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Linguistic Features of Metaphor, Metonymy and Narrative Gap in "The Yellow Wallpaper:" A Literary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic Features of Metaphor, Metonymy, and Narrative Gap in "The Yellow Wallpaper":

A Literary Analysis

by

Sherry Kaye

In 1890, Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote a piece of fiction that reflected her personal experience for treatment of nervous exhaustion. The story she wrote created controversy and comment when it was published and, years later, agitation among feminists who found allegories of truth in its narrative. This thesis explores the linguistic features used by Gilman to connect the structure of the home with the structure of marriage as a way to confine women. Gilman's use of metaphor challenges conceptions of the home and her use of metonymy extrapolates the particular to a wider review. The main findings of this inquiry reveal Gilman's opposition to women's status in the marital relationship and established hierarchies of male control. The literary analysis exposes the thin divide between the animate and inanimate in hypothetical text worlds and the efficacy of narrative gaps in provoking the reader's participation in finding solutions to textual silences.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The fin de siècle of the nineteenth century saw slight improvement in the lives of white middle-and upper-class American women trying to escape the confining conditions of patriarchal authority. In a growing consensus, these women protested their exclusion from participating in activities outside of the home considered the domain and prerogative of men. Women privileged by social status were separated from public discourse and sequestered in their home as the proper place for women and children by sentiments of protected isolation. Social ideas about women were dictated by literature, sentiment, and the authority and praxis of medical professionals who eagerly proffered opinions on the nature, cause, and cure of women's nervous conditions. The latter grounded firmly in decades of European and American praxis and precedent. In the West, the medical profession was populated with "enlightened" male physicians who opined on the origin of neurasthenia in women. Laurinda Dixon (1995) remarks that their opinions about "uterine hysteria and intellectual melancholy" in women marked female gender frail and in need of protection (9). Many medical practitioners advised against any intellectual activity for women who complained of nervous disorders and, instead, prescribed quiet and bedrest.

In 1890, Charlotte Perkins Gilman reflected on her own recent experience of protective custody after she lapsed into a state of melancholy following the birth of her child and, on advice of an eminent physician, was prescribed bedrest and cessation of intellectual endeavor. Gilman's response to her physician's prescriptive isolation was to write a protest framed by her short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" to comment on what she saw as the inequitable treatment of women living under socially constructed definitions of gender that kept women at home. The short story received the critical attention of women who, like the author, were resentful of a destiny imposed by biology and by medical practitioners who felt threatened by its explicit honesty.

Gilman's story takes place in an isolated colonial mansion where the heroine is enclosed and kept under strict scrutiny by her physician/husband who forbids her to write or engage any intellectual activity; frustrated and denied any creative outlet, she projects her resistance and persona onto the forms she perceives in the yellow wallpaper lining the dormant nursery room upstairs in the old house that her husband, against her will, decided they would use. In this thesis, I analyze the linguistic features of metaphor, metonymy, and narrative gap to show how Gilman represents social structures as physical structures of confinement that are experienced by women such as the protagonist in her story and how such enclosures extrapolate to include all women.

I argue that Gilman imbues her narrative with metaphorical references that carry feminist implications of resistance to the male authority represented in her story and, more, as a political commentary on the social institutions that impede women's progress into the expressly public domain beyond their domestic enclosure. Gilman uses metonymy and narrative gap as literary tools in her narrative to add meaning through extended reference and to create dramatic tension. The goal of this thesis is to illuminate the corresponding connections between social institutions of marriage and domesticity and the physical structures portrayed by Gilman. In 1892, Gilman's work was published in the *New England Magazine* where it met with disdain by literary critics and earned rebuke from one physician who, in a letter to the editor of *The Boston Evening Transcript*, wrote: "It is graphically told in a somewhat sensational style . . . holding the reader in morbid fascination, it certainly seems open to serious question if such literature should be permitted in print" (8 April 1892). In response, Gilman printed an explanation for writing the story in the feminist monthly magazine she edited and published, *The Forerunner*:

> For many years I suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown tending to melancholia—and beyond. During about the third year of this trouble I went in devout

faith . . . to a noted specialist in nervous diseases. This wise man put me to bed and applied the rest cure. He concluded there was nothing much the matter with me and sent me home with the solemn advice to "live as domestic a life as far as possible," and to "have but two hours intellectual life a day" and, "never to touch pen, brush or pencil again as long as I lived" I went home and obeyed those directions . . . and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over. (271)

Following a long career as a writer and a tumultuous life underscored by hardship and poverty, Gilman finally met with success as a feminist intellectual who lectured for women's rights and suffragist causes. As editor in chief of the *Forerunner Monthly Magazine* (1909-1916), Gilman espoused her views on the politics of gender to further progressive ideas about women's social change and advancement. In addition to her work as a writer, Gilman's decision to divorce her husband was a source of controversy and, after her death, Gilman's fictional work fell into obscurity until other feminist writers revived it decades later. In later years, Gilman's story received as much, if not more, attention from feminists as when she wrote it.

Within the literary canon of women's writing, Gilman's text has been reviewed by a diverse audience of readers with opposing political agendas alternately claiming her work as feminist, divergent, and/or psychologically revealing. The authors of *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) find feminist traditions of "enclosure and escape" in a "distinctively female literary tradition" (xi). In contrast, Conrad Shumaker (1985) argues that, although feminists present a cogent argument, "The Yellow Wallpaper transcends its author's immediate intent," illuminating the question of women's role in nineteenth century imagination (589). Beate Schöpp-Schilling (1975) reviews Gilman's story as a "specific kind of psychological realism" unappreciated for its contribution to the study of mental illness (284).

Returning to a feminist agenda, Thomas Erskine and Connie Richards (1993) comment on the "critical interest" in Gilman's text by the feminist press, noting connections between the protagonist's descent into madness and the author's analysis of her own breakdown represent "every woman's plight in a culture defined by patriarchal condescension" (9). Since its initial review by the feminist press in 1973, subsequent analysis by feminists reframe such assumptions of power and cultural condescension to instead emphasize reformation of the literary canon. Annette Kolodny (1980) notes a generational carryover of literary influence among writers who are included in a shared canon of literary heritage, a literary discrimination that leads her to ask what happens when readers and writers find themselves "cut off and alien from that dominant tradition" (453). Similarly, Judith Fetterley (1986) takes issue with the entrapment of women in text-worlds written by men in which they are denied self-recognition and agency. Fetterley notes silencing the female other in male textuality precipitates a crisis of identity for women who see themselves imaged in such texts and contends the reason why women are subsumed and made silent is the anxiety over loss of power and control (182). Fetterley argues that women become characters in masculine texts that bear no relation to reality and, in losing the power to define themselves, "are forced to deny their own reality" (183). Patrocinio Schweikart and Elizabeth Flynn (1986) review the issue, writing, "For men, reading women's stories means confronting themselves reflected in the eyes of women—they must endure the gaze of the other" (xix).

The shift of feminist argument reflects the struggle for the inclusion of texts that reify the voice of women outside the cultural definition of femininity. In deference to the argument, Erskine and Richards argue feminists reframe their arguments in sophisticated analogies that connect Gilman's story of confinement to the confining silence of an exclusive literary canon that determines what "women may or should read" (11).

Internecine conflict among feminist critics in their approach to, and critique of, literary texts has led to the reevaluation of prioritized agendas pursued by feminist scholars between 1970-1980. In a critical review of previous feminist scholarship on "The Yellow Wallpaper," Julie Bates Dock (1998) offers a fresh perspective on the "privilege of some kinds of scholarship over others" (53). Dock cites deliberate and omissive delinquencies in the verbatim transmission of the text that directly impact the way it is received and interpreted, arguing, "recent editions offer variations in the wording at several critical points" (53). Dock's review agrees with the prioritized emphasis of feminist review that "struggle[d] to gain a foothold for women writers in literary studies . . . and often took precedence over textual criticism" (53). Dock cites the failure of feminist scholars to accurately reproduce the original text and offers her own reprint as the "most authoritative" due to her verbatim reiteration of the text in the 1892 edition of *New England Magazine* (55).

In accord with Dock, my analysis follows using text emphasized in the original version. The literary review of Gilman's text in this qualitative analysis will be aided by exploring her use of linguistic features such as metaphor, metonymy, and narrative gap to offer new interpretations of her work. Zoltán Kövecses (2010) defines use of cognitive linguistic metaphor, i.e. conceptual metaphor, as "understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain" using the sort of cognitive mapping that occurs in transposing mental constructs (4). Underlying that action are assumptions of cognitive transference among congruent correspondents of each construct going from the abstract to the concrete. For instance, Kövecses uses the example LIFE IS A JOURNEY[1] to illustrate "coherently organized knowledge about journeys" that is relied on to understand the more abstract concept of life (4).

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[1] Kövecses suggests the use of small capital letters to indicate phrases that do not occur in a text under question, but conceptually underlie all the metaphorical expressions that proceed from it (4).

Gilman uses metaphors to connect her story to themes of authority and confinement in the politics of institutions she finds oppressive to women, such as marriage and domesticity. Joanna Gavins (2007) introduces *Text World Theory* as a viable theory of constructing internal concepts, scripts, and schemas of experienced life situations that result in stored mental images or "text-worlds which enable us to conceptualize and understand every piece of language we encounter" (2). Gavins investigates the mental representations people use in reconstructing the fictional worlds of text they translate into relatable experiences by drawing upon knowledge stores of familiar events and situations. Gavins explains that people construct mental models of everyday existence using "holistic analogues" representing real-life situations by which people negotiate correspondence between internalized scripts and textual representations (4).

This thesis allows the complementary qualities of both theories to reexamine and reevaluate the text of "The Yellow Wallpaper" and elicit a more thorough understanding of the author's meaning. As well, two other theories are applied to the analysis of Gilman's text: Hypothetical World Theory for its contribution to how fictional worlds are formed and Feminist Theory for Gilman's affiliation with the women's activist movement and the way in which the nuances in the text incline toward that focus. Hypothetical World Theory (HWT) is presented by Marie-Laure Ryan and Alice Bell (2019), who propose fictional worlds as alternative realities in which "things could be different from what they are" (3) and as possible alternatives in a many world's ontology. While the benefits HWT affords to the pliability of the text are positive, the exponential possibilities of "what if" that result are requisite to Gilman's text as she transitions the inanimate qualities of the wallpaper into forces of opposition acting to restrain and imprison women. HWT is critical to the necessary engagement of readers in their complicity to compose fictional worlds and in the readers' cooperation to supply missing narrative.

Critical Feminist Literary Theory (CFLT), due to its overwhelming representation by a number of extraordinary scholars, needs to be defined more precisely and categorized according to the particular ideology governing its focus. For this thesis, I propose to focus on a liberal perspective represented by leading feminist scholars in the field of literary studies. Cora Kaplan (1996), Mary Maynard (2006), and Rosemarie Tong (2014) are but a few of the leading feminist theorists in this area who guide this review, adding to the interrogation of the text with insight from their ideological positions. The application of CFLT to the text under review is apparent when attempting to understand the unwritten tension resulting from the protagonist's nervous condition and her lapse into insanity. CFLT aids in comprehending why the protagonist merges her identity with the phantoms fleeing the house and when incorporated into the textual analysis of Gilman's script provides a fuller review and theoretical grounding for assumptions authorizing how the text is received and interpreted for this study.

CHAPTER 2. LINGUISTIC THEORIES

Metaphor

Recent scholarship and theories on metaphor reveal innovative ideas on cognitive function in constructing the comparative overlay of conceptual domains to obtain meaning. As a linguistic feature, metaphors are used in writing to suggest what is not directly addressed by the author by using corresponding attributes. Megan Henricks Stotts (2021) argues metaphors can be "recognized as indirect speech acts [and as] indirect directives that invite the hearer to engage in open-ended comparison" and as a "pragmatic phenomenon" that does "something fundamentally different" in the way it conveys information by emphasizing "what a speaker means . . . on a particular occasion, rather than what the words themselves mean" (114-17).

H. D. Adamson (2019) explains metaphor as a comparison "asking us to view one [concept] in terms of the other" so that "metaphors provide a mapping across two concepts, one of which contains features that are mapped onto corresponding features in the other concept" (54). David Ritchie (2013) argues metaphors work by "focusing on the attributes of the vehicle that are transferred to the topic" noting many attributes are "culturally associated with the vehicle" (28). Zoltán Kövecses (2010) proposes a definition of metaphor as a conceptual domain consisting of the source domain and the target domain with the "target domain [as] the domain we try to understand through the source domain" (4). Kövecses adds, "conceptual metaphors typically employ a more abstract concept as their target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source," noting "there is a set of systematic correspondences between the source and the target in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of B correspond to the constituent elements of A." Kövecses refers to these conceptual correspondences as mappings (7). Kövecses distinguishes between conceptual metaphor, defined as mentioned, and linguistic expression,

with the latter as one of context and concrete reference with words that "come from the language or terminology of the more concrete conceptual domain" (4). Conceptual metaphors differ from literary metaphors in their contextual approach to describing concrete phenomena. Nicholas Asher and Alex Lascarides (2001) argue indirect speech acts are a "matter of interpretation," addressing the "communicative or semantic value of an utterance (192). The intentionality behind a speaker's utterance defines how metaphors work to convey a writer's or speaker's meaning by alluding to something not directly addressed, as mentioned by Stotts. John Searle (1993) notes "whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are talking about what a speaker might utter it to mean in a way that departs from what the word, expression, or sentence actually means. We are, therefore, talking about possible speaker's intentions" (93). Searle (1979) posits intentionality as key to understanding metaphor and as an indirect speech act performed by the speaker to "communicate to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information . . . together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer" (32).

Searle defines indirect speech as "one illocutionary act performed indirectly by way of performing another" (31-32). Jerrold Sadock (1979) notes, "Indirect speech acts are the most important nonliteral figures of speech besides, of course, metaphor" resting their success on the clash between what is done, what is said, and what is intended (46). Kent Bach and Robert Harnish (1979) concur, offering extended explanation of indirect illocutionary acts as based on a system of "mutual contextual beliefs" shared between people of "that which is said, that which is done, and the intended relation between them" (66). In Gilman's text, the physical structure of the house mirrors social institutions such as marriage and contractual obligation in corresponding attributes of enclosure and confinement to cognitively integrate the concepts.

Joseph Grady (1997) provides an explanation for what Gilman does in his article on metaphor by relating physical structures (buildings) to social structures (theories), explaining "The concern with experiential motivation is central to current cognitive linguistics. By showing that these domains [theories] and [buildings] are actually related via two cognitive links which do arise from experiential correlations we save an important generalization" (287). The "generalization" mentioned by Grady regards cognitive integration of "submappings" derived from individual experiential motivation (287). Grady proposes a "systematic" interdependence of parts that compose separate domains as an organized form of association motivated by experience (285). In other words, stored experience organizes association of characteristics recognized in separate domains and fosters cognitive integration. Again, Grady notes an important feature of metaphors are extensions that "encompass new concepts and elements which do not appear to be part of the conventional range of the metaphor" (287).

The emphasis on experiential correlation in Grady's article indicates the importance of understanding metaphor through "mutual contextual beliefs" introduced by Bach and Harnish. Joanna Gavins (2007) explores ideas of a community's culturally shared correlation of experience in her work on internalized scripts and schemas in Text World Theory. Gavins explains her theory this way "We construct mental representations, or text-worlds, which enable us to conceptualize and understand every piece of language we encounter. . . . Human cognition is structured around scripts: knowledge stores containing information about familiar types of events and situations" (2-3). Gavins' Text World Theory provides an example of holistic mental models or analogues that act as mapped representations of human experience to enable "inferences and predictions" about the world (4). In her study, Gavins notes, "crucially, our ability to construct analogue mental models also enables us to experience events by proxy (4).

Gavin's explores how metaphor fits within Text World Theory in terms that are reminiscent of the theory proposed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2001). In reference to Fauconnier and Turner, Gavins notes, "The formulation of a coherent theory of conceptual integration . . . has been of enormous benefit to Text World Theory," positing a "close relationship with contemporary theories" (148). Fauconnier and Turner describe the optimal conditions of "conceptual integration" and "conceptual blending" as necessary to mental cognition (18). In practice, their theory suggests that people fluidly merge or transpose their experience of the world to bring together "elements of different domains" in a systematic "compression" of events that condenses their interdependent experiences into a manageable portfolio or schematic rubric (30). The central argument by Fauconnier and Turner resolves "that conceptual integration interacts with cognitive activities like category assignment, analogy, metaphor, framing, [and] metonymy" with "blending as a basic cognitive operation" (59). The emphasis Gavins places on their theory of "blending" illustrates interactive mapping between domains and conceptual integration of corresponding attributes residing in each domain.

Metonymy

Similar to metaphor, metonymy relies on cognitive function to integrate concepts into an analogical whole that relates a singular part to the encompassing whole represented by the part. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) describe metonymy as "using one entity to refer to another that is related to it" and synecdoche as "where the part stands for the whole" (35-36). Metaphor and metonymy while related, are significantly different; metaphor conceives meaning in terms of another unrelated concept to construe an original blending or integration of both concepts that convene to form understanding. Metonymy has a referential function allowing cognitive extension of the part described to the whole concept.

Lakoff (1987) proposes an extraordinary theory of Idealized Cognitive Models (ICM) that structure a mental space as described by Fauconnier where one concept expands to provide relationship between two related parts (68). The idea of an ICM is helpful in understanding how metonymy works to expand and extend a conceptual gestalt in relating a part to a whole, as in this example by Kövecses: "We need a better *glove* at third base," where glove stands for a better baseball player (171). H. D. Adamson (2019) describes a variation of metonymy called synecdoche that forms a "particular kind of conceptual metonymy often found in literature" (79). Adamson's example of this form of metonymy uses the rhetoric of "All hands on deck" where "hands" stand for sailors and works as a representative part of the whole concept. Adamson notes synecdoche can also reverse the representational process to where the whole is represented by a specific part, as in the example, "the university has enacted a hiring freeze," where university represents the administration of the university (79). The essential characteristic of metonymy requires referent attributes remain within one conceptual domain but, as René Dirven and Ralf Pörings (2009) note, "In metonymy we perspectivise [sic] the given experiential area as one domain matrix . . . incorporating ever more new elements" (89). The idea that one conceptual domain offers "new elements" is explored by Sandra Handl and Hans-Jörg Schmid (2011), who discuss the conventionality of metonymies. Handl and Schmid emphasize ways of "figurative thinking are so entrenched speakers are no longer aware of it" complemented by "the cognitive salience of attributes involved in the metonymical construal (85-86). Handl and Schmid frame their argument of conceptual theory as "conventional patterns of figurative thinking [that] shape not only the way we speak, but also how we conceptualize and experience the world and act (86). In their emphasis on conventionality, Handl and Schmid note, "A conceptual metonymy should be considered conventional if it is shared by the members of a speech community" and

bears on "well-established ways of thinking" (88). In the narrative the theory of new elements applies to the characterization of "John," whose role as the husband of the protagonist contextualizes him as a figure of authority in the larger construction of control.

 Narrative Gaps. Lars Bernaerts (2013) introduces narrative gaps as that which require additional effort by readers to enable them to "see something else and make new narrative connections" (2). Bernaerts argues that "narratives come into being through interaction between minds and narrative gaps," and writes, "there is profound awareness among theorists . . . [that] the construction and interpretation of narratives as coherent wholes . . . require gaps, empty spaces, and hidden information" (3). Bernaerts notes that literary scholars find in the construction and interpretation of narrative that gaps are necessary to the dynamics between reader and author to frame the text (5). In his introduction, Bernaerts argues narrative gaps follow from what he terms a "cognitivist approach" that focuses on the "mental operations required to comprehend narratives" (8). Bernaerts's approach separates from other theories of mind such as hermeneutical or structuralist in that the cognitivist approach focuses on "the gap-filling process in both the brain . . . and the mind" (8), whereas the hermeneutic tries to integrate the objective and subjective processing of the text (4). In contrast, the structuralist approach circumvents subjective reading to instead emphasize the "distribution and structure of textual gaps" (6). While Bernaerts prefers cognitivist theories on how readers comprehend text and narrative, there are other theories that also contribute to the literary competence of the reader. However, for brevity, this paper will focus solely on cognitive approaches to textual gaps found in studies such as those by Richard Gerrig (2010). Gerrig defines narrative gap as the "distinction between story, what is told and discourse, the manner in which it is told" (19). Gerrig asserts "discourse opens a gap between what narration reveals and the underlying story,"

and he endorses an empirical position called "*memory-based processing"* (emphasis in original) to suggest readers recruit information that "resonates" in their memories, interacting "idiosyncratically" with the text (20-23). Gerrig's theory of memory-based inferential processing departs from Gavin's "bounded" theory of schema and argues for the adaptability of individual memory (22). Gerrig writes, "Such structures are . . . bounded, static and reasonably similar across readers" advocating instead for the fluidity of memory-based processing to show how the "elements of complex texts resonate through each reader's memory to yield inferences" (24).

The contrast in the respective theories of Gerrig and Gavin lies in how readers use memory, experience, and schemas to encode inferences "supported by information that is readily available from each reader's memory" (22). While the memory-based approach allows readers to be more fluid and selective in determining which samples of memory are used, the approach of encoded schemas argued by Gavins tends to limit or restrict how readers react and interpret text. In an interesting juxtaposition to the foregoing, H. Porter Abbott (2013) provides a different understanding of narrative gaps, distinguishing between gaps that can be filled and the more predominant type of narrative gap that cannot be filled. Abbott refers to textual gaps as a "guided process in which we are not only cued to fill gaps in a certain way but also cued to leave other gaps unfilled" (109). Abbott predicates his argument on the work of Wolfgang Iser (1974), whose ideas on textual indeterminacy posited gaps as, "the very points at which the reader can enter into the text . . . to configure the meaning of what he is reading" (40). Iser wrote narrative gaps were essential components of any text and, further, no text could be known in its entirety (40). In later work, Iser proposed gaps can be filled "in many different ways . . . and will always remain open to some extent with one text . . . capable of several different realizations" (1980:275).

Iser argued "A literary text must therefore be conceived in such a way [that] it will engage the readers' imagination in the task of working things out for himself" (275). Meir Sternberg (1978) concurs, writing, "every literary work opens a number of gaps that have to be filled in by the reader" (50). However, Abbott argues Iser's notion of gaps as "key points of entry" fails in the way gaps "riddle narrative at *all* points" (emphasis in original), leading to how gaps play a "critical part in narrative success" (109). In a novel blending of theories, Abbott invokes the imaginative power of Ernest Hemingway's "principle of the iceberg" to emphasize "the art of leaving things out in such a way that they are still present" stressing the necessity of the readers' own "requisite depth of experience" (110). Abbott points to "egregious gaps" in narrative requiring "immense inferential energy" and cites the contractual agreement among authors and readers in which each "knows the rules of narrative" (110). The "contractual agreement" noted by Abbott reflects Gilman's dependence on the cooperation of readers to infer meaning from gaps of unfilled narrative left deliberately open.

CHAPTER 3. HYPOTHETICAL WORLD THEORY

Hypothetical World Theory (HWT) pertains to the "what if" possibilities in "The Yellow Wallpaper." The text presents numerous instances in which brief paragraphs and abrupt endings open numerous possibilities of what could have taken place—if. An example of this is found in the text when the narrator confesses, "John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him" (original emphasis 14). This segues into a discussion of possible worlds theory in which reality is imagined in alternate forms by the literary complicity of readers who bring their own experiential knowledge into the text. HWT posits that readers have mental reserves of scripted scenes and flexible capacity to fill in the missing narrative of a text. To put this into context, Raymond Bradley and Norman Swartz (1979) propose people engage in counterfactual supposition to wonder "about things that *might* have happened" (emphasis in original) and ask, "what if things had been thus?" (2).

Bradley and Swartz argue that such "actuality is . . . surrounded by an infinite realm of possibilities . . . by an infinity of other possible worlds," and they present a plausible theory by which to investigate the fiction of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2). Jerome Bruner (1986) posits a psycholinguistic approach to understanding how readers process language to derive multiple meanings. Bruner explains how readers receive, understand, and process text, using various subjective methods of decoding such as genre to categorically inform assignment. No "fixed" method of interpretation impacts how the text is read and understood to replicate the fictional world and its inherent possibilities in mirrored distortions of reality. Literary theorist Lubomír Doležel (1998) addresses what he considers to be the incompleteness of fictional worlds, remarking that "to construct a complete possible world would require writing a text of infinite length" (794-95).

Doležel posits this argument to justify the ontological nature of fictional worlds. The text world created contains numerous possibilities of development that could exceed the author's intentions when engaged by the reader. Doležel explains this as "literary poesies" that transforms writing into what did not exist before; "the world-constructing power of the fictional text implies that the text is prior to the world, that it calls into existence and determines its structure" (790). As Doležel claims, "Fictional texts . . . construct sovereign fictional worlds which satisfy the human need for imaginative expanse, emotional excitement, and aesthetic pleasure" (792). HWT serves the purpose of providing a theoretical basis for constructing speculative scenarios of "what if" inhered in the narrative gaps of unmediated text created by Gilman. While discussion of narrative gaps will be pursued later, it is relevant here as a means to explain how HWT works to fill such gaps by using the power of individual cognitive processing to provide those possibilities of what might have happened.

Abbott argues the internal dynamics of fictional worlds require "the reader's creative engagement with the text" in order to configure the meaning of the text (108). The individual authority of the reader to employ HWT allows them to establish relevancy, construct meaning, and bridge textual omissions. The critical engagement of HWT establishes precedent for theories of mind correlating cognitive models with internal scripts, subjective experience, and conceptual integration networks that impose on the capacity of the reader to construct meaning. HWT remains essential to fiction in general and to the fiction of "The Yellow Wallpaper" in particular to provide a necessary means of interpretation. While much of HWT results from   Kantian (1908) philosophical speculation on the arcane and esoteric formulations of the mind with regard to space and time, recent reviews reevaluate the operation of possible worlds in relation to the actual world or the present temporal reality.

Marie-Laure Ryan and Alice Bell (2019) advance the proposition that "In a many-worlds ontology, fictional texts can be associated with worlds, these worlds can be imagined on the basis of all the propositions presented as true by the text, and it is possible to distinguish true statements about the members of particular fictional worlds" (3). Ryan and Bell hypothesize fictional worlds where it is possible to distinguish truth to facilitate possibilities of an alethic system, noting not only could things be different from what they are in reality but that things "could be different in many different ways," and propose that readers are enabled in a many-worlds ontology to evaluate statements as either true or false by being given the option of more than one possible world and outcome (3).

Ryan posits an explicit difference between fictional worlds limited by relationship to the text and storyworlds that encompass "totalities [of] space, time and individuated existents that undergo transformations as the result of events" (63). Ryan's characterization of storyworlds as "networks of relations" concurs with David Herman's (2009) conception of "global mental representations enabling interpreters to frame inferences about situations, characters, and occurrences explicitly mentioned or implied by a narrative text" (109). Interestingly, Herman categorizes features other than text as "expressive resources," adding emphasis to the text of storyworlds in the disposition of space, section breaks, and typographic features (107). Jonathon Evans, David Over, and Simon Handley (2003) discuss hypothetical thinking as a "uniquely human faculty that is a distinguishing characteristic of our intelligence" (3). Evans, Over, and Handley argue that hypothetical thinking comprises implicit "background beliefs and knowledge . . . reflecting the learned history of the individual" that links to "language and reflective consciousness" as a basis for reasoning (3).

Echoing that theory, Bo Pettersson (2016) cites the ability for abstract thought as the single most novel aspect of human cognition and "literary world-making" (9). Pettersson notes the faculty of a cultural community or shared imagination bridging with individual imagination and perceptions of reality to build a shared concept of meaning (28). Pettersson concludes "The study of shared imagination and particularly literary imagination can provide tools for analyzing . . . imaginative uses of literary representation" (40). Finally, Ruth Ronen (1994) examines the representation of possible worlds in her study of a "heterogeneous paradigm that allows various conceptions for possible modes of existence" and the commitment to an "alternate ontology" (21). Ronen discusses the theoretic position pertaining to possible worlds that "non-actuality" does not preclude . . . one's ability to make propositions" and "possible worlds can account for the links between the actual world and other worlds" (26). In describing the relative "autonomy" of possible worlds, Ronen argues other worlds comprise not so much an alternate version of reality as complete worlds with their own systematic set of possibilities characterized by intentionality (28). Ronen's assessment of possible worlds tallies well with what readers encounter in fictional texts as the resulting gestalt of inference, intention, and complicity with the author in its creation.

CHAPTER 4. FEMINIST THEORY

Critical Feminist Literary Theory (CFLT) has developed over time beginning with the work of Mary Ellmann (1968), Kate Millitt (1970), and Germaine Greer (1971). Since then, there has been a plethora of feminist commentary on women. Feminists have not been sparing in their critique of literature, authors, and/or the impact of gender on texts and their interpretation.

In this section, I examine a small sample of feminist literary critique as it may apply to the text of "The Yellow Wallpaper" to expose the underlying bias of review brought to this study. Feminist review reveals the inequity of social and marital relations arising from ingrained ideas on gender and ascribed notions of women's fragility in the critical assignment of authority and autonomy. In Gilman's text, social structures and institutions predicate subordinated assumptions about women's place in society that authorize a discursive feminist review. The feminist commenters reviewed have reevaluated the political, social, and historical context of women's writing to critique the boundaries between the text and the world, and the text and the reader. The application of the term *feminist*, irrespective of ideology, merits a review of who and where the critic, the reader, and the writer are located politically, and influences interpretation. Annette Kolodny (1996) reiterates an important observation in her analysis of feminist review: "the feminist must oppose the painfully obvious truism that what is attended to in a literary work, and hence what is reported about it, is often determined not so much by the work itself as by the critical technique or aesthetic criteria through which it is filtered" (250). Kolodny acknowledges the limitations adhering to a feminist review, writing, "all a feminist is asserting, then, is her own right to liberate new . . .significances . . .and . . . her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant" (250).

Kolodny's emphasis on the individuality of reading endorses the critical application of a feminist ideology that supports many reviews. Charlotte Perkins Gilman authored her short story on a wave of feminist sentiment that began, according to Estelle Freedman (2002), in 1848. Freedman reviews the history of feminist politicization taking place in Europe and the United States with new publications in France, *La Voix des Femmes* representing women's voice, and feminist conventions such as the one held in July of 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Gilman was among those who wrote and published for a female readership, and she took an active part in legislating for women's political autonomy. Accordingly, it is fitting to apply a feminist theory of review to her work with its allusions to women's physical and ideological entrapment within socialized conventions of marriage and authority. Certainly, there has been no paucity of feminist reaction in the decades since the first publication appeared, followed by demands for suffrage, education, and property rights. However, Freedman notes it was not until the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) widened the gap in wage earnings between men and women and a radical reevaluation of economic opportunity created hierarchies of exclusion that women and other non-privileged classes became dependent (46). Freedman's description of the resulting economic dependence of women may have contributed to their experience of anxiety.

In her review, Freedman points out that the same conditions that engendered separate spheres also gave women opportunities of expression through writing and organization (46). In deference to the debate over superfluous pluralism, I propose to focus literary analysis of the text in this study through a liberal or humanist framework guided by Mary Maynard's (2006) definition of liberal feminism as "individual rights . . . equality, justice, and equal opportunities" as ways of achieving gender equity through political and legal reform (260). In that respect, the feminists quoted follow a liberal ideological approach to issues of gender.

Cora Kaplan (1996) makes a circuitous argument in her discussion of gender and genre, but directly addresses the question of women as writers: "the mid-century saw the development of a liberal 'separate but equal' argument which sometimes tangled with, sometimes included the definition of women's sphere and the development of the cult of true womanhood" (181). Kaplan writes, "All the major women writers were both subject to and sensitive about charges of coarseness. Sexual impurity was *the* unforgivable sin, the social lever through which Victorian culture controlled its females" (164). Kaplan, in her address of women as writers in the nineteenth century, notes the entry of literate women into the public discourse endangered "taboos" of male prerogative and prejudice (164). In similar fashion, Josephine Donavan (2012) examines the writing of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, recognizing her as being among the first wave of cultural feminists with publications on the plight of women and social institutions. Donavan notes that "Gilman's *The Home* remains one of the most clearly articulated pieces of radical feminist theory on the domestic sphere produced during the first wave of feminist thought" (48).

Rosemarie Tong (2014) presents a comprehensive review on the diversity of feminist thinking, beginning with the liberal approach to social reformation. Tong argues the "classic formulation" of liberal feminism began in the women's suffrage movement and in women's groups such as the National Organization of Women. Tong recognizes organizations such as these as responsible for rhetoric rooting female subordination in a "set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world" (2). Tong writes "to the extent that society holds the false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men, it tends to discriminate against women in the academy, the forum, and marketplace" (2). Tong argues liberal ideology requires the rules of the game to be fair for everyone and the distribution of goods and services inclusive of those who

are systemically disadvantaged. Tong states, "women should have as much chance to succeed in the public realm as men do" (9). In advance of Rosemarie Tong, Gilman expressed her feminist attitude in 1903 in her book, *The Home: Its Work and Influence*:

> We have always assumed that the woman could do most by staying at home. Is this so? Can we prove it? Why is that which is so palpably false of a man is held to be true of a woman? The home in its arrested state of development, does not properly fulfill its own essential functions—much less promote the social ones. . . . Among the splendid activities of our age it lingers on. . . . It hinders, by keeping woman a social idiot. (314).

Due to extensive divisions within the broad overview of feminist theory, it is useful to have an operative definition for the particular focus used in this study. Mary Maynard (1995) offers her opinion, writing, "Liberal feminism is depicted as focusing on individual rights and on concepts of equality, justice and equal opportunities, where legal and social policy changes are seen as tools for engineering women's equality with men" (260). Gilman's fictional tale takes on new facets of meaning when reviewed through the lens of liberal feminist ideology, revealing new perspectives on women's marital experience. Gilman's subjective experience of marriage and male authority may resonate with some women while others reject it; however, as leading feminist authors and critics such as, Beate Schöpp-Schilling (1975), Susan Wendell (1987), Mary Eagleton (1986), Cheris Kramarae (1992), Susan Marilley (1996), Estelle Freedman (2002), and Rosemarie Tong (2013) have noted, the evidence suggests women are vulnerable to and mindful of inequitable social and economic relationships. Liberal feminism stresses rationality as a fundamental human attribute, and, as Alison Jaggar (1983) argues, "Liberal political theory ground[s] on the conception of human beings as essentially rational agents." (28) an understanding that informs proponents of liberal feminism.

In Gilman's narrative, it is precisely this rationality that is called into question as the protagonist slowly loses her grip on reality and succumbs to the seductive lure of madness that eventually mirrors back to her in her own image as the woman caught behind the yellow wallpaper. Questions of rationality underscore more than the idea of madness that afflicts the protagonist; rational actions and thoughts reflect the criteria held by society and the medical community in their assessment and treatment of women's nervous conditions and in diagnoses of hysteria. It can be no coincidence that Gilman's treatment for "nervous exhaustion" by a respected member of the medical community resulted in her writing a self-explicatory tale of resentment and resistance to ideas about women's physical and mental capacities. Feminist women's groups responded by pointing to the underlying inequity incurred in social institutions such as marriage, domesticity, and education that restrained women's progress into the public domain of discourse and commerce. In Gilman's fiction, it is these circumstances that compel the protagonist to seek relief when her physician/husband John threatens to send her to a specialist "who is just like John and my brother, only more so!" (19). Historian Mark Micale (1995) notes hysteria represented, "everything men found irritating or irascible, mysterious or unmanageable" in women, mirroring their "irrational, capricious and unpredictable nature" (68). Peter Brooks (1993) concurs, writing, "Hysteria . . . was conceived to be a female malady . . . held to be the result of a wandering womb whose displacement had to be corrected to effect a cure" (224).

Edith Gomberg and Violet Franks (1979) argue "physicians that treated hysterics were ambivalent at best, but usually caustic and punitive. Because women did not fulfill their female roles, they threatened physicians as professionals and as men" (361). Elaine Showalter (2020) revisits the history of research into women's diagnoses of hysteria, noting, "nineteenth-century physicians generally believed that hysterical women were skillful performers, faking their

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symptoms in order to get attention and special treatment" (29). The discursive canon of literature

on what Beret Strong (1998) refers to as *la condition feminine* has drawn comment far too broad

for this venue; however, as Gomberg and Franks note, Gilman provides "the first description of

the relationship between the psychiatrist and madness" and on how "the paternalistic collusion

between the psychiatrist and the physician—husband destroyed the protagonist" (360).

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS

Gilman, a noted feminist, and leading activist for women's rights, wrote a piece of fiction that paralleled her experience as a married woman who received medical advice for melancholy. The result of her consultation proved disastrous for Gilman due to the dismissal of her complaint by a physician who diagnosed women's complaints as symptomatic of hysteria. Gilman's fiction reflects her resistance to that diagnosis, and she styles her central character as her personal avatar with a focus on the relationship between her unnamed narrator and her husband, John. Gilman describes John as a respected physician with an authoritative presence in the home who decides to dismiss his wife's ailment subjectively and professionally. The other characters in the text remain peripheral with exception of the female phantoms who emerge from behind the wallpaper to seek freedom from their metaphorical prison. Importantly, the plot centers on the protagonist's isolation, the relational inequity she experiences, the social stigmatization of women's nervous disorders as hysteria, and the protagonist's subtle transition to insanity as a last means of escape.

A recurrent theme of madness reiterates throughout with emphasis on the wallpaper as an instigating agent of opposition to women restrained by its animus. The main ideas supported by the text revolve around women's subjugation to social institutions of authority such as marriage and the contractual obligations those institutions impose on women, the diminution of women as rational beings, and representation of physical structures such as the home and/or the wallpaper as metaphorical enclosures that mimic the authority of those social institutions. The narrative's structural elements are metaphorical and/or metonymical, aided by narrative gaps and omissions of silence that disconcert the readers' expectation of fulfillment and open alternative possibilities of reality.

It is in Gilman's critical decision to create gaps of unnarrated possibility that "alethic modalities" draw from the experiential perspective brought by readers (Ryan 239). Gilman's visual metaphors image feminist structures that traditionally are assigned to represent the feminine sphere such as the home, gardens, and children. The structural aspect of her writing takes form in the nursery, where her protagonist discovers within its barred enclosure a means of escape from the husband's authority. Hypothetical World Theory reveals the inherent possibilities of alternative realities residually dormant in Gilman's text like visual afterimages readers can use to expand on what is missing in the text to obtain closure and fulfill expectations. The fictional world created in text borders between sanity and madness, merging the actual world with the possible world of fiction. Gilman's primary structural component of the house contains a nursery room lined with a molting yellow wallpaper whose:

> sprawling flamboyant pattern commit every artistic sin. It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance, they commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions. (13)

Gilman's description of the yellow wallpaper in her story, animated by the imagination of her protagonist, assumes form and substance to become a physical entity that stalks its inhabitants. Readers assume the possibility of the supernatural to engage the gothic reality of an inanimate object that "creeps all over the house . . . hovering in the dining room, skulking in the parlor, and hiding in the hall" (28-29). The elastic credulity of the readers' imagination is tested when Gilman positions her protagonist, who is enmeshed in a burgeoning madness, to subjectify the forms emerging out of the wallpaper into angry women fleeing their imprisonment.

Gilman verifies the growing apprehension of her readers that her avatar/protagonist identifies with them, writing, "I really have discovered something at last . . . I have finally found out. The front pattern really *does* move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!" (30). In Gilman's possible world, the thin divide between the animate and inanimate converge to form an ontological fiction that by necessity is marked by what Doležel calls "irrecoverable lacunae" (795). Gilman applies theories of possibility to her incomplete construction of fictional worlds to form an alethic alternative developed in complicity with the reader and the text and writes her characters into existence much as the fiction of the wallpaper writes its emerging phantoms into the mind of the protagonist. What Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1847) describes as a poetic state of mind "sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment" assumes central importance as a cognitive theory of mind aiding assimilation of the supernatural world and creating access to multiple levels of processing text (2). The idea behind this theory rests on the way readers assign meaning to a text using cognitive processes.

Gilman accomplishes such distortions by assigning animated qualities of form, function, and purpose to the wallpaper in such a way that it becomes a living entity in and of itself to mime the controlling enclosure of the domestic sphere. The possibility of women held prisoner within its enclosure adds to conceiving it in malignant terms. Indeed, as Gilman writes, "It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like yellow buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things" (28). In the narrative, the yellow wallpaper becomes an omnipresent being who commands the attention of the woman forced to remain in its presence by a husband who commands her obedience. The reality of the wallpaper as a changing, ever present influence can be seen in this excerpt by Gilman, "This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had! I never saw so much expression

in an inanimate thing before" (16). The latitude of literary interpretation allowed by cognitive theories of mind expands the text beyond what may have been the author's intention, allowing readers to subjectively rewrite the text using scripts of experiential memory. The flexibility of the subjective reading experience allows readers to imagine multiple outcomes. The main points taken are that fictional worlds contain the seeds of their own germination into relevant worlds of meaning for different readers who bring into the text their own priorities; and, as Bruner argues, the focus on psycholinguistic theory depends on the cognitive apprehension of language as "speech acts" that inflect meaning and reference (5). Fauconnier and Turner propose an interesting argument, claiming the capacity for humanities imagination furthers the social evolution of the species and allows individuals, "greater power of conception and choice" (217).

Gilman assigns that power to the reader, who needs to decide the credible possibility or veracity of the mind of a madwoman who sees forms within the wallpaper, forms that emerge to creep into the shadows of nearby "blackberry vines" (31). In a hypothetical world, such things could happen without the cognitive dissonance that accompanies perception in the actual world, that allows extraordinary experiences to happen. Gilman's text is extraordinary as she describes the woman who exits from the wallpaper, "I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind" (31). The hysterical madness of the protagonist resonates throughout the text creating an atmosphere of heightened tension,

> Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night alone. That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to 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. (32)

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In the story, the protagonist finds relief by peeling off the wallpaper to release the woman held inside by its stultifying influence and pungent odor. The madness induced by the wallpaper on the imagination of the protagonist allows her a way to slip past sanity and past the barred windows of the nursery room to escape an intolerable situation. At the time Gilman wrote her story, women were still assessed as fragile in comparison to the robust rationality of men that entitled them access to the public domain; indeed, Gilman's protagonist is kept under scrutiny and protective custody within the prison of her home. It is the character of imprisonment that influences the events that follow, causing Gilman's protagonist to write, "He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction" (12). Gilman's text reflects conditions under which some women were restrained to hide the nervous conditions that resulted in their medical diagnoses of hysteria. Indeed, as Mitchel Weir (1877) would later write, "For some years I have been using . . . methods of renewing the vitality of feeble people by a combination of entire rest and of excessive feeding. The cases thus treated have been chiefly women of the class known to every physician, nervous women" (9).

Weir's critique and opinion was still quite common among physicians in the late nineteenth century and, at the time Gilman was writing, were guided by years of medical tradition reflecting, as Laurinda Dixon (1995) notes, "ancient medical belief[s] in the innate instability of the female sex . . .reinforcing traditional notions concerning women's societal roles and intellectual capabilities" (3). In the narrative, Gilman portrays her protagonist as considered vulnerable to whimsical fancies. "John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies" (16). The portrayal substantiates Dixon's notion of "the fragile . . . . housebound woman [who] has always been a reflection more of male wish

fulfillment than of female reality" (3). In "The Yellow Wallpaper," hysteria parades as a

madness that verges on obliteration as the heroine seeks escape by merging with the women

exiting the wallpaper. They are hysterical, aggravated by the grief of their imprisonment; they

creep into the margins of oblivion aided by a hysterical heroine who remains imprisoned behind

the barred windows of the nursery room itself held captive by the yellow wallpaper. Gilman's

tale of madness and female hysteria is central to a feminist reading, understanding, and

perception of hysteria as a "performance," that discredits its legitimacy and reduces its victim to

an unreliable actor.

        Gilman is aware of this when she writes, "If a physician of high standing, and one's own

husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but

temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?" (10). Gilman's

treatment of hysteria locates the logic of its devastating consequences in the incipient madness

that overwhelms the protagonist, who retreats from her husband's society and legitimates her

escape from his authority. If Showalter is correct, then Gilman writes hysteria as a performative

quest for attention. Indeed, DSM-III (1980) states the following:

> The essential feature is a Personality Disorder in which there are overly dramatic,
> reactive, and intensely expressed behavior characteristic disturbances in interpersonal
> relationships. Individuals with this disorder are lively and dramatic and are always
> drawing attention to themselves. Minor stimuli give rise to emotional excitability, such as
> irrational, angry outbursts or tantrums. Individuals with this disorder crave novelty,
> stimulation, and excitement and quickly become bored with normal routines. Flights into
> romantic fantasy are common; in both sexes overt behavior often is a caricature of
> femininity. In other classifications this category is termed Hysterical Personality. (314)

In a successful contrast of masculine logic and female sensitivity, the heroine declares,

"there is something strange about the house—I can feel it. I even said so to John one moonlit

evening, but he said what I felt was a *draught*, and shut the window" (11, original emphasis).

Gilman's adept characterization of John's dismissive attitude towards his wife's nervous

condition leads to his infantilization of her and shows in his condescension the passage, "'What

is it, little girl? Don't go walking about like that—you'll get cold.' . . . 'Bless her little heart!'

said he with a big hug, 'she shall be as sick as she pleases!'" (23-24). As Gilman's protagonist

slips deeper into her psychotic diagnosis, she remarks, "Life is so much more exciting now than

it used to be. You see I have something to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and I

am more quiet than I was" (27). The "overactive imagination" Gilman assigns her victim

becomes her salvation even as it becomes a resource she can use in her sphere of domestic

enclosure (15).

Hysteria, when reviewed through feminist ideology, reconfigures itself as a feminine

resource predicating on established ideas about women as weak and susceptible and provides

women with a medically authenticated excuse to escape. The feminist perspective of hysteria is

fractured, at once prescriptive and performative, and when read through the feminist lens it

becomes a condemnation and a resource of survival. It is this contradictory nature of hysteria that

while considered by the DSM-III to be a "feminine characteristic" can also affect men. Feminist

perspective does not exclude the consideration of men in its calculus of equity and when applied

to Gilman's fiction can be used to review the role of the stalwart, rational physician assigned to

John as equally susceptible to hysteria. If the theory of hypothetical worlds and alternate

possibilities can be trusted to interpret or provide other explanations for what occurs within

fictional worlds such as Gilman's, then it is possible to suggest that John, too, is affected by the

pervasive influence of the yellow wallpaper. Indeed, as Gilman writes, "I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times *looking at the paper*!" (27). Gilman casts John's character as impervious to irrational actions or thoughts, but in his reaction to his wife's slide into madness there is the possibility that John, too, becomes hysterical when he sees his wife crawling around the floor of the nursery room:

> He stopped short by the door. "What is the matter?" he cried, "For God's sake, what are you doing!" I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder. "I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane! And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back! Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time! (36)

The incidence of male hysteria was discussed and documented by leading medical practitioners in Europe and England throughout the nineteenth century. Sigmund Freud (1886) presented a paper on male hysteria before the Viennese Society of Physicians that was built on the work and established theories of Jean-Martin Charcot's (1877) *Leçons sur les Maladies du Système Nerveux,* Paul Briquet's (1859) *Traité clinique et thérapeutique de l'Hystérie,* and Moritz Benedikt's (1868) *Elekteotherapie.* In England, Herbert William Page (1883) documented evidence of hysteria in the "deplorable state which patients of both sexes, men not less frequently than women, present when suffering with this condition" (172). Henri Ellenberger (1970) delves into the history of male hysteria, writing, "since many accident victims were men, the diagnosis of male hysteria, formerly restricted to men with classical symptoms, was now extended to men with functional, posttraumatic disorders. . . . In Vienna, the existence of classical male hysteria was no longer questioned" (439).

Mark Micale (2008), in his review of male hysteria, writes, "The notion that men were as susceptible as women to hysterical pathology ran counter to prevailing patriarchal ideals and seemed to entail the need for a substantially revised understanding of masculine human nature" (193). Feminist logic would assume any medically recognized disorder such as hysteria, when shared equally across gender, would alleviate the stigmatization associated with it, thereby removing its "feminine characteristic" from review. The discourse on hysteria aside, feminist perspective on the plight of the heroine/victim in Gilman's fiction requires explanation and a review of her projected fantasies onto the yellow wallpaper. As even the most superficial feminist review reveals, Gilman has created a situation in which any woman, let alone someone with a nervous disorder, might experience an irrational reaction. The situation in which the heroine/victim finds herself places her in immediate danger of relapsing into a separate fantasy world apart from the actual reality of her contractual obedience and marital obligation. The central objective of the protagonist is relief from a situation she considers intolerable and, given her creative proclivity, she projects her unhappiness onto forms of women in the wallpaper (17).

Analysis of Gilman's fiction through the perspective of feminist theory asserts arguments impacting the way the story is read and understood as a woman's relational experience in a social culture where approbated forms of institutional authority derive from men. The disadvantages of this are apparent in the domestic inhibitions recognized by the protagonist as a means of control, as when Gilman writes, "I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition. But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself—before him at least" (11). Feminist theory recognizes control as antithetical to an equitable relationship for women, providing the reason for the reaction and resistance of the protagonist to look for a means of escape.

The metaphors in Gilman's text allow readers to fashion cognitive connections that draw from their own experience and enable them to connect physical structures such as the home and wallpaper with social institutions that enclose women in contractual obligations such as marriage and domesticity. While such interpretations rely on the use of a feminist ideology, the literary metaphors do incline toward perceiving the heroine as a woman trapped by the conventions and expectations of conforming behavior society imposes. Metaphor relies on overlap, extension, and grouping of characteristics recognized in correspondents represented in conceptual domains; the idea that "correspondents" must be recognized and identified successfully suggests possibility of a breach where the metaphor fails to perform as anticipated. The example used by Kövecses, "LIFE IS A JOURNEY," therefore, relies on the cultural understanding of life as a journey taken. The useful effect of metaphor remains culturally and temporally indebted to recognition of certain constructs in any given society in which they are allocated meaningful attribution and are understood as such within that cultural community of shared symbolic meaning. Gilman invites that intersubjective comparison in her use of the home and wallpaper as symbolic of restraint.

Gilman's characterization of the yellow wallpaper invests it as living entity with purpose when she writes, "This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had! I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. But in places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so, I can see a strange, provoking, formless figure" (16-18). The conceptual metaphor here expresses the idea of the wallpaper as animated and, while different interpretations can be formed according to the readers' own subjective experience, conception of restraint is explicitly perceived by the protagonist as a willful entity that restrains the figures within its grasp. The wallpaper becomes a substitute for the enclosing conditions of the home and marriage that contain the protagonist and, by extension, the formless figures of other women.

The wallpaper then is conceived of as a material force of opposition corresponding to structured enclosures as a form of restraint used against women.

Table 1. The Yellow Wallpaper is an Animate Force of Opposition

Source: Yellow Wallpaper	Target: Animated Entity
Design and Pattern	Animus/Influence
Faded Paper	Visions/Imaginary Forms
Cross-Hatched Lines	Constraint/Imprisonment
Opposition	Resistance
Foul Odor	Decay/Death/Disintegration
Putrid Color	Enveloping Miasma/Encroaching/Invasive

Gilman's example of the wallpaper is retained in its color, odor, and patterns as a palpable form of restraint that maps onto the concept of a prison with similar sensorial sensations and function.

The metaphor uses the concept of the wallpaper as a "vicious influence" to impress the idea that the willfulness of the wallpaper mimics intentional abrogation of women's freedom by restricting their authority as rational actors, and it becomes an oppositional force against the will of those it holds captive evolving into a prison. The protagonist's uneasy premonition expresses her recognition of the wallpaper as a physical restraint coinciding with her own intangible sense of entrapment, as when she writes, "Dear John! . . . I tried to have a real earnest talk with him the other day and tell him how I wish he would let me go and visit Cousin Henry and Julia" (21). The longing expressed by the protagonist to get away from her current situation is rebuked by the authority of her husband who declines to allow her to leave.

Table 2. Colonial Mansion is Representative of a Social Institutional Structure

Source: Colonial Mansion	Target: Socio-Institutional Structure
Enforces Physical Isolation	Enforces Social Isolation
Domesticity of Structure	Domesticity of Control and Isolation
Assigned Home	Assigned Separate Sphere/Ideological Cult of True Womanhood (Purity/Piety)
Barred Windows/Prison	Containment/Control/ Restraint/Opposition (Resistance) (Resentment)
Marital Bed	Social/Institutional Sanction of Marital Rights

The table above represents corresponding elements in separate domains that map conceptually from concrete structures on the left to hypothesized ones on the right. The table represents the element of enclosure that is present in both the physical structure of the home and in social institutions that mimic its purpose as an isolating and controlling enclosure.

Gilman's literary metaphors allow the association of separate and distinct domains by representing elements within the domains that correspond and have similar characteristics. An example of metaphor from the text relies on the construct of the home as an enclosed domestic sphere that separates women from public discourse and constrains women's public aspirations. The home as a controlled enclosure maps onto corresponding elements in marriage as a situation in which women are enclosed, restrained, and controlled, and as table two shows, represents an enclosure of restraint that is present in both the home and in aspects of social institutions. A third metaphor lies in the way the character of John is written as a dominant authority in the home and representative of the social institutions that support his authority and from which he derives his status.

The authority that adheres to John as both physician and husband anchors in the bedrock of formal institutions such as medicine and marriage that preclude challenge and rematerialize as forces of opposition the heroine contends against. Authority is represented in physical form as John, and conceptually, in the formal institutions that exert control over lesser men and women by demonstrating how the correspondent of control is present in each domain.

Table 3. John Represents Social, Domestic, and Institutional Control and Authority

Source: John	Target: Social, Institutional, Domestic Control and Authority/Rational Actor
Physician	Elevated Social Status/Credibility
Husband	Domestic, Legal, and Political Authority
White Middle and Upper-Class Men	Visibility/Public Figure/Socially Sanctioned Status/ Institutional Standing and Recognition

Gilman's characterization of John as a physician/ husband imbues him with the institutional authority to make unilateral decisions in regard to his wife, her health, and her property.

The issue of control appears when the heroine/victim describes her situation to the reader and asks, "But what is one to do?" and in comments on the need to hide her writing she remarks, "I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition" (10). Control is evidenced in John's presumption to make unilateral decisions concerning his wife, "John says that if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall" (33). The heroine's casual comment indicates her consent is not needed. In Gilman's hypothetical world the metaphor of the woman/victim/heroine who engages the opposition of controlling authority, whether it is represented physically as her husband or more abstractly by the social institutions that legislate control, results in her resistance to that authority.

The metaphor of control works because representation of resistance configured in the woman maps onto ideas of resistance configured in the opposition to social institutions that demand compliance.

Table 4. Feminist Resistance to Social and Political Control

Source: Women's Social Movement	Target: Social and Political Institutions
White Middle and Upper-Class Women	Resistance to Institutional and Political Hierarchies of Exclusion/Conforming Social Expectations of Marital Performance

It may be Gilman's feminist formulation of her fictional storyworld serves to inform and represent the greater ideology of the women's movement in their opposition and resistance to subjection. The corresponding element recognized in Gilman's fiction as resistance can be mapped onto the resistance of the women's social movement in its bid for recognition and equity. The woman/victim/heroine written into Gilman's fiction corresponds in kind with the social movement of feminist resistance to the institutionalized authority of white men. Metaphors involve extension and what H. D. Adamson refers to as, "mapping features not part of the source concept proper but only part of the background cognitive model in which the source concept is embedded" as a smaller part of a complex model of associated characteristics that extends the original metaphor to include those related aspects (75). This constellation of related aspects coalesce to form a representative whole that takes the "conceptual metaphor in a new direction" (73). Extension relates metaphors in the text when Gilman writes, "Such a peculiar odor too! If I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell! It is not bad at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met . . . The only thing I can think of that it is like it is the *color* of the paper! A yellow smell" (29).

In the case quoted, the wallpaper, as the source domain, maps the visual element of color as odor onto the more abstract target domain of intangible sensations where both are connected by extension of associated characteristics. Gilman's example of extension represents two distinct domains, color and odor; offering a novel approach to metaphor by using elements of sensory perception. Adamson explains a second aspect of metaphor he terms elaboration that works by "expanding on and supplying details about an aspect of a source domain that *is* commonly mapped onto a target domain," (76). Gilman does this when she elaborates on the wallpaper writing, "The wallpaper . . . is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother" (17). The elaborated metaphor of the wallpaper sticking to the wall and that of brothers sticking together works by sharing a common element of attachment as an associated characteristic that exists both in the wallpaper and in the domain of siblings. In another instance, Gilman extends the rage of the heroine/victim to the ethereal women who exit from the wallpaper as elaboration of the rage and insanity that possesses her where it becomes symptomatic of both the real and the unreal.

A second linguistic strategy, metonymy, associates closely with metaphor, referencing an aspect or part of the *same* conceptual domain of the thing or person to represent the whole. Metonymy can be thought of as an inductive process that reasons from one example of reference to implicate the entire concept, such as when Gilman images John as indicative of male authority. Gilman imbues John's role in the home and in the medical profession with authority, linking him by dint of metonymic extension to nineteenth-century white men as their representative. Both the husband and brother of the protagonist represent figures of authority as individual examples of authority and control in domestic and public space. In another instance, Gilman's metonymical fiction represents the woman/victim fighting for her sanity as a singular instance of the larger women's social reform movement fighting to restore relational equity.

A third instance of metonymy occurs when the form within the wallpaper takes on a distinctly feminine shape who shakes angrily at the bars of her prison as reference to other women similarly trapped, including the protagonist and possibly Gilman herself. Similarly, the "colonial mansion," represents a culture that came to define the lives, and occupations of women (9). John's role and character in the story can be contextualized both as metaphorical, in that he is written as representative of social institutions that politically, and systemically diminish women's authority, and as metonymic of the presumed authority imbued to white men. In the latter, John represents the stereotypical white male professional who has an attitude of privilege and arrogance. John's assumption of authority contrasts with the heroine's valiant effort to assert herself, typecasting his role in the story as overbearing—a presumption that may be typical of his class or indeed, the literary license of the author.

In either case, John's character suggests authority. In the second example, Gilman writes feminine forms into the wallpaper that desperately seek to find a way out from their prison, a prison the heroine contrives from the pattern imprinted on the wallpaper. Gilman's graphic description contextualizes the wallpaper metaphorically as a prison within the prison of the house and, as a metonym representative of enclosure. The internment of feminine forms within the crosshatching of the wallpaper pattern suggests the suffrage of women and the surrender of their freedom. The wallpaper becomes symbolic of women's separation from public life and imagined captivity in the home as well as women's repressed anger toward their guards/captors. The drafting of the wallpaper as a barrier demonstrates the private seclusion that encumbered women's domestic lives. Notably, the wallpaper in form and function takes on the guise of a living entity to haunt the protagonist in her home. As such, the portrayal of the wallpaper exemplifies the gothic influence that styled women's writing.

The same gothic reference extends to the "colonial mansion" mentioned in the text as the type of home that invites gracious living with extended gardens and walkways. The house tends to suggest other homes representing the lifestyle of white upper-class society patrons, such as lawyers and physicians, who could afford to rent or own such homes. The final example of metonymy occurs with the characterization of the protagonist as a woman driven to insanity by the combined opposition of her husband and the institutions that supported his authority over her. The depression she endures as a result of her dependence on him and her acknowledged place within the hierarchy of social and institutional power locates her among other women who also experienced displacement and diminution because of their gender. John's role as a member of that elite class who commands authority contrasts vividly with the role written for the heroine, who typifies the quiet reservation of domestic women who lived quietly in the shadow of their husbands. The submission experienced by the heroine in the story can be extended to represent the experience of other women who had demands placed upon them in the marital relationship. Although the physician/husband transgress the normative conduct of most men, so, too, does the example of the protagonist; yet both become symbols in metonymic representation.

Narrative gap is a literary device writers use to their advantage and Gilman's use of it allows readers to hypothesize what could have happened in her story when she fails to disclose that information. Narrative gaps are textual omissions of occurrences that have happened and are a part of the story, but which remain undisclosed to the reader. Gilman illustrates an example of a narrative lapse when she ends her first paragraph, "There comes John, and I must put this away—he hates to have me write a word." The narrator fails to disclose why this is important or what could have precipitated the edict against her writing. The next paragraph begins with, "We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day" (13).

The gap in between what happened in the prior two weeks is left open to the reader's imagination. The scene, as it is written, becomes a poignant space of untold narrative and a time in which something has occurred, but is left abruptly unsaid. In another instance, Gilman writes, "There's sister on the stairs!" and, just as before, Gilman ends her paragraph leaving the reader to imagine or construct some meaning to its importance (18). In the next paragraph, Gilman writes, "Well the Fourth of July is over!" Again, something has occurred in the interval but left untold, leaving the reader to fill in the missing narrative (18). In another example of a narrative gap, Gilman suddenly introduces an infant without any preamble to alert the reader writing, "Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way! . . . Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able—to dress and entertain, and order things. It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!" (14). In this first of two references to a child, Gilman declines to explain whose child it is, how the child figures into the text, or what happened prior to this cursory introduction or, later, what becomes of the child. Indeed, the name "Mary" occurs only once, without prior introduction or explanation.

Yet another instance occurs with the transition of the protagonist into the madness that engulfs her sanity; the process has been gradual, but definitive. While Gilman carefully relates the protagonist's obsession with the pattern and design of the wallpaper, there is no account of how or why she slips into the conviction that women exist behind its façade. The reader is left to infer from what has been written that it is the protagonist who sees herself as trapped, but the narrative fails to make this hypothesis clear or to confirm it and, instead, requires the reader to resolve the absence of information. An example occurs in reference to a "rope" the protagonist secures and for the first time the protagonist declares, "I wonder if they all came out of that wallpaper as I did? But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope" (35).

In this line of text, something strange has occurred and been left inexplicably untold, and in the gap that ensues, the protagonist slips through the lined bars of the wallpaper and merges her identity with the fantasized forms of women fleeing its influence. The final instance occurs in the last lines of the text, when John enters the locked room where the protagonist has secured herself, and she declares, "'I've got out at last,' said I, 'in spite of you and Jane'" (36). While this is the first mention of "Jane," it can be inferred from the text that she is the narrator of the story, and she has dissociated from herself by merging her identity with the anonymous women who are exiting the wallpaper. It is possible that "Jane," as an anxious and submissive wife, may have been a threat to the new identity assumed by the protagonist and opposed her quest to escape.

The textual omissions present spaces where readers are invited to construct the story and apply their own hypothesized endings grounded in interconnected networks of experience. Narrative gaps and omissions of silence are interesting literary features that enhance hypothetical text worlds with their creative capacity to form indeterminacies in the text that open alternative possibilities for readers. Gilman's decision to abrogate her text at critical junctures of revelation combines with the indeterminate nature of the text to pose difficult questions of interpretation for readers, who are, as Iser notes, "driven by the urge to group things together and unravel the tangle, but any attempt to do so reflects [their] own personal preferences rather than any supposed objective meaning" (111). The question of indeterminacies in narrative are in and of themselves interesting subjects of conjecture among literary theorists, who argue the full extent of a text can never be fully known, nor any tale ever told in its entirety (Iser:1980, 55). Gilman's deliberate omissions of narrative qualify to fulfill that obligation between author and reader to create and make sense of possible worlds of fantasy and fiction to satisfy that commitment.

CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY

The text used in this analysis follows the version most closely confirmed as Gilman's original writing and, therefore, contains her exclamation marks, abbreviated sentence structure and, most importantly, the way in which Gilman structures her abrupt and arbitrary paragraphs. A fundamental feature of Gilman's writing is the abrupt shift of topic without explanation, creating what Bernaerts refers to as "narrative lacunae" in which reader's "mobilize . . . knowledge and experience to supplement what is left unsaid" (2). Gilman's artful use of silence in an unfinished line of thought or text and her abrupt ending of a paragraph set it apart from the rest of her narrative, emulating the style and manner of a personal account or diary. In such an account, the reader is left to infer from these expressive silences the author's intent. While this analysis adheres to a feminist interpretation of the text, the results appear to validate that perspective, given the author was committed to a platform of activism defending women's rights and underwent a similar experience of isolation. The application of Hypothetical World Theory applies well to this analysis in that it supplies the necessary ideas substantiating theories of mind and the construction of possible alternatives in fictional worlds. In her use of linguistic features, Gilman achieves her intended meanings and salience through textual omissions that insert gaps into the text that allow/insist upon the intervention of the reader's understanding through which new texts are composed. In Gilman's story, the narrative gaps, inexplicable silences, and omissions of text are literary devices to create spaces in the text where readers are invited to participate in fashioning alternative endings by filling in what has not been written or by imagining what could have happened. The abrupt and awkward silences that mark her text conflict with the smooth continuity of the script and disrupt the comfortable expectations of the reader, who, instead of revelation, finds empty spaces of absent narration.

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