

ART 14: “Both texts repeatedly establish the extent to which the patriarchal pressures of that period posed severe obstacles for even the most privileged women. In regard to each text's ending, however, the same set of questions tends to arise: is Edna's suicide, like Gilman's speaker's descent into madness, a triumph—the best possible achievement of independence and agency under the circumstances? Or are her final actions a defeat—the fatal, inescapable result for any woman who tries to assert autonomy in the face of such debilitating, insurmountable patriarchy?” p145

“So different from other representations of meek, self-effacing spinsters of this period, this woman here—an aging, un-married, impolite trouble maker—is not only tolerated but universally respected... of course it would be absurd to assume that Madame Reisz is absolutely free—in general, or from all the patriarchal pressures with which she must surely still contend. But here, at least, she manages to use her social identity in a very public way to navigate and even overcome some of the social restrictions one might assume to be in place at this time.” p149

“In learning to swim, she experiences a moment of delicious joy and ecstasy, realizing that her potential is unlimited, that she is freer than she suspected: “A feeling of exultation over took her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul” (Chopin 1988, 36).” p150

“As Edna herself comes to realize, she can exercise a certain amount freedom in choosing the kind of woman she wants to be. But this freedom is not enough: she must then act on and willfully sustain her choices in order for them to have any meaning beyond whim. This is essentially the way one lives an ethical life—acting on, and being responsible for, the choices one is more or less free to make. According to Chopin's novella, achieving such an implicit ethical life (as opposed to a moral one) would be neither impossible nor immediate (too simple) but would instead involve extraordinary strength, courage, and dedication. What Edna ultimately fails to sustain these qualities may mean that she fails to uphold and live by what I am calling “ethics.”” p151

“r self-defeating choices stem, in part, from the fact that she believes with increasing intensity that no favorable identity or social fiction is available to her. Rather than sustaining or modifying her identities? recently separated wife, artist, mother, lover? or only abandoning the ones that seem to her impossible to realize, Edna abandons all of them in favor of stark reality itself. It is not quite fair to say that she lacks imagination or a sense of reality; rather, Edna's chief flaw, the novella implies, is that she lacks the will to maintain and inhabit (and possibly modify) any of the social fictions available to someone like herself.” p152

“Edna is neither absolutely determined by patriarchy and its limitations, nor free from her social conditions and restraints—in any inhabitable, practical way—when she commits suicide.” p154

ART 20: “This ending of “The Yellow Wallpaper” is ambiguous and complex. Because the narrator's final proclamation is both triumphant and horrifying, madness in the story is both positive and negative. On the one hand, it testifies to an alternative reality and challenges patriarchy head on. The fact that her unflappable husband faints when he finds her establishes the dramatic power of her new freedom.” p67

“The final vision itself is one of physical enslavement, not liberation: the woman, bound by a rope, circles the room like an animal in a yoke. Yet that this vision has come to exist and to be expressed changes the terms of the representational process. That the husband-physician must at last listen to a woman speaking—no matter what she says—significantly changes conditions for speaking. Though patriarchy may be only temporarily unconscious, its ancestral halls will never be precisely the same again.” p74

ART 11: "Treichler points out that in the novel's terms, "to be alive is to sleep and to dream," but "to awaken... is to die," and Edna may be said to have precipitated this dilemma as she transforms herself into a magic-lantern projection of the solitary soul." p69

ART 12: "Just before her suicide, we are told: "She understood now clearly what she had meant long ago when she said to Adele Ratignolle that she would give up the unessential, but she would never sacrifice herself for her children('p.113). What she is talking about is obviously a concept of selfhood. Edna comes to see her children as threats to her identity not because of their personalities or their specific demands, but because they limit her freedom, a freedom which she has only just come to understand and want." p54

"If these lines indicate that Edna's suicide is an escape from the tyranny of her children and the restrictions on her freedom which they represent, other statements in this last section of the novel suggest that Edna is actually sacrificing herself for her children, to save them from the shame of a mother who drifts from one illicit affair to another. The two suggestions sit oddly together. One can see them as representing a confusion in Kate Chopin's mind or perhaps as stemming from a desire to make some gesture towards conventional morality, to provide a 'cover' for the real motivation. But I would argue that what is offered is a genuine paradox, one which suggests the two feelings are simultaneously true" p55

ART 14: "Edna's refusal finally to dedicate herself to an identity or creatively transform one for herself is a particular failure, one that ends in suicide. But this failure is not universal among all the female characters in Chopin's novella. Both Mademoiselle Reisz and Adele Ratignolle explicitly inhabit social identities available to them only to actively and creatively transform them. In doing so they implicitly demonstrate the options available to women of this time period, options Edna fails to exercise and sustain." p148

"The problem Edna faces, the more pressing and essential issue is not so much a matter of how many available roles there are to choose from, but of how to fight for and dedicate oneself to (and then modify) any of those roles in the first place. To ultimately reject all the available social roles, as Edna does by the novella's end, is not to live freely but to live chaotically and without meaning, is to eliminate the very identities Edna would otherwise inhabit and use to represent herself. Her rejection thus leads to a kind of despair in any ways akin to madness, for both (madness and a surrendering of the will) involve relinquishing the sole means of self-representation in a society that already limits and undermines women's ability to do so." p154

ART 15: "In order to escape, she peels off the paper that symbolises the patriarchal tradition that has crippled the woman's mind as well as her identity." p80

ART 18: "The narrator experiences her victimization as a conflict between her own personal feelings, perceived by feminist critics as healthy and positive, and the patriarchal society's view of what is proper behavior for women. Since, like so many women up to the present day, she has internalized society's expectations of women, this conflict is felt as a split within herself." p76

"The appropriateness of this convention (our willingness to agree to it) is probably a coalescence of two aspects of experience. First, women frequently feel mad because their own reality/feeling is in conflict with society's expectations. This is often expressed in literature as the sense of being "split." p80

"Second, women who try to express difference (do not submit to patriarchal expectations) are frequently called "crazy."" p80

thinks of and that we now recognise as the suffragists of the day. The feminists as suffragists want something; *Edna does not want anything*. Or she does not know what she wants. Or she wants everything. In any case, her desire is not recuperable within feminism." p485-6

ART 14: "As Steater herself argues, "No matter how much Edna's absolute rejection of her conventional gender roles resonates with a sense of feminist triumph, it is a type of literary romanticism that can quickly dead-end in despair once the book-cover is closed: Edna's escape through death may feel freeing, but ultimately, she offers us no hope" (2007, 415). Given her knowledge of the author's biography and personal views, even Toth must finally admit "Chopin's own attitude toward women's suicide was more critical than sympathetic. (And of course, she was no suicide herself)" (1991, 121). The point is worth repeating: Chopin, like Gilman, faced social pressures and obstacles as an artist and a mother at the turn of century much like Edna's, without committing suicide or going mad. Nor did she ever endorse such methods of escaping patriarchy, in correspondence or public writings. Edna and the speaker in "The Yellow Wallpaper" are pitiable figures whose fates remind us of the magnitude of the obstacles women like them faced. But their creators remind us—by their own example as well as that of other women and inherent possibilities within their stories—that such obstacles, though they demanded remarkable strength, creativity, discipline, could ultimately be overcome." p161

ART 15: "The theme of the work epitomises the ideological framework of feminist theorists who, like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, assert that the family as an institution serves as the essential tool for oppression." p79

ART 17: "Jean F. Kennard suggests that the recent appearance of feminist novels has changed literary conventions and led us to find in the story an exploration of women's role instead of the tale of horror or depiction of mental breakdown its original audience found." p589

ART 21: "Even when William Dean Howells reprinted Gilman's story in 1920 he wrote that it was "terrible and too wholly dire," "too terribly good to be printed." "Feminists could argue convincingly that Gilman's contemporaries schooled on the "terrible" and "wholly dire" tales of Poe, were surely balking at something more particular: the "graphic representation of "raving lunacy" in a middle-class mother and wife that revealed the rage of the woman on a pedestal." p418.

"I have found it striking that discussions of the text so frequently end by distinguishing the doomed and "mad" narrator, who could not write her way out of the patriarchal prison-house, from the sane survivor Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who could." p419

"Fully acknowledging the necessity of the feminist reading of "The Yellow Wallpaper" which I too have produced and perpetuated for many years, I now wonder whether many of us have repeated the gesture of the narrator who "will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of conclusion"(p. 19) —who will read until she finds what she is looking for—no less and no more. Although—or because—we have read "The Yellow Wallpaper" over and over, we may have stopped short, and our readings, like the narrator's, may have reduced the text's complexity to what we need most: our own image reflected back to us." p420

ART 25: "Perceiving the narrator as a four-legged beast, Jacobus goes on to posit that the "smooch" the narrator leaves while crawling along the wall of her nursery prison is a mark of repression imposed not only on female sexuality but on women's writing; the yellow smell signifies menstruation and female genitalia." p16