feminine transformation of the home" (4). The material feminists represent the chasm separating Marxism and feminism. The industrial revolution increased the impetus toward mass production and "socialized labor," but concomitantly the housewife "became more isolated from her husband" (13) and

from society. The greatest legacy of the material feminists was their reconsideration of a variety of alternatives to feminine domesticity (28). In Part V, entitled "Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Her Influence" (181-278), Hayden presents an interesting and accurate portrait of Gilman and her varied activities, both "practical and fanciful" (183) but certainly not extreme: "In many ways her program was a somewhat conservative synthesis of earlier material feminist ideas with popular theories of social revolution" (183). Many of Gilman's ideas for domestic reform were indeed influential, probably because they were logical and practical: Women and Economics was considered a "'bible' by college women at Vassar, and many women's groups around the country attempted to put some of Gilman's ideas into practice.

Kennard, Jean E. "Convention Coverage or How to Read Your Own Life." New Literary History 13.1 (1981): 69-88.

YW Until recent years "The Yellow Wallpaper" has been read as a Poesque horror story of incipient madness, but conventions change according to the needs

of the "interpretive community." Kennard examines some of the "associative clusters" of meaning which readers now accept as conventions and which make possible a feminist reading of this story as she addresses the concepts of patriarchy, madness, space, and quest. She also discusses feminist readings of the story by Elaine Hedges, Annette Kolodny, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in conjunction with her own and advocates creating meanings within a text instead of merely discovering them in a fixed text.

Pearson, Carol. "Coming Home: Four Feminist Utopias and Patriarchial Experience." Future Females: A Critical Anthology. Ed. Marleen S. Barr. Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1981. 63-70. Pearson examines Mary Bradley Lane's Mizora: A Prophecy, Gilman's Herland, Dorothy Bryant's The Kin of Ata Are Waiting for You, and Mary Staton's From the Legend of Biel for similarities in "these seemingly divergent works," similarities "which can be explained by the similar conditioning and experiences women share."

Bader, Julia. "The Dissolving Vision: Realism in Jewett, Freeman, and Gilman." American Realism: New Essays. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982.

YW Examining females in local color works, Bader discovers that a tangible, real, orderly place can dissolve into one that is grotesque and blurred, providing "a somber commentary on the process and the hazards of female perception and self-perception" (176). Gilman's story "calls into question the decipherability of the physical world" (192). As the paper constantly shifts "in meaning and even in visual detail" (193), order and readability of the physical world gradually dissolves and becomes grotesque as the narrator's illness progresses.

Bartkowski, Frances. "Toward A Feminist Eros: Readings in Feminist Utopian Fiction." Diss.U of Iowa, 1982.

Bartkowski refers to Gilman's Herland as a world

"inherently flawed, mis-recorded, mis-remembered, and even, perhaps, censored by the narrator" (19). She discusses "The Yellow Wallpaper" as "a short fictional piece whose heroine undergoes the infamous rest-cure of S. Weir Mitchell, nerve specialist in the era of neurasthenia and hysteria" (21-22). She also refers briefly to Gilman's novel With Her in Ourland (28), and there is another brief reference to Herland (100), but otherwise there are no more references to Gilman, and in the general conclusion, there is no obvious allusion to Gilman.

Fehr, Av Drude Daae von der. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper': Ansatser Til en Semiologisk Tekstanalyse." Edda 1 (1982): 39-53.

YW Von der Fehr offers the familiar comments about the narrator's domestic relationship with her husband John and her sister-in-law Jennie as she notes the wife's imprisoned condition and her growing interest in the wallpaper (44), as well as John's attempts to squelch her desire to write and to communicate (46). In the most original part of the article, von der Fehr puzzles over the splitting of the egos in the case of Usher/Madeline in Poe's

"Fall of the House of Usher" and the narrated and narrating's egos in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" ("i spaltningen av jeg'et, Usher/Madeline, og det fortalte og det fortellends jeg; "The Yellow Wallpaper") (51). Von der Fehr points out that both Poe and Gilman use the word "arabesque" (51). This author also argues that Poe offers a biological explanation for the degeneration of the Ushers while Gilman insists on a social and sexual causality. The textual meaning becomes clear in both stories through a study of metonymical relationships (52): a gradual resemblance develops between the house windows and the owner's mental condition in Poe's story; the bed and especially the wallpaper gradually come to represent the woman in the bed observing the wallpaper in Gilman's story (52).

1983

Arms, George, ed. Introduction. W. D. Howells: Selected Letters. Vol. 6: 1912-1920. Boston: Twayne, 1983.

Arms mentions Gilman's letter to Howells expressing her pleasure that Howells wanted to publish "The

Yellow Wallpaper" and explaining to him her own breakdown under Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's treatment. Gilman told Howells she sent a copy of the story to Mitchell and learned in later years that it caused Mitchell to alter his treatment of neuraesthenia.

Combellick, Katherine. "Feminine Forms of Closure: Gilman, Deming and H. D." Diss. State U of New York, Binghampton, 1983.

YW This critic discusses "the problem of closure" in women's texts by using Elaine Showalter's three-part framework as a "paradigm for the evolution of women writers in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries: feminine, feminist and female." The woman author internalizes male conventions, but "betrays, especially at the moment of closure, her perspective of non-centrality" (3). Gilman's writing, however, "emerges from the initial 'feminine' stage; it is ambiguous in its allegiance to the heroine's perceptions. This heroine's perception [that of the narrator in TYW] is undercut by the damage it inflicts on her. She is 'right' and 'wrong' at the same time" (10). At first, she has so internalized male values that she "perceives herself as synonymous

with her responsibility as wife . . . . When she speaks of the house it is a description of the strictures on her own life. The house is ordered by a system of rules and compartments which the heroine finds 'beautiful'" (43). Though John ridicules her perceptions, his fear of them dictate "his increasingly tight strictures of her confinement" (43). Her circular, limited movements around the room form a "groove" on the wall which becomes "comfortable" to her (50). "At the moment of closure, the heroine inhabits the position of complete power" (52).

Fleenor, Juliann. "The Gothic Prism: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Gothic Stories and Her Autobiography." The Female Gothic. Ed. Juliann E. Fleenor. Montreal and London: Eden P, 1983. 227-241.

YW Fleenor observes that the themes of Gilman's autobiography and of three of her short stories, "The Yellow Wallpaper," "The Wisteria," and "The Rocking Chair," are within the domain of female gothic, or gothic as it is produced by women. All four express anger at the patriarchal treatment of women, ambivalence about the role of motherhood, and "ambivalence about the capacity of the female imagi-

nation and female creativity." Viewing motherhood as Gilman's central conflict, Fleenor suggests that she never came to terms with it and was "at odds with her society, . . . those of her own sex, and primarily . . . with herself" (241). "Maternity and creation" are so closely "intertwined, . . . woman as author is depicted in the autobiography . . . as a wounded woman in constant torment" (240).

Freibert, Lucy M. "World Views in Utopian Novels by Women." Women and Utopia. Eds. Marleen Barr and Nicholas D. Smith. Lanham, MD: UP of America, 1983. 67-84.

Freibert examines four feminist utopian works--Herland by Gilman, 1915; The Dispossessed by Ursula LeGuin, 1974; Woman on the Edge of Time by Marge Piercy, 1976; and The Wonderground by Sally Miller Gearhart, 1979--for shared principles and "a pattern which is emerging in the feminist canon." This pattern is that of an "organicist root metaphor [which] embodies . . . the idea of a living, progressing system. Herland is based on the metaphor of motherhood," while the others are based on the metaphors of anarchy, personhood, and sisterhood

respectively. These metaphors advocate "the union of reason and nature, rather than the domination of nature practiced by the current male-oriented culture."

Gubar, Susan. "*She* and *Herland*: Feminism as Fantasy." *Coordinates: Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Eds. George E. Slusser, Eric S. Rabkin, and Robert Scholes. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1983: 139-149.

Feminism as fantasy imagines a possible reality rather than the probable one for women. Gubar transposes the system of signs used to read H. Rider Haggard's *She* into Gilman's *Herland* to "trace the dialectic between the father's curse and the mother's blessing in the relationship between [the two works] because *She*'s power and popularity transformed the colonized continents into the heart of female darkness that Charlotte Perkins Gilman would rename and reclaim in a utopian feminist revision of Haggard's romance" (143). Gubar observes that Gilman attempts to portray a culture unlike her own in its harmony with nature.

Huckle, Patricia. "Women in Utopias." The Utopian Vision: Seven Essays on the Quincentennial of Sir Thomas More. San Diego: San Diego UP, 1983. 115-136.

Huckle juxtaposes nineteenth-century utopian novels and efforts to establish utopian communities with twentieth-century feminist science fiction and communes; "Each is examined for assumptions and practices in terms of sex role specialization, patterns of relationships, and attempts to achieve new social structures." Novels discussed in some detail are Mary Griffith's Three Hundred Years Hence (1836) and Gilman's Herland; Joanna Russ's The Female Man and Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, and many others are mentioned. A few of the communities discussed are the Rappites, the Shakers, the Owenites, Communia in Iowa, Kaweah in California, Nashoba in Memphis, Tennessee, Loma-Land in California and others. "The feminist visions of the future are grounded in contemporary values and mores, and posit new and wondrous options. The novels, therefore, are more successful at social criticism than they are at clarifying practical methods for achieving utopia" (125).

Keyser, Elizabeth. "Looking Backward: From Herland to Gulliver's Travels. Studies in American Fiction 2.1 (1983): 31-46.

Keyser draws parallels between Gulliver's Travels, especially the Fourth Voyage, and Herland. She postulates that "Gilman uses Swift's satire on human pride in general as a model for her attack on male pride in particular, offers an explanation for the Yahoo in human nature, and, finally, suggests how the Yahoo can be eradicated," unlike Swift who offered no recourse.

Miller, Margaret. "The Ideal Woman in Two Feminist Science Fiction Utopias." Science Fiction Studies 10 (July 1983): 191-198.

Miller compares and contrasts Gilman's Herland (1915) with Suzy McKee Charnas' Motherlines (1978) to see what each writer believed the female potential to be under different and in some ways superior conditions to our own and to see if and how feminist assumptions about the nature of woman have changed during the interval between publication of these two works.

Poirier, Suzanne. "The Weir Mitchell Rest Cure: Doctor and Patients." Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 10.1 (1983): 15-40.

YW In describing Mitchell's cure at length, Poirier tells of the experiences of some famous patients whose number included Jane Addams, Gilman, William Howells' daughter Winifred (who died of organic causes while undergoing treatment and being force-fed), Edith Wharton, and Virginia Woolf, who was treated later by another doctor who espoused Mitchell's theories. Mitchell believed that body and mind were so connected that healing the body meant healing the mind. From his records about a woman who was taught to crawl before learning to walk again after much bedrest (and who evidence strongly suggests is Edith Wharton), Mitchell writes: "You see that, following nature's lessons with docile mind, we have treated the woman as nature treats an infant" (Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System 47; Poirier 32). The women Poirier discusses "had to redefine themselves to themselves, often in defiance of all authority figures around them" (35).

Fryer, Judith. "Women and Space: The Flowering of Desire." Prospects: An Annual Journal of American Cultural Studies 9 (1984): 187-230.

In her exploration of the "relationship of space to the female imagination," Fryer notes that at the turn of the century in America, men and women moved in two distinct and separate spheres, the men in spheres of business and industry, the women in spheres of culture and their homes. Citing Erikson's studies showing that "women have been conditioned not to move in space . . . but to stay filed in their model houses," she asks. "what is the relationship, in America, of spaces to the female imagination?" She concludes that women need both private and public space in which to move freely so that there can be dialectical interaction between the two. In an overview of the history of theories of home building in America from about 1900, she deals with Gilman's progressive theories of the family and kitchenless homes and their pos-

sibilities as freeing influences on the women depicted in Women and Economics, The Home, Herland, and What Diantha Did, as well as the negative effects on a woman, such as the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper," who must live in "spaces that enclose and entrap," that do not "free the imagination.""

Krieg, JoAnn P. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman and The Whitman Connection." Walt Whitman Quarterly Review 1.4 (1984): 21-25.

Krieg traces the "chain of events, people, and ideas that led to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's participation in the last meeting of the Walt Whitman Fellowship in 1919." Horace Traubel was the key figure responsible.

Payerle, Margaret Jane. "A Little Like Outlaws: The Metaphorical Use of Restricted Space in the Works of Certain American Women Realistic Writers." Diss. Case Western Reserve U, 1984.

YW Payerle focuses her dissertation on "the preoccupation with physical environment, specific material objects, and personal space in the works of five American women realist writers: Mary Wilkins Freeman, Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins

Gilman, and Susan Glaspell. The fifth chapter entitled "'Different Kinds of the Same Thing': Madness and Solidarity as Escapes from Restriction in the Works of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Susan Glaspell" treats Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" as "new directions for women who need to escape the loneliness and confinement in their lives" (148).

Treichler, Paula A. "Escaping the Sentence: Diagnosis and Discourse in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 3 (1984): 61-77. rpt. Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship. Ed. Shari Benstock. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987. 62-78.

YW Treichler perceives the story as a clash between "ancestral" patriarchal language and a new "visionary" women's discourse. She interprets the wallpaper as women's writing and the woman within the paper as "a representation of women that becomes possible only after women obtain the right to speak." The narrator, diagnosed by the physician-husband, receives a "sentence" that includes "isolation, deprivation, and alienation from . . . [her] own sentencing possibilities." For her and all women

to "escape the sentence" patriarchal representatives pass on them "involves both linguistic innovation and change in material conditions of speaking." Treichler presents a good explanation of the ways in which language reflects one's concept of reality.

1985

Berman, Jeffrey. "The Unrestful Cure: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" The Talking Cure: Literary Representations of Psychoanalysis. New York: New York UP, 1985. 33-59.

YW Berman offers an intensive, concise, comprehensive psychoanalytical reading of both Gilman and the narrator of her short story. In the introduction to the book in which he discusses "fictional accounts of psychotherapy" (26), noting that Gilman and Bertha Pappenheim, Breuer's patient whom he calls Anna O. in the literature, were contemporaries, he draws parallels between their lives, commenting that Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a successful account of the "oppressive social, political, and sexual forces responsible for the heroine's fatal entrapment in her Victorian ancestral house" (26),

whereas Breuer's "Fraulein Anna O." fails for lack of the type of "restraint and clinical detachment" which Gilman achieves. (26). In the chapter devoted to Gilman, he praises her insight into her--and her narrator's--childhood experiences as the source of her illness and her instinctual knowledge that "psychological illness worsens when it is not acknowledged as real and that the rest cure is antithetical both to the talking cure and to the therapeutic value of artistic creation" (56).

Ford, Karen. "Notes and Queries: 'The Yellow Wallpaper' and Women's Discourse." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 4 (1985): 309-314.

YW Ford begins with the basic tenets of Treichler's seminal article, "Escaping the Sentence: Diagnosis and Discourse in 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" (1984), and her assumption that the narrator's mental breakdown is potentially every woman's problem; she "problematizes the image of the wallpaper, thereby calling into question the notion of women's discourse" (309). Arguing that Treichler has fixed "the significance of the wallpaper too rigidly" (310), Ford asks several important questions about

Treichler's conclusions, such as "if the wallpaper stands for a new vision of women, why is the narrator tearing it down?" (310). Ford then flounders in her own interpretation: "I am interested in the notion that the wallpaper represents women's discourse to the extent that the wallpaper is impossible to define" (311). It is difficult, however, to take a critic seriously when she does not get the characters in the story straight. Ford is lamentably amiss in calling Mary the sister-in-law because Jennie is the sister-in-law, and Mary is the nurse. In addition, Ford perhaps confounds readers by equating the narrator's tearing away of the wallpaper with "a retreat from discourse precisely because language is male-controlled" (312). True, the language of Gilman's time was male-dominated, but Gilman's own thoughts offer proof that the language was not exactly "male-controlled."

Hill, Mary A., ed. Endure: The Diaries of Charles Walter Stetson. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1985.

YW Selected diary entries from August 1883 through June 1888 show Walter, Charlotte's first husband, to be a well-meaning man who loved Charlotte but who

wanted a traditional wife. Like John, the husband in "The Yellow Wallpaper," he thought he knew what was best for her, and as she acquiesced to his wishes she, like the narrator in her story, came near to losing her mind. A product of his age, he ascribed more importance to his work than he did to his wife's.

Lenarcic, Faye Mertine. "The Emergence of the Passionate Woman in American Literature, 1850-1920." Diss. Syracuse U, 1985.

Lenarcic's discussion of Herland is mostly an interpretative retelling of the novel. She speculates that perhaps "because Freeman, Jewett, Phelps, and Gilman were themselves victims of hostility, they were able to create in their fiction memorable portraits of the New Woman in conflict with society" (267).

Neely, Carol Thomas. "Alternative Women's Discourse." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 4 (1985): 315-322.

YW In this article Neely addresses some of the issues Paula A. Treichler raises in her 1984 article, "Escaping the Sentence: Diagnosis and Discourse in

'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Although she agrees with Treichler that "patriarchal discourse is oppressive to women," she doubts that women's discourse can replace it (315). She also agrees with Treichler that the "level of context" is the important difference between male and female language:

> . . . attempts to contextualize language tend to embed it so deeply in institutional contexts that discussion shifts from language to discourse to wider social issues so that problems peculiar to language usage get lost. (315)

Noting that the wallpaper "is emblematic of the aging and restrictive institutions of patriarchy" (316), Neely remarks that the patient "is supposed to change herself but is not allowed to change anything else--not the wallpaper, the room, the house, the marriage" (316). Neely feels that male discourse sentences "women to a perpetual 'otherness'" but that women's discourse may be "even

more circumscribed and less useful than that which patriarchy allows" (319). Furthermore, "women's discourse remains so intertwined with patriarchal discourse it tries to displace that it is difficult to be sure a female-centered discourse is there" (321). In Neely's opinion, the destruction of the wallpaper can be viewed as both victory and defeat.

Scharnhorst, Gary. Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Boston: Twayne, 1985.

This literary biography discusses Gilman's complete works chronologically and thematically. Each period of her life is discussed along with the work she did during that period. This excellent source book provides a synopsis of most of her works, their historical backgrounds, and Scharnhorst's critical acumen.

___. "Making Her Fame: Charlotte Perkins Gilman in California." California History. (Summer 1985): 192-201, 242-243.

Scharnhorst provides a history of Gilman's work in the Nationalist movement and its effects on her sociological theories and work throughout her life.

Shumaker, Conrad. "'Too Terribly Good to be Printed': Charlotte Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" American Literature 57 (1985): 588-599.

YW "Gilman explores a question that was--and in many ways still is--central both to American literature and to the place of women in American culture: What happens to the imagination when it's defined as feminine (and thus weak) and has to face a society that values the useful and the practical and rejects everything else as nonsense? Second, this conflict and related feminist message both arise naturally and effectively out of the action of the story because of the author's skillful handling of the narrative voice" (590). Schumaker discusses the American male's trust in logic alone and his fear that to use his imagination would be a sign of weakness: "fear of the imagination has been institutionalized through assigned gender roles" (592). By defining his wife's writing impulses as feminine temperament, John thinks he controls his wife and this experience in their lives. In his discussion of associations, foreshadowing, and humor, Shumaker explains how the pattern of the narrative provides

both association and foreshadowing. For example, in the passage about Jennie ("She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper . . . . There's sister on the stairs!"), he shows "how Gilman develops the narrator's mental collapse" by implicitely contrasting a previous passage with a later one (597). Dark humor is displayed in the central images: the window, the barred pattern on the paper, the woman behind the paper. "In a sense, she has discovered, bit by bit, and finally revealed to John, the wife he is attempting to create--the woman without illusions or imagination who spends all her time creeping" (598). Shumaker avers that Howells agreed the story was "too terribly good to be printed" because he understood (and so did other readers) on some level what the story was about: "it struck too deeply and effectively at traditional ways of seeing the world and women's place in it" (598).

Treichler, Paula A. "The Wall Behind the Yellow Wallpaper: Response to Carol Neely and Karen Ford." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 4 (1985): 323-330.

YW In responding to Neely's and Ford's assessments of her earlier essay, "Escaping the Sentence: Discourse

and Diagnosis in 'The Yellow Wallpaper,'" Treichler addresses three issues pertinent to "language and feminist literary analysis": "(1) problematic aspects of the term 'women's discourse'; (2) problems with the notion of an 'alternative discourse'; and (3) the difficulty of interpreting the metaphor of the yellow wallpaper" (323). She cites several definitions of the term "women's discourse," addresses the issue of discourse in general, and concludes that patriarchal discourse and women's discourse inhabit the same "terrain" at the same time; thus, women's discourse cannot be considered an actual alternative discourse. "The two discourses do not stand apart from each other as two separate alternatives" (325). "The Yellow Wallpaper," therefore, "does not present two clear alternative discourses but rather shows in graphic and claustrophobic detail how the same terrain--language--may be differently inhabited" (327). Patriarchal discourse in the form of "the medical diagnosis and its representation of women" coexists with the narrator's attempts "to produce a counter-diagnosis" in this story (327).

Bassuk, Ellen L. "The Rest Cure: Repetition or Resolution of Victorian Women's Conflicts?" The Female Body in Western Culture. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986. 139-151.

YW In this well-researched article, Bassuk describes "the physical and psychological aspects" of S. Weir Mitchell's rest cure, "explores the medical rationale" for this treatment, and discusses "the symbolic meanings of both the nervous symptoms and the cure" (140). She speculates that the cure allowed some Victorian women to regress to an infantile state and thus to avoid sometimes overwhelming household responsibilities which they were not equipped to manage while also repressing their sexual conflicts. She perceives that this may have been a transference cure, transference implying that "the patient developed an idealizing or narcissistic transference to the therapist." At the same time, earlier unresolved pre-oedipal and oedipal conflicts were reactivated in the physician-patient relationship. Transference, then, "becomes the vehicle of change" (148). Having elicited his patient's emo-

tional loyalty, Mitchell relied on suggestion to effect change by convincing her "to exercise more self-control and to abandon her symptoms" (149), without exploring the conflicts underlying the symptoms.

Fetterley, Judith. "Reading About Reading: 'A Jury of Her Peers,' 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' and 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Gender and Reading. Ed. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patricia A. Schweickert. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986. 147-164.

YW Based on the premise that women can and do read both women's and men's texts, but that men will not make the effort to learn to read women's texts, Fetterley examines in these three stories the results on women's lives of men's refusal to attempt to "read" them. She observes that "The Yellow Wallpaper" "makes clear the connection between male control of textuality and male dominance in other areas" (159), for John controls every aspect of his wife's life. "Gilman argues that male control of textuality constitutes one of the primary causes of women's madness in a patriarchal culture. Forced to read men's texts, women are forced to become characters

in those texts" (159). Faced with John's reality and John's truth, the narrator of Gilman's story turns the wallpaper into a text John cannot read, but she confirms John's text when she goes mad. "Reading validates one's reality and enforces one's identity" (152). "One is a competent reader only of texts that one has written or can imagine having written" (155).

Guempel, Stephen Robert. "Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman, A Voice for Progress and Perfection: A Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Addresses, 1883-1892." Diss. Louisiana State U and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1986.

Guempel discusses the background, the structure, and the effectiveness of five early addresses after a study of Gilman's life as The Apostle of Progress in which he gives "careful attention to those people, experiences, and events in Stetson's life that contributed in an important way to her development as a speaker and reformer" (4). The addresses include "Belief in God and the Use of It," "Our Opportunity," "Our Place Today," "Our Social Duties," "The Unity of Man," and "Poetry and Life."

Haney-Peritz, Janice. "Monumental Feminism and Literature's Ancestral House: Another Look at 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 12.2 (1986): 113-128.

YW This author discusses the wallpaper with its "unheard of contradictions" as symbolic of both John's discourse and the narrator's writing. Instead of looking to the narrator as a monument of the feminist movement, she thinks it might be more fitting to read her as a memento mori signifying one woman's death "rather than as a memorial that encloses the body essential to a viable literary criticism." Then she "would provoke sympathy rather than identification and . . . would encourage us to apprehend the turn to the imaginary . . . as a sign of what may happen when a possible operation of the feminine in language is repressed." Haney-Peritz presents a good discussion of Gilbert and Gubar's interpretation of the story in The Madwoman in the Attic, Annette Kolodny's in her essay "A Map for Re-Reading: Or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts," and Jean Kennard's essay, "Convention Coverage or How To Read Your Own Life."

Jacobus, Mary. Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.

YW These essays are about "feminist reading and the . . . question of reading 'woman' as a figure for sexual difference." They are about reading and woman as reader, writer, or as read, "especially as represented in and by Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis." The chapter entitled "An Unnecessary Maze of Sign-Reading" gives a gothic reading of "The Yellow Wallpaper," and deals with the creeping and the yellow smell as symbolic of woman's sexuality and man's fear of the feminine.

Wilson, Christopher P. "Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Steady Burghers: The Terrain of Herland." Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal 12.3 (1986): 271-292.

Wilson explores literary devices Gilman uses in Herland and Herland's "implicit commentary about art, gender, and property," and he suggests that Gilman's efforts to produce a literature that served as a counterpoint to the established "masculine aesthetic" of contemporary fiction often proved "elusive and paradoxical."

Brown, Gillian. "The Empire of Agoraphobia." Representations 20 (Fall 1987): 134-157.

YW Much of Brown's article centers on Bartleby the Scrivener's fear of open spaces, but she also observes that the narrator's room in "The Yellow Wallpaper" "reiterates the agoraphobic association between selfhood and domestic enclosure" (144). Gilman's character is so uncertain about her space that she claims the space within the wallpaper:

> the uncertainty of this woman's place, her identification with both the woman she imagines creeping behind the paper and the woman she imagines "creeping along" "in the open country" suggest that domestic borders vary and waver, that the walls and women move. (138)

Gilman's narrator is a "wall-moving woman," but "shifting the walls that situate the self, agoraphobia is inevitably not agoraphobic enough" (145).

Doyle, Laura. "The Body Poetics: Language and Materiality in Modern Women's Narrative." Diss. Brandeis U 1987.

YW Doyle compares the narrator's voice in "The Yellow Wallpaper" with that of Tristram in Tristram Shandy:

> As in the difference between deconstruction and l'ecriture feminine, in which practitioners of the former are "at play" among the props of the known world, and practitioners of the latter are of necessity at peril in spinning out the meanings of a beseiged counter-world, so it is with Tristram and Gilman's narrator. (30

The text, like the wallpaper, "'commits every artistic sin'" (32), and the wallpaper is "a reflection of the character's condition" (33). Doyle briefly discusses the "mother-daughter relationship" which "exists in exile in this story" (35), conjecturing that "Charlotte is living out a cycle of mother-daughter alienation typical of women in patriarchy" (36).

Michaels, Walter Benn. The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.

YW In this book which explores consumerism in the works of such authors at the turn of the century as

Gilman, Dreiser, Crane, and others, Michaels views "'The Yellow Wallpaper' as an endorsement of consumer capitalism [much more] than as a critique of it." He agrees with his understanding of Gilman's philosophy, whose role he sees as critical in the "emergence of consumer culture." He argues that the quality that "makes 'The Yellow Wallpaper' exemplary . . . is thus its determination to see the self on its own terms, as a commodity, a subject in the market" (28). He defines the work of writing as "the work of at once producing and consuming the self or, what comes to the same thing, work in the market. What makes 'The Yellow Wallpaper' exemplary for me is thus its determination to see the self on its own terms, as a commodity, a subject in the market" (28). In his view "The Yellow Wallpaper" is not so much a story about the effects of Weir Mitchell's rest cure, his "refusal to allow her to produce," but about a woman who is so committed to producing that "it requires her to begin by producing herself" (5). He continues: "For Gilman, then, the work of writing is the work simultaneously of production and consumption, a work in

which woman's body is rewritten as the utopian body of the market economy." He emphasizes the point that Gilman viewed the female body "not only as an object to be exchanged . . . but as the very site of exchange." In "The Yellow Wallpaper," then, "being oneself depends on owning oneself, and owning oneself depends on producing oneself" (13).

1988

Allen, Polly Wynn. Building Domestic Liberty: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Architectural Feminism. Amherst: U of Mass. P., 1988.

Allen explores Gilman's feminist/socialist theories about architecture that would free the woman to work outside the home and make the home a haven for the entire family to enjoy. "Her vision of an alternative, woman-supporting landscape remains powerful enough to arrest the attention of would-be planners, developers, and community activists as the end of another century approaches." She deals with Gilman's architectural vision as it is expressed in both her fiction and her non-fiction.

DeLamotte, Eugenia C. "Male and Female Mysteries in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Legacy: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers 5.1 (1988): 3-14.

YW DeLamotte observes that Gilman's heroine becomes a Gothic writer as Gilman explores the genre from the feminist perspective. The result is "a bold revelation of the meanings concealed beneath women Gothicists' preoccupation with knowledge and with a set of interrelated issues: self-defense; the encounter with a hidden woman; speech and silence; the misprizing of the heroine; the horrors of repetition; and the problem of freedom" (3). DeLamotte discusses male knowledge of women's psychological disturbances and deduces that "the feminine mysteries [which male knowledge] cannot accommodate--are at the center of Gilman's brilliant re-visioning of the genre of women's Gothic" (4). In women's gothic a woman vicariously lives adventures she could never experience in reality; "the Heroine's suffering is the principle action because it is the only action she can perform" (60. She contrasts the narrator's feelings about John to her feelings

about the paper. She can be frank about her feelings about the paper, but not about John. Some other relevant sample quotes from her article are: "the difficulty of being known is the real subject of Gothic Paranoia" (8-9); "Gothic fear is a mask for anger" (11); "woman is shut up within her home and shut up within herself in a 'circle of herself'" (quoting de Beauvoir, The Second Sex 500). In DeLamotte's view the end of Gilman's story is ambiguous: "triumph and defeat, insight and insanity, self-knowledge and self-loss" (13).

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century. Vol. 1: The War of the Words. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988.

This volume presents an "overview of social, literary, and linguistic interactions between men and women from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present" in a study of modernism's different inflections for male and female writers (xii). The authors discuss Gilman's short story entitled "When I Was A Witch" and her novel Herland briefly as fusions of "feminism and fantasy" (89). They be-

lieve Herland to be a revision of Tennyson's The Princess and Rider Haggard's She.

Herndl, Diane Price. "The Writing Cure: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Anna O, and 'Hysterical' Writing." National Women's Studies Association Journal 1.1 (Autumn 1988): 52-74.

YW In this essay, Herndl explores the "relation between hysteria and feminist writing" (52), defining hysteria as the "women's response" to "the male-defined signifying system" (53) and citing the history of hysteria beginning with Freud's analyses (53-54). Herndl believes that psychoanalysis is "male-oriented" and "male-founded" and that it "perpetuates sexual and psychological stereotypes . . . " (55). She discusses the "'metaphorical' phallus" and the "physical penis" (55) and woman's need for a language to express her sexuality. Since the "phallus becomes the privileged symbol," and "nothing penile" equals "No thing" (56), the hysteric is the woman who has no unconscious representation of her sexuality and who therefore experiences the nothing directly, without the mediation of language (61). The "hysteric lacks the spacial-temporal

distance gained from the framework of language" (62):

> A cure . . . would focus on shifting not only the woman's representations of sexuality and femininity from "nothing" to "something" but would also work on changing the context in which she used language. (64)

Herndl cites the case history of Breuer's Anna O. who becomes her own "doctor-saviour" (68) and writer but "published under the masculine pseudonym, Paul Berthold, which suggests that her 'new metaphor' for self may not, at first, have been a particularly feminine one" (67). Herndl observes that "writing can become the other" (68): "Denied the power to create her own text, the narrator begins to experience her self as text . . ." (73). She concludes that the narrative instability at the end of the story is not the "communal voice" that Treichler finds, but the voice of no one, the voice of one without subjectivity (74).

Marchalonis, Shirley, ed. Patrons and Protegees: Gender, Friendship, and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1988.

Marchalonis concludes that the friendship between Gilman and Howells, was "in part a function of easily overinterpreted natural affinities" resulting in "mutual attraction" and "mutual restraint."

Veeder, William. "Who is Jane? The Intricate Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman." Arizona Quarterly 44.3 (1988): 40-79.

YW Examining "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Gilman's life "in light of various psychological models taken from boundary and object-relations theorists, Freud, and . . . Melanie Klein," Veeder focuses on infantile tendencies that the heroine projects into her adult life and on her increasing rage as the story progresses. He discusses Gilman's feminism as displayed in the story in the context of "the cultural, medical, and literary traditions of her time."

1989

Bruno, Maria. "Teaching 'Women in America': Some Notes on Pedagogy and Charlotte Perkins Gilman." Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ed. Sheryl L. Meyering. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989. 109-115.

YW Bruno views "The Yellow Wallpaper" as "an excellent beginning" of a course to teach composition to the American woman, whose "timidity is also based on her real fear of male antagonism, coupled with the unspoken or unrecognized need for a female audience to validate her perceptions and experiences" (110-111). Gilman represents in Bruno's course "a model of a woman who defied the societal restrictions of the domestic sphere, and who transcended patriarchal definition (all the monks and knights and Hawthornes of her era) to emerge as the leading intellectual of the feminist movement in the twentieth century" (111). Overall, Bruno presents the depressing view that most women students still feel, prior to taking her course, that it is "improper" for a female to be creative (111).

Davidson, Cathy N. Foreword. Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989.

Davidson observes that Gilman "was a woman ahead of our time" and that she endured "the cruelest fate of any artist--she outlived her own popularity, saw her work dismissed, watched herself forgotten, like

a silent bystander at her own literary funeral" (ix). Today, however, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is rightfully placed "among the most harrowing portraits of stultifying, self-destroying marriage ever written" (x).

DeKoven, Marianne. "Gendered Doubleness and the 'Origins' of Modernist Form." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 8.1 (Spring 1989): 19-42.

YW DeKoven presents readings of Chopin's The Awakening and Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" as examples of female modernism. In her discussion of Gilman's story, she deals with "the doubleness of female modernism," pointing out the "Kafkaesque, proto-Surrealist formal stylization that deploys the great power of dream structure to enact self-contradiction" (28). The front and back patterns of the wallpaper constitute "a self-defeating duality of prison and prisoner" (34), a duality that inscribes "the story's double figure of ambivalence about female freedom" (35). The two patterns are actually "all one," "the twin offspring of the narrator's internalization of her own oppression. The self stifled by the husband's law erupts onto the wallpa-

per." When that self, in turn, "becomes too threatening to the self that participates in the stifling, the eruption itself becomes ironically the 'prison' whose bars must be pulled down" (35). The woman who escapes, then, is victim as well as victor.

Feldstein, Richard. "Reader, Text, and Ambiguous Referentiality in 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" Feminism and Psychoanalysis. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989. 269-279.

YW Feldstein discusses the importance of the word "wallpaper" as a hyphenated or unhyphenated word [Gilman wrote the word as "wall-paper"] as well as the proper reference to the author of "The Yellow Wallpaper," whether Charlotte Perkins, Charlotte Stetson, or Charlotte Perkins Stetson for no evident purpose. He chastises the narrator's husband John, her brother, "and the likes of Weir Mitchell" (270). Feldstein observes that the narrator regards the mirror images in the story as "fellow victims of a phallic system that resembles the wall-paper's restrictive outside pattern" (271).

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *No Man's Land The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*. Vol. 2: *Sexchanges*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989.

This volume is a continuation of the study of modernism begun in Volume One in which the authors associate sexual battles with "radical 'sexchanges,' as well as with notably sexualized visions of change and exchange, in the lives and works of both literary men and literary women" (xi). They cover the period from the 1880's through the 1930's. The authors move from the impotent heroine in "The Yellow Wallpaper" to Gilman's other works wherein the heroines are pathfinders: "While the heroine of 'The Yellow Wallpaper' gnaws at a double bed she cannot seem to move out of the room she is made to inhabit, the men of *Herland* are banished from the bedroom in a fantasy that goes so far as to eliminate both desire and difference" (80). They also discuss Gilman's life and her views on feminism, religion, and sexuality as well as her works, especially *Herland*, which they again view as a feminist revision of "the imperialist romance made popular by Rider Haggard" (71).

Golden, Catherine. "The Writing of 'The Yellow Wallpaper': A Double Palimpsest." Studies in American Fiction 17.2 (Autumn 1989): 193-201.

YW Golden detects two texts within the story, a dominant text which she equates with the narrator's factual self and a muted text which she equates with the narrator's fictionalized self. "Independent of the muted text, the dominant text of her actions incrementally reveals her destruction" (197).

Hall, K. Graehme. "Mothers and Children: 'Rising with the Restless Tide' in Herland." Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ed. Sheryl L. Meyering. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989. 161-171.

Hall begins with a reference to Gilman's earliest memories of her purpose in life by stressing "the value society places on motherhood," which is the "religion" of Herland (162). Most of the essay is a summary of the commitments of the Herlanders to their altered virtues and traditions. Hall also discusses Gilman's intimate relationship with Martha Jessie Luther, citing sexual innuendoes from the correspondence between the two young women, all

adumbrating Gilman's satisfaction with the all-female world which she created in Herland (166-167).

Johnson, Barbara. "Is Female to Male as Ground is to Figure?" Feminists and Psychoanalysis. Eds. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989. 255-268.

YW In discussing the relationship between "feminism and psychoanalysis" (255), Johnson juxtaposes Hawthorne's "Birthmark," Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," and Freud's "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," three texts which examine "a female patient subject to the therapeutic ambitions of a male doctor" (255), to "pursue the conjunction between the aesthetics of the figure-ground relationship and the therapeutics of the male-female relationship" (258). Johnson is also interested in the universality of the "invisible men and women trapped in the wallpaper of the Western canon," those who are not white or middle-class citizens.

Kessler, Carol Farley. "Brittle Jars and Bitter Jangles: Light Verse by Charlotte Perkins Gilman." Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ed. Sheryl L. Meyering. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989. 133-143.

Although Kessler points out some humor in Gilman's poetry, she admits that most of the poems are more didactic than entertaining. As examples of Gilman's poetry, she cites from "Women of Today," "The Modest Maid," and "Wedded Bliss." In the last poem, for example, Gilman satirizes the devouring propensities of the male by juxtaposing the improbable proposals of an eagle, a lion, and a salmon to a hen, a sheep, and a clam respectively (136). After they "wed," each female's life settles unhappily into unproductive inaction while the male soars, or prowls, or swims, as the case may be. Kessler ends with "Feminine Vanity," which inculpates men who adorn females in silk, velvet, feather, fur, jewels, gold, perfumes, roses, and false hair.

Lanser, Susan S. "Feminist Criticism, 'The Yellow Wallpaper,' and the Politics of Color in America." Feminist Studies 15 (1989): 415-435.

YW Prior to presenting her own interpretation of "The Yellow Wallpaper," Lanser reviews the critical stances of six major interpreters of the short story: Hedges, biography; Gilbert and Gubar, female

story: Hedges, biography; Gilbert and Gubar, female authorship; Treichler, textual form; Fetterley, Kolodny, and Kennard, interpretation. Since feminists have deconstructed the dominant male patterns and reconstructed the neglected female experience (417), feminists should acknowledge that their subject is not "literature" but "ideas about sex and gender" (435). Lanser comments upon the "double-voiced" nature of the discourse (418), noting the "crucial shift from narrator to author, from story to text" (419). She dismisses as invalid the assumption that the story is simply a "woman's text" (424) primarily because "it is impossible to separate the text of a culture from the text of an individual, to free female subjectivity from patriarchal text" (424). Lanser boldly asserts that "the patriarchal text and the woman's text are in some sense one" (424), that "the narrator's text is also the text of her culture" (424). More appropriately, Lanser argues, the story can be interpreted in the light of the "discourse of racial anxiety" (427). She compares the narrator with both Jane and Bertha, the mad woman in the attic in Brönte's Jane Eyre (428).

At this point in her discussion, Lanser provides undeniable evidence that color existed for Gilman as a political problem (429-434), and she draws her convincing, if fairly obvious, conclusion: "'The Yellow Wallpaper' has been able to pass for a universal text only insofar as white, Western literatures and perspectives continue to dominate academic American feminist practices. . . (434). The ugly-yellow color and strong foul smell become unconsciously a political reference to the undesirable yellow races and the yellow peril; the text thus reflects Gilman's racist culture and times.

Meyering, Sheryl L. Introduction. Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ed. Sheryl L. Meyering. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989. 1-10.

YW Meyering discusses briefly Gilman's "legacy of imaginative writing" (1) and notes that "The Yellow Wallpaper" accurately represents the "patriarchal and literary tradition" of the author's time: "Creative women were trapped inside the rigid nineteenth-century ideology of the 'women's sphere,' a world defined by domestic concerns" (2). Meyerling observes that Walter Stetson, Gilman's first hus-

band, recognized the existence of Charlotte's own double:

> Stetson himself sees the two Charlottes only too clearly, and throughout the entire painful courtship he tried to encourage the one who wanted marriage, home, and children, and to discourage the "doppelganger". . . . (4)

Finally, Charlotte agreed to the marriage and "steadfastly attempted to let "the Princess"·[the Charlotte who wanted to marry] prevail. . . . She lavished on Stetson her appreciation for his helping her see the light and truth about herself. He had changed her nature completely from the time of their early courtship. . ."(5). Although Gilman was self-deprecating in the assessment of her own literary merits, Meyerling wisely declares that it is time for critics to form an independent judgment of her imaginative efforts (7-8).

Pearce, Lynne and Sara Mills. "Marxist-Feminism." Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading. Eds. Sara Mills, Lynne Pearch, Sue Spaull, and Elaine Millard. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989. 187-226.

YW These authors "suggest methods of reading texts

which are compatible with the post-structuralist realisation [sic] that literature is not simple [sic] the reflection of the world outside the text" (190). In Marxist theory, the mirroring of society in a microcosm becomes paramount in a literary work of significance (190), and the authors express their interest in "the double mirror which reflects itself to infinity" (191). One important Marxist concept essential to a further understanding of "The Yellow Wallpaper" arises from a study of what a text does not expressly speak or imply, the "Machereyan 'not-said,'" or the "'unspoken sub-text'" (192). This sub-text, the one offering no voice, becomes important in selecting and interpreting the absence of a statement in a text. Therefore, while the text of "The Yellow Wallpaper" offers no definitive details and is contradictory in its conclusion, its lack of definiteness "constitutes its problematisation of madness in materialistic terms" (192). They argue that the undermining effects of the text of "The Yellow Wallpaper," hails to women, interpolating them "into sympathy with the narrator" and causing them to misrecognize themselves and to arrogate to

themselves "the elements of madness which the protagonist is undergoing": "Thus, in reading the text, the connection between madness and womanhood is re-stated, in the same way as patriarchal texts run together these notions of femininity, frailty and madness. It is this false recognition which needs to be challenged and resisted" (216). The contradictions in the text more appropriately indicate "a larger social phenomenon affecting middle class women in this period" (219), as opposed to an inherent weakness in women to become insane (216).

Rambo, Sharon M. "What Diantha Did: The Authority of Experience." Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ed. Sheryl L. Meyering. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989. 151-160.

Although acknowledging the "preeminence" of "The Yellow Wallpaper," Rambo argues that a study of this Kunstlerroman, the novel What Diantha Did, "is a particularly good starting point for rediscovering Gilman's fiction." She feels that "The Yellow Wallpaper" should follow the novel as a transition to Gilman's other works because its autobiographical

and first person narrative offers "two contradictory and simultaneous opinions about the main character . . ." (153). Rambo detects two voices in the story who disclose the true feelings of the narrator: "The muted subtext says that the narrator's tearing the wallpaper in order to release her double is not madness" but sanity, and the dominant text reflects the so-called sanity of society (154). In this excellent, and perhaps singular, reading of this serial novel, Rambo examines the "richness" of the text, the theme of mother as muse and daughter as creator, and the structure of the novel.

Schwartz, Lynn Sharon. Introduction. The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Writings. New York: Bantam Books, 1989, vii-xxvii.

YW Schwartz manages to capture the spirit of Gilman in this brief sketch outlining her life, her ideology, and the vast scope of her writing.

Wagner-Martin, Linda. "Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper': A Centenary." Charlotte Perkins Gilman: The Woman and Her Work. Ed. Sheryl L. Meyering. Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1989. 51-64.

YW In discussing the woman as mother in literature,

Wagner-Martin cites "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a story which depicts "the young married woman as mother" (54). She notes the "dishonest rhetoric of the comforting husband" by pointing out John's dissembling words and deeds because the wife is really "his" and does not have her own self (57). She cannot, therefore, find her own way. As the story ends, "she is worried about . . . physically losing her way" (50). Wagner-Martin also notes that the narrator's "escape into madness may have won her continuing argument with John," but, if so, it is "only a Pyrrhic victory because her present life is valueless to anyone, particularly to herself" (60). Then, however, she contradicts her argument that the narrator has gained a "Pyrrhic victory":

> She wins back her language, and vanquishes her husband--who has neither speech nor action by the end of the story. He lies as if dead in the path of her highly functional movement, and she simply crawls over him. (60)

Failing to acknowledge outright that the narrator's victory is only momentary, Wagner-Martin attempts to reconcile her contradictory readings by conceding

that the narrator has "silenced" John "temporarily at least" (61). She evidently argues that the narrator is victorious because she [the narrator] withdraws "into a world of her own making, a complete separation from the patriarchal existence that used her to be the mother of an ancestral line over which she had no control. . ." (63).

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