

CHAPTER IV
THE IDEA OF FEMINISM IN
CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN'S THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

4.1. Plot

Dealing with the definition of plot in theoretical framework, in this analysis the writer of this thesis will be delineating the sequence of actions and conflicts in connection of the unnamed woman's actions. Each sentence shows an action stressing on the unnamed woman's actions toward her husband because of his way in treating her. The interactions between each sentence are the conflicts as the reflection of her action.

- The unnamed woman feels something strange of the house chosen by her husband.
- She tells him, but he does not pay attention of it, and thinks that is because of her condition.
- She decides not to talk of it to him anymore, she takes all the medicines, exercises given by him which is for her good.
- She only takes a rest in their room, the upstairs one, chosen by him, though she does not like it.
- She hides paper and pen when he is there, because he thinks that will lead her to worse condition.
- She accepts John's way in separating her with her baby and again he said it done for her good.
- She stays there even when he is going out for his cases as a doctor.

- She tries to be a good girl in front of him, and when he was not there, she will accompany by his sister, Jennie.
- She tries to express her feeling, to tell her experience to him once more, but again he thinks that only of her condition and her ability in making the imaginative world.
- She decides to keep all her experience, feelings, and thinking for herself.
- She never lets anyone else coming to her world, no one.
- She never feels that her condition is getting better, but John sees that the place is doing good for her recovery.
- She lives in her isolating world, John never realizes of her true condition - he thinks that all he arranges for her is done in a good way.
- Finally, she decides not to leave her world, the world where her husband cannot take her out of it, - the decision which is make John shocked to face the reality of her condition.

The above sentences are the actions done by the unnamed woman toward her husband, John. She could accept his way of treating her in that way because he tells her that all he has done are for her best.

"He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest"(p.2:l.6)

Though she tries to do all his orders which is he thought for her best, she never feels that her condition is getting better. Her conflict here is between her attitude toward her husband's way in making her get well back, and her real feeling of her condition.

John thinks that the place is improve to make her get well, but she finds that nothing change in her condition.

"You know the place is doing good," he said,"

"..... I told him that I really was not gaining here, and I wished he would take me away".

(p.3:l.1) and (p.6:l.3)

John never realizes what happened to her during stay there. He only knows that she seems more health than the first time they came there. He believes that because the place, the way in treating her as a patient; take a good rest, take the medicines, always in someone's care - so she could be in a better condition. Besides that she also tries to give impression that all he has done is the best. She acts as if his way in treating her, his care, his love, very good for her. She will not tell him her real feelings, the real things which is make her looks more better than before. The things that make her so alive.

"Life if verymuch more exciting now that it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet that I was. John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wallpaper. I turned it of with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was because of the wallpaper - he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away. I don't want to leave now"(p.7:ll.23-30)

In spite of doing whatever her husband tells her to do, she still has her own needs to be herself, to do all she likes to do, to express her feeling, her thinking and her own experiences - which is according to her is the way to make her get well.

"I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would releive the press of ideas and rest me". (p.3:l.19)

The sentences below are the actions of the unnamed woman to express her need to be herself.

Her needs to express her feelings, thinkings and her actions to be seen as herself.

- **She expresses her feeling of the house to her husband.**
- **She decides to keep it by herself after she saw his response of it.**
- **She tries to enjoy the place; the house, the room, the garden and the view surrounding it.**
- **She feels sad that she is separated with her baby, but then, she finds that is the good way in order to her recovery.**
- **She starts to enjoy living there after she found something there.**
- **She tries to convince her husband and his sister that her condition is getting better, while she is studying the wallpaper which is make her seems healthy.**
- **She believes that she is the only one who knows the things behind the pattern.**
- **She keeps silent of it, never talk of it to others.**
- **She enjoys it.**
- **She thinks that no one will understand that.**
- **She will show it to them that she still use her ability and feeling to understand it.**
- **She still in her attitude though they think that was her imaginative world.**
- **Until she comes to her decision not to leave it, she wants to be a part of it, that was the world only for her which is nobody cannot take her out of it.**

The main character here wants to give the impression that all her story is real. It sources from her own experiences - the real feeling and thinking of her.

In her condition, she never pay attention to the external world. She lives in her own world which for the others is unbelievable. As the example here is her way in seeing the room with its wallpaper. To the other it is only the paper, but for herself - she finds something in it which nobody will realize it except her. It is her real experience in her own world, then she wrote it in her diary. She wants to convince the others about her real experience which is surprising, but to her as a reality.

She uses diary-narrative form (the observing eye of the first person). In this form she could express everything she wants to write. She can express it freely. So that she write in that way - each sentence in new line. While the idea in each parts actually is the same, only the object of her thought is various - jump from one thing to another.

Her idea in writing this diary is that her desperate need for freedom. She finds that it is almost impossible to express her freedom without any consent of her husband. It is happened in that time, the ,nineteenth-century, that the husband and wife are one, and that one is the husband. She had no right to make a deed, a contract, or a will nor to sue in the courts without her husband's concent.

Through this point Charlotte Perkins Gilman presented her story "The Yellow Wallpaper" as her view of the life of women in her time. The idea of feminism in "The Yellow Wallpaper" would be seen in this part as the analysis of the plot of this story.

4.2. Characterization

The two main characters, the unnamed woman and her husband, John, is the focus of the analysis in this part.

Through the characterization of those characters, the writer of this thesis tries to see the idea of feminism in the story "The Yellow Wallpaper". The writer will reveal those characters by using the basic means of characterization, e.g. through their speech, action, thought, physical appearance, and what their thought of each other. All are used in a whole, because they are interconnected.

THE UNNAMED WOMAN

This unnamed woman who narrates the story is a symbol of the repressive roles some women accept for themselves. She does whatever her husband tells her to do, even those things are against her will.

She does not like to stay in that house but continues to do so because her husband wants her to do. Again in choosing the room for them, she wants the downstairs but he thinks the upstairs is the healthy one. She accepts his reason in choosing the upstairs room.

"He said we came here solely on my account," (p.2:1.6)

"I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it." (p.1.:ll.50-53)

"He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another. So we took the nursery at the top of the house. It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore." (p.2:l.1-11).

She feels that actually she is a burden to him. All her activities there is only entertaining and ordering. All of her needs are already arranged by her husband. From the little thing she needs until the big one - a friend to talk to, is already done for her.

"....., such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already! Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what littel I am able, - to dress and entertain, and order things." (p.2:ll.40-43)

"There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! (p.3:l.53)

When she wants to see her cousin, he tells her that would not be good for her, that would not help her to get well, the only one who can make her good is herself.

"Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia. But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there. He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well. He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control" (p.3:ll.14-26)

She also accepts the degrading roles her husband forces upon her. She does not work, and she allows herself to become separated from her baby - a very demoralizing and humiliating thing for a person to endure. But then she could accept his reason in doing it, and thinks that it is doing good for her than for the baby.

"It is fortunate May is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous." (p.2:l.44)

"There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper. If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds. I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see." (p.5:ll.27-33)

Writing is the only thing she does that her husband did not give her permission. At first she has her excitement in it, finding an outlet and a confidant in her paper, "I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength." (p.2:l.31) She does not tell him about it; he said she should not write, and she would be in trouble if she did. She finds excitement and joy with it before it is replaced by the paper in the wall.

She comes to regard her writing as tiring and threatening. Finally she even wants to withhold what she knows from what she writes. "I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much." (p.8:l.43)

She frees her angry, rebellious self by stripping bare the superimposed bars of patterns. But this act of self-liberation imprisons her in madness, for she loses her bearings in a world whose details she sees realistically, but whose meaning she cannot fathom.

Her observations of the situation there increasingly turn into an obsession with the wallpaper. The dislocation from her realistic world is also measured by the way she populates the wallpaper and the garden with her doubles.

She regards the actual wallpaper as a false pattern, a set of prison bars leading to the liberated woman behind. In the end she tells her astonished husband - that she has "pulled off, most of the paper, so you can't put me back!" (p.10:l.24)

Her freedom is paid at her sanity done by tearing off the realistic surface, even when that surface is neither loved nor reassuring. The idea of feminism here is her need to be herself, her freedom to decide her will, to express her feeling and thinking.

Her environment also influencing the change of her personality. At the first time she came there, she was understandable - but then, after she played with her imaginative world in her room, the house and the garden, nobody can understand her. The wallpaper is the most important environment in her personality. She studied and found her enthusiasm in it. It plays an important role in the changing personality of the unnamed woman.

JOHN

John, the husband of the unnamed woman epitomizes the repressive attitude of science.

"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." (p.1:ll.8-10)

The scientific attitude is important because science is impersonal, and it can be seen in the way John treats his wife. He takes her out to the country and leaves her alone all day. "John is awal all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious." (p.2:l.33)

He is a doctor. "John is a physician,,," and always saying that his wife just being a silly girl and is not really sick, but he allows her to be sick because "she'll be as sick as she pleases." (p.6:1.13)

He never listens to his wife's complaints, just hears them. He will not listen to her when she asks to leave, just tells her that she is better. "You know the place is doing good." (p.3:l.1) He also threatens to send her to another doctor, an act so impersonal that it frightens his wife.

"John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall. 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." (p.4:ll.18-20)

He absolutely forbids his wife to work at anything except entertaining and ordering." - to dress and entertain and order thing." (p.2:l.42) He tells his wife to have more self-control, implying that she cannot control herself, "..... John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control" (p.1:l.48) He says that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me." (p.5:l.26)

The most repressive thing he could have done is to forbid his wife to write, believing that writing would lead to flights of fancy. "There comes John, and I must put this away, - he hates to have me write a word." (p.2:l.28) Actually, writing is his wife's mental release. "..... this dead paper and a great relief to my mind -" (p.1.l.11)

John is symbolic of both the scientific and repressive attitudes that some men have toward women.

4.3. Setting

Based on the theoretical framework that there are two kinds of setting, physical and psychological, so the writer of this thesis would like to see the idea of feminism through these two kinds of setting and through the three parts of the setting in the story (place, time, and the environment of the character).

The story takes place in the colonial mansion, exactly in the upstairs room of it. It is an old house, out of the village about three miles, with hedges and walls and gates also a large and shady garden. The room itself is in the upstairs with windows so that it is an airy one. The immovable bed is the only furniture there, they brought the other from downstairs. And the major thing is the wallpaper. It is stripped off with an unclean yellow color.

The story takes time in the summer. Sunshine bright and the flowers blooming. Then the author also mentions about the Fourth of July - the American Independence Day.

While the environment of the characters tells about the unnamed woman's condition - she is in her nervous condition. So, John her husband - as a doctor takes her to the quiet place for her good.

All her needs are arranged by him, and it sometimes makes her as if she is a prisoner, cannot do anything freely.

That is all the physical setting in the story "The Yellow Wallpaper". Because the psychological setting cannot be separated from the physical setting, so the analysis in the psychological still connected to those in the physical setting.

The house is symbolical of the place where the society put someone in her sanity condition though her insanity is caused by the environment around her. It is in the isolating place. Eventhough surrounded by the beautiful scenery, it still make her isolated from the others.

"..... and talk about the house. The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. for there area hedges and walls and gates that lock I never saw such a garden - a large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them. There were green houses."
(p.1:ll.33-39)

For her condition it is true that the quiet place and nice scenery which is give a calm feeling is needed. All of it are for her good, to take a good rest for her body and mind - separated from the noisy sound and crowded place.

The room where she stays in is symbolic to the position of women in society. It is in the upstairs and away from the rest of the house. It symbolizes the place where men put women. The room is isolated from the house which represents the isolation of many women feel. The windows are barred which is a symbol of isolating the women from society. The steadfastness of the bed is also a symbol of the unchangeable repressive attitudes of men toward women.

**It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sun shines galore.; for the windows, are barred."
"I lie here on this great immovable bed - it is nailed down,"
(p.4:l.33)**

During stay there she accepts all her husband treatment. All of it represents the way men have put and think of women.

The major symbol in the story is the wallpaper. It is stripped off with an unclean yellow color. It gives great impression to the unnamed woman. It becomes an obsession of her observation of the room as her activity during stay there. The yellow color is the indicate to caution or danger. In this story deals with her mental condition whose in her husband's eye that she is getting better, but actually she is going mad by the end of the story. While the wallpaper itself acts as a cage for her, holding her in, not letting her move. She finds that she is trapped by the pattern. It intricate turns and sommersaults mirrors the unbreakable traps society holds for women. It represents that in society there is no complete freedom because there is society restriction. The wallpaper has a bad smell to it, one from which she cannot escape. It exemplifies how the traps cannot be avoided, for wherever she goes she found the smell.

**The paint and the paper It is stripped off - the paper - The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow - turning sunlight."
(p.2:ll.14-24)
"a woman stooping down and creeping behind the pattern."
(p.5:l.39)
"You think you have mastered it, but just as you get underway in the following it turns a back sommersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream." (p.6:ll.35-37)
"It creeps all over the house. It gets into my hair."
(p.7:ll.43-46)**

There are two patterns, one inside the other. It shows that women must break two patterns to be free: the pattern men have set for women and the one they have set for themselves. It represents the great effort of women in order to set their existence in the society, to get their freedom.

The summer time represents the atmosphere of spirit. The sunshine bright and flowers are blooming symbolical to the spirit to get everything. While the Fourth of July as the American Independence Day symbolical to the party. Dealing to the story it represents the situation after the cheerfulness. John takes her to the quiet place in the summer time in order to have her recovery done good.

Setting and the whole story cannot be separated. It is fluencing to the story. It gives the impression to the readers to understand the story.

Through this part of analysis, the writer of this thesis finds that the idea of feminism which is presented by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is done. All the elements of the setting contribute to her idea. The symbolical values of each part of setting play an important rule to her readers.

4.4. The Idea of Feminism

The write of this thesis finds that the idea of feminism in the story "The Yellow Wallpaper", done in the three elements of it (plot, characterization, setting).

In plot of "The Yellow Wallpaper", the author presents her idea of the desperate need for freedom for the unnamed woman (the main character of the story).

The unnamed woman, as seen at the analysis of plot in the previous part, expresses her feeling and thinking to her husband. She tells him, but then decided to keep it after saw his reactions. Her need to be seen as herself versus her husband's way in caring her makes her lives in her own world. The changing personality of her happened when they stay there. The environment influences her mental condition. The need for freedom is facing the reality and the environment around her, at last leads her to the sanity.

Meanwhile, in characterization, the author of the story presents her two main characters, the unnamed woman and John, her husband. Each character represents different attitude in facing the unnamed woman's problem. John represents the way man or society in facing the need of women for their freedom. While the unnamed woman with her attitude toward him and herself represents the way of women in order to get their freedom, they must face men or society with their attitude, and also they have to face their own attitude. How man/society sees their need, also how women see it from their own point of view.

Setting in this story also contributes to the idea of feminism of the author. All of the elements of setting with their symbolical values play an important role to the changing personality of the unnamed woman. The house, the room, the wallpaper, the furnitures, the garden are important to give the understanding of her personality in this story. How are they influence her? And how can they give the impressions to the readers? The author's way in describing the unnamed woman need for freedom in her marital life, and also the describing of the reality at that time - how society especially men in facing the need for freedom for woman, can be understood through the setting of this story.

The important role is in the character of the unnamed woman. Why it is the unnamed woman? According to the writer of this thesis the use of the *unnamed* here is to shown that it could be happened to every women. This woman wants to be seen as herself and also wants to be understood by the other of her need for freedom. But then, after she found the reactions around her, she decided to keep it. She never fights to break up the patterns in her environment. She keeps her disappointment, and lives in it. Never tries to convince the other, especially her husband, she comes to her decision that she will live in her own world forever. Because only that world can understand her. This kind of feminism is called the weak movement to get her rights even for her own life.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION