

Yellow wallpaper



Chelsey French Stacy Phillips ENGL 1010 November 28, 2012 The Yellow Wallpaper Approximately 10 to 15% of women suffer from postpartum mood disorders, including postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety, and postpartum psychosis ("How Many Women Get Postpartum Depression? The Statistics on PPD"). "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a story about a woman, whose husband takes her away to a home out in the country. She is to believe that she has a temporary nervous condition, by which her husband, a doctor, has her to believe.

As the story unfolds the reader comes to find out that the narrator has more than a nervous condition. It is clear to see that the narrator has postpartum psychosis. Postpartum psychosis has a wide range of symptoms, all of which the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" exhibits. The disorder, which sets on up to several weeks after giving birth. Postpartum psychosis is characterized by symptoms of extreme agitation, confusion, exhilaration, and an inability to sleep or eat.

It may also be difficult to maintain a normal conversation with a woman who has postpartum psychosis. She may also experience delusions, hallucinations, altered or impaired concept of reality, rapid mood swings, insomnia, and abnormal or obsessive thoughts. The narrator of the story shows many of the signs and symptoms of postpartum psychosis which sets up just weeks after giving birth. The description of the disorder fits almost perfectly with what can be seen from the narrator.

Her actions, along with what she sees in the wallpaper of her room can be interpreted as symptoms of postpartum psychosis. The reader also knows that the narrator has given birth recently when she writes "it is fortunate

Mary is so good with the Baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous” (Gilman). Knowing that the narrator just had a baby is only reason that she is suffering from postpartum psychosis, because if she didn’t just have a baby then she could not have suffered from this.

In the beginning of the story, the narrator tells that she gets angry with her husband, and believes that it is due to her nervous condition. The narrator is more than aware that her agitation goes beyond what is reasonable at that time, yet she cannot control it. She knows something is wrong, and is to believe that she has a temporary nervous condition, that her husband diagnosed her with, but the narrator is suffering from more than a mere nervous condition.

The narrator’s abnormal thinking shows when she writes, “ John is a physician, and perhaps—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster” (Gilman). It doesn’t make sense that because her husband is a doctor, she is not getting better. The narrator’s agitation and abnormal thinking here shows she is suffering from more than depression. Another symptom of postpartum psychosis is hallucinations. One of the first hallucinations that the narrator has is when she sees people creeping outside around in the garden.

Another hallucination the narrator experiences is, “ Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over” (Gilman). The narrator is having hallucinations of a woman behind the wallpaper of her room and that she is shaking the pattern on the wallpaper. At the end of the story the

narrator is acting really strange when she describes herself crawling around her room, with her shoulder in the “smooch” of the wallpaper.

To someone who has their sanity intact, this would be very weird, but with her impaired concept of reality, her actions are completely logical. By having hallucinations and impaired concepts of reality are strong signs that she is suffering from postpartum psychosis. The Narrator also shows signs that she has a hard time eating and sleeping, and has moments of obsessive thinking. During the story the narrator writes “I don’t sleep much at night” (Gilman), which shows that it is not depression that she is suffering from, which causes hypersomnia, rather than insomnia.

The narrator also shows signs of difficulty eating when she says “I don’t weigh a bit more,’ said I, ‘nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here but it is worse in the morning when you are away!” (Gilman) Trouble eating is yet another sign of postpartum psychosis. Along with difficulty eating, and insomnia, the narrator also has moments of exhilaration, when she writes “Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see, I have something more to expect, to look orward to, to watch...it was because of the wallpaper” (Gilman). The fact that the narrator has become excited over the wallpaper in her room, points toward the diagnosis that she has some type of psychosis. Wallpaper is usually not exciting to a person in a normal state of mind. This part of the story shows that the narrator is having obsessive thoughts, at this point of the short story she is no longer simply examining the wallpaper, she is obsessed with the wallpaper.

The last thing that the narrator shows is homicidal and suicidal thoughts. At the end of the story the narrator is making threats when she writes “ no person touches [the] paper but [her]—not alive! ” (Gilman). Pretty much she is saying that she will hurt, or kill anyone that comes close or touches the wallpaper. This act would be very irrational because touching wallpaper would ordinarily be an innocent gesture, but the narrator is so wrapped up in her psychosis that she is willing to commit homicide if a person just touches the paper.

The narrator contemplates suicide when she says “ I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try” (Gilman). The narrator’s thoughts of committing homicide and suicide are just further signs of her disorder. According to Heidi Scott, “ The reader is more likely to see her madness as a tragedy of early mental health care, the positive reading gains ground with this interpretation of ecological adaptation. Unfortunately Ms. Scott seems to have made an error in logic known as hasty generalization. What Ms. Scott is saying is that the narrator is just not adapting to her new environment, but this is not the case at all. With all of the evidence that is provided in this paper it should be clear about what kind of condition the narrator has. The proof in “ The Yellow Wallpaper” that the narrator has postpartum psychosis leaves little room for other scientific diagnosis of her problems.

The narrator has given birth recently, she becomes agitated and exhilarated easily, and she has abnormal thoughts, insomnia, inability to eat, hallucinations, homicidal and suicidal thoughts and so on; all of which are

symptoms of postpartum depression. Ultimately, this means that the short story “ The Yellow Wallpaper” is a harrowing tale of a woman suffering from postpartum psychosis. Works Cited " How Many Women Get Postpartum Depression? The Statistics on PPD. " Postpartum Depression, Postpartum Progress, The Best Help & Hope for Moms. Web. 19 Nov. 012 " Signs of Postpartum Psychosis - RightDiagnosis. com. " Right Diagnosis. Web. 19 Nov. 2012. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. " The Yellow Wallpaper - Charlotte Perkins Gilman. " Women's History - Comprehensive Research and Information Guide. Web. 20 Nov. 2012 " PsychiatryOnline , American Journal of Psychiatry, Postpartum Psychosis: Detection of Risk and Management. " PsychiatryOnline Home. Web. 20 Nov. 2012. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. " The Yellow Wall-paper: And Other Stories - Charlotte Perkins Gilman - Google Books. " Google Books. Web. 21 Nov. 2012.