



The Yellow Wallpaper (Forgotten Books)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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"The Yellow Wallpaper" is a 6,000-word short story by American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman. It was first published in 1891 in New England Magazine. It is regarded as an important early work of American feminist literature, illustrating attitudes in the 19th century toward women's physical and mental health.

The story is written in the first person as a series of journal entries. The narrator is a woman whose husband - a physician - has confined her to the upstairs bedroom of a house he has rented for the summer. She is forbidden from working and has to hide her journal entries from him so that she can recuperate from what he has diagnosed as a "temporary nervous depression - a slight hysterical tendency;" a diagnosis common to women in that period. The windows of the room are barred, and there is a gate across the top of the stairs, allowing her husband to control her access to the rest of the house.

The story illustrates the effect of confinement on the narrator's mental health, and her descent into psychosis. With nothing to stimulate her, she becomes obsessed by the pattern and color of the room's wallpaper. "It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw - not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things. But there is something else about that paper - the smell! ... The only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell." (Quote from wikipedia.org)

About the Author

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (July 3, 1860 - August 17, 1935) was a prominent American poet, non-fiction writer, short story writer, novelist, lecturer, and social reformer. She is best remembered today for her short story The Yellow Wallpaper, based on her own bout with severe depression.

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