

Symbolic Orders in The Yellow Wallpaper

Literary Analysis

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The Yellow Wallpaper is one of the most progressive novels of its era, which carefully elaborates on the imprisonment of women in a patriarchal society. The writer elaborated on the events in the story by using the tools of psychoanalytical imagery. Thus, the backgrounds, events, and outcomes in Jane's story were carefully woven, keeping in view human psychology. The writer proficiently used symbolism, which gave each event in the novel depth and an invitation to think. This essay will summarize the journal article: The Writing's on the Wall: Symbolic Orders in 'The Yellow Wallpaper' by Barbara A. Suess.

Since its first publication, the novel has always enjoyed the limelight and has always found its way into the press in the form of reviews, critical analysis, and socio-psychological analysis. Each analyst or critic has adopted a different lens to see the [yellow wallpaper](#) (St. Jean).

Barbara A. Suess, a proficient reviewer, has adopted a different reviewing strategy and has viewed "The Yellow Paper" from the perspective of "Lacanian Psychoanalysis" in her review "Symbolic Orders in 'The Yellow Wallpaper' ". Lacanian psychoanalysis presents the therapy in the form of an interrelation between subjectivity and language. Suess has adapted a reviewing strategy that is based on analyzing the underlying facts, i.e., root causes rather than the surface issues. She has highlighted that Jane could not decipher the "reality" and the "fantasy" because the patriarchal encounter she suffered has disturbed the "mirror stage" of her personal development. Upon relating it to the Lacan view, Suess signified the mirror stage as the establishment of reality for an individual. The mirror stage helps a person to identify his/her individuality in the surroundings. After the mirror stage, the individual is capable of governing not only oneself but is also able to self-constitution. However, the subjugation of Jane in the patriarchal society led her to suffer in the self-constitution.

As the curtain rises in The Yellow Wallpaper, the readers can learn about the narrator's disrupted mental health. Jane, the narrator of the story, suffered from [postpartum depression](#). She binged headfirst into severe postpartum delirium soon after the birth of her son. According to the writer Gilman, Jane's husband being insensitive and ignorant of her mental state used to characterize postpartum depression as:

"Temporary nervous depression with the slight tendency for hysteresis".

However, according to Suess, the later symptoms exhibited by Jane were serious enough not to be characterized as the results of postpartum depression alone, like hallucinations and paranoia. Rather, Suess suggests that the mental conditions had long been subduing in the unconscious of Jane and appeared on the surface after crossing the threshold in the form of postpartum depression.

As the narrator used to consider the nursing room as a prison in which she had been imprisoned by the voracious patriarchal society, Jane's belief was so deep-rooted that she used to visualize the bars in the [yellow wallpaper of the room](#). Yet the hallucinations were consistent with the grief she had within her personality. The writer Suess saw the condition beyond hallucinations and instigated that the woman behind the bar was Jane's ego, continuously striving to thrive in the patriarchal society. Gilman used the word "escape" in the original text to refer to the freedom of the woman from the wallpaper. Suess presents this as unchaining the societal standards that have long been constraining Jane, thus creating her own symbolic order. Jane triumphantly revamps the mirror stage of her identity and rules out the symbolic order John wants her to practice. Suess carefully highlighted the succession of the fantasies in the progression of the story. Though her perception of self-constitution was fogged by the image of women that used to appear on the wallpaper, Jane was able to develop an altered sense of identity. Suess related this to the disembodied images that used to appear on the wall at first,

"Nobody could climb through the pattern strangles, so I think that is why it has so many heads"
(Gilman, 15)

But later, she progressed in her fantasies to constitute herself as a whole.

The author Suess has been able to maintain her individuality and rational approach throughout the analysis; she continues it even more gracefully at the conclusion. According to her, though Jane was able to creep her order out of the wallpaper, in reality, Jane, in her true personality, wasn't able to get freedom either from society or from herself. It was her altered image, the symbolic order she constituted for herself, that enabled her to achieve freedom. She strengthens her stance by quoting from the original text when Jane says to John:

"I have got out at last [...] despite you and Jane, and I have also pulled off most of the wallpaper so you cannot put me back" (Gilman)

Here, an irony has been highlighted too; she constituted her order to keep on floundering in the symbolic order-less world. The order she perceived as a triumph, which dares to rule out the orders of John, was, in reality, the progressive stage of her mental illness. In conclusion, Suess leaves the readers with the question:

"How can living in a state of psychosis be considered triumphant in any way?"

Work Cited

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