



## “Out at Last!”: A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*

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### Abstract

Central to Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s feminist theories is the emancipation of women from economic dependence on men and from the ‘middle-class ideal of domestic femininity’ (Robertson, 2018). This paper analyzes one of Gilman’s most famous works, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, using Halliday’s (1968) transitivity framework and drawing on Mills’ feminist stylistics (1995, as cited in Montoro, 2014). The study examines how the narrator encodes her worldview and experiences through material and mental processes. These stylistic choices are explored within a feminist framework, highlighting the consequences of gender stereotypes and prejudice on mental health. The analysis reveals the yellow wallpaper as an allegory of the narrator’s confinement in a marriage that reduces her to the role of a ‘domestic housewife,’ inferior to her husband. The narrator’s material and mental processes reveal her longing for freedom and eventual escape from these societal stereotypes. This study demonstrates how feminist stylistic analysis can deepen our understanding of literature, making it socially relevant and enriching the study of literary works in the classroom. Furthermore, it sheds light on the psychology of gender-based stereotyping and bias, with implications for understanding the experiences of women and other marginalized genders.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Central to the feministic theories and advocacies of Charlotte Perkins Gilman was the emancipation of women from being seen as economically dependent on men, and from the “middle-class ideal of domestic femininity” (Robertson, 2018). More specifically, Gilman had strong views against the role of women as wives and mothers in marriage and family raising (Somers, 2019). Not discounting the merits of her arguments and ideas in feminism, various scholars trace them back to her childhood and married life. Gilman’s youth was marked by her father’s abandonment, resulting in them moving from place to place more than a couple of times during her childhood. In addition, her married life, at least the first one, was also remarkable. Along with a divorce, she experienced postpartum depression, eventually leaving custody of her child to the father; and then remarrying in her 40s. In her time though, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries America was not very kind to revolutionary women like her (Degler, 1956); and in general, was in the middle of many, tumultuous upheavals (Bergman, 2017).

Gilman arguably redefined feminism, focusing the discussion on “women’s enforced economic parasitism” to men (Chang, 2010). One of her most famous works, *The Yellow Wallpaper* particularly brought her much literary attention in her time. The said literary piece,

which is the object of this present analysis, is a semi-autobiography that follows the horrifying descent into madness as recorded in a diary by the female narrator, identified later on as “Jane” (Veeder, 1988). Jane was suffering from a nervous breakdown, being treated through a “rest cure” by her husband, who happens to also be her physician. “Rest cure” was a practice of isolating and forcing the patient into bed rest, preventing any creative or intellectual activity or stimulation for a number of weeks. Gilman’s feministic take on how women are supposedly trapped in marriages that seem to diminish their roles to a “domestic housewife” and inferior to the husband, is delivered in a first-person point of view, whose suffering in and emancipation from which setup was metaphorized through the very particular yellow wallpaper that decorated the narrator’s makeshift asylum in the story (Mambrol, 2022).

This current paper attempted to make a stylistic analysis of the said literary piece through the feministic lens. Stylistics gives a premium to the literariness of a particular text (Ufot, 2012). While it has its roots in Formalism and Structuralism (Sotirova, 2016), stylistics appraises a literary piece for its literariness, that is, the “palpability and unfamiliarity of the language of the literary text”, or in the words of Shklovsky (1965, as cited in Sotirova, 2016), the “artfulness” of the literature in question. Meanwhile, as both a philosophy or ideology and a movement that began in the 19th century (Siregar et al., 2020), feminism in literature attempts to highlight how women and their struggles, as well as their institutionalized roles in society, are being portrayed. Furthermore, feminism as a literary theory holds that on one hand, literature treats both, if not either sex unfairly. On the other hand, literature becomes an effective vehicle for the said sexes, particularly for women, to carve their rightful place in society (Hood, 2017; Guo, 2018). Feminism and stylistics converge in feminist stylistics, of which term is arguably credited to Mills (1995, as cited in Montoro, 2014). Mills defined feminist stylistics as that which is “concerned not only to describe sexism in a text, but also to analyze the way that point of view, agency, metaphor, or transitivity are unexpectedly closely related to matters of gender, to discover whether women’s writing practices can be described, and so on.” Generally, feminist stylistics seeks to “write woman into relevance” (Ufot, 2012).

One of the various frameworks of analysis employed in feminist stylistics is through transitivity. Burton (1982, as cited in Montoro, 2014) proposes that feminist stylistic analysis should not only focus on the power dynamics between the two sexes; but rather, that the analysis should also shed light on how “realities” of the characters are constructed through language. The work of Halliday (1968), that is on functional linguistics, comes to the fore in which case, feminist stylistics should shed light also on how the characters’ experiences are linguistically being encoded. Halliday’s transitivity system describes how humans encode their experiences in language through six (6) types of processes: material, mental, relational, behavioural, verbal and existential (Sakrikar, 2019). The use of this framework of analysis rests in the argument that since there are various ways of expressing reality through language, the syntactic choices available to, and made by an author to represent a character reveal significant gender treatment issues, which is the focus of feminist stylistics (Kang & Wu, 2015). Accordingly:

If a character is very active in a text, in control of their own decisions and actions, an analysis of text describing them might be expected to show a range of processes and a relatively high number of material-action-intention processes- where the character is performing an action which they have voluntarily chosen a course of behaviour. A character whose behaviour consists of many internalized mental processes might be expected to appear as very introspective; similarly, a character whose processes consist disproportionately of externalized mental processes may seem incomplete in some way. A character who is written in terms of supervention processes might appear somehow out of control of themselves (Kang & Wu, 2015, p. 1201).

In sum, stylistics highlights how literary texts achieve their “artfulness” by bringing into light their style elements; how these devices work together against a canvas of varying linguistic features and literary ‘forces’, the choice of use of which in the creation and being of the object of analysis, defamiliarized and foregrounded. Feminist stylistics add to the formula of how gender and sexuality are represented, either consciously or unconsciously; and are described against the intersection of power politics, and history. The present undertaking examined Gilman’s work through such lenses, with the aim of echoing one of the timeless struggles of women in a patriarchal society, and its horrifying effect.

**2. METHOD**

This paper is an attempt to analyze Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* using feminist stylistics, particularly in the transitivity framework of Halliday, assisted by the underpinning of feminist stylistics by Mills. A feminist stylistics approach using Halliday’s transitivity framework analyzes either the activity or passivity of the characters, or participants, in a text according to their circumstances and the processes realized through their speeches. In Halliday’s transitivity system:

Transitivity normally picks out three key components of processes. The first is the process itself, which is typically realized in grammar by the verb phrase. The second is the participant(s) associated with the process, typically realized by noun phrases. Perhaps less importantly for stylistic analysis, transitivity also picks out the circumstances associated with the process. This third element is typically expressed by prepositional and adverb phrases which fill up the Adjunct element in clause structure. (Simpson, 2004, p. 22).

Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* is analyzed through two of the six types of processes, which are: material processes and mental processes. According to Simpson (2004), material processes refer to processes of doing, with two participant roles, the Actor and the Goal. Mental processes refer to processes of sensing, with two participant roles, the Sensor and the Phenomenon. Unlike material processes, mental processes represent the world of consciousness, and “involve cognition (encoded in verbs such as ‘thinking’ or ‘wondering’), reaction (as in ‘liking’ or ‘hating’) and perception (as in ‘seeing’ or ‘hearing’).”

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Analysis of the Material Processes in Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper***

*The Yellow Wallpaper* is told in a first-person point of view, allowing for a more direct or straightforward examination of the main character’s thought processes and speech acts. One could consider it an epistolary work; a recounting of the character’s experiences through a diary of some sort. Through analysis of material processes in the language used by *Jane*, as later on inferred the narrator and therefore the main character in the story, it is revealed how she sees herself *doing* in a world mostly dominated by her husband, *John*, who does so not only because of his role in their social bubble as a married couple; but also because of his being *Jane*’s own attending physician too. In which context, firstly the following extracts from the text should reveal the power dynamics between the couple, at least in the eyes of *Jane*, whereby *John* is indeed dominant or more active and that the social context is a patriarchal society, indeed:

John	laughs	at me.
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>

He	took	me in his arms...
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
...John	gathered	me up in his arms...
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
[John]	just carried	me upstairs...
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
[John]	laid	me on the bed...
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
John	kept	me here after all...
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
[John]	looked	at me with such a stern, reproachful look...
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
...he	...making me lie down for an hour	after each meal.
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>

### 3.2. Analysis of the Mental Processes in Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*

A rich and interesting point of analysis is the very fact that the narrative of *Jane’s* descent into madness is relayed in a more personal, and even sort of privy point of view because of it being laid out as it is in the character’s diary, as well as how it is as it is in the same narrator’s stream of consciousness. Most of the narrative is encoded in the worldview or world of consciousness of the protagonist. This is a telling that indeed, the narrator seems to be trapped in a world where is mostly alone with her thoughts, and mostly not by choice. Later on, the recount of the protagonist’s experiences in the text eventually concluded to her finally *freeing* herself from such a world, again, a patriarchal society indeed; and this time, a society where a woman’s voice seems to only be permitted to be louder inside her head, than outside of it. The following extracts portray samples of mental processes encoded by *Jane* in her diary:

I	disagree	with their ideas.
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

(This particular inner monologue and diary entry of *Jane* came after thinking about how she was “forbidden to work” until she was well again. Yet, even while she *disagrees*, she still takes the advice; and even feels helpless about it, as she remarked, *But what is one to do?* Furthermore, even while it was an inner monologue and only a diary entry, which no one is supposedly expected to read, she still described her thinking and feeling of disagreement as *personally*.)

I (sometimes) fancy that in my condition, if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus...  
*Sensor Process Phenomenon*

I think it is due to this nervous condition.  
*Sensor Process Phenomenon*

(In the above case, the context of her *thinking* that *it* was due to her supposed nervous condition was that she gets “unreasonably angry with John sometimes.” A few points to notice here are that in the narrator’s mind, she was *unreasonable* in her anger against John, despite it supposedly being reasonable as in the text, *Jane* recounted a short talk with her husband about the strangeness she felt about their new place, where *John* dismissed such feeling as just a “draught”. This particular incident, *Jane* did not see as actually an unfair and rather rash dismissal of her thoughts and feelings in such a context; and rather, actually thought instead that she was being *unreasonable* in her anger towards *John*. The text did not explicitly show whether *Jane* was conscious or not of gaslighting herself and then justifying such unfair treatment with an unconnected yet self-pitying thought. Another point of interest and analysis is, in which case, *Jane* did not only make herself believe that her being *unreasonably angry* with *John* was just her being *unreasonable*, but also her having a *nervous condition*, after all. In *Jane*’s world of consciousness, and at the beginning of the narrative, she thought it was only because of her condition, and that she was only unreasonable, that she gets angry *sometimes* with her husband.)

In the other following extracts, still revealing the narrator’s mental processes, *Jane* further recounts how she feels *very tired* because she *takes pains to control* herself in front of her husband, following *John*’s telling her that if she feels unreasonably angry at times against him, she *shall neglect proper self-control*. Other than this, she further recounts that she did not like their room, which *John* did not want to hear of it; and rather justified that there “was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.” In response, or at least in her thought afterwards, *Jane* thought *John* to be “very careful and loving” and that he did not let her “stir without special direction.” In these lines of dialogue and thinking, it could be seen just how *Jane* is submissive and *controlled* by her husband, magnifying the internalized unfair roles of husband and wife in a marriage in their time and context.

*But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so, I take pains to control myself before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.*

*I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.*

*He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.*

*He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.*

The next extracts further illustrate how *Jane* sees and thinks of herself in their social situation as a married couple, along with her condition in the scenario.

I	feel	basely ungrateful not to value it more.
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

(This followed after the narrator recounted how her husband *takes care* of her, which seems to her was not a natural, normal obligation of a husband to a wife, and so she must be *grateful*, no matter what. Furthermore, these come on top of the earlier analyses of *Jane* being dismissed by her husband; and she having nothing else but to justify which action as just due to her condition, among others. The analyses, in other words, again point to *Jane* having an internalized inferiority against her husband; and not seeing her place properly as an independent wife to him, notwithstanding her condition.)

I	am glad	my case is not serious!
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

It	does weigh on me so	not to do my duty in any way!
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

I	[am] really getting quite fond	of the big room, all but that horrid paper.
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

I	think	sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little, it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

This paper influence it had!	looks	to me	as if it knew what a vicious
<i>Phenomenon</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Sensor</i>	

I	get positively angry	with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness.
<i>Sensor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Phenomenon</i>

The extracted lines above, analyzed into the sensor, process and phenomenon, are lines that are also evidentially leading to, if not outlining how now the narrator begins to notice the wallpaper in her room, and how she begins to feel something against it initially. The next parts of the story from here on introduce her sister-in-law, *Jennie*, who the narrator thought to be *careful* of her, a *perfect and enthusiastic* housekeeper. Interestingly, *Jane* believed that *Jennie* thought differently and rather believed that *Jane's* writing was what actually made her sick.



While *Jennie* was supposed to be an understanding female companion, an ally, at that, to *Jane*, it did not seem so. The narrator still had to keep her writing, her expressing herself, from a supposed another female companion. Later in these same pages in the text, the narrator begins to notice back the wallpaper and now even more as she thought to *see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design*. Interestingly again, what followed this description of the narrator was a separate line, circling back to her sister-in-law now being on the stairs; and then another entirely different diary entry.

I [am] getting really fond of the room *in spite of the wallpaper*.

The line above is another interesting point of analysis as the narrator thought again how she was *really getting fond of the room*; but more importantly, *Jane* now began to be fond *in spite of the wallpaper*. Accordingly, *it dwells in her mind so!* One could see here thus how the narrator slowly changes into someone who would not so later on anymore get obsessed with the said wallpaper. The next parts of the narrative *Jane* specifically noticed the intricacies of the design of the yellow wallpaper, describing in particular the pattern of repetition in the design, as well as how the color of it interacted with the light in the room and out. The following lines show how the narrator eventually perceived the wallpaper later on:

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

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

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

Further along the story, it became more and more noticeable just how the narrator really became obsessed, if not only very conscious of the wallpaper:

*On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of the law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind. The colour is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing. You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.*

*The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions why, that is something like it. That is, sometimes! There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.*

*When the sun shoots in through the east window - I always watch for that first long, straight ray - it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it. That is why I watch it always.*

It was along these same lines of perception that the narrator confirmed seeing a woman among the patterns of the wallpaper.

*At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.*

At some point though, this particular phenomenon of being conscious with the wallpaper and seeing the pattern of woman in it made the narrator somewhat feel better. She felt herself getting better; she felt excited about her life now that she had something to look forward to and be busy about. She continued to observe and think about the wallpaper in her room the following days ahead. Eventually though, this habit turned into something more. She even began to notice the smell of the wallpaper. It sent her to certain memories of her past. She even called it, *yellow smell*. Later she circles back to the presence of the woman behind the wallpaper. Over time, it became more real to her.

*The front pattern does move - and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over. Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.*

*And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern - it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads. They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down and makes their eyes white!*

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

*I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why - privately I've seen her! I can see her out of every one of my windows! It is the same woman, I know, for she's always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.*

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

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

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

In the lines above, it has become clear how the narrator felt about the woman she saw in the wallpaper. Interestingly, eventually the narrator projected herself onto this woman by these lines: *I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.* The narrator, Jane, is the woman in the wallpaper. She felt she wanted to escape, to be free from the limiting wallpaper. *If only that top pattern could*



*be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.* She tried to literally come off of it by beginning to tear away the wallpaper. *John*, the narrator's husband, began to notice. *There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.* This did not escape *Jane*. Eventually, the narrator was able to pull it all off the wall:

*That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.*

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

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

*And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it today! We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.*

Later on, *Jennie* saw what the narrator did. The narrator hoped to find an ally, someone who would understand, in the person of *Jennie*, especially as she was a woman as well herself. *Jane* thought *Jennie* must relate. However, the story interestingly painted *Jennie* as a woman, yes, but also as one who seemed to have accepted her fate, defeatedly; with but a faint wanting to also *free* herself from the shackles of the patriarchy, but she does not do so. She does not dare.

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

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

*How she betrayed herself that time! But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me, - not alive!*

Unlike *Jane*, *Jennie* did not seem to have the courage to pull off the wallpaper that metaphorically caged *Jane*'s and other women's voices and lives in a room, a society, dominated by men; bound particularly by the institution of marriage. Eventually along the story, nearing the end, *Jane* is depicted as having almost gone deep into madness, insanity driven not only because of a seemingly ineffective cure, but also because of suppression of voice, suppression of feelings and thoughts, projected against an inanimate object, that is, the room's wallpaper.

*But I must get to work.*

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

*I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.*

*I want to astonish him.*

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

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

*This bed will not move!*

*I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner - but it hurt my teeth.*

These lines above, along with the rest of the following, seemed to metaphorize *Jane's* eventual show-off of her strength and stance against her husband; her finally finding an ally, if not only a reflection of herself, with the woman she found beneath the wallpaper. She did not care anymore, except to be *free*; to *astonish* her husband, all men in the society at the time, that she, too, can do something bold; something like it.

*Why there's John at the door!*  
*It is no use, young man, you can't open it!*  
*How he does call and pound!*  
*Now he's crying for an axe.*  
*It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!*  
*"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front: steps, under a plantain leaf!"*  
*That silenced him for a few moments.*  
*Then he said - very quietly indeed. "Open the door, my darling!"*  
*"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"*  
*And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. 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!*

In *Jane's* world, she was struggled to be *free*; to get out of the wallpaper, of the domination of her man; of her world. In her consciousness, and as implied by the abovementioned lines, she was just trying to escape, if not only her health condition, but also her suppression. She wondered why her husband fainted at what he saw, as to her, it was nothing but her wanting to escape; to be "out at last".

### **3.3. Implications to Pedagogy**

A feminist stylistic analysis is a useful tool for both teachers and learners especially in a literature class in the secondary and tertiary levels. This is so because a critically meaningful stylistic analysis of a text demands social relevance or context. A feministic look at a literary text, whether or not it is of Gilman's work and others like it, is supposedly insightful and thought-provoking to the young critique. This is not to mention its highly possible relatability. The issues of feminism yesterday are almost still the same as those of today.

Meanwhile, Halliday's transitivity framework emphasizes how both functional and systemic language is. In other words, it is an efficient tool for teachers to simplify relationship of structure with meaning when trying to guide learners into deeply understanding

texts. Critical reading comprehension and an artful appreciation of such literary pieces, elevated by socially responsible and relatable lenses such as feminism are given premium.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

*The Yellow Wallpaper* when analyzed in the lenses of feminist stylistics through transitivity framework, particularly material and mental processes, leads to the emphasis on women's struggles, not only as being inferior to men's in terms of politics, for instance; but also, as being a part of the institution of marriage.

More interestingly, the literary piece when analyzed through the mental processes that the protagonist encoded her experiences with showed that such psychological issues or mental health-related challenges especially of those times are not merely biological or chemical; rather, they could also be that of induced ones. The analysis of how the characters saw and experienced their worlds and their institutionalized roles in such social relationship proved that, especially for the women, suppression and dismissal of feelings and thoughts, including ignorance of self-worth or value as a supposed equal partner in such a marriage, in this instance, is fatal.

The yellow wallpaper that decorated *Jane's* room, a makeshift asylum, did not do its job in helping the heroine to calm down, or to stop from thinking and feeling. The "rest cure" was proved to be ineffective and inefficient, for sometimes it was not enough that one "rests". Rest does not equate to healing. If anything, and in the case of Jane in the story, it was a prison; a subjugation; until she finally, eventually, forced her way out.

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**“Out at Last!”: A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Gilman’s The Yellow Wallpaper**

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