

Male dominated



Male Dominated Society Abstract This essay is about two short stories which are “ The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Gilman and “ Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway. Both are so different but very alike at the same time, the stories use symbolism and imagery to express their true feelings. They both struggle with feminism and individualism, while living in an era where it was a male dominated society. “ The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman uses symbolism and imagery to convey a sad story of the repression that women faced during the late 1800's.

Gilman writes " The Yellow Wallpaper" from her own personal experiences of having to face the overwhelming fact that this is a male- dominated society, and sometimes women suffer because of it. The narrator, being female, is suffering from postpartum depression that slowly ends in total loss of reality. Likewise " Hills like White Elephants" written by Ernest Hemingway uses symbolism and imagery to express choices and consequences. It's about an American man and a young girl named Jig who is traveling throughout Spain together.

The couple is in Barcelona outside of the train station sitting at a table at a bar in the late 1920's. The couple is contemplating about a drastic decision that could affect their lives forever. “ The Yellow Wallpaper” and “ Hills Like White Elephants” are two stories that represent how they were living in a male dominated environment and felt as if their feelings didn't matter. The time period of “ The Yellow Wallpaper” was a factor in the outcome of the story because back then there was little scientific knowledge and archaic cultural values.

The story takes place in the late 19th century. During this time period, it was customary for the women to be treated like little children. For example, John says to his wife, "What is it, little girl?" (Gilman, 2006, p. 518). Women were supposed to obey everything that their husband said for example "There comes John, and I must put this away, -he hates to have me write a word" (Gilman, 2006, p. 515). Also, the medical knowledge of the time was very limited compared to what we know today.

During that time period, it was proper practice to prescribe; "I take phosphates or phosphates—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to 'work' until I am well again" (Gilman, 2006, p. 513). Also, the narrator's doctor was her husband, so she obeyed him, which in fact, made her condition even worse. Even though she disagrees with her husband, "Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good" (Gilman, 2006, p. 13). She still follows what they say because it was what women were suppose to do. In the story "Hills Like White Elephants" the scenery plays a major role with symbolic meaning. The young girl dazes off into the distance staring at the hills describing them as "white elephants" (Hemingway, 2006, p. 126). At this point in the story the white elephants do not have any symbolic meaning, but then the American says "It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig" (Hemingway, 2006, p. 130).

The operation that the couple is speaking about is an abortion and the young girl is trying to get validation from her statement about the white elephants because she desperately wants to keep the child. The roundness from the hills represents the belly of a pregnant woman and the color white would

represent purity, meaning of an unborn child. The wallpaper in “The Yellow Wallpaper” also puts some strain on the narrator’s mental state as the story progresses. The yellow wallpaper becomes more and more bizarre, according to the narrator. This further shows how the narrator is slowly separating from reality.

Additional, designs are added to the wallpaper as the narrator’s mental state becomes less and less stable. For example, at the beginning of the story, the narrator sees just dull yellow wallpaper with no real design pattern: “This thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of” (Gilman, 2006, p. 517). She was looking for a reason in her mind why the pattern is arranged so strangely. Then halfway through the story, the narrator says that the, “dim shapes get clearer every day” (Gilman, 2006, p. 18). Later, she writes, “I didn’t realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman” (Gilman, 2006, p. 520). She begins to show signs that her mental health is getting worse every day. Near the end of the story, she sees “Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard” (Gilman, 2006, p. 521). This symbolism could represent the narrator trying to escape from mental and physical imprisonment.

The train station and the baggage have symbolic meaning in “Hills Like White Elephants” as well. In the story the suitcases were described as “there were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights” (Hemingway, 2006, p. 131) which give records of their travels together. The suitcases can be seen as a map of the journey that brought them to this

point. It also can represent the excess baggage that the American man does not burdened with. The train station was described as “ the station was between two lines of rails in the sun” (Hemingway, 2006, p. 128).

The train tracks going in opposite directions signify their lives going in different directions if they don't agree upon the same decision. In both of these stories it shows how the women were living in a male dominated society. The women spoke up at times but never truly voiced their feelings. Their feelings were pushed to the side and swept under the rug. And in “ The Yellow Wallpaper” is was obvious that everything was getting the best of her, the room with the eerie wallpaper and bars, being told not to write, and being treated like a child, but she had to go along with it and hope for the best.