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Subject

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Yellow wallpaper

Symbolism and settings contribute towards the development of themes of feminism and social constraints.

Perkin’s Gilman in the fiction “The Yellow Wallpaper” portrays a woman who suffers from depression due to the loss of her child. Her husband, John diagnose her condition as hysteria with the assumption that rest will make her better. He leaves her at home with the hope of her improved state. The condition of a wife gets worse because what she needs is freedom. The story criticizes the patriarchal society where associated male females with house chores. The narrator plays the character of a young woman who continues to struggle in a typical society, denying her of freedom and independence. The reason behind the depression is her entrapped state of mind. Also, she is unable to escape the attic room that makes her sick. Themes of feminism and social constraints are visible throughout the story.

The story also symbolizes male authority by displaying the character of John. He plays the character of a typical male who Social norms and taboos prevents the girl from leaving the small room that results in her self-destruction. The narrator states, “he is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction” (Gilman 648). The wife has to follow directions of her husband, depicting the male dominance. He maintains supremacy in the relationship is making the narrator feel about her dependency on her husband due to the financial power he gained. The wife narrates, “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 647). Superior power and male ego appear in his response of laughing at her fancies. He easily dismisses her opinions making her insignificant and worthless. Jennie lacks independence and life of her own that reflects the themes of typical patriarchy and conervativeness. Throughout the story the feelings and desires of woman remains unepxlored.

Settings convey depressive themes, “I lie here on this great immovable bed it is nailed down, I believe - and follow that pattern about by the hour" (Gilman 450). The narrator becomes more depressed, but her relation didn't change. The change in her description reflects changing stages of her illness. She feels trapped and helpless causing her to tear the wallpaper so she can get rid of it. She fancies freedom, “these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least” (Gilman 649). She accepts her visions of figures on wallpaper giving the audiences clues about her mental instability. By the summer her condition gets worst, and her husband takes her to the doctor. The hallucinations of the narrator explain her psychological illness. She attempts to argue with John, but he believed in to his dominant male views. He only thought that her condition was due to hysteria. She switches to the second person for drawing readers attention. She explains that the light makes it look unclear.

The settings portray a small room covered with yellow wallpaper. It conveys the mental illness and disorder. The story had a close reflection of the cultural history of the nineteenth century when women faced social restrictions. The small attic room represents the limited existence of females. The central cause of the nervous breakdown of a traditional wife is the gendered society. The author identifies that the inability of a young woman to escape the attic room leads to her destruction. She struggles to accept her limited role as desired by her husband, resulting in an inner conflict. The source is useful for understanding the yellow room that presents an entrapped state of the feminine world (Mays).

Gilman adopts a narrative tone in expressing the feelings of a wife entrapped in a patriarchal society. The story is expressed from the first-person perspective as the narrator talks about her life problems and experiences. Narrative tone is visible in the text, “I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more. Society and stimulus - 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” (Gilman 648). The choice of the tone depicts that the wife is sharing her experiences of her married life and her loss. She becomes passive and thinks that her husband belittles her. The only way to cure illness according to her was to visit people and write. Her emotions reveal she wanted a place of her own and self-identity. Her feelings indicate that she lacks excitement and joy due to her constrained status.

The incidents of the attic room and the husband-wife relationship confirms the prevalence of feminine oppression. Most of the women became mentally unstable who were unable to find roles other than housewives. The source also contributes to the exploration of the female character living according to male desires. It highlights the issues of male superiority, feminine struggles for independence and freedom. The narrator enters into a state of conflict due to her desires to exploring self. The story is the perfect representation of the repressed state of the women. Their limited roles in home highlight lack of freedom and liberty. The middle-class wife becomes victim of the patriarchal system.

Work Cited

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