

'Bed Rest' Challenged: A Liberating Treatment in 'The Yellow Wallpaper'

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Abstract: *This article explores a feminist approach to the nineteenth century psychoanalytical treatment of 'Bed Rest'. The treatment, as the article demonstrates, is practiced on women who according to standards of patriarchal society project abnormal brain activity, and should be reduced to docility in order for them to resume their domestic societal roles. However, the cure in this research does indeed prove to be beneficial for women by giving the opposite of the intended outcome, by allowing women enough space to question their place in society and allocate a subjective Self that goes beyond the fixed patriarchal image of maleness and femaleness onto a fluid 'in-between'. This newly formed individuality will be discussed through the analysis of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story 'The Yellow Wallpaper'.*

Keywords: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'The Yellow Wallpaper', Bed Rest, Feminism, Patriarchy, Liberating Treatment.

1. Introduction

This article demonstrates a socio-psychoanalytical study of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper', first published in 1892, which, according to Gilman, projects the use of science in a patriarchal context as a method to oppress women's minds and reduce them to mental subordination and childlike numbness to their existence in society. This paper focuses on Gilman's assertion of her creative impetus, through the voice and pen of her protagonist, by turning negative oppressive ideologies and concepts into positive and subjectifying tools for her own liberation. The treatment of 'Bed Rest', as will be further explained has consistently been interpreted as an oppressive psychological method which carried negative connotations. Being exclusively practiced on women, it was rapidly popularized in the late nineteenth century as it was introduced and practiced by male physicians on female patients who projected abnormal mental activity, atypical to the patriarchal society; hence encouraging and normalizing the male-constructed image of women as confined, emotional beings incapable of taking on responsibility, inactive members of society and thus the need for them to be reduced to docility for their own good. Gilman is considered the first writer to focus on the treatment in her short story, and even though the treatment of bed rest is mentioned in some texts such as Sarah Bilston's novel *Bed Rest* (2006), it is not analyzed within the same feminist dimensions as those of Gilman. This paper sheds light on the treatment as a patriarchal method that

confirms the inferiority of women, as part of an oppressive societal system in order to assert gender hierarchy. Yet, no matter how oppressive the concept behind the treatment is, Gilman creatively has her protagonist create her indigenous identity by subjecting her to it.

Gilman's protagonist exhibits an unexplained restlessness and energy considered abnormal to her society: she is, as Edward Said puts it, '[...] permitted adventures in which [...] her bed rest] experiences reveal to [...] her] the limits of what [...] she] can aspire to, where [...] she] can go, what [...] she] can become' (1993:84). The protagonist is aware of her patriarchal context which she uses to empower future developments. These developments will prove to be acts of resistance which bring discomfort for the patriarchal system simply because a woman's independence is believed to be foreign to its ethos. However, transcending the realm of set and normalized attitudes in society results in what Said suggests is 'the death of a hero or heroine [...] who by virtue of overflowing energy does not fit into the orderly scheme of things' (ibid:84). This idea of death will be pursued metaphorically as a projection of psychological and physical numbness through 'bed rest', and will be considered as not merely the end of the protagonist's objectivity but the birth of her new subjective Self.

The study is divided into three parts: Focus will first be shed on the radical treatment of bed rest; the neurological cure that the American psychiatrist, neurologist and physician, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, formed and practiced in the late nineteenth century on what he believed were 'nervous women' with hysterical tendencies. The second part of this study includes a feminist approach to 'psychical reality' to reach an understanding of women's place in a hierarchised patriarchal context. This includes a close study of the opposite effect of the intended outcomes of Mitchell's treatment. It will also be exemplified through the study of Gilman's semi-biographical story 'The Yellow Wallpaper'. The experience of the treatment that Gilman projects through her protagonist shows that the treatment does prove effective for women, not by reducing them to docility, but by allowing them space away from patriarchal influence, and room for self-realization, affirmation and allocation in society as active members capable of both rationality and emotions. This required space will then be demonstrated in the third part of the study through the adoption of Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of 'in-betweenness', as a fluid space between the Self and the Other. Even though Bhabha's theory of the 'in-between' is mostly argued in Post-colonial theory, nevertheless, the use of his theory proves most essential in this paper because it will be interpreted as the space where the protagonist of Gilman's story reaches a balance between her mental activity and emotions, and eventually emerges as a full individual with both body and mind. Furthermore, the use of Bhabha's 'in-between' as a fluid space that transcends dichotomous relations is crucial for the understanding of the actions of the protagonist toward the end of the story because it is the moment that the protagonist breaks away from patriarchy's binary oppositions and announces her individuality.

2. 'Bed Rest': the Patriarchal Treatment for Abnormal Women

The 'Rest Cure', or better known as 'Bed Rest' is a treatment that Mitchell designed for 'nervous women [... whose] emotional disorders [...] were not understood [...] and] were not responsive to medical therapies' in the late nineteenth century (1878:9). The quick and responsive medical reception of this treatment helped establish it as the only therapy for women at the time, especially that it was justified by Mitchell as a 'moral method' (Burr 1929:160). According to Mitchell, men and women's roles in society were clearly defined and unequally stratified. A woman's morality was strongly connected to her image as the 'Angel of the House'; an image prevalent in the nineteenth century, where the more silence, passivity, obedience women projected the more moral they were considered in society. Accordingly, Bed Rest treatment became not merely justifiable, but also crucial for women who did not conform to the required image set by society, and risked being marginalized.

The treatment included absolute isolation and confinement to bed rest for twenty four hours per day, continued through months at times, with the watchful eye of the psychiatrist and nurse in charge of the patient, in order to ensure the patient's mental and physical passivity. This method was designed to transform the mind from a state of excessive emotions to a state of complete numbness, till the psychiatrist in charge decides that the patient's mind is reduced to placid contentment: 'Brain work having ceased, mental expenditure is reduced to a slight play of emotions and an easy drifting of thought' (Dercum 1917:44). What is most striking about Mitchell's newly formed and radically followed treatment by his peers is his insistence on one crucial factor to a woman's physical and psychological 'health', which is the strict limitation and reduction of the function of the brain to the minimum so it does not interfere with her domestic role and duties. As it follows, the desired outcome would serve the purposes of the patriarchal system. He believed that the more mental activity a woman was projecting, the higher a risk her nervous system ran, leading to hysteria (Mitchell 1878:99). Mitchell's personal opinions, in addition to his attitude towards the purpose of his treatment seem to address his concern for the stability and continuation of the patriarchal system rather than the psychological health of his female patients. In one of his studies, he describes one of his patients as '[...] a pallid, feeble creature [...] that] had no more bosom than the average chicken of a boardinghouse table. Nature had wisely prohibited this being from increasing her breed' (Walter 1970:132). A woman's physical and psychological health were thus determined according to the standards set by the very system oppressing her, proving the treatment effective for the patriarchal system instead of women of society.

3. 'The Yellow Wallpaper' within the Dynamics of Psychical Reality: A Feminist Reading

Psychical reality is an emerging issue in recent writing on socio-psychoanalysis and feminism. It takes its origins from Sigmund Freud's abandonment of the

explanation of hysteria which he had attributed to 'childhood seduction', which in turn was changed into a fantasy of seduction to replace the hypothesis of actual seduction. With this shift, the effect of a repressed fantasy on psychical reality was the same as an actual occurrence. Freud still believed in the trauma of an actual event but shifted his attention to the unconscious fantasy, therefore introducing the concept of psychical reality and setting the foundation for psychoanalysis.

Freud refers to psychical reality as 'everything in the psyche that takes on the force of reality for the subject':

Frequently [he] means nothing more than the reality of our thoughts, of our personal world, a reality at least as valid as that of the material world and, in the case of neurotic phenomena, decisive. But [... in] its strictest sense 'psychical reality' denotes the unconscious wish and the phantasy associated with it (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973:7).

The problem becomes evident when studying psychical reality from a feminist view point as it bears two main interpretations: one in which psychical reality is 'modifiable', the other in which it is 'intractable' (Brennan 1988:255). It is essential at this point to consider different feminist debates on psychical reality and socio-psychoanalysis in order to consider Gilman's work in the light of such debates. Some of the many feminist debates – namely Nancy Chodorow's and Juliet Mitchell's – on psychoanalysis repudiate Freud's dependence on the biological state of the human being in his attempt to explain the origin of patriarchy. They argue that patriarchy finds its origins in social and historical behaviors. Conversely, Luce Irigaray employs psychoanalytic theory and philosophy – the discourses which she believes exclude women from their social roles – in her study of identity formation. Irigaray (1985) insists that gender difference does not exist because difference would suggest that men and women are two sides of the same coin and are capable of achieving subjectivity so they can be compared or existent in opposition to one another, but the subjectivity of men relies on the oppression and the categorization of women as the Other.

However, another debate within psychoanalysis is evident in Mitchell and Chodorow's work (Dinnerstein 1976; Mitchell 1974; Chodorow 1978). Mitchell suggests that psychoanalysis theorizes 'a socio-historical product' (Brennan 1988:256). Chodorow also uses psychoanalysis to study the social internalization of gender difference which, according to her, originates in socio-historical gender relations and oppression rather than 'the psychical centrality' of manhood (ibid:256). One prominent debate emerges from Mitchell's claim that one cannot study psychoanalysis without the use of Freud's – or Lacan's for that matter – theory of phallo-centrism, hence the lack of psychical reality, as psychoanalysis becomes reduced to a sociological rather than a psychic state. On this topic, Teresa Brennan writes: 'psychoanalysis is not a theory of how socially created [... gendered] relations are internalized, It is about the construction, rather than the internalization, of [... gendered] difference' (ibid:256). Yet the 'immediate demands' of feminists entail their attribution of psychoanalysis to social relations (ibid:256).

These feminist debates contend that psychoanalysis, and therefore psychic reality, cannot be reduced to a sociological state especially in the study of gendered difference: Brennan suggests that critics 'imply that psychological reality involves more than contingencies' (ibid:257). Gilman seems to adopt a concept close to Chodorow's and Michell's, which defines psychic reality as 'an internalized version of social reality', the scope under which gender difference falls (ibid:257). Through her detailed and prolonged evaluation of her protagonist's actions and reactions to oppression, Gilman stresses the point that internalizing socially created gender relations and difference involves more than a simple correspondence between one's social life and one's psyche. Chodorow (1978:50) explains that:

Internalization does not mean direct transmission of what is objectively in [one's] social world into [...] unconscious experience. Social experiences take on varied psychological meanings depending on [...] one's] feelings of ease, helplessness, dependence [...] Internalization involves distortions, defenses, and transformations [...] and it] is mediated by fantasy and by conflict.

In her study of Gilman's feminism, Judith Allen (2009:3) sheds light on the socio-economic context in which Gilman lived and translated through her numerous rebellious female protagonists. She contends that the critical time, namely between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was problematic to women yet offered many opportunities for change for Gilman and other suffragists of her time. It was problematic in its two contradictory realities, one that held on firmly to sexual differentiation that was confounded with the economic relation between men and women, upon which women were left economically dependent upon men and conformed to traditional ideals of morality and domesticity. The second contradictory reality embraced political, economic and social progressivism laying its foundation for Modernity (Allen 2009:4). This contradiction, of a world moving forward and progressing in all its dimensions excluded women, which pushed Gilman to fight for a 'human world', one that went beyond the dichotomous image set for men and women by patriarchy. Thus, Gilman embraced many campaigns and reform initiatives through which women's acquirement of their basic rights would be a step toward reaching such a desired world, where women and men alike were regarded as equally productive members of society. On this topic, Allen (ibid:1) quotes Gilman:

[...] today we find ... extension of the franchise to women charged with the same evils long ago attributed to their having a higher education or the chance to earn their livings. The latest and highest form of Feminism has great promise for the world. It postulates womanhood free, strong, clean, and conscious of its power and duty.

Gilman translates these realities in her characters; John and Jenny represent mainstream patriarchal society, while the protagonist represents the progressive woman accommodating the changes of her time. Gilman employs the role of a medical doctor as the protagonist's husband, John, monitoring her

every movement as well as the watchful eye of his sister Jennie, throughout the treatment in order to present the social reality of men and women controlled by a hierarchical system. The story opens with the protagonist's projection of the patriarchal setting where her treatment is to be carried out. She describes the house as a '[...] colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, [...] a haunted house, [...] with] something queer about it' (Gilman 2010:1). Her careful choice of description for the setting addresses her recognition of patriarchy as not merely oppressive, ancient, repetitive and forceful, but also flawed. Thus, projecting a conscious realization that the treatment does not serve her mental wellbeing but instead works for the better good of the stability of the patriarchal system. As it follows, the protagonist's room is described as a 'nursery' with '[...] the windows [...] being] barred for little children'; a perfect setting for the treatment's desired outcome (ibid:2). The striped pattern on the room's walls resembling the bars of a prison also completes the desired setting for the protagonist's treatment as she is constantly reminded of her confinement and imprisonment not just through the treatment, but also through the restrictions of patriarchy. She describes the pattern as

[...] committing 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 suddenly commit suicide – plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions (ibid:2-3).

The colonial setting along with John's oppressive medical opinions of the protagonist's so called 'condition' help her recognize the flaws in the patriarchal system, which pushes her to suggest that: 'John is a physician, and *perhaps* [...] that is one reason I do not get well faster' (ibid:1). The contradiction in opinion and action that John projects add all the more confusion to the protagonist's mind which leads to her distrust in his professionalism. She says:

[...] he does not believe I am sick! [...] 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? [...] I] am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again. Personally I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good (ibid:1).

Although the protagonist senses the flaws of patriarchy and recognizes her presence, she nevertheless knows she is helpless as she cannot disagree with John because he represents the voice of reason in society. He is on the one hand her husband, and to add to his authority over her, he is a physician, which leaves her doubly controlled and lacking credibility in society were she to voice her opinions. Therefore she resorts to acting out 'proper self-control [...] before him' which she finds tiresome (ibid:2).

Although on the surface men are presented as powerful oppressors and colonizers of women they are portrayed as victims of a corrupt system. The protagonist admits that John 'hardly lets [...] her] stir without special direction',

but his blind projection of his expected role as one in control leaves him no space for perceiving difference (ibid:2). The repetition of the presentation of social reality as corrupt leads to the normalization and internalization of the hierarchical assumption as right and justifiable in men's and women's minds. This also explains why John's sister Jennie similarly plays the role of the watchful nurse carrying out orders. The protagonist describes her as '[...] so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing. She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is writing which made me sick' (ibid:5). Jennie also describes the process of self-realization and individuality as 'staining everything it touched', thus representing women who live and die unnoticed or recognized (ibid:10).

However, through the process of the protagonist's self-realization, the tables are turned as she starts taking on the role of the watchful eye. She notices John and Jennie's growing interest in her creativity as a projection of her brain activity as she reports:

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!* And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once. [...] I know she was studying that pattern [...] (ibid:9).

The protagonist realizes she is on the right track watching their growing and inquisitive secret interest in her creativity, but reacting violently at the prospect of being discovered. They do so because of the corrupt system which forces them to live on the margins of life and makes them completely passive towards their individuality. They have no control over their lives, thus no attention is given to them.

The protagonist on the other hand, is not satisfied with the passive image forced upon her by the patriarchal system. She is considered a threat to the stability of patriarchy because she shows excessive mental activity, considered too excessive for her according to the standards of normality in society, and so is forced to submit to the cure or else risk being labeled as hysterical. However, by submitting to the cure she comes to realize that her mandatory imprisonment does not merely drive her to think more, but also helps her question her place in society privately and away from the influence of the patriarchal system. In this sense, the protagonist turns the suppressive treatment into one that helps her form her individuality, so she willingly embraces it and secretly starts documenting her improvement and process of realization of her forming individuality. John is also stripped of feelings or personal opinions and takes on the role of a physician rather than an affectionate husband, and is made to believe in a subjectivity dependent upon the objectivity and oppression of an Other, his wife. Questioning his actions would also mark the end of the power which justifies his actions. Gilman's depiction of men and women as equally objectified in the story is a projection of the social reality controlled by a hierarchical system. The Self and the Other for Gilman are two sides of the same coin and should both exist equally in one body to bring out one's true and

complete self: one cannot be complete when one's real desires are restricted by society.

The struggle of a woman with her femininity emanates from an essential consciousness of physical lack or castration. Patriarchy associates her 'inferiority' with what is physically apparent and what she visibly lacks. When a female is born into such a long tradition of gender struggle and discrimination, she either internalizes the ideology as inborn and natural, as exemplified through Jennie's character, or realizes the injustice of it and resists it, which is what the protagonist does. Her struggle becomes one against what society claims as natural for a woman, against the patriarchal constitution of her culture. The protagonist does not deny her femininity or promise vengeance on the males of her society; she denies and struggles against the sense of mandated objectivity which patriarchy imposes on her mind and body. She is aware of gender difference and wants to locate it but not within the dichotomy of superiority and inferiority. She furthermore demands to be treated as a whole, a subjective individual with an identity.

The protagonist's awareness and realization of her situation becomes threatening knowledge to the essence of patriarchy; a source of power, according to Michel Foucault (1977), that constitutes different effects such as confinement and 'institutions of discipline' as a result of the conflict between the normal Subject and the different Object. He moreover employs science for the conception and understanding of such relations, which result in either 'madness' or 'law'; social dilemmas are treated with either hospitals or punished through the legal system; prison. In 'The Yellow Wallpaper', Gilman does not hesitate from using physical and mental confinement as an alternative place for the Othered woman and her condemnation to psychological death, as her protagonist is accused of being hysterical, thus condemned to imprisonment. She however uses 'Bed Rest' as a remedy or alternative for curing the socio-psychological ills of her patriarchal society through the protagonist's claim of selfhood. This seems to suggest that the only escape for a woman from the constraints of her culture would be through submitting herself wholly to the treatment in order to place herself beyond the reach of men and women; hence ridding herself from the influence of patriarchal society and the traditional role of obedience and weakness she is driven to project.

At the beginning of her treatment, the protagonist confronts her husband with her feeling of discomfort and irritation with the sickly color and the sense of imprisonment that the bar-like striped wallpaper projects. But when she suggests that her husband changes it she is faced with opposition as she would be '[...] letting it get the better of [... her], and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies' (Gilman 2010:3). The protagonist describes the pattern as manifesting strange beings, nonsensical to the rational eye; she describes it as 'a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind', as she sees

a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down. [...] Up and down and sideways

they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere (ibid:4).

With the passing days well into her treatment, the eyes that she constantly sees in the wallpaper start developing into 'a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design' (ibid:5). The formless figure soon develops into

a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern [... she] seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out. [...] 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 (ibid:7-10).

The sense of imprisonment that the bars initially give the protagonist is soon replaced with a growing interest in understanding its dimensions, especially when she discovers 'things in that paper that nobody knows but [... her], or ever will', eventually leading to her determination in destroying the bars (ibid:10). Thus, instead of having her tamed into patriarchy, the protagonist creatively resolves to rebellion by manipulating every representation of patriarchy to her own advantage even if it means freeing the woman she sees from the restraints of the bars.

The protagonist also starts realizing that the woman she sees behind bars is a manifestation of her own psyche. She does not merely see herself imprisoned behind bars, but starts seeing other women like herself trapped within the confinement of a corrupt system. Therefore, she decides to free herself and other women, but in secret as she does not want the interference of society in the development of her newly formed and creative Self. She asserts:

I wasn't alone a bit! [...] 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 [...] there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast. I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did? [...] it is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please! (ibid:12-15).

The protagonist clearly becomes one with the woman behind bars. As she frees her she starts crawling the way the woman does. The act of crawling instead of walking on the one hand projects the image of an active child acquiring knowledge before it takes its first steps into the rational world of society. On the other hand, crawling and creeping could be interpreted as resembling an unleashed wild animal. In either case, the image that the protagonist starts acting out embodies her newly born Self that goes beyond the fixed dichotomies set by patriarchy and forced upon her and other women.

In a society internalized as a man's world where a woman does not belong, she is considered an impostor and has to naturalize the way she is looked at. As a growing woman questioning her being and locating herself within society, she is on a mission to exceed the set dichotomies of male/female and subject/object, therefore jeopardizing the power of manhood as it is only meaningful in relation to the woman's femininity. The protagonist claiming

power and much more than her mandated femininity takes her beyond the realm of her gendered image; by refraining from being what patriarchy wants her to be, the male loses his only weapon, his manhood as the very symbol of its power and existence is gone forever with the advent of female subjectivity.

As illustrated in the story, John is shocked at the sight of the protagonist crawling across the room and saying 'I've got out at last [...] in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!' (ibid:14). His rational mind does not comprehend her irrational act and so he faints as described by the protagonist: '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!' (ibid:14). John sees his wife as a subjective being, so he realizes that his subjectivity, which his own identity and manhood within the patriarchal system depend on, is based on a fake assumption made up by an oppressive system.

Thus, by projecting the opposite of the intended outcome of bed rest, the protagonist elevates herself to the same level of subjectivity which allows her to compete with the authoritative power in control, the physician and husband carrying out the treatment. Consequently, John faints as he is unprepared for such retaliation. The fact that he faints across her path should ideally pause as an obstacle, but it does not force her to deviate from her chosen path. She consequently resolves to crawling over him; an act that confirms her Self affirmation and psychological empowerment unaffected by patriarchy anymore.

This form of female resistance becomes what Foucault (1983:208) suggests is

A chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.

Gilman in this sense allows her protagonist, through her vivid depiction of the period of bed rest, the Self-realization of her power of balancing her femininity with her mind. This balanced space is described by Bhabha as the elevation of one's otherness from its hierarchized dichotomous trap onto a fluid space of an 'in-between'.

4. Breaking Out into the In-Between

Bhabha (1994:2) suggests that:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity [... which define] the idea of society itself.

Simultaneously, Bhabha suggests that individuals who are oppressed in any form can situate themselves in an 'in-between' through the very concept of difference. They can formulate 'strategies of representation or empowerment',

strategies which can also work for the benefit of women as oppressed beings of a society in spite of their individual differences and needs. Although Gilman's protagonist is secluded and oppressed by the hierarchical system, she still manages to change the meanings of the oppressive tools that were originally used against her and other women of society in order to serve her aim for liberation.

The protagonist turns the once oppressive cultural tools of the patriarchal tradition into a space that she crucially and earnestly needs to firstly rid the influence of patriarchy on her mind, and secondly by allowing herself the space to reevaluate and place her newly formed self in society as neither oppressor, nor oppressed, but as a whole individual owning her own indigenous identity. Bhabha (*ibid*:2-3) quotes Renee Green's demonstration of the fluid movement of the in-between in her own writing as she says:

I wanted to make shapes or set up situations that are kind of open [...]
My work has a lot to do with a kind of fluidity, a movement back and forth, not making a claim to any specific or essential way of being.

Green is quoted at this point because of her positioning as an African-American artist. She too aims in her work at displacing herself from and dismantling binarisms, of being the prisoner of either/or, and instead situates herself in the 'in-between' which Bhabha describes. She gives herself access to visit both binaries and situates herself in them as neither/nor and both at the same time. Green becomes what Bhabha suggests is 'the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between [... either side]' (*ibid*:4).

Gilman's protagonist similarly does not have to stay victim of an oppressive tradition, nor does she have to blindly imitate her oppressor. Instead, she represents herself as an open space or a bridge between both, moderating both extremes, in order to have free access to both sides. The protagonist thus keeps on renewing and redefining herself constantly because when she refuses to follow certain ways, she starts locating herself as a presence and defines herself as a subjective being. Bhabha explains that with the process of 'presencing' by locating an 'in-between', oppressed beings can bring the binary oppressive sides closer to one another, and develop an intimate relationship between the 'private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social'; a relationship that questions the authority of hierarchical binaries and allows space for other possibilities (*ibid*:13).

In conclusion, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' becomes the umbilical cord which connects Gilman to the women of her society. The use of scientific fact in her story also affirms her existence as it creates interaction with men which is gradually normalized as new ethics and attitudes may develop. The story is thus a projection of an awareness of the practice of gendered binarism in patriarchal societies, a practice that confines and restricts the essence of individuality for men and women, and requires reevaluation.

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