

of it” (203). This illustrates that John’s wife is being conditioned mentally to submit to the will of her husband, which is identified as a feminist issue. Through several other moments during the short story, Gilman makes a point in addressing John’s captive and constraining control over his wife. Jonathan Crewe proposes that Gilman uses this theme of control and restraint as a way to show the male dominance in the time period which the protagonist was living. Crewe states the following:

The sovereign imagination (canonically that of male genius) will rapture constraining forms, both social and literary, or bend them to its purposes; the subject imagination will in contrast remain captive...inasmuch as “The Yellow Wallpaper,” is taken to confirm this general truth...Such a view of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” is, however, implied by nothing more than the title of the volume. The critical essays in the volume largely concern the historical determinants of the protagonist’s race-class-gender predicament and the contexts of Gilman’s pro-feminism. (273)

Through Crewe’s statements it is clear that Gilman is attempting to address the issues with the traditional male-female gender roles. This particular passage is specifically referring to the issues of male dominance over women, clearly illustrated through Gilman’s continual use of control and restraint as themes.

John's wife inspects the house, and more specifically her room, which he picks for her – again depicting John portraying the male dominate role in the traditional male-female environment. As Gilman's narrator writes, it is clear the room was used to imprison people, but John's wife does not perceive it in that way, rather she states, "It was a nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls." Gilman uses this scene in the story to demonstrate not that John's wife is insane, but rather that she has become conditioned to the point where she will ignore the reality in front of her.

A fundamental argument is now realized as regards the narrator's sanity. If John's wife were insane, she would not be able to reason, and draw conclusions based on her surroundings, which she clearly is capable of doing. The fact that the wife will ignore the absolute factual reality staring her in the face, shows Gilman's attempts to show that the wife is exhausted from a life-time of being controlled, and is becoming miserable with her reality. Due to this, she has been conditioned to substitute facts with a reasonable alternative reality that pleases her. This substitution of reality directly relates to her figurative imprisonment, which is in accordance with the traditional male-female gender roles.

Throughout the story, Gilman depicted John's wife as helpless and child-like in the way John treats her, which directly relates to the male-female roles of the

time. Men were to provide everything for the women, but in doing so, the men controlled all aspects of women's lives. One particular quote clearly illustrates Gilman's employing this tactic; "And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head" (207). Through this quote it is clear that Gilman is trying to demonstrate that John treats his wife as helpless and childlike, again coinciding with the traditional male-female roles of the time. John carrying his wife upstairs and reading to her could be compared to a father carrying his daughter and reading a bedtime story to her. Because there is such a child-like innocence to John's wife, it is clear Gilman is attempting to establish John's control and restraint over her, just as a father would have control over his daughter. Again, this is agreeing with the male-female gender roles of the times, of which Gilman is attempting to address.

John is a logical and scientific man while his lovely wife has the mind of a writer: child-like in her innocence, filled with imagination, as well as creative. John consciously attempts to deny his wife the ability to express her artistic emotions, considering her creativity as nothing more than juvenile and impractical. This is illustrated as the wife states, "There comes John, and I must put this away – he hates to have me write a word" (204). The wife, even as creative and imaginative as she is, hides her writing whenever John comes near. This shows Gilman's use of captivity and control as themes,

as John is playing into the traditional male-female gender roles, controlling his wife.

The simple fact that John's wife is nameless speaks volumes in addressing the male-female roles. Gilman leaves the protagonist nameless to show that women had neither voice nor their identity of their own during this time period. Wang Fanghui stated; "... [The Yellow Wallpaper] is urging people to reflect on women's roles in the domestic sphere..." (202). Fanghui is referring to women being associated with the lesser, and having no real identity. Rather than be an independent person, woman is seen under her husband's or father's control. Gilman demonstrates this by purposely leaving John's wife nameless, suggesting the wife is nothing without John.

Throughout the story, Gilman showcases the lack of effective communications between women and men, and the lack of attention women were showed by their husbands. Gilman displays this through her writings of the dialog between John and his wife. John continues to interrupt his wife, never allowing her to finish a thought, believing her opinions and thoughts to be useless regardless of what she were to say. Over and over again Gilman is seen writing a dialog reflecting this lack of communication between men and women, such as, "Better in body perhaps--" I began, and stopped short, for he [John] sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word" (208). This is only one of many instances in

Gilman's short story in which she purposely has John cut off his wife, showing the lack of communication that actually takes place between the two, due to John's male dominant mind-set. This again goes along accurately with the male-female gender roles of the time, of which Gilman is attempting to address.

Continuously throughout the story Gilman uses the theme of captivity. This captivity refers to the figurative imprisonment of women by men through men's dominant positions in the traditional male-female roles. The theme is seen through the captivity of the wife herself, by her husband, as well as the imprisonment of the fictitious women within the wallpaper. It is discovered that the wife sees the imaginary women, when Gilman writes, "At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light... it becomes bars! The outside patterns I mean, and the women behind it is as plain as can be" (209). Again, much like with the interruption of the room, Gilman uses the made-up women behind the "bars" in the wallpaper not to indicate the wife's insanity, but rather the captivity of women by men, reflecting the traditional male-female gender roles.

Clearly there are ample sources and evidence to reinforce the argument that Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," was written in order to address the male-female gender roles. The argument is indicated strongly through simply understanding Gilman's purposeful styles of writing; having John interrupt his wife over and over, as well as having John's wife remain nameless,

stripping her of any identity. Gilman uses the themes of captivity and control, as well as the imagination of John's wife to depict a woman who is figuratively imprisoned. By extension, Gilman's depiction illustrates all women's imprisonment resulting from the traditional male-female gender roles.

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