

# Themes in Crispin's Model and the Yellow Wallpaper



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

What is it that makes a story great? Is it the characters and what they are like, the setting, the problems that happen throughout the story to the characters? In eighteen ninety-two, Charlotte Perkins Gillman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* was published. The story surrounds an unnamed woman more or less locked up by her husband. She is cut off from as much stimulus that is possible, and this lack of stimulus starts to drive her mad as time goes on and the story progresses further (Gilman, " *The Yellow Wallpaper* "). Going farther into detail in " why I wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Gilman talks a little about the state of medical care for women in the time she lived. After years of nervous breakdowns, Gilman went to one of the best known specialists in the country. Gilman followed his instructions and said " I went home and followed those instructions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over" ( " why I wrote " ). In the story *Crispin's Model* by Max Gladstone, main character Deliah Dane is a model for Arthur Dufresne Crispin, an artist who paints does not paint normal things, in his own words " I do not converse with my models. Your form interests me. Personal connection distorts perspective... I paint the noumenal—that which lies beneath appearance" (Gladstone, " *Crispin's Model* ").

In both stories, the main characters are both in situations where they feel trapped. In " *the yellow wallpaper* " that is quite literal, as she is locked up in what they call " rest cure " by her husband who is a physician. Rest cure is designed to cure the subject but ends up doing more damage than it does good. In *Escaping the Sentence: Diagnosis and Discourse in " The Yellow Wallpaper "*. Paula A. Treichler says that " the diagnosis of hysteria or

depression, conventional 'women diseases' of the nineteenth century, set in motion a therapeutic regimen which involves language in several ways" (Treichler, *Escaping the Sentence: Diagnosis and Discourse in "The Yellow Wallpaper"*, 61). In *Crispin's Model*, Deliah is not locked up or tied to something she is trapped by a few things that change throughout the story. In the beginning of the story Deliah is free to leave at any time, she stays because she is being paid by Crispin to stay and sit as he paints her. As the first session goes on she senses that something is different with Crispin, no music is played so the entire studio seems still and uneasy. As Crispin paints, when he looks at Deliah she thinks ". His whole body leaned into me through the points of his eyes. I didn't feel seen. I felt peered through, like the near lens of a telescope" (Gladstone). Later on in the story as Crispin is painting Deliah for a second time, she is trapped more out of fear, for what Crispin is painting than anything else. As time goes on what seems to be the weather gets worse, branches that are not there scrape against the windows. Eventually Deliah gets up to see what it is that Crispin is painting, that seems to be causing the problems outside. After breaking Crispin's nose Deliah saw the painting. Deliah describes the painting as

" Beautiful and hideous... I saw through it-through the eyes, through the cracked skin and the wet red muscle, through the flayed flesh and the bare skull, saw the thing he'd summoned, this creature his mad beholding had chiseled from raw space, cancer and mother and blood, swollen, breaking open, shaking ropes of flesh, hair a coil of serpents, panes of body and breasts and thighs venting vapors that were fingers reaching through." (Gladstone).

Where a story takes place are just as important as to who is in that story. The place that the story take place helps with setting the tone such as in *the yellow wallpaper* where the narrator is put in a small room that only has a single barred window, a bed that does not move and yellow wallpaper that the narrator describes as “ the color is repellent, almost revolting; a smoldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight”( Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 381). In *Crispin's model* most of the story happens in Crispin's studio while he is painting Deliah. As opposed to the little stimulus that is given in *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *Crispin's Model* gives much to what can be seen and heard. In the beginning of the story what is talked about seem to make one curious, but at the same times gives the horror that comes up more nearing the end of the story. As Deliah is sitting as Crispin Paints her, she gives a detailed description of what she sees while staring at face for the first afternoon, “ That first afternoon I saw his skin bubble off the bone, his forehead bulge and birth curving horns, his jaw distend like a snake's about to devour the world. And then he looked up, and his face was a face again” (Gladstone). Near the end of the story she describes the horror and terror of what Crispin has been painting, “ I heard the waves of an unlit sea wash a dead city's shore. The screams outside the windows swelled, the clattering things clawed harder at the glass” (Gladstone).

When a story takes place is also important to what happens in the story. The time period that a story takes place dictates the possibilities of what can happen and what someone can do in the story. In *The Yellow Wallpaper* the story is set in the mid to late Eighteen-hundreds, around this time “ rest

"cure" is common place. The patient is put in a room where there is little to nothing to stimulate her, and this is supposed to cure them. The narrator does not have much in the way to occupy herself in the room apart from writing in the journal that she keeps hidden. The journal she keeps helps keep her sane for the first couple of weeks in the room that she hates, "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" (Gilman, 381). In *Crispin's model* it is set in modern day with all the modern amenities that we have. But much of that is used has for the most part been used by painters for centuries if not millennia; a brush, paint, canvas on an easel, and a person to pose in a way that the painter desires.

Conflict gives the story suspense up to when it is resolved, in *The Yellow Wallpaper* the narrator is trapped in a small room in a colonial mansion. Her husband, John is a practicing physician who seems to mean well when he puts her on "rest cure" the narrator put it this way, "If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and family that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression-a slight hysterical tendency-what is one to do?" (Gilman, 380). Is the conflict resolved in *The Yellow Wallpaper*? That depends on how someone reads the story. After the narrator has ripped off as much of the yellow wallpaper as she can, she speak to John saying, "I've got out at last, in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back" (Gilman, 391). This can be seen many ways one of which can slightly be seen as being resolved. Earlier in the story the narrator talks about how she is "securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope" (Gilman, 390). With the rope

and her creeping around the room, coupled with her husband fainting after he opens the door. It can be taken that she hung herself with the rope she has, but this is just one of many ways to interpret the ending. On the other hand, the conflict that goes on in *Crispin's Model* is more horror based, between Deliah and Crispin and his paintings. As time goes on Deliah notices that what Crispin paints is not normal and is in fact dangerous. The first time we find something is wrong with the painting is at Morrison's apartment, after he bought them, he intended to show them in full lighting. When Deliah arrives at his apartment Morrison is gone and her agent is unconscious. One of the paintings seems as though something had come bursting out of it, later we find the same thing as Crispin is painting Deliah. After smearing paint across the canvas to try and keep the monster in the painting Deliah thinks " She strained against the paint, to burst into our world from Crispin's mad fantasies. My smear would not seal her" (Gladstone) the conflict is solved when Deliah convinces Crispin to paint her " Don't paint her, paint me. As I am. Not as you see" (Gladstone)

## Works Cited

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