

**Feminist Writings**  
**Professor Avishek Parui**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Studies**  
**Indian Institute of Technology Madras**  
**The Yellow Wallpaper - Part 3**

S So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Feminist Writings. We were looking at Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. So, we had a series of lectures on this text already and we have seen how some of the fundamental issues with this book is how the female subject is being coerced into a certain kind of cure method.

The female subject is bereft of agency, the female subject is bereft of any kind of, sort of, assertion of agency and also how the entire medical treatment is so masculinist in quality, it is so patriarchal in quality and how there is a very complete collusion between patriarchy and medical science over here which is to say how the female subject is, sort of, denied any dignity to a certain extent.

So the male figure, the husband, doctor, John, in this particular novel, novella, doesn't even take the female protagonist seriously. He doesn't even consider her to be really or seriously sick, right? So, and that is something which is obviously part of the patriarchal treatment of the hysteria, the female hysteria. So that is something that we keep saying throughout this text.

Okay, so, and then we talk about how this came out of a direct experience of postpartum psychosis which is a post pregnancy condition. And that is something which is obviously quite palpable in this, throughout this text, similar to the presence of his baby, who never appears directly but then, the baby is always there as a presence, as a background presence and we are told about the baby all the time.

(Refer Slide Time: 1:54)

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

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



So, this reference of the baby in the text over here, I am just going to read out the section which should be on your screen, where the female protagonist, the narrator says - 'There is one comfort, the baby is well and happy and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper.' So the wallpaper is obviously, is just more than a material over here. It becomes metaphorical and its conversion from materiality to metaphoricity is something which happens throughout the text.

And we also see, how at the beginning of the text, she has, the female protagonist has this aversion towards the wallpaper. And by the time the text ends, that aversion converts into association, I mean, she sees herself in the wallpaper, essentially. And the female figure trapped in the wallpaper turns out to be her in a very symbolic, sort of psychological maneuver.

(Refer Slide Time: 2:49)

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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.

Of course I never mention it to them any more—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.



So, we find that, over here, that she is saying there's one comfort, and this should be on the screen - '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.'

So she is saying that it is a good thing that I am living in this room after all, otherwise the baby would have had to shift over here, this would be the nursery otherwise, and I can't bear

the thought of the baby looking at this wallpaper, this horrid wallpaper all the time. So it's a good thing that I'm looking at him and I'm suffering it rather than the baby.

(Refer Slide Time: 3:09)

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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.

Of course I never mention it to them any more—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.



And then she goes on to say - 'I never thought of it but it is lucky that John kept me here at all. After all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see? Of course, I never mention it to them any more - I am too wise but, I keep watch of it all the same. There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.' So this is the beginning of the association that she has with the wallpaper.

So as I mentioned, the movement is from affiliation, from aversion to association, from aversion to affiliation. So she starts getting more and more affiliated to the wallpaper. Okay, and then she says - 'Behind the outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.'

(Refer Slide Time: 3:48)

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.



It is always the same shape, only very numerous. And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder - I begin to think - I wish John would take me away from here! So the whole idea of finding the woman, or finding the figure of a woman in the wallpaper beneath the patterns is the beginning of the association that she has with the wallpaper. That is something that we get to see.

And then we are told - 'It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.' So you can see the word 'love' over here is used very ironically and that is the part of the almost satirical quality in this particular voice. And she is saying that, you know, it is difficult for me to talk to John about my condition because he loves me so much.

And I wonder, normally, common-sensically, if someone loves another person very much, then obviously the person would feel comfortable talking about her condition to him. But the fact that love over here is a very loaded word, is part of the patriarchal care-giving package, is part of the patriarchal coercion narrative, the patriarchal control narrative, you know, that love becomes a bit of a protecting, controlling, coercing kind of a maneuver.

And that prevents her from talking about her condition to him. And she says quite clearly that - I don't talk to him because (A) he is very wise and (B) he loves me so much. So wisdom and love in a patriarchal sense is obviously conferred on the figure of authority over here which happens to be the medical, male, figure.

(Refer Slide Time: 5:10)

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.



Okay, and then, she said, 'But I tried it last night.' - I tried to talk to him last night about my condition. So we see how, throughout this text, we have a crisis in communication which is sort of shaping up and which is beginning to get a normal, palpable as it progresses, as the narrative progresses. And then, she says quite clearly - 'John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper till I feel creepy.'

So there was this sense of fear, this sense of menace that came with the wallpaper, that came with the idea of, you know, looking at the wallpaper in moonlight. And she says that - I felt creepy, because you know, the wallpaper began to have an undulating shape of his own, he is almost becoming more and more organic in quality; that fear of the wallpaper - the wallpaper itself is becoming more organic in quality, it has become more human like in quality.

So we have a very interesting dynamic operative over here. So the wallpaper, the thing, the material is becoming more dynamic, is becoming more palpable and more organic, whereas the husband, who, happens to be a human being, is becoming more and more detached and mechanical from the subject. So, you know, she's sort of gravitating towards the wallpaper to a certain extent.

She is moving towards the wallpaper emotionally and she finds more emotional connect, I mean at this level, at this point, it is probably aversion, but even aversion as a sense of association is a negative association but it is still association. And that is beginning to, not just consume her but also over determine the way she is thinking.

And then, we are told quite clearly that she sees the faint figure behind seemed to shape the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out. So, you know, we can see how she has begun to see a female figure behind the pattern and she can also see how the female figure is beginning or trying to get out of the wallpaper, right?

And this, obviously, we know, by the time this story would end, that a female figure would happen to be her. And when she will dismantle the wallpaper, symbolically, symbolically meaning emancipating her and she is sort of step out of the wallpaper as it was. So the female figure would come out of the wallpaper in the same way that she would come out of the coercion space, the coercion narrative that she is been subjected to by the medical figure of authority who also happens to be her husband.

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I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper did move, and when I came back John was awake.

"What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that—you'll get cold."

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

"Why, darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before."



Okay, so - 'I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper did move, and when I came back John was awake. "What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that - you'll get cold.'" So you know, if you look at the tone of John over here, the tone was very very patronizing, a very patriarchal way of addressing her as a little girl and advising her not to go out at night, or she'll get cold.

So it becomes a voice of advice, a voice of wisdom in a way which is obviously quite patronizing and condescending to a large extent. And he is, sort of, essentially telling her that, you know, if you go out in the night, you'll get cold and that is unsafe for you. You should be guarded etc. So it comes from a point of privilege, a position of privilege, a position of superiority which assumes authority because he happens to have medical knowledge.

But we see how this kind of medical knowledge, a medical narrative is completely bereft of empathy, it is completely lacking in empathy. So in a very interesting sense, this becomes a critic of medicine and medical narratives. This becomes a critic of the cure narratives which do not have any empathy quotient, which do not have any human quotient attached to them.

Okay? So and then she tells him quite clearly, she says - 'I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished you take me away.' And then he replies to that - "Why, darling?" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks and I can't see how we leave before." So, you know, it's all very contractual for him, it's all very empirical for him.



So we see this contractual, empirical material markers which are conferred on the rational man and then the rational man fails to understand the hysteric over here, the hysteric of course, as a classification given very conveniently to the woman and then he fails to understand or doesn't even attempt to understand or communicate with the female subject over here, who essentially suffers a medical condition all the time, right?

(Refer Slide Time: 9:12)

"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you."

"I don't weigh a bit more," said I, "nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when



And then we are told that, you know, he tells her quite clearly that she should trust him because he is a figure of authority and this is obviously on your screen, where he is saying - 'I am a doctor dear and I know you are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you.'

So he is speaking from a position of privilege, he's telling her essentially that - I speak as a doctor, I speak as a medical authority and I am telling you that you are better already. And I'm telling you that, you know, this is something which is good for you; you are gaining weight, you are getting more and more color in your countenance and that's good for you, and you can take my word, you should take my word for it.

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"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you."

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Okay, and then she responds by saying - "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." So there's a complete conflict in communication. He is telling her that he knows that she is better, so he can also know for her, he can also tell her things about herself; medically, existentially and she is refusing to buy into the narrative.

She is saying that - I don't feel better and I may be gaining weight, I don't know if I am gaining weight, but my appetite is only periodical. It's very periodic in quality; it comes and goes. And then, obviously, he continues his patronizing narrative by saying - 'Bless her little

heart, said he with a big hug, she shall be as sick as she pleases. But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep and talk about it in the morning!'

So, you know, he is procrastinating, he is deferring this discussion and he is deliberately differing this discussion because he doesn't want to avoid it, he does want to avoid it. And he is being evasive in a very very offensive kind of way. So, this, you find even if you look at the communication in this particular story; you find the communication is very gendered in quality.

The male figure already knows everything, the male figure claims to know everything, the male figure doesn't want to listen to the narrative of the female figure, the female subject and then, you know, the male figure will speak for her, the male figure will decide for her and the male figure will also feel for her. I mean, he will tell her that - this is how you are feeling.

So you can see how this complete negation or dissemination of agency which should be with the female figure. So she didn't have any control of her own body, she is not supposed to know about her feelings or someone else is supposed to know about her feelings more than she does and that is something that happens throughout this text.

So, again, we can see how a similar kind of a tension was operative even in Tulips, where we had a situation where the female figure in Tulips was confined in a hospital space, Sylvia Plath's Tulips - and then she didn't have any agency, she saw nurses come and go, taking care of her, but essentially, confining her in a space which is getting more and more claustrophobic in quality.

So that claustrophobia is obviously experiential in quality, which she is experiencing at phenomenally, emotionally and existentially. But also, it is part of the discursive apparatus of containment and confinement. So that claustrophobia is part of the male apparatus, the male medical apparatus to contain and confine the female sufferer over here, who is conveniently classified as a hysteric over here.

Okay, so you find, we skip a little bit and we come to the point where she's beginning to get emotionally attached to the wallpaper and she has begun to humanize the wallpaper in a way that it becomes more and more human like for her. And also, she gets a sense of empathy for the wallpaper. And this is interesting because the only empathy that she is able to establish in

the story is with a thing and it start an aversion, but then it becomes association through a process of empathy.

And we find how there is a complete crisis in empathy, there is a complete collapse of empathy as it were for the other human beings around her, right? So, you know, she hovers and gravitates towards the things over here. So the wallpaper here becomes a thing; the only object of empathy that she subjectifies to a certain extent.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:02)

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.



It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.



And then she sees how it gets more and more sensory for her, where she is saying - and this should be on your screen - 'There's something else about the paper - the smell! I noticed it the

moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain and whether these windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house. I find it hovering in the dining room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in way for me on the stairs. It gets into my hair.' So the smell becomes almost a figure over here. The smell becomes material and the smell becomes which moves towards the house and she says - I find this smell entering my system, entering my hair; in the dining hall, everywhere.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:45)

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it-there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.



So it basically conquers and invades all the spaces that we have in this house. 'Even when I go ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it - there is that smell! Such a peculiar odor too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like. It was not bad - at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.'

Now we find that the adjectives are changing. It's gentle, subtle and enduring and it begins to take a human quality over here, which is interesting because that human quality is missing in the human figures that she is experiencing around her, who don't really have any connect with her, who don't really have any empathetic connection with her at all.

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Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.



It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mop-board. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even smooch, as if it had been rubbed over and over.



'In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me. It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house - to reach the smell.' So the whole idea of violence becomes important over here.

And how you find that violence and affiliation become quite interestingly and problematically proximate with each other; how she is wanting to burn the house in order to reach the smell, in order to arrive and occupy and possess the smell. 'But now, I'm used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell.'

Now, at this point, I must stop and talk a little bit about something called synesthesia. What is synesthesia? Synesthesia is that condition where different sensory perceptions crisscross with each other. So essentially, what she is saying over here, that it's a yellow smell. Now normally, yellow, the color yellow would appeal to a visual sensation.

But over here, the color yellow also appears to appeal to the smell; the olfactory sensation. And this crisscrossing of sensations when you can smell a color, touch a color or maybe see a smell, all that becomes part of the synesthesia mechanism where you basically begin to dissolve away in difference in perceptions and they all begin to merge together in very interesting ways.

Because, you know, and that can become a heightened sensory condition, that can become a heightened sentient condition. It can also happen due to an aberration of your normal, mortal or cognitive mechanism. But in either way, it is an extraordinary cognitive experience where you begin to smell colors, when you begin to touch smells or you begin to hear colors.

So, you know, all different kinds of sense perception crisscross with each other. So synesthesia is something that we should pay attention to. And if you want ( ) ( 16:00) the topic and look it up, there's a lot of really interesting research done on synesthesia from the perspective of psychology of course; cognitive psychology, but also literature.

And synesthesia becomes one of the key connections between literature and psychology. Because even in literature, we find, the use of metaphors, it can also be sometimes synesthetic in quality because using one thing and talking about something else, right? So that interpolation, or that transposition of objects and attributes in literature which is very common throughout in figurative language.

And that can sometimes open up, in terms of describing synesthetic experiences. And synesthesia over here, is a very important experience that is being described - a yellow smell. So the smell is yellow, the smell has a color over here.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:42)

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mop-board. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even smooch, as if it had been rubbed over and over.



I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern does



'There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mop-board. A streak that runs around the room and goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even smooch, as if it had rubbed over and over. I wonder how it was done and who did it. and what they did it for. Round and round and round - round and round and round - it makes me dizzy!'

So you can see the word 'round' all over again. 'Round and round and round - round and round and round - it makes me dizzy!' So there's a sense of movement over here - a dizzying



movement, something which is not very healthy. But also, see, this is part of the synesthesia package; this is part of the aberration package.

So what she is experiencing over here is a sense of sensory explosion, a sense of sensory aberration which is also heightened in quality. And that is obviously, non-normative in quality. So she is completely located at a sensory level, in a non-normative position.

And so that makes it, you know, that makes her the complete other, the complete other for the rational, medical husband who refused to see her as anything apart from a complex, existential situation. The husband, the rational, medical husband doesn't see her as someone who is really suffering.

He more or less considers her as someone who is, sort of, suffering because she is self-indulgent or self-absorbed into herself, right? So, that crisis of communication, that crisis in clarity is something which is running throughout the story and that is something which is part of the critique of medical sciences she is offering as a writer and also as a sufferer.

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I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!  
I really have discovered something at last.  
Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.  
The front pattern does



move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

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.

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.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so;



Okay, and then at this point in this story, we are told clearly for the first time, that this is a discovery that she makes, it is almost like an epiphany moment for her when she realizes that there is actually a woman behind the patterns. And this is what she says - 'I really have discovered something at last. Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern does move - and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! 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.' So this sense of finding or seeing one woman behind the patterns, behind the entire symmetry, the extraordinary symmetry that she suffers, that sense of finding a woman is the beginning of association.

I mean, obviously, we find at the end of the story that she is the woman and that woman becomes a symbolic figure trapped in a particular kind of existence, trapped in patterns which are painful in quality, in the same way that the medical treatment which is conferred on her is painfully coercive in quality.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:21)

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And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so;



And then she says quite clearly - '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. Then in the very bright spot she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.' So the whole idea of being imprisoned comes very visually over here. There's this woman who happens or seems to be in prison behind bars.

So that becomes a very symbolic position. That becomes a very symbolically spatial position because, you know, in the same way that she is imprisoned in this patriarchal medical system, that she doesn't really have an agency to emancipate herself or forget about emancipation, but to even assert herself - that she is not even allowed to write.

Writing was denied to her, writing is something that is forbidden for her to do. And then that kind of imprisonment, discursive, experiential imprisonment of the apparatus of imprisonment is something that she sees in a woman as well in that wallpaper. And she says that, you know, the woman happens to take hold of the bars and she shakes them hard.

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move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

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.

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.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so;



'And she is all the time trying; to climb through. But nobody could climb through the pattern - it strangles so.' Now you can see the associations quite clearly. The woman in the wallpaper is trying to climb out of the wallpaper, climb out of the patterns. But then, she, the protagonist realizes that it is impossible to climb through the patterns because the patterns will strangle you, to repress you existentially and agentially, right? So that association has begun to really become palpable in quality.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:42)

I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!



I think that is why it has so many heads. 'They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down and makes the eye white.' So this very morbid image, this very gory image; the strangulation over here, is a very symbolic image because that is the kind of image, that's the experience that she is suffering as well as the human subject - that she is being strangled and strangulated by all these patterns of control, patterns of medical control, patterns of patriarchal control.

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upside down, and makes their eyes white!  
If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.  
I think that woman gets out in the daytime!



And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!  
I can see her out of every one of my windows!  
It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do  
not creep by daylight.  
I see her in that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark  
grape arbors, creeping all around the garden.  
I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage  
comes she hides under the



'If those heads were covered or taken off, it would not be half so bad.' And then she tells us, and this is part of a confession narrative as well, a sort of a diary writing narrative. 'I think the woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why - privately - I've seen her!' So this is the

beginning of the palpable connection that she has with the woman - that, I have seen her, I've seen her get out at that day time. I have actually visualized, not just visualized, I've actually experienced her visually.

'I can see her out of every one of my windows! It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.' The movement over here is obviously one of non-agency. She's creeping around, she is not someone who is walking proudly walking around. Even in daylight, she is moving around in around in a very skulky kind of fashion.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:00)

And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her in that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the



blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.



'I see her that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden. I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when the carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines. I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight! I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.' So you can see how she has begun to get associated with the woman, she has begun to get close with the woman, when she says quite clearly - I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself - I'm the only one that connects with her.

I am the only one in touch with her - so I need to be the only person, I want to be the only person who would have any association with her. I don't want anyone else around her at all. And then she says that - I don't blame her. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight. So the whole idea of humiliation becomes important over here because that's what she is.

She is humiliated, she is humiliated by the way she is treated by the medical male figures. She is humiliated by the way she is being confined, she is humiliated by the way that she is being forced to take rest and subjected to the rest cure method that she is part of here. That figure of humiliation, that experience of being humiliated is something which connects her with the woman in the wallpaper.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:18)

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.  
But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.  
And though I always see her, she may be able to creep faster than I can turn!  
I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as  
a cloud shadow in a high wind.



'I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows are once. But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of the one at one time. And though I always see her, she may be able to creep faster than I can turn! I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.' Right?

So the whole idea of being able to see the woman, the whole idea of feeling sorry for the woman is the beginning of the association, is the beginning of the affiliation that she begins to experience with the woman figure over here.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:49)

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.  
I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.  
There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.  
And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.





Okay, so it's something that, you know, she is saying, how, what is interesting is first, to understand is how the material and the metaphorical are merging with each other. And that is something which becomes part of the complex cognitive condition that she is experiencing.

And she says over here, quite clearly that - 'There are only two more days to get this paper off.' So, you know, she's trying to get the paper off, the yellow wallpaper off. And 'I believe John has begun to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes. And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me.

She had a very good report to give.' So again, if you look at the adjectives over here, if you look at the words over here, she's - John is asking a lot of professional questions about me. So it's not really human questions, it's not really emotional questions, he has always been the doctor, he's always been the male, medical figure asking the nurse Jennie, over here, essentially the nurse, about the condition of the woman.

So there's no direct connection, there's no direct conversation that he is having, or even wanting to have with his wife. So he is asking questions to Jennie, and Jennie is giving a very good report about her. So again, the word 'report', the word 'professional', obviously very medical words, very medical epithets and adjectives and classifications. And that's something which is really, you know, making it more claustrophobic for her, there is no human connect at all that she is experiencing, that she is able to associate with.

(Refer Slide Time: 25:07)

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.  
John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!  
He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.  
As if I couldn't see through him!  
Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.  
It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are



Okay, and then we are told that - 'He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.' So the word 'pretended' is an operative word over here. So she's able to understand that he's pretending and we see quite clearly that she is telling immediately after - 'As if I couldn't see through him!' Right?

So, - I am able to see through him now, I am able to see through all the patriarchal pretensions of love and care and protection which I know by now are all a subterfuge for, you know, complex techniques of coercion and containment, right? So all this pretention to be, you know, protective, all this pretention to be loving is essential a maneuver for patriarchy, a maneuver to sort of control and contain and confine and coerce the female subject into a corrective method, right?

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She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are



secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John to stay in town overnight, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon



'Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months. It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.' And now, we come to the last bit. It is the last day and we are being told that, how she is being secretly trying to get the wallpaper off the wall.

Because if that act of taking the wallpaper off becomes symbolically an act of liberation, an act of emancipation for her. And then she says - 'Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John to stay in town overnight, and won't be out until this evening.' So I have the time to do my rebellious act of taking the wallpaper down. 'Jennie wanted to sleep with me - that sly thing!'

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secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John to stay in town overnight, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon



as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!



So, if you notice, the adjectives are becoming different. She is being able to see through John, she's able to see Jennie as a sly thing, someone who is completely complicit with the patriarchal protection narrative, the patriarchal confinement narrative. 'But I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for the night all alone. That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.'

So, you know, she's now trying to help the 'poor thing'. So there's a bit of pity, empathy that is being established with the figure of the wallpaper. And she is saying that - the moment I saw the poor thing begin to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. So she's now able to see herself as an assistant, as a fellow sufferer, as a comrade in crisis with the figure in the wallpaper.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:19)

as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!



'I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning, we had peeled off yards of that paper.' So it was an overnight work and then, by the time morning arrived, we had been able to take off the wallpaper more or less. 'A strip was about as high as my head and half around the room. And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!'

So, you know, this idea of declaring 'I'd finish it today' becomes an act of an assertion of agency. And now you see how she is becoming more and more agentic in quality. And now she is touching a different order of embodiment as it were. More agentic and more purposeful and more motivated order of embodiment compared to the very passive order that she has been subjected to all the time by the medical method.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:03)

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!



'We go away tomorrow and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before. Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing. She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself but I must not get tired. How she betrayed herself that time.' So now she is able to see through the machination, the deceptions of Jennie and her husband John.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:30)

person touches this paper but me,—not alive!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we



'But I am here and no person touches the paper but me - not alive!' So now, we can see a sense of protectiveness which is beginning to emerge over here. This is how she is trying to

say that, you know, no one has access, no one has the agency to touch the wallpaper but me. 'She tried to get me out of the room - it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner - I would call when I woke.'

So now we see the voice of agency coming in - that she is demanding to be left alone, she is instructing Jennie that she should not disturb her, if she wants to have dinner, she would call, when she woke. So she is now reasserting her agency bit by bit.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:09)

person touches this paper but me,—not alive!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we



found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front

I don't want to go out, and



'So now, she is gone, and the servants are gone and the things are gone and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it. We shall sleep downstairs tonight and then take the boat home tomorrow. I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again. How those children did tear about here!

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found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and



I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will not move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little



This bedstead is fairly gnawed. But I must get to work. I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path. I don't want to go out and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes. I want to astonish him.' So there is a sense of violence in the word 'astonish' over here. So there's a sense of retaliation that we see, you know, - I want to astonish John when he comes back.



So you find how it becomes slightly gothic in quality towards the end and there is a detective story quality, there is a suspense building up and now we are going to have a revelation scene at the end. So I will stop at this point and we'll continue with this in the next lecture.

But it is important to see how she's beginning to acquire agency, how she has begun to enjoy agency, the acquirement of agency, the procurement of agency is what makes her more assertive in quality and she is giving orders to be left alone, she's doing things; the activities are very agentic in quality in terms of taking the wallpaper down, in terms of asking Jennie to leave her alone and in terms of throwing the key away - a very symbolic act, that of throwing the key away.

'I want to be left untouched over here, I want to be left unaffected over here until John comes. And when John comes, I want to astonish him.' So the whole idea of astonishing becomes an act of retaliation, an act of subversion. So it's a repossessing of agency.

So she owns back the agency which is denied to her, and moving away from the very passive position of being subjected to a cure method to an active position where she is doing things and trying things and asserting things. And now she is waiting for the husband to come back just so she can astonish him.

And there is a sense of violence and retaliation about this desire to astonish. So 'astonish' over here, becomes a very loaded term, it's a very experiential term. It's something which is agentic in quality. And she wants to astonish him and now she has the ability to astonish him now.

So, I will stop at this point today and I will conclude this text in the next lecture. Thank you for your attention.