

The yellow wallpaper as a psychological story

Literature



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The story is widely regarded as a classic of feminist-inspired fiction in America and the author makes a clear distinction between the psychological and the sociological elements in the story. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is of course brutally honest psychology, so brutal that many readers in that more innocent age were outraged that anyone would write off such terrifying experiences. They feared that the story itself would drive people crazy. The literary success of "The Yellow Wallpaper" was indeed due to the coercive effect of the wallpaper, which so disturbs the young woman's deep, but least stable, feelings that she is drawn into its lurid, obnoxious patterns." (Lemert, 13) Therefore, in a reflective analysis of "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, it becomes lucid that the short story is one of the best examples of a psychological story.

The psychological elements in the story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman are most evident in the protagonist and the narrator of the story who is taken to a remote house as part of her 'rest cure'. The author creates an effective setting for her psychological story when she places the narrator in an expansive "colonial mansion, a hereditary estate" which is "quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes [her] think of the English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates lock and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people." (Gilman, 3-4) Through the setting of this lovely house for the recovery of the narrator from her nervous condition, the author effectively creates the background for her psychological story, and the empty, deserted or economically rented house is a standard motif in various ghost stories as well as other tales of the supernatural. Gilman's narrator expresses mistrust for her surroundings which increases the

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character's loneliness and vulnerability in the face of the dangers that creep around from within her mind. Thus, the character observes, " there is something queer about it. Else why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?" (Gilman, 3)

A careful analysis of the life of the narrator in isolation confirms the view that Gilman's story is a classic tale of psychological terror. In the story, the woman is all the more isolated by the prison-like bedroom which is ' at the top of the house' and its windows are barred. More, the room is cut off by a gate at the head of the stairs. As Roberta Laurie maintains, " Gilman's narrator is also cut off psychologically. John, her husband, is convinced that he knows best. He forbids her to write or engage in any activity that could induce excitement. She becomes secretive and withdrawn, making her a perfect target for the supernatural forces that exist in the house." (Laurie)

Therefore, the life of the narrator in isolation clearly suggests the psychological terror involved in the story and the author effectively creates the setting for her psychological story. In conclusion, a reflective analysis of the characters, themes, motifs, and setting of the story " The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman establishes that it is a celebrated example of a psychological story.